

Church & State

An Irish History Magazine

And Cultural Review Of Ireland And The World

Welfare: Origins

Trinity *Exceptionalism* !

George Borrow

Throwing Off The Overalls!

Catherine Coll De Valera Wheelright

B o o m t i m e B o b !

Solzhenitsyn

Where Did The Free State And Its Social Welfare System Come From?

Modern liberal civilisation was produced by white racist imperialism, with the British Empire at its core.

The high point of this Imperialism was, roughly, 1832 to 1914.

Prior to 1832 the Empire was conducted by an aristocratic ruling class which tended to be racially lax compared to what followed.

The 1832 Reform was forced by a threatened capitalist revolution against the monopoly of political power by a landowning, aristocratic ruling class. It opened the corridors of power to the Nonconformist Protestant stratum which, during the century and a half of exclusion from political power, had built up a capitalist civil society which became irresistible.

"Nonconformism" had that name because it did not conform to the rituals of the Anglican State Church, but it was in its own life more stringently conformist than the State religion.

When it entered Parliament and established its ascendancy it left the State religion in place while legislating its own values. The tight structure of the heterosexual nuclear family were established, homosexuality was criminalised as a class struggle blow against aristocracy, and racism was systematised.

What liberalism has been destroying in recent times was what it built up in the great Liberal era of Queen Victoria.

For about half a century Liberalism was the ideology of *laissez-faire* capitalism. It was confident that British world dominance could be maintained by free trade, backed up by an unequalled power of manufacture, without the structure of Empire.

But then—coincidentally with the multitude of German petty kingdoms cohering into a national state, developing a strong capitalist economy, and realising that it needed a Navy to protect its foreign trade—British capitalist liberalism became imperialist in popular ideology.

The 1832 Reform was followed by others, chiefly those of the 1860s and 1880s. The latter brought the upper strata of the working class into the Parliamentary franchise.

By this time the dependence of the general standards of living in Britain on the proceeds of Empire had become unmistakable. Imperialism became the kind of mass ideology that Free Trade had been in the 1830s. In the 1890s the governing circles began to think that full democracy might be introduced on the ground of popular Imperialism without endangering the system.

The President recently made some remarks about the British Empire which provoked a reply from the Regius Professor of Theology at Oxford, Nigel Biggar (*President's View Of British Empire Is Incomplete*. Irish Times, March 3). The reply is in the nature of defensive apologetics, depending on quibbles of

the kind that seem to flourish in exclusive academic circles. He suggests that—

"the President has drunk too deeply at the well of theory, causing him to misread the diverse historical phenomena of the British empire in terms of seamlessly pejorative abstractions—such as 'domination', 'othering' and 'violence'. Yet reflection on the facts of political life suggests that every state must be in the business of dominating, if it is to perform its basic function of preserving the good of public order. And sometimes that domination must be violent... The Irish Free State discovered that early in its existence..."

What this means is that general statements should never be made because some particular detail can always be found which is at variance with them.

"Sometimes it [the British Empire] slaughtered the innocent, infamously at Amritsar in 1919, but its greatest violence was directed at European fascism, against which, from May 1940 to June 1941, it was the only military force in the field—except for Greece..."

We would have thought the greatest British act of violence in the Liberal era was the suppression of what Britain called the *Indian Mutiny*.

Its great military exploit in May/June 1940 was an escape from the battlefield, to which it had contributed a very small Army compared with France.

The War it declared in 1939 was a war on Germany, not on Fascism. During the preceding five years it had helped fascist Germany shrug off the restrictions imposed on it by the Versailles Treaty.

The British violence directed against Germany between the French Armistice of June 1940 and June 1941 was very slight indeed.

Greece was not at war with Fascism. It might itself have been described as a fascist country. It was at war with Italy, and was doing rather well at it until Britain pressed military support on it, which brought Germany into the war as an ally of Italy.

Fascist Spain and fascist Portugal had no British violence directed against them. Britain was very content to let them be.

The Regius Professor makes a very poor generalisation when he says that the greatest British act of violence was directed against Fascism. Surely he must have known that Churchill—who continued the war with minimal action for a year until Stalin was brought in to win it for Communism—had made a pilgrimage to Rome to praise Mussolini and Fascism.

And, as to "domination": what substantial comparison is there between the domination by the Free State in Southern Ireland in 1922-23 and the domination imposed by the British State, by acts of violence, on the other side of the world?

The Free State, when it went to war in June 1922, was not an established state structure defending itself against “grave threats” that had to be “fended off”. It consisted of a group within the Sinn Fein movement which made a deal with the British State under which it was to be established as the State power in the 26 Counties in exchange for suppressing the system of Republican Government established on the mandate of the 1918 Election.

It was not itself a State power. It was far from commanding a monopoly of force, which is usually taken to be the hallmark of a State. The main force of the Army that had obliged Britain to negotiate terms was against it. Without British backing it could not have hoped to establish its dominance over the country. But the reason it aligned itself with Britain against the Republican Army was to ward off the Imperial reconquest threatened by Britain if it did not do so.

The Treaty War was a really bad example for the Regius Professor to have brought up. It was not a war to defend a State. It was a war to construct a new State by means of naked force backed by an outside party. Its main task was the conquest of Munster.

The British State itself, securely established for more than two centuries, was founded on the Williamite wars, whose battles were fought in Ireland. It was consolidated politically under the Prime Ministership of Walpole in the early 18th century. Its great acts of violence thereafter (aside from the slaughter at Culloden) all had the purpose had the purpose of establishing British State dominance over others.

The word *domination* is applied by the Regius Professor both to the position of State authority over a willing domestic population, and the forcible subjugation of other populations around the world regardless of their willingness.

The *Irish Times* is scraping the barrel for kindred spirits these days.

*

An Irish Government independent of Britain and free of the Home Rule mentality was set up in January 1919. It did not possess dominant military power in Ireland. In the first instance it possessed no military power at all. It was merely a democracy.

Britain at the time was the greatest military power in the world. It had greatly expanded the territory of the Empire by war, had broken up rival Empires and created new states by mere act of will to serve its purposes. And it launched a democratic order in the world by creating the League of Nations.

It had resisted democracy until it could be made advantageous to the Imperial interest. And, having become democratic itself, it had to be master of the democracy which it sponsored. It was casuistically democratic and would not fall prey to a mere counting of heads.

In January 1919 it expected that it would be able to brush aside the Irish Government based on mere voting power. But, despite its victory over Germany, and the humiliating settlement it imposed on Germany, it had been severely damaged in its entrails by the stubbornness of the German resistance. And, in order to defeat the Germans, it had had to subordinate itself to the USA both financially and militarily.

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By 1922 it was clear that it was damaged goods in the new order of things in the world. As it was installing its Free State in Ireland in place of the Republic, it was also conceding Naval supremacy on the insistence of the United States, and ended its alliance with its Imperial ally in the Far East, Japan, at the demand of the United States.

And it was selling out the Greeks who it had encouraged to invade and annex parts of Turkey, and conceding independence to the Turkish rebels who had refused to comply with the Treaty imposed on the Sultan. It called on the Empire and Colonies to come to the aid of the Greeks. The call fell on deaf ears. The War Coalition, which had won a landslide victory in the 1918 Election, fell. An era of Imperial drift set in.

But Ireland had been brought to order. The merely democratic Republic was destroyed and elements were drawn from it to establish a British-authorised state in its place.

The Free State was a state established on British authority. It was established on British insistence. Without British support it would not, and could not, have been established. Its establishment aborted the process of establishing a state from Irish sources that had been going on for three years.

The Free State was a state structure established in the 26 Counties on British authority when Whitehall reckoned that direct British government of the region was no longer sustainable. It justified the British Government in all that it had been doing since January 1919 to suppress the elected Irish Government. And it continued the laws and arrangements of the British state system established in Ireland since the Union of 1800, and swept aside the developments towards an Irish legal system that had been going on since the Declaration of Independence in January 1919.

The construction of the Free State as an authoritative State force asserting a practical monopoly on the political use of violence began on 28th June 1922, when the headquarters of the Republican Army was shelled with borrowed British artillery by Michael Collins.

A Dail election for the territory of the 26 Counties had been held six days earlier. It was held under terms agreed by both parties, Treatyites and Anti-Treatyites, which had been authorised by the Dail on May 20th. The terms were that the two parties should contest

the election as a national Coalition and should form a Coalition Government in the new Dail when it met on July 1st.

Collins had defended his signing of the 'Treaty' with the argument that it gave freedom to achieve freedom. If he had carried through the election on the terms agreed by the Dail, he would have proved his case.

But, after the election and before the meeting of the new Dail, he made war—with British artillery—on the headquarters of the Republican Army. This was done on the insistence of Whitehall, whose purpose was to break up the Republican structure in Ireland.

The *de facto* construction of the Free State as an actual state—i.e., as a Government commanding an actual monopoly of the apparatus of force—began with the shelling of the Four Courts and continued with the military conquest of large areas of the country.

When the Dail elected in mid-June eventually met in September, the Free State conquest of the country was in full swing. Its first action was to break the terms on which the Election that returned it were held. Only members who took Treaty Oath were admitted to it. The actual State that was being established was, across a wide spectrum of affairs, a continuation of the administration established by Britain.

This fact is particularly relevant to the *Mother And Baby Homes Commission Of Investigation Final Report*.

[The comment which follows concerns a printed volume with the title given above. This volume was received in response to a request to the Department, on behalf of a survivor, for a copy of the Report. As we were about to go to print, we discovered that an Internet version of the Report is substantially different from the printed version. There has not been time to figure out how the two versions relate to each other. It was decided to go ahead with this version, which the Department chose to issue in response to a request, and possibly deal with the other version later. Editor.]

The Report has a table of Contents which tells us that there is a Chapter 3, dealing with *The Situation Prior To 1922*.

I looked up Chapter 3. But I couldn't find it. The Contents doesn't give page numbers. In fact there is no continuous

numbering through the volume of 314 pages. Different sections are numbered separately. The different sections in the actual volume are not listed in the Contents, and the five Parts and 36 Chapters listed in the Contents are not to be found in the text.

An Executive Summary tells us that "*The Commission's Terms of Reference cover the period 1922-1998*". That explains why there is nothing about the period prior to the formation of the Free State. But why the pretence in the Contents that there is a chapter about *The Situation prior to 1922*?

The Report does not describe the formation in 1922 of the system it is investigating—for the very good reason that it was not formed in 1922 but was a continuation of the British system.

The fact that the system investigated by the Commission was in existence prior to 1922 is obliquely acknowledged by a sentence in Paragraph 49 of the Executive Summary:

"In the 19th century Ireland there was intense competition between religious denominations to save the souls of orphaned, abandoned and destitute children including the children of unmarried mothers and this continued into the 20th century".

If the view of the Commission was that the system should not have existed, that it was an evil institution, then surely it should have traced it to its origins, instead of beginning with 1922, when it was already well established?

And it was the opinion of the Commission that the system should not have existed: "*The women and children should not have been in institutions*" (Para 15 of Executive Summary). If the women should not have been in the institutions, it follows that the institutions should not have existed.

Para 46 of the Executive Summary:

"*Church and State attitudes*. The Catholic Church did not invent Irish attitudes to prudent marriages or family respectability: however, it reinforced them through church teachings that emphasised the importance of pre-marital purity and the sexual dangers associated with dance halls, immodest dress, mixed bathing and other sources of 'temptation'. In the 1920s, the Irish Free State was a newly-independent nation which was determined to show the world that it was different; part of that difference related to the capacity to withstand the undesirable aspects

of modernity, including sexual licence and alien cultures. There was a strong alignment of views between church and State, resulting in legislation against contraception, divorce, censorship of cinema and publications that was bolstered by church sermons denouncing sexual immorality and the evils of modern society. Priests who denounced a man or woman who was held responsible for an extra-marital pregnancy were reinforcing wider social concerns with family lineage and the respectability of a community.”

A strong alliance was forged between the Free State and the Catholic Church because the founders of the Free State were obliged by Whitehall to make war on the Republican movement and that meant exorcising from themselves the Republican spirit which had driven the War of Independence. They turned to the Church for spiritual support against Republicans and made themselves Puritan Catholics in the process.

I was very puzzled by the novels of John McGahern in which men were the bearers of stern religious attitudes. I grew up in a culture in which men engaged in minimal compliance with religious doctrine, and it was women who tended to be religious beyond the sphere of customary routine. I did not understand at the time that male religiosity was a Free State characteristic. (The Republicans on whom the Free State made war were excommunicated, but they took it in their stride, changing nothing because of it.)

Film censorship was a British institution. Films shown in Ireland around 1950 all showed the British Film Censors’ authorisation. And the British Film Censor had established a relationship with Hollywood producers under which they cleared scripts with him (especially on Irish themes) before going into production.

Certainly there were sermons preached against dance halls, immodest dress and sexual dangers, but all of these things were very popular, and attempts at interference by the clergy to give effect to their sermons were not tolerated.

As to “alien cultures”, I cannot recall ever hearing a sermon on that theme—and, as a busy altar-boy in a rural parish, I heard a great many sermons.

When I moved from rural Ireland to Britain in the mid-1950s, it did not strike me that the English were in these matters significantly different from the

rural Irish—and Ireland was then predominantly rural.

Paragraph 45 says:

“*Fleeing to Britain*. Many pregnant women fled to Britain to protect this secrecy [of unmarried pregnancy], only to face the prospect of being returned to Ireland against their wishes.”

Who deported them? Any Irish born before 1948 were British in British law. And I never heard that the Irish decision to leave the Commonwealth in 1948 made all future Irish into aliens in Britain. If it was the case that Irish girls born after 1948, who fled to England with an unmarried pregnancy in the 1960s were deported, one would expect the Commission to give some details.

An Introduction to the Executive Summary says:

“Ireland was a cold harsh environment for many, probably the majority, of its residents during the earlier half of the period under review. It was especially cold and harsh for women. All women suffered serious discrimination.”

Well, maybe most of us were miserable but were duped into imagining that we weren’t! Or maybe it was the case that we ought to have felt miserable because of the circumstances we were in but we didn’t, and that now we should repent and try to make amends for having experienced life falsely by engaging in an exercise in retrospective existential revisionism of experience.

Sexual discrimination was built into human existence by nature.

The ideologically dominant view in the media just now is that throughout human existence women have been oppressed by men. The ground of that oppression is that it is a man’s world and women are not men.

The role of women has been to reproduce the species. Men are necessary to the process of reproduction, but their necessary part in it could be performed in a couple of minutes of the nine-month cycle of pregnancy and the many months of breast feeding that went into the production of a viable child.

And so men had time on their hands, and with that time they made the complicated world that we live in.

That world in its present mode of existence is the work of the WASPS, the White Anglo-Saxon Protestants. They claimed to be its creators, and the claim is well-founded. Globalist Capitalism is

the work of British Imperialism and its American colonial offspring. And, in its development, it somehow brought about in the increasing numbers of the women involved in it a fundamental discontent with the fact that they were women.

Charlotte Bronte, Yorkshire daughter of an Ulster Protestant clergymen, spent some time in Catholic Belgium as a governess. In the novels based on that experience Catholics are seen as being fat, stupid and happy.

Can happiness based on stupidity be authentic? Is mere contentment to be tolerated in a world that is there to be saved?

Margaret Thatcher, the first woman Prime Minister, abolished the official economic category of “*Housewife*” for women. It was demeaning for women to allow them to rest passively in that mediaeval condition. They must be active economic units, out in the market, producing and consuming in their own right. If they did not have the impulse of freedom in them, then they must be forced to be free. The higher purpose of life needs it, and the market needs it.

Women are not breeding animals after all. The decision whether to have a family, Mrs. Thatcher said, is only “a particular life-style choice”.

Of course it was not Mrs. Thatcher who undermined the family as the building-block of society. She only gave it the finishing touch. The family had become an object of suspicion long before her. And the English population had long ceased to depend on it. Bernard Shaw, in his capacity as social commentator, had noticed in the early twentieth century that, around the middle of the 19th century, the English population had stopped reproducing itself and that people had begun to be imported.

That is to say that the English population was kept up by the breeding activity of women in other societies. The Irish were the first source of supply. Then around 1950 the labour shortage was so acute that Enoch Powell, who is usually regarded as a white racist, went on a recruiting campaign for population in the West Indies. A generation later an Indian population, with which the Empire had sought to colonise East Africa, was rejected by a development of African nationalism and transferred to England.

People flooded into England but the population scarcely increased. It was like the Jordan and the Dead Sea. That appears to be the hallmark of modernity.

Ireland has become modern during the past half-century. And, from the modern vantage point, the whole of human history up to the present moment has been a story of misery and oppression for almost everybody, and within that general oppression men have exercised an oppression of women that is particularly hateful. What is to be done about it?

That oppression of women by men throughout history rests on the fact that women are not men and that the order of the world was made by men, while women kept the race in being.

That hateful relation was not experienced as hateful and oppressive throughout all that era. It is now experienced retrospectively as oppressive by an influential stratum of women within the centres of Imperialist Capitalism.

It appears that most women remain absorbed with the fascination of heterosexual relations and put up with many irritants because of it. That might be called the *Tiresias factor*. In ancient Greece Tiresias discovered that, in the matter of sex, considered by itself, women had the more satisfying part in it. He was blinded by Athena for blurting out what the goddesses had been keeping secret.

There has always been a stratum of women who found heterosexual relations distasteful. For a thousand years the Roman Church made provision for such women to have a part in social life, or to retire from society altogether, through Orders of Nuns of many different kinds. The Protestant Reformation took strong objection to the existence of "*nunneries*" and indulged in lurid fantasies about them which seem to have functioned both as propaganda and as an acceptable form of pornography, with the result that English society was without institutions for women whose inclinations were professional rather than domestic and reproductive.

The nuclear, bourgeois family was tightly structured by the rise to political power in the 19th century of Liberal Protestant Capitalist England—which is also known as *Victorian England*. Sexual aberrations which did not fit the ideal of the nuclear family were criminalised in a form of class struggle against the aristocratic ruling class that had made the State, and a transcendental struggle to establish mastery over Nature and its unheeding preoccupation with reproduction.

The nuclear family was the official

ideal of society and was treated in the influential literature of the time as being a virtually accomplished fact. But Nature and aristocracy would not lie down. What existed in reality was a far-reaching division of labour between housewife and whore. There were millions of virtuous housewives and millions of whores—and it began to be seen that there were complementary. And path-breakers in bourgeois literature began to suggest that housewifery was itself a form of prostitution—though not of whoredom, of course. Hints of this view entered polite society in some plays of Bernard Shaw.

The emancipation of women began the transition from ideal to reality with the 1918 *Reform Act*. By the late 1920s women had the vote at the same age as men, but it happened somehow that men kept on running the world.

This might be attributed to the fact that women were physically unsuited to do the work that men did and that this kept them in a secondary position. But the development of machines for labour discounted that difference, especially when combined with Artificial Intelligence.

Fifty years ago the B&ICO held a conference with the Gay Liberation Front. Feminists seemed to be dominant within the GLF, and they obviously felt that the position of women in society had hardly improved at all.

A forceful Dublin woman (who had been in the BICO for a while) explained that the imposition by nature of the burden of childbirth on women was the great obstacle to equality. Women would be oppressed until another mode of reproduction was invented. There was a good prospect of incubated babies being produced in the near future and that was when freedom for women would begin to be realised.

With the role of sex difference in reproduction being set aside by technology, there could be uniformity of men and women, and therefore equality in the other affairs of the world.

Andrea Dworkin saw the matter from a different angle. She was much taken with Tolstoy, both as the horrible example of the existing situation and the analyst of it. In *War And Peace* he comments that a well-bred young lady on the eve of marriage would be shocked to the core if she knew what was in store for her—which was rape. Then in the *Kreuzer Sonata* he expresses disgust with the sexual game that goes on shamelessly all the time between the sexes.

As far as I recall, he treats the overcoming of it as the moral Christian purpose. When it was overcome, the Christian mission in the world would have succeeded, and the human race would be saved and would cease to exist.

Dworkin's ideal figure in human history seems to have been Joan of Arc who, living among men, was not only sexless herself but exuded an aura which switched off the sex impulse in men.

Life is problematic for the stratum of women for whom doing what nature intended is repulsive and from whom the orderly structures for living apart from nature have been withdrawn. They must live within the world made by men and try to reorder it, but the more they assault it, and the more successful they are in that assault, the more sensitive they become to its durability, and the more oppressed they feel.

Laboratory reproduction has made little headway in half a century. The family has been more or less abolished in much of Europe. Population is kept up by imports from less progressive societies, who bring the family spirit with them and have to be indoctrinated out of it. A basic idea is that women are not sex objects and must not be looked at as if they were, but television programmes on British TV like *Naked Attraction* present them for the masses as sex objects to be studied in detail and assessed. And instruction is given on how to be *whoreish*.

This is England. But England today is Ireland tomorrow.

England established Puritan Liberalism as the official order of things. After a few generations, it began to chafe under that order and set about breaking it down. It is now trying to reconstruct some other order of life, guided by some incoherent ideal, a contradictory ideal whose emphasis changes from week to week.

England constructed the legal order of things in Ireland in its era of Liberal/Puritan dominance of the world. Within this order of things, the Irish population reconstructed itself socially out of the morass to which it had been reduced by the wars, conquests and punitive settlements of Elizabeth, Cromwell, and William, and asserted itself against England.

The order of things described as "*cold and harsh*" by the Commission Report regarding unmarried mothers was established by the British Government: a fact which the Com-

mission was too timid even to mention.

Once Irish national development was resumed by applying that order in a particular way, it was not experienced as “cold and harsh” but as purposeful.

The people took themselves in hand, using the vehicle of Papal Catholicism, as opposed to Gaelic Catholicism, in order to survive to live again in the harsh world of Manchester Capitalism in its hey-day.

That approach was continued after Independence, very high-mindedly, by the Treaty regime. It began to be amended in some degree by the anti-Treaty regime but the weight of a system established by law and practice over many generations is not easily shifted, and there was no serious popular discontent with it. Effective independence was not gained until 1938. Then the application of that independence to the World War was absorbing.

I was out of joint with prevailing opinion on the point of religion all through my teens, and was certainly not predisposed in favour of things as they were, and I know that the Commission’s generalisation that the country was “cold and harsh” for the majority was wildly off the mark. (At least that is not how it was experienced—and can it have been the case if it was not experienced so?)

The generalisation seems to be a deduction from the fact that births outside marriage were described as *illegitimate*. The Commission Report puts the word in quotation marks, suggesting that there is actually no such thing as an *illegitimate birth*, and that the order of things in which this inhuman classification was used was itself illegitimate.

Well, while nature in its apparently blind drive for reproduction might appear to be in tune with the Christian injunction to be *like the birds of the air to give no thought for the morrow*, one finds that there is actually a strict order of things in nature, maintained by devices which have been discarded in the human, and that powerful human societies have usually found artificial ways of producing order, despite the freedom into which nature has thrown the human.

“We multiplied by neglect and plenty like cattle on the shores of South America”—those are the words of an Irish Catholic writer of the early 19th century, describing Irish society as it emerged

from a couple of centuries of disruptive interference by Britain, and from the perverting influence of the Penal order of the colonial Parliament. (“Plenty” was supplied by the rackrented potato patch.)

That is pre-Famine Ireland. It went under in the Famine. A new order of things came out of the Famine, inspired by Young Ireland and Carlyle, and supplemented by Cardinal Cullen—the order of things deplored by the Commission.

But for that new order of things, native Ireland would probably have withered and the colony would have become Ireland.

But the new order was not universally applied in the way described by the Commission. The boy I knew best when I was growing up was illegitimate, but nobody told me he was. It was only much later that I understood that he was and that when a nickname was not used (as nicknames usually were) two different surnames were used. His mother was unmarried but she sang in the local choir, and sang in a very noticeable way, always slightly out of tune. There was another unmarried mother in a Labourer’s Cottage about a mile to the west, which I also understood later. And, in the mid-1950s, there was a bit of agitation over the award of a Labourer’s Cottage to another unmarried mother about two miles to the east. That was the only incident I knew of concerning illegitimacy. The protest was over-ruled. She got the cottage.

Then, very much later, I got to know that a daughter of a small farmer, who lived at the eastern end of the County and rarely visited, and who was something like my third cousin, had been transferred out of the area and arrangements made for her under some pretext, because she was unmarried and pregnant. When I asked why she had to leave, when the unmarried mother of the boy I mentioned sang in the choir, it was explained that it was a matter of pretensions to middle class respectability on the part of her family.

I understand that particular arrangements for particular cases are no longer tolerable in Ireland. The English fashion of uniformity has superseded it. Haughey’s “Irish solution for an Irish problem” is ridiculed. The practical meaning of that is that there must be English solutions. But the Irish arrangement of things now condemned

in the Commission Report is an English arrangement—which the Commission did not have the courage, or the intellectual conscience, to say.

*

The *Irish Times* on 20th March carried a long extract from a book by its Berlin correspondent, Derek Scally, which it describes as “a memoir of a Catholic childhood in Ireland. Derek Scally grapples with the country’s self-image as the ‘most oppressed people ever’...” It seems that the book is entitled *The Best Catholics In The World*.

I first heard the phrase “the most oppressed people ever”, or *MOPE*, in Belfast around 1990. It seemed to come from Smart Ales in the University. It certainly was not the “self-image” in Slieve Luacra. Nor did I ever hear it said that the Irish were the best Catholics in the world. That could hardly be the opinion of people who let the priest be denounced during Mass in the Church on the anniversary of the Decree of Excommunication issued by the Bishop against the anti-Treatyites during the Treaty War. The spirit of it was that they were still Catholics *despite* the English and would remain Catholics *despite* the Bishops.

Scally does not cite these two phrases from his own Catholic childhood somewhere—I don’t know where, as his biography has been removed from the Internet. He takes them from Liam Kennedy, a Tipperary Catholic who has become an anti-Catholic lecturer in Queen’s, Belfast, and has failed to notice that Northern Ireland is a region of the British state which is excluded from the democratic political life of the British state, and that undemocratic government has consequences.

And both of them seem to be entirely unaware of the great dispute amongst Catholics between 1818 and 1828 over how the Church in Ireland was to be governed, the Veto Controversy, which had far-reaching consequences.

About thirty years ago a Habsburg princess married into the English aristocracy and was interviewed about Austrian Catholicism on Raidió Éireann. She tried to explain that Austrian Catholics did not think about religion. Austrians were Catholics and that was all there was to say.

Catholicism in Ireland would probably be in that healthy condition if the Vetoists had won. And Slieve Luachra in my time there was very much like that.

Further comment must wait on the appearance of Scally’s book.

*

Jack Lane

Trinity Seeks Special Treatment —Again!

"Trinity seeks exclusion from governance reforms"

Trinity College Dublin is seeking private legislation to exclude it from sweeping Government reforms aimed at strengthening the accountability of higher education institutions.

In an unpublished submission to Government, it says planned changes threaten to undermine its autonomy, damage its academic standing and end its tradition of "collegiate governance" which has served the college well for over 400 years... Trinity said it has a distinctive status under law, with laws governing its relationship with the State stretching back to 1592"

(Irish Times 25.3.21).

What unmitigated nonsensical arrogance!

Have Trinity boffins not noticed that state matters have changed somewhat since 1592? Who is qualified to make a judgement now on "*laws governing its relationship with the State stretching back to 1592*"? It's surprising they have not suggested that the Privy Council is not asked to come back and intervene.

If they are seeking to re-establish "*its relationship with the state*" of 1592 perhaps they should also attempt to exclude themselves from having to pay any taxes or other "*exactions*" as was originally granted them by the Tudor State. That was a nice perk to begin with. Its task then was quite clear—to make Ireland Protestant. It failed.

It was set up as college, which it remains, to be part of a university for Ireland. It failed. It remains a college of a non-existent University. It was expected, and should have attained, the standing of Oxford and Cambridge colleges but it failed in this also and became '*the silent sister*' because it was so academically hopeless.

It tried to preserve the Penal Laws by passing the last one for itself in 1808, to help preserve its '*unique status*'. It considered itself so unique that it asserted the right to defy the laws of the land with its own laws. That is exactly what it is proposing to do now with the Government's proposals.

It failed to preserve the Penal Laws.

Its failures were not due to any lack of resources. As well as the start-up perk of no taxes etc it was showered with

British State support and the main instrument was the land it acquired through the Plantations and confiscations. Beginning with its prime site on the ruins of the Monastery of All Hallows.

It acquired land of 200,000 acres in total, approximately the size of County Louth. And all the rental incomes from these acres, through a pyramid of middle men with the usual rack-renting that was bred by this system. This helped hide the extent of its lands. Daniel O'Connell was one such middle man.

It got a special deal under the Wyndham Act that gave it 23.9 times the annual rent in compensation—and a 12% bonus for good measure. An enormous sum in total and a quite out of the ordinary deal, compared with those made with other landowners. And there were many and varied donations to its coffers.

Yet it was an academic failure, a dud, to the extent that there were only 183 students attracted in 1902 because anyone from its 'catchment area', rich and serious about an education, went to Oxbridge.

The Government decided something had to be done about this and, as part of its policy of '*killing Home Rule with kindness*', it proposed a University structure for Ireland in the Bryce Report of 1907 that would have TCD as a constituent college, to cater for its Protestant ethos, along with UCD for the Catholic interest.

The Catholic interest was quite happy and more than keen to be on a level playing field with TCD. But TCD violently opposed it on sectarian grounds. Perish the thought! It was comparing apples and oranges, to put it benignly, being treated the same as Catholics! The idea was abhorrent and they succeeded in squashing the proposal.

The present objection to the Government plans has the same undertone—We have the right to be responsible only to ourselves—dressed up in the fashionable terminology of collegiality. We are not as others. We are special. Period.

The first real setback came with the *Articles of Agreement* in 1922. Effectively Lloyd George forgot or ignored any pleadings about their self-importance. He said it

had "*escaped his memory*". And he was not a forgetful man. The Free State did not have any soft spot for it—particularly Fine Gael which was ensconced in UCD and availed of every opportunity to ignore any special pleadings from TCD, and promoted UCD. This came to a head in the Coalition after WWII, when Fine Gael made it clear that TCD would be treated the same as the other Colleges. If that would not satisfy it could fall down for all FG cared.

The Provost, A. J. McConnell, complained that this was literally happening and people were in danger of being injured by falling masonry! So help was needed and he made an appeal to his mutual mathematically-minded pen-pal, de Valera, and the latter passed the problem on to his Minister for Education, Sean Moylan who, being the kind hearted man he was, visited the place with McConnell and with his contractor's eye appreciated the problem and said that TCD "*could not be allowed to fall down.*"

And, as McConnell joyfully recalled, the Government money stated coming in, the scaffolding went up, year after year, and TCD survived thanks to this man, Moylan. He, who had put the fear of God into every loyalist in the Dail debate, vowing to wipe them all out if necessary, if they resumed their war on the Republic—and he was quite prepared to die in the effort.

TCD should have a plaque to Moylan. Instead, its late star of the History Department, Peter Hart, branded him a bigot in his infamous book on Irish history and was praised to high heaven by a host of TCD luminaries. If Fianna Fail had respect for it history, it should make such a plaque part of any negotiations with TCD.

Donagh O'Malley tried to do the sensible things and merge both TCD and UCD but again it did not happen due to TCD's efforts, and to its delight.

The present Government should not repeat the mistakes of the past in their endeavour to have proper accountability by Universities today. These cannot be a law unto themselves. They eagerly took the huge benefit of public sector pensions a few years ago, and that alone entitles the Government to have them accountable. A few years ago TCD made all its lecturers into Professors. No doubt that alone added to the pension bill and to the Government's costs. Trinity should not have the sole authority to do such a thing—in which it no doubt had unanimous collegiate support!

The idea of TCD having '*private legislation*' for itself should not be tolerated for a moment by any Government worthy of the name of Government.

Stephen Richards

George Borrow

A Singular Man

This is the title of Simon Barnes's biography of Philippe Edmonds, the Middlesex and England spin bowler of the 1980s, whose nonchalant Public School demeanour disguised a ruthless streak. For those interested, his wife Frances Edmonds wrote a highly diverting account of a Test series in the West Indies, *Another Bloody Tour*.

The singularity equally applies to George Borrow (1803-81), scholar, linguist, tramp, tinker, missionary, Hispanophile, honorary Gypsy, and, it must be said, fantasist. Even in an age of eccentrics he surely stands alone. I think there was a time when, even if people didn't much read Borrow, he at least was the sort of man that people knew about, could identify in the literary firmament, whereas he's now lost in the lumber room. Which is a pity, I think.

As far as I know, there have been no biographies since Edward Thomas's one of around 1910, which is extremely good. At that time Thomas (he of Adlestrop fame) was himself living a somewhat Borrowian existence, churning out reviews and biographies for a subsistence living; and of course in 1915 at the advanced age of 38 he left his wife and children behind and volunteered for the trenches, from which he never returned, dying at Arras in 1917.

Thomas expresses a fitting modesty as to his ability to rise to the faithful depiction of such a wilful, Protean and at times contradictory character. One could wish that more biographers would follow his example and not use their subject as a vehicle for self-promotion. This is how he begins:

"The subject of this book was a man who was continually writing about himself whether openly or in disguise. He was by nature inclined to thinking about himself and when he came to write he naturally wrote about himself."

Just as Samuel Johnson remarked that a man who neglects to mind his stomach will mind nothing else, I think equally that, if we're not interested in ourselves, we will find it difficult to

persuade anybody to be interested in what we say about anything else; which is not at all to say that we should obsess endlessly about ourselves. Borrow's fascination with himself was matched by his need to get away from himself, and his insatiable curiosity about the histories of his chance companions.

What Is Truth?

His literary fame rested on four books, *Zincali* (or *The Gypsies of Spain*, which I haven't read), *The Bible in Spain*, *Lavengro*, and *The Romany Rye*. Later there came a volume of linguistic researches into the Romany language, shortly after superseded, much to his chagrin; and in 1852 *Wild Wales*, a copy of which ended up in our house from my Welsh forebears, but by that time Borrow had turned into a Victorian literary lion, and some hardening of the arteries seems to have taken place, though there are some brilliant passages.

If contemporary accounts and a portrait are to be believed, Borrow was a man with a striking physical presence. Very tall for that period at about six feet two, olive-skinned ("swarthy, like a Gypsy", said his father in disgust), and with a thick head of hair that had gone spectacularly white while he was still in his twenties, he tended to stand out. A slight cast in one eye completed the effect.

"An eye like Mars, to threaten and command" says Hamlet of his deceased father. Borrow is very careful to tell us that in the course of his travels, depending on the context, he was assumed to be a Catholic priest or even bishop, a Jewish rabbi, or a Gypsy chief, on account of his air of natural mastery. Yet there's something slightly disquieting about the portrait too, a hint of self-doubt or inner disturbance.

In *Lavengro* (the master of tongues), Borrow takes us through the earlier part of his life. While I was expecting the successor volume, *Romany Rye*, to take the story a lot further forward, the concentration is still on the same rela-

tively brief period of his life, maybe no more than six months or so. I also found the successor volume, while still very readable, to be lacking in some of the freshness and perhaps believability of *Lavengro*. But this is where we encounter a problem: Borrow is that post-modern character, the unreliable narrator. In later life he got very annoyed at the suggestion that his biography was fictionalised, but even more annoyed if it was accepted as a truthful account.

It's certainly very difficult to identify episodes that are clearly invented, especially in *Lavengro*. The fact and the fiction appear to be so artfully blended that it's hard to tell where one ends and the other begins. Some readers may be familiar with the Sam Mendes movie, *Big Fish*, where the most outrageous yarns of the narrator's father turn out, after his passing, to have been in a strange sense true. It would be fair to say that Borrow plays with the truth, plays fast and loose indeed with dates, and conflates disparate events, and he always turns out to be the hero of his own narrative, but sure that's just as it should be.

Even leaving aside the Gypsy elements, Borrow's autobiographical meanderings evoke a world that's almost mythical to us now, the England of the post-Napoleonic era, with its coaching inns, horse fairs, conmen, prize fighters, hack writers (as the young Borrow was), eccentric country gentlemen, and the open roads frequented by those living from hand to mouth. It was a world inhabited by real men who, Cobbett-like, settled their quarrels with their fists, and drank beer rather than tea or brandy.

The two autobiographical volumes were brought out partly as a result of popular demand, for Borrow's reputation was already made by *The Bible in Spain*. They were carefully-crafted productions, so the apparent mistakes, omissions and additions must be held to be deliberate. It was also a case of a middle-aged man, with a certain position in society, reviewing his impetuous and impoverished youth. According to Thomas, this dissonance is compounded by Borrow's prodigious memory. It wasn't that he had forgotten anything; on the contrary, his memory was just too good.

This would be a poisoned chalice for any of us to have to carry through life. It meant too that authorial selection became a horrendous problem.

It's greatly to Borrow's credit that he tones down the weirdness of his narrative

so little. It wasn't what his readers were expecting of a sometime representative of the Bible Society, which explains the initially bewildered and disappointed reaction of the critics.

A Wandering Star

An irritating trait from the first page is Borrow's mindless coyness about the most basic facts of his life. This is the opening sentence of *Lavengro*:

"On an evening of July, in the year 18 - , at East D - , a beautiful little town in a certain district of East Anglia, I first saw the light."

This must be about the least prepossessing opening sentence in all literature. And so it goes on, with some locations in his childhood journeyings being plainly described while other towns, even quite major ones, are veiled in these pointless initials. Even William Cowper, buried in the crypt of Norwich Cathedral, is described as "*England's sweetest bard*".

The mysterious East Anglian town was in fact East Dereham, not too far from Norwich and, insofar as Borrow could be said to come from anywhere, I suppose it would be Norfolk and Norwich. His older brother John, who was apparently by far the more promising of the two boys, followed their father into the army, leaving with the rank of lieutenant; became a painter, studying in Rome; but died in Mexico in 1834 while working for a mining company.

The father, Thomas, of yeoman stock, from Liskeard, Cornwall, rose to the rank of an army captain, and came to marriage and fatherhood late in life. His much younger wife, Ann Perfrement, was of farming stock, local to East Dereham, but her name was a mark of her Huguenot descent, her ancestors having migrated to England from Caen, Normandy.

If Borrow lived under a wandering star, it may be partly because, like Lee Marvin, he was born under one. This was the Napoleonic era, and regiments were being moved around various camps all over the British Isles, as indeed we read about in Jane Austen: Hythe in Kent (also associated with Elizabeth Bowen), Pett in Sussex, Winchester, Peterborough, Edinburgh: these were some of the places where the young Borrow fetched up, with scant opportunity to put down roots. We'll come later to his year-long Irish sojourn, in Clonmel and Templemore, in his early teens.

Inevitably Borrow's narrative casts a glamour over his early years, signify-

ing that even then, like Jose Mourinho, he was "*the special one*". Vacant and listless as a small child, slow to speak and to learn to read, but yet an *enfant savant*. An aged Jewish pedlar going about his business demanded to know "*who the child was, sitting in the sun; the maid replied that I was her mistress's youngest son, a child weak here, pointing to her forehead*". But the Jew rebukes her, declaring that he has all the look of a prophet's child. He then takes a closer look at the marks the young George is scratching on the dust:

"All of a sudden he started back, and grew white as a sheet; then, taking off his hat, he made some strange gestures to me, cringing, chattering and showing his teeth, and shortly departed, muttering something to himself about 'holy letters' and talking to himself in a strange tongue."

This is tremendous theatre, and there may even be some vestige of truth in it, but it chiefly serves to establish Borrow's credentials as an uncanny character. Similarly we see him handling a viper as a three-year-old and, like the Apostle Paul, suffering no hurt. He later took to taming vipers himself, like the old viper-hunter he met at Norman Cross in Huntingdonshire; so, when he met a Gypsy couple, their attitude towards him veered from initial suspicion and contempt to something like adulation, when he produced a tame viper from under his shirt.

That was also his first meeting with Jasper Petulengro, otherwise (perhaps) Ambrose Smith, their son, who was a few years older than Borrow, and who drifts in and out of his life and narrative, and skilfully used as its integrating element. The clan is just about to strike camp, leaving Borrow gazing up the road after them: "*A strange set of people*", said I at last. "*I wonder who they can be*".

But quite some time elapsed before he could find out. It wasn't long after that that he was transported to Edinburgh, clutching his Lilly's *Latin Grammar*, the importance of which had been so impressed on him by his father that he learned it off by heart, thus confusing the means with the end. At the High School he acquired what was called in those days "*a tolerable proficiency*" in Latin, as well as in the despised Scotch language of the natives, and some notion of how to look after himself in the constant tribal wars between schools. For a not dissimilar heart-stopping account of

the violent Edinburgh schoolboy scene thirty years previously see Lockhart's *Life of Scott*.

The Protestant Nation

For all that, one gets the sense that it was Borrow's Irish sojourn that formed him imaginatively, and perhaps contributed most to the direction of his future life. His curiosity about people and his receptivity to atmosphere and influences found ample outlet in Tipperary. In one sense Borrow was a product of his era, Anglican because he was English: as Sellar and Yeatman point out, the English can only really ever be C of E. So his attachment to the Established Church was simply one facet of the no-nonsense English *persona* that he liked, at times, to inhabit. His ferocious anti-Catholicism is something else, which we'll come back to.

Southern Ireland around 1815 was a heavily garrisoned land. England was full of troops too, though they existed as a more integral part of society. Army numbers were the greatest they had ever been; of which the percentage of Irish was particularly high. In the years following the country was full of paid-off unemployed soldiers, many of them injured, and often with nowhere to go but the workhouse.

Not only was Ireland a militarised society, it was still an Ascendancy society. The tub-thumping Protestant chauvinism of the owner of their lodging house in Clonmel seems to have been too much, even for Borrow:

"It did my heart good when I saw your honour ride in at the head of all those fine fellows, real Protestants, I'll engage, not a Papist among them, they are too good-looking and honest-looking for that. So I no sooner saw your honour at the head of your army, with that handsome young gentleman holding by your stirrup [Borrow] than I said to my wife, Mistress Hyne, who is from Londonderry, 'God bless me,' said I, 'what a truly Protestant countenance, what a noble bearing, and what a sweet young gentleman... it would be no more than decent and civil to run out and welcome such a father and son coming in, at the head of such a Protestant military'... And now I have you in the house, and right proud I am to have ye one and all; one, two, three, four true Protestants, no Papists here, and I have made bold to bring up a bottle of claret which is now waiting behind the door; and when your honour and your family have dined, I will make bold too to bring up Mistress Hyne, from

Londonderry, to introduce me to your honour's lady, and then we'll drink to the health of King George, God bless him; to the 'glorious and immortal' — to Boyne water—to your honour's speedy promotion to be Lord Lieutenant, and to the speedy downfall of the Pope and Saint Anthony of Padua".

Borrow's father was assured that his son need no longer waste his time fishing and gathering rosehips:

"Now we have a school here, where he can learn the most elegant Latin, and get an insight into the Greek letters... and where, moreover, he will have an opportunity of making the acquaintance of all the Protestant young gentlemen of the place, the handsome, well-dressed young men whom your honour sees in the church on Sundays... for it is no Papist school, though there may be a Papist or two there—a few poor farmers' sons from the country, with whom there is no necessity for your honour's child to form any acquaintance, at all, at all."

But the pleasures of this desirable society appear to have palled with young Borrow. Just as in later life he liked to sit under hedges talking to Gypsies, so in Ireland there seemed to be more fun hanging out with the Catholics. As for the young gentlemen, he comments waspishly, "*with whatever éclat they might appear at church on a Sunday, did not assuredly exhibit to much advantage in the schoolroom on the week-days, either with respect to clothes or looks*".

The Tongues Of Men And Angels

It was from one of these poor farmers' sons, Murtagh, that Borrow got his tuition in the language, the same Murtagh who, in typical Borrowian fashion, makes a much later and improbable appearance in his life, as recounted in *Romany Rye*. Having been singled out to be educated for a priest, young Murtagh is slowly going mad for want of a pack of playing cards. So, the deal is done and he agrees to teach Borrow in exchange for the cards.

Borrow had already been making a habit of calling randomly into "*the cabins of the peasantry*" just so he could sit at the corner of the hearth and listen to the sounds of this new tongue. Why the fascination?

"First of all, and principally, I believe, the strangeness and singularity of its tones; then there was something mysterious and uncommon connected with its use. It was not a school lan-

guage, to acquire which was considered an imperative duty... nor was it a drawing-room language, drawled out occasionally, in shreds and patches, by the ladies of generals and other great dignitaries... Nothing of the kind, but a speech spoken in out-of-the-way, desolate places... Such were the points connected with the Irish, which first awakened in my mind the desire of acquiring it; and by acquiring it I became, as I have already said, enamoured of languages."

So, sensing the social pressure to conform, he responded characteristically by going off in a different direction. While he was competent at his Classics, his heart veered away from their well-tended gravel paths and from the learned professions to which they ineluctably led. Irish on the other hand was the wild forbidden fruit. Ireland for Borrow is a romantic land of mists, ruined castles, and aged sinister crones; and the place which bred in him not only the passion for language but also the gift of horsemanship, even bareback riding, a gift which stood to him at various stages in his later career.

Later on he puts into the mouth of his father the kind of criticism which is really a back-handed compliment to himself:

"What is he fitted for, even were it in my power to provide for him? God help the child! I bear him no ill-will, on the contrary, all love and affection; but I cannot shut my eyes; there is something so strange about him! How he behaved in Ireland! I sent him to school to learn Greek, and he picked up Irish!... The boy is not to be blamed for the colour of his face, nor for his hair and eyes; but then, his ways and manners! —I confess I do not like them, and that they give me no little uneasiness—I know that he kept very strange company when he was in Ireland; people of evil report, of whom terrible things were said—horse-witches and the like. I questioned him once or twice upon the matter, and even threatened him, but it was of no use; he put on a look, as if he did not understand me, a regular Irish look, just such a one as those rascals assume when they wish to appear all innocence and simplicity, and they full of malice and deceit all the time."

Shades Of The Prison House

Norwich by the end of the following year provided quite a contrast, with its Grammar School, where James Brooke, the future Rajah of Sarawak, was one of

his contemporaries. But here once again, as Thomas remarks, it was evident that Borrow was fond of study but not of school. He went for private tuition in French and Italian, was taught how to box by the celebrated prize fighter John Thurtell, later to be hanged; and, for the rest, roved around the countryside with rod and gun. He renewed his acquaintance too with Jasper Petulengro, and is said to have stained his face to darken it further.

He relates that it was around this time that he was first afflicted with acute depression, something which was to plague him periodically for the rest of his life, and may have contributed to his increasing carnaptiousness in middle age. It has been speculated that he was projecting his own internal struggles on some of the characters he came across on his travels. There is for example the gentleman with the "*touching malady*": that is, he had to go round the house touching certain objects in sequence, behaviour which would be now classed less picturesquely as OCD (Obsessive-compulsive disorder). This was one of Samuel Johnson's idiosyncrasies too, I think in his case involving hitting fence posts with his stick on his way home. It's said that in later life in his regular walk there was a tree that Borrow had to go out of his way to touch. Also there is the attractive figure of the Welsh Methodist, Michael Williams, who saved Borrow's life after he'd been poisoned by the witch-like Mrs. Herne. But Michael too is battling demons, being hag-ridden by the fear of having committed the sin against the Holy Ghost.

Borrow's troughs of despair, self-loathing and futility, leading to what the psychiatrists call "*suicidal ideation*", seem hard to reconcile with the rest of his life, particularly with the intrepid horseman Don Jorge who is the hero of *The Bible in Spain*, impervious to heat and cold and assuming effortless command of every situation.

But the episodes of severe depression are essential to an understanding of Borrow, I believe. A sedentary life as an articulated solicitor's clerk in Norwich under the kindly tutelage of a Mr. Simpson, or later in London as a poorly-paid, if paid at all, hack writer, was never going to dispel the clouds hanging over him. Emotionally and psychologically, he needed action as the rest of us need oxygen. He may have left Norwich for London to seek his fortune but he eventually leaves London for the open road, to save his soul and his sanity.

Law's Labours Lost

Borrow's legal career seems to have involved remarkably little commitment to learning the ropes of his intended profession, intended by his father anyway. Instead he devoted most of his time during office hours to learning Danish and Welsh.

"I have ever loved to be as explicit as possible," he tells us, somewhat implausibly, "on which account, perhaps, I never attained to any proficiency in the law, the essence of which is said to be ambiguity".

As for the Welsh, salvation came in the form of the late mediaeval poet, Ab Gwilym, whose mystique inspired him to persevere with this admittedly difficult language. In doing so he discovered links with the Irish, "*and I soon found they were cognate dialects, springing from some old tongue which perhaps itself had sprung from one much older*". He writes of the—

"venerable words, highly expressive, showing the wonderful power and originality of the Welsh, in which, however, they were no longer used in common discourse, but were relics, precious relics, of the first speech of Britain, perhaps of the world".

Borrow would never have made it as an academic philologist, one of those who "*edit and annotate the lines*", but he underlines for us that, without enthusiasm and a sense of wonder, all academic study is a waste of time. Not surprisingly, his ten thousand lines of Ab Gwilym translated into English verse didn't find any takers among the London publishers. Borrow's later spoken Welsh was fluent but execrable in pronunciation.

His Danish explorations came about partly by chance and partly due to a half-remembered episode as a small boy in Hythe, when a sexton showed him and his brother round an ossuary full of huge skulls of the old Danes. The numinous legacy of the Danes had then been reinforced by the stories of the Irish peasantry, in which the Danes loomed large and superhuman. And then he was gifted an old volume in board covers by an elderly couple who were clients of the practice, which they had in turn been given by a Danish sea captain. This turned out to be a collection of Danish epic ballads.

Borrow, lacking any Grammar or dictionary, despaired of making anything of the Old Danish, with its Gothic script, till he thought of procuring a Danish Bible to use as his comparator. With this

key to hand, "*I found that the language which I was studying was by no means a difficult one, and in less than a month I deemed myself able to read the book*", despite its more ancient dialect; and from that it was a short step to English verse translation.

Darkness On The Edge Of Town

Somehow or other, it's not clear how, Borrow at this time was drawn into Norwich's intellectual and philosophical circle, whose doyen was William Taylor, "*the Anglo-Germanist*", translator of Goethe and Lessing, born in 1765. True to form, Borrow neglects to identify him by name in *Lavengro*. Taylor came from a prosperous background but, by the age of 26, he had withdrawn his capital from the family manufacturing interests, and from that time forth was able to devote himself to his literary pursuits.

He represented the end point of a strand in English Nonconformity. The successors of the ejected clergy of 1662, with their sadly depleted flocks, in many cases embarked on the Long March, what Spurgeon, another East Anglian, termed the *Downgrade*: they were successively Arians, Socinians, Unitarians, Deists, and, from there they passed out into the void. These men were certainly influenced by philosophical currents from continental Europe, but their journey can't be laid at the door of German liberal theology, which was a later phenomenon, designed to make the Christian religion respectable. The English rationalists had no thought of that: they were atheists, albeit of a Protestant stamp.

"But was not Gibbon an enemy of the Christian faith", asks the young Borrow.

"Why, no, he was rather an enemy to priestcraft, so am I; and when I say the philosophy of the Bible is in many respects unsound, I always wish to make an exception in favour of that part of it which contains the life and sayings of Jesus of Bethlehem [sic]... for with his followers and their dogmas I have nothing to do. Of all historic characters Jesus is the most beautiful and the most heroic... the worship of spirits is synonymous with barbarism—it is mere fetish; the savages of West Africa are all spirit-worshippers. But there is something philosophic in the worship of the heroes of the human race."

This was the well that Borrow drank from, and it probably intensified his pre-existing sense of horror, of being alone in an impersonal universe. Even if he had enjoyed private means, or if he

had managed to make serious money as a hack author in London, he would still have needed some displacement activity, something to abstract him from the relentlessly churning windmills of his mind. He needed to get out among real people and listen to their stories.

I think he also kept some part of himself in reserve. The atheism of Taylor didn't quite have the effect of converting him to atheism, just as his later association with the Bible Society doesn't seem to have made him quite into an evangelical Christian. He was certainly stimulated by the society in which he moved at different periods of his life, but the influence doesn't seem to have extended to the deeper recesses of his heart and mind.

Before we launch into Borrow's travels among the Gypsies I'd like to say something more about his refusal to "*get on in the world*". Once again we're given a clue to this by words he puts into his father's mouth: "*I am afraid that the child is too condescending to his inferiors, whilst to his superiors he is apt to be unbending enough*". And there follows a story about how the young Borrow scandalised an archdeacon by comparing Ovid unfavourably with the Welsh poet Ab Gwilym (the only saving grace being that it wasn't an Irish poet who had been so exalted!).

If this is a failing, and I think it undoubtedly is, it's a rather pardonable one, to chafe at authority and be at pains to be kind towards those from whom we can't expect any reward. Of course there's an element of pride too: the "*clients*" of a Roman noblemen weren't clients as we know them, but dependants or hangers-on, to whom he was able to dispense favours from time to time, which made him feel good. Borrow likes the idea of being a celebrated figure, first among the Gypsies, and, then later, the Spanish peasantry. He doesn't like the idea of being one of the "*clientes*".

As discussed above, there was also a psychological necessity for Borrow to get away from his desiccated life, to make his fortune by getting out of London.

The Third Way

It seems to me though that the overwhelming factor in Borrow's exodus to the country was his urge to walk away from responsibility, from the world of normal work, to escape from the machine. In our day even the hedge

fund managers and investment bankers have to earn their bread by the sweat of their brow. It's a dirty job that imperils your soul, but someone has to do it. Borrow shied away from the commercial structures of his day, the drudgery and the rewards, though it meant dispensing with the flowers of humane studies that bloomed on top of this manure heap. He didn't want to be at the top, the bottom, or in the middle of it. The unbending social structures of late Georgian England were equally stifling. Borrow wasn't quite a gentleman, and lacked the money to pass for one.

Unknowingly, Borrow also takes his place in the line of English eccentrics who have repudiated the system. The more orderly and stratified a society is, the more it will produce dissidents. That explains why Swiss rebels are often very rebellious indeed, and why quite a few Dutch and Germans have settled in places like Mayo, because nobody can tell them what to do.

But I think that, in this flight from responsibility, Borrow was quintessentially English. This is discussed at length by Humphrey Carpenter, the biographer, in his wonderful study of children's literature, *Secret Gardens*. The Victorian child in particular was believed to be an innocent creature, and childhood was The Golden Age, which indeed was the title of an early book by Kenneth Grahame. The Child hadn't yet eaten the corrupting fruit of the Tree of Knowledge.

The adults, who had done, yearned to get back to a world without consequences. Peter Pan, the *Alice* books, A.A. Milne, all bear witness to this. The *genre* perhaps found its apogee in Kenneth Grahame's *tour de force*, *The Wind in the Willows*, which for some reason didn't feature in my childhood environment around Kells and Connor.

The most attractive facet of Borrow's character can be discerned in the carefree and adventurous Ratty, but one also sees something of him in the bumptious Toad, and in gruff, old-fashioned Badger.

I'll close with this from the ballad of *True Thomas*, Thomas the Rhymer, who while lying on Huntly Bank encounters a mysterious lady, whom he mistakenly takes for the Blessed Virgin, but she clears up that confusion and announces herself instead as the Queen of Elfland:

"O see ye na that braid braid road,
That lies across the lily-leven?
That is the path o' wickedness,
Though some call it the road to Heaven.

"And see ye not yon narrow road,
Sae thick beset wi' thorns and briers?
That is the path of righteousness,
Though after it but few enquires.

"And see ye not yon bonny road,
That winds about the ferny brae?
That is the way to fair Elfland,
Where you and I this nicht maun gae."

Borrow had heard the horns of Elfland, and that was where he was headed, as we'll find out next time.

Pat Muldowney

Schrodinger: A Postscript!

Further to John Martin's article about Edwin Schrodinger, *What Is Life* (Church & State 143): Before Dev got Schrodinger into the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies in 1940, he was in a bit of a pickle because of his anti-Nazi opinions.

He was the shining light of physics and you'd think he could have got refuge in Cambridge, where he had previously worked and was very well known, and where at that time there were more people in his line of work, and at his level in physics, than in Dublin. But Cambridge rejected him, which was as if they had rejected Einstein.

But, whereas his unconventional lifestyle was accommodated in *"Holy Catholic Ireland"*, it was unacceptable in modern rational Cambridge.

It was only later, in the 1950s, that Schrodinger got a job in Cambridge. But they didn't help him out when he really needed it!

After Schrodinger, Dev and the Dublin Institute found a place for Hungarian Jew Cornelius Lanczos, who was, like Schrodinger, coming under pressure from fanatics --- this time in the McCarthyite USA.

He was a co-worker of Einstein.

But, in post WW2 USA, he was targetted during the McCarthy era, coming under suspicion for possible communist links. In 1952, he left the US and moved to the School of Theoretical Physics at the Dublin Institute, where he

succeeded Schrodinger and stayed until his retirement in 1968 (see Wikipedia).

Lanczos said coming to Dublin was like coming back home to Habsburg Hungary. In the course of his life he pre-empted Hungarian post-WW1 reaction by going to Germany, then dodged the coming German reaction by going to USA, only to come under threat from USA reaction. He was given a refuge from the McCarthyite persecution in Catholic Ireland.

I met him several times in 1960s and '70s. He died 'in office' in the 1970s.

"*What is Life?*" is discussed in the *Church & State* article. Also very interesting is Schrodinger's "*Mind and Matter*". Both of these can be found online. Though I'd say "*What is Life?*" is sufficient unto the day, without wandering off into "*Mind and Matter*".

IRISH FOREIGN AFFAIRS – MARCH 2021

Ireland and its elections: 1918-22

Brendan Clifford

A Century of Greek Independence: Fact or Fiction?

Pat Walsh

The truth behind the myth of the 'Tiananmen Massacre'

Dr. Dennis Etler

Shapurji Saklatvala MP: The Anglo-Irish 'Treaty' - A Conqueror's 'Treaty'

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The road to Bretton Woods: Britain goes off the Gold Standard (Part one)

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A narrative of the Anglo-Irish negotiations in 1921 (Part one) from the 'Irish Bulletin' Reflections on the War of Independence

The Drishanebeg Ambush Centenary Commemoration Address by Jack Lane

Martin Tyrrell

Review:

Eamon Dyas

The evolution of Britain's strategy during the First World War,

Volume 2: *Starving the Germans*,

Belfast Historical and Educational Society, 2020

€30, £25. £35 hardback. Postfree.

A Tremendous Book!

The First World War ended on 28th June 1919, the date on which Germany's new Social Democrat-led Government signed the Treaty of Versailles. It did not end on 11th November 1918, the date that is officially and widely commemorated. What was agreed on 11th November was an armistice—subsequently *the* Armistice—a conditional cessation of hostilities to enable peace negotiations to begin.

One of the conditions was that one of the hostilities—the Allied blockade—should continue. Indeed, not only was it continued, its reach was widened to cover German trade and fishing in the Baltic Sea, thereby almost certainly increasing its impact—more shortages, malnutrition, illness, mortality.

This enhanced blockade was not fully lifted until a fortnight after the Germans had signed the Versailles Treaty. All told, the Armistice lasted eight months, some seven more than the Germans had expected. Each time it was extended (*'prolonged'* in Allied parlance) additional conditions were attached to it that had the effect of weakening an already depleted Germany.

Negotiating the Treaty was primarily a matter for the three main victor powers—Britain, France and the United States. The Germans were given no say in the proceedings until late April 1919 when the Treaty was largely a done deal and they could say all they liked.

The period between the Armistice and the Treaty is the subject of this, the second volume of Eamon Dyas' three volume history of the First World War blockade. *Starving the Germans* records the time of the Armistice in fine detail, event by event, demonstrating comprehensively how the blockade, which had secured the initial cessation, was now deployed to ensure that, sooner or later, there would be German signatures on a Treaty that was in every respect to Germany's disadvantage. (An earlier historian of the *blockade*, Eric Osborne,

describes it, pre-Armistice, as a weapon of war and, post-Armistice as, oxymoronic, a weapon of peace. Either way—weapon of war or weapon of peace—it did the same thing, which was to turn the screws on German civilians the better to make them biddable).

As with his Volume 1, *Blockading The Germans*, Dyas has here achieved a solid narrative history based on an impressive body of evidence, mainly primary sources, that is deftly handled throughout. In particular, we get a real sense of the wrangling that went on between the Allies after 11th November—the subtle shifts in position from one meeting to the next, the divergent national agendas. Presented this way, up close, it is clear what an unedifying time the Armistice was and how baseless the Allies' claims to any kind of higher purpose. Whatever else their goals, creating a lasting European peace was not among them and, naturally, the peace they made did not last.

An *armistice* is a break in a war, not its end. It is possible that the First World War might have resumed during the Armistice period—that the Germans might have at some stage bridled at the way they were being treated and gone back to the fight—but that was unlikely. The reason the German Government had asked for a cessation was that it was more or less defeated, both militarily and on the home front, where the blockade had resulted in hardship and a mounting civilian death toll. Civil and political order had begun to disintegrate, with the first stirrings of revolution.

In agreeing to an Armistice, the Germans believed, wrongly as it transpired, that the Blockade would be lifted. Equally unfounded was their expectation that any final settlement would be based on the *Fourteen Points for Peace* that US President Woodrow Wilson had set out at

the start of 1918. Finally, they imagined that the new German Government, being made up of the former—and democratically aspirant—Opposition, would be treated differently to the aristocratic Government that had led the country throughout most of the war.

The longer the Armistice—with the Blockade as a part of it—continued, the greater the Blockade's destructive and demoralising impact on Germany, and the stronger was the incentive for Germans to agree to the Allies' terms. These, when they came, were intentionally harsh and trans-generational the better to stall a German recovery, a recovery that was already going to be slow on account of the long-term human impact of War and Blockade. The severity of the terms was justified by those who dictated them on the grounds that Germany had caused the War, while the Allies were blameless and had to be compensated. Tough though the other terms of the Versailles Treaty were, this *war guilt* was especially difficult for the Germans to swallow. They did so at something like the eleventh hour, under duress and after bitter infighting.

Lately, all this has been disputed. It has been denied, for instance, that the effects of the blockade were particularly severe, or that the terms of the Treaty were particularly demanding, or even that there was any attribution of war guilt in the text of the Treaty. This book, among other things, successfully challenges these revisions.

The Blockade of Germany was primarily a blockade by Britain until 1917 when it became an Anglo-American affair. Prior to that, the United States had been generally, if ineffectually, unhappy with the Blockade. The Blockade disrupted American trade with Europe, it was contrary to the freedom of the seas of which the United States was formally supportive, and it was a snub to international law and custom and practice.

On the other hand, it had meant that a separate and more lucrative transatlantic trade—in armaments especially, though also, as Dyas shows, in pig meat—had been developed with the Allies. The longer this continued, the more Britain and the others became dependant on and indebted to the United States. As a result, the Wilson administration objected less stridently to the Blockade than the other neutral Governments might have expected. And less to the Blockade than to the German submarine campaign, which was a reaction to it.

Dyas' previous volume detailed the development of this Blockade from pre-War planning to wartime implementation, noting that it was achieved only because the British were able to press neutral European countries into operating it with them. If these neutrals had been able to continue or expand their peacetime trade with Germany, the Blockade would have been a failure. But this business as usual was not an option for them. The Royal Navy had sealed off access to Europe by means of naval patrols and minefields and, only with the Navy's assistance could these be safely navigated. Assistance was made conditional on the neutrals agreeing to cooperate in the Blockade. If they cooperated—if they did not export to Germany or carry its trade—they could go on importing approximately what was needed for domestic consumption. But if they failed to cooperate, their ships would no longer be assisted through the Blockade and that would be the end of their seaborne commerce.

Dyas notes some of the means by which neutral compliance was achieved—the seizure of Dutch trawlers until their captains agreed to sell what they had caught to Britain exclusively, for instance; and, later in the War, what amounted to the pressing of neutral merchant ships into Allied service. Neutral ships and their crews pressed into Allied service ran the risk of attack by German submarines. And neutral Governments that, in effect, colluded in the Blockade by allowing their ships to be pressed into Allied service or by agreeing not to export even their domestic produce to Germany, ran the risk of German invasion. But these risks needed to be set against the arguably more likely prospect of being, in effect, blockaded.

This coercion of neutral Governments sat awkwardly with Britain's ostensible reason for entering the War. Marion Siney, a sympathetic American historian of the Blockade, would claim that this was the reason the official British history of the Blockade, by A.C. Bell, and two semi-official accounts, by William Arnold-Forster and H.W. Carless Davis, were suppressed on publication.

In the Second World War, Bell's book, in a Nazi pirate edition, would be deployed as German propaganda, while Arnold-Forster would publish a pamphlet in which he tried to demonstrate that the Blockade had not been used to coerce Germany into signing the Treaty of Versailles and that the Armistice pe-

riod had, in fact, seen the conditions of the Blockade relaxed.

This alleged relaxation of the Blockade is one of the aspects of the Armistice period that Dyas considers in some detail. In seeking an armistice in 1918, the Germans had, as noted, hoped the Blockade might now end, their seaborne trade recommence and their country begin to restore its pre-war economy. Instead, the Allies said only that they would "*contemplate the provisioning of Germany during the Armistice as shall be found necessary*" (quoted p239). In other words, they would think about it. And, while they were thinking about it, they extended the Blockade to the Baltic where it had up to then had little effect.

Only in April, nearly six months later, was there some, limited relaxation of this more comprehensive post-Armistice Blockade. There was nothing magnanimous in this. On the British side, for example, the limited relaxation of the Blockade that was permitted was due to concerns that, if Germany were pressed any further, it might collapse completely, taking the balance of power with it. Or it might go Communist and ally with Russia.

The detail of the relaxation was that the Germans would be permitted to import a prescribed quantity of food (described as 'relief') that was still significantly below what it needed. This was not aid. Food relief for Germany meant shipments of food for which the German Government would have to pay. Not only that, in order to transport the supplies, the Germans would have to rent their own merchant ships to the Allies who would then bill the Germans for the cost of the freight. This curious arrangement—in effect, the Germans hiring out their own ships then hiring them back—worked very much to Germany's disadvantage as the rental charge that the Allies paid was lower than the freight charge that the Germans paid the Allies. Each shipment therefore sailed at a net loss to the German Government.

All of this meant that the Allies' relaxation of the Blockade was a decidedly limited concession that did little to alleviate conditions in Germany. Also, the concession related to food only, not to imports that might have made the country better able to feed itself. There were no concessions, for instance, with regard to imports of fertiliser, fodder or agricultural equipment. In fact, Germany at the time of the relief was being pressed to surrender the best of the agricultural

equipment it had, as well as livestock and railway rolling stock, for the use of the Allies. Loss of the latter meant that, when the food imports arrived, there were practical difficulties moving them from the ports to where they were most needed. And, even with regard to food, moreover, Allied financial conditions meant that the German Government was, in practice, able to buy only around half the amount it was permitted to import—which was already significantly less than it needed.

To the extent that the blockade is mentioned in mainstream histories of the First World War, it is typically mentioned in passing, often with the aim of playing down its effects, notably on civilian mortality. The German registrar calculated that, up to 1918, there had been 763,000 excess civilian deaths. (That estimate was arrived at by using the mortality figure for 1913, the last full year before the war, as a base, and calculating the number of civilian deaths above that base figure for each of the years 1914 to 1918.) The excess itself has not, as far as I can tell, been disputed. No one has ever argued that there weren't 763,000 excess civilian deaths in Germany in 1914-18. Debate has focused on what proportion of that excess might reasonably be attributed to the Blockade. This, as Dyas says, is "*still an area of contention among historians*" (p441). The German Government thought that the full 763,000 total was due to the Blockade; a German statistician, Emil Roesle, argued in the immediate post-War period that 424,000 was a more credible figure; and in the late 1930s, the League of Nations estimated that around 737,000 of the total excess was Blockade-related. A.C. Bell, in his suppressed history, accepts the 763,000 total and commends the German officials for their work in calculating it, and in the 1940s it was sometimes cited as authoritative evidence that blockading was more destructive of civilian life than aerial bombardment, the new weapon of war and peace.

Dyas, too, thinks that the 763,000 figure is reasonable and I am with him on that. Aside from the Blockade—the shortages arising from it—it is not obvious what else might have caused so sharp a rise in civilian mortality, particularly one that correlates so positively with the gradual intensification of the Blockade (the majority of the excess occurs in 1917 and 1918 when the Blockade was at its greatest wartime extent). Indeed, Dyas even suggests, with reason, that the 763,000 figure might be an underestimate, since it does not cover the Armistice period, when the Blockade at its most comprehensive and when it coincided

with the flu pandemic of 1918. Nor does it take account of the immediate post-War period when the effects of the Blockade appear to have lingered.

Avner Offer is perhaps the most prominent of contemporary historians sceptical of the impact of the Blockade on Germany's civilian population. Dyas considers Offer's evidence but is I think rightly dismissive. It does not help Offer's case, for instance, that his main analysis (of female death rates in England and Germany from pre-War to post-War) indicates a significantly higher German than English mortality, one that is, in fact, consistent with the official 763,000 excess. Offer's other 'exhibit' is the findings of a handful of contemporaneous German surveys which suggest that a majority of urban households had an adequate wartime diet, Blockade or not. Dyas is critical of these surveys, noting among other things that they were based on small and shifting samples.

One of the main narratives of Dyas' book is that the peace the Germans ended up with—the Treaty of Versailles—was not remotely the peace they had expected when they sought terms in 1918. *"It was on the understanding that any eventual outcome from peace negotiations would be based on the 'Fourteen Points' that the Central Powers were convinced to lay down their arms..."* (p160).

That was an illusion that was put right over the following eight months. The peace that was imposed on Germany had nothing to do with the *Fourteen Points* despite sophisticated efforts to make it look as if it was, and it was imposed using the Blockade and the threat of invasion and military occupation—an *immediate and terrible war*, so to speak. (Dyas writes that it was a senior officer of the US Army, Colonel Arthur Conger, who advised the German Government, via an intermediary, that, if they rejected the terms of the Versailles Treaty, then they could expect American military occupation. And, if they were unsure what that might mean, they should familiarise themselves with the detail of the American occupation of the Philippines some twenty years earlier when an estimated 200,000 to one million Filipino civilians were killed by the occupiers.)

Woodrow Wilson had set out his Fourteen Points in a speech to Congress in January 1918. Some of these were fairly uncontroversial, such as the restoration of Belgium, Romania and Serbia. Some were mildly aspirational—the various *desiderata* on open diplomacy, freer trade, and

the establishment of a League of Nations. And some were ambiguous.

The proposals for the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, for example, could be read as advocating dismantlement (and independence for the successor states), or federalism (as the Austrians themselves had been working towards pre-War). Dyas suspects that the *Fourteen Points* might never have been intended to be taken seriously. They were certainly not taken seriously enough to influence the Versailles Treaty. Indeed, it could be argued that the Points were disregarded almost as soon as they were accepted as the basis on which the War would end.

The eventual Armistice terms, for example, were largely written without American input and over the months that followed, the Americans would accede to all kinds of compromise. This need not have happened, argues Dyas. If the United States, if Woodrow Wilson, had been as committed to the Fourteen Points as was claimed both at the time and ever since, they could have used their formidable military and economic power to make their European Allies more compliant.

Indeed, it is the United States that comes out of this account especially badly. Wilson's principles were quickly jettisoned. And yet German illusions regarding him and his Government as the more reasonable of the Allies continued for much of the Armistice period, right up to April 1919.

The Versailles Treaty required that Germany pay certain of the Allies an amount to be determined only after the Treaty was signed. Historically, defeated states had often been obliged to pay the victors an indemnity, a punitive fine. But Wilson, especially, was not keen that any such payment should be levied on any of the Central Powers. Indemnities were Old World, like secret diplomacy and colonial empires and subject peoples, all of which he at least formally rejected. He was, however, open to the idea of reparations, that Germany should pay for the damage its armed forces had caused throughout the War.

Such literal reparations—reparations that would make good the damage attributable to the armed forces of Germany and its allies—would have meant France and Belgium receiving a good two-thirds of any total payment, with Britain receiving around a third. And the United States, little or nothing. The Americans seemed content with that—Dyas notes that these shares were in fact based on an American

analysis—and the French and Belgians were also, and unsurprisingly, supportive. The British, however, argued that Germany should pay the full cost of the war, not only the cost of repairs but the full amount the Allies had expended in fighting it. If the Germans had paid that—if it had had the wherewithal to pay it—that would have made Britain and the United States the principal beneficiaries, with some 70 per cent of the total payment between them. France would have received around a quarter and Belgium, a token share. The British were keen on this and the French and Belgians not so much.

A compromise was eventually negotiated whereby reparations would include the cost of Allied military pensions. Naturally, this greatly increased the amount that Germany was obliged to pay. (The Americans had estimated literal reparations at around \$25 billion; war pensions added a further \$10 billion to that.) John Maynard Keynes would later write that Wilson's concession on pensions was *"perhaps the most decisive moment in the disintegration of the President's moral position and the clouding of his mind"* (quoted p498). Dyas, on the other hand, argues that there was no such moment on the American side, noting *"Wilson's capacity for abandoning, changing and morphing the Fourteen Points into what suited his political purpose at any one time"* (p498).

That Germany should pay so large an amount was due to the fact that the Allies were depicting the war as a crime for which it was guilty. The Germans' alleged guilt is encapsulated in Article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles.

"The Allied and Associated Governments affirm and Germany accepts the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated Governments and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies."

That seems a fairly unambiguous and exclusive attribution of blame to one side of the conflict, particularly when read in the context of Article 227, which arraigned the former Kaiser *"for a supreme offence against international morality"*, and Articles 228-230 which obliged the German Government to hand over war criminals and cooperate in the Allies' legal proceedings against them. And, outside of the text of the Treaty, there is the entirety of Allied condemnation of Germany throughout the War.

It was the War Guilt clauses that Count Ulrich von Brockdorff-Rantzau, the new German Foreign Minister, rejected on receipt of the *Treaty of Versailles* in June 1919.

“...in the manner of making war... Germany is not the only guilty one... The hundreds of thousands of non-combatants who have perished since the eleventh of November by reason of the blockade were killed with cold deliberation after our adversaries had conquered and victory had been assured to them. Think of that when you speak of guilt and punishment” (quoted p555).

Nor was the German Government as a whole impressed, nor the National Assembly, which eventually agreed to the Treaty solely to prevent further hardship. On guilt at least they might have expected better treatment. The Kaiser, who had allegedly sinned against international morality was no longer in power, was exiled in the Netherlands where he would live the rest of his days. There was a new Germany now. The Germans had been careful to create one—in part because their dealings with the Allies, and with the Americans above all, had suggested that a democratic Germany would be treated generously. It was a coalition of those democratic parties that had been historically progressive—Social Democrats, Catholic Centre and Democrats—that concluded the Armistice and agreed the Treaty. And the head of that coalition was not an aristocrat as in the past but Friedrich Ebert, a former manual worker and lifelong socialist.

These would in time be blamed, by the Nazis and the Right in general, for accepting both the Treaty and the Armistice before it (*‘the stab in the back’*). Had they been handled more gently by the Allies, they, and Germany, and Europe, might have had a better future. But, for the Allies, Germany had not changed at all. Germany in itself, and in any form, was the problem. Lloyd George made it plain enough that that was how he saw things. And Clemenceau, too. If the progressive parties in Germany had imagined that theirs was something new that would be welcomed, they would soon be put right.

Dyas relates how, when the German delegation came to Marshall Foch to request an armistice, Foch was disdainful, pettily insisting that the German General von Winterfeldt remove the *Légion d'Honneur* that he had been awarded prior to the War in happier Franco-German times and rejecting their

suggestion of a ceasefire. There would be no ceasefire, not until the date and time specified in the letter of the eventual Armistice Agreement, the eleventh hour of the eleventh day.

Even when the Germans had signed, which they did on the evening of 10th November 1918, the War and its death toll continued right up to that literal eleventh hour—during which there were close to 3,000 deaths and 8,000 injuries. Clemenceau was later able to inform Wilson’s advisor Colonel House that the German delegation that met Foch had been “*much depressed*” and that “*from time to time a sob escaped from the throat of Winterfeldt*” (quoted p237).

Months later, when the German delegates arrived at Versailles, their baggage was unceremoniously dumped outside their hotel and they were required to lug it to their rooms themselves. Then the negotiations, from which they were excluded; and the Treaty which they could take or leave on the understanding that if they felt like leaving it, they should consider the Philippines; and all the while the Blockade and all its consequences. (There was one tiny humiliation that they did, however, manage to avoid. When it came to signing the Treaty, someone on the French side had thought it would be a great wheeze if the Germans could be made to sign with a pen made from shrapnel. But the Germans got wind of this and, on the day, they came with a pen of their own.)

Just as in his first volume, Dyas observed how a European war in 1914 was not inevitable and that French-German *rapprochement* was possible, here he shows that not everyone favoured the type of vindictive peace that was eventually delivered.

Étienne Clémental and Émile Haguenin on the French side—just two of the many remarkable figures Eamon Dyas has rescued from historical obscurity—both favoured some kind of formalised cooperation between Germany and France whereby the two might work constructively to rebuild Europe. The motivation here was not pure altruism. These Frenchmen considered Germany a threat, and a threat to be contained. But their preferred method of containment was to integrate the German economy into a French-dominated European union.

Marion Siney, in her history of the Blockade refers to similar, though wartime, attempts to establish a union of Allied states, one that would continue into the envisaged post-War era which at that time was being imagined as a kind

of ‘cold war’ between the former Entente and Central Powers. Siney refers to Conferences at Cernobbio in 1915 and Paris in 1916. These were French-driven initiatives (Clémental participated in the Paris event) that proposed a shared and centralised system of support for industry, workforce protections, and a pooled research service to facilitate industrial development across all participant states. It was unlikely that Britain would ever have agreed to such a development.

Dyas comments on the conflicting visions on the Allied side—British market liberalism versus the more centralist, directive approach favoured by the French. There was nothing for Britain in the State-sponsored development of industry in France and Italy, not compared with Free Trade, the Empire and naval superiority.

Moreover, French hegemony, whether political or economic, was no more desirable to London than was German hegemony. In the 1930s, Britain would scupper French plans for a *petite alliance* with the new post-War states against Nazi Germany for fear that any such alliance would tip the *balance of power* in the French direction.

Versailles was a British peace, I think, not French or American, and Dyas is right to say that its negative effects continue to this day. “*The European economy*”, he comments, “*through the EU, continues to struggle to re-establish itself along the lines it originally began to evolve on over 130 years ago*” (p598).

Recent decades have seen an increase in the commemoration of the First World War. As commemoration has increased, analysis has fallen off, particularly as political history is marginalised as a school subject. I suspect that if people commemorating the First World War were pressed as to what they were commemorating, many if not most of them would say that it was a defensive war, that the Allies, or the British at least, were standing up to an unscrupulous Germany bent on global conquest. It is no coincidence I think that this is a narrative that has thrived in tandem with Euroscepticism. European unification was an outworking of the settlement of the Second World War, an altogether better peace than Versailles. Versailles settled nothing and left it highly likely that there should be another war. That seems plain enough.

Starving the Germans is a valuable corrective to the ongoing romanticisation of the First World War, and the revisionism that has flourished alongside it. It is a massive and lasting contribution to the study of that war and its aftermath.

V O X

Legacies
Porn!
Gender?
Jews
Sex Outreach
Execution
WW2
Benjamin Disraeli
Casement's Resting Place

P A T

FORMER Catholic Bishop of Raphoe Seamus Hegarty (1940-2019) left just under €79,000 in his will, according to the *Sunday Independent* (7.2.2021)

Dr. Hegarty died at Letterkenny General hospital in September, 2019.

He served as Bishop of Raphoe from 1982 to 1994, then as Bishop of Derry from 1994 to 2011.

Dr. Hegarty was born in Kilcar in the South-West Donegal Gaeltacht.

"Balbriggan farmer left €15.7m in will" (17.5.20); "Dublin woman left €5.5m in will" (5.7.20); "Architect leaves €5.4m in will" (1.11.20); Dublin woman leaves €3.4m in will" (8.11.20); "Hotelier leaves €5.9m in his will" (6.12.20); "Dublin housewife leaves €5.6m in will" (13.12.20); "Chartered accountant leaves €4.5m" (28.2.21); "Cork farmer leaves €6.2 in his will" (4.4.21) (Acknowledgement *Sunday Independent*).

We're not only the Sixth most democratic country in the world : per head of population, we're probably the sixth wealthiest!

PORN?

"It comes as the murder of Sarah Everard led to a Reclaim the Streets movement online, with Fianna Fail TD Jim O'Callaghan calling for internet service providers to be required by law to stop pornography being accessible to children.

He tweeted: "To reduce violence against women & girls we need to stop the online proliferation of porn.

"However, the director of the Cork Sexual Violence Centre, Mary Crilly, said that violence against women is not a result of pornography, pointing out that online pornography was not available until recent years.

"She added that she has been working in the area of gender-based violence for up to four decades, when pornography was not readily accessible.

"She said: "Sexual violence has been around for so long, without pornography."

"And she said: "While I hate porn with a passion, not all young men who do look at it go on to attack women." (*The Echo*, Cork-16.3.2021)

Gender?

THE CENTRAL STATISTICS Office has confirmed that Census 2022 won't include a question about citizens' gender identity, but research is being carried out into including the question in subsequent ones.

Ireland's census form has included a question on the form that asks about people's sex. The options are 'male' or 'female'.

A question on people's gender would give transgender and non-binary people the option to include what gender they identify as on their census form.

In short, 'sex' refers to a person's biological anatomy and reproductive organs. 'Gender' can refer to socially-constructed roles and behaviours people have which are loosely based on what 'feminine' and 'masculine' have traditionally meant. Gender identity refers to a person's sense of their own gender.

This year, British citizens are to be asked about their gender identity in their national censuses, but there will be no penalties for those who choose not to answer.

The next Irish census had been due to be held this year, but has been postponed until 3 April next year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

A public consultation requesting submissions on what should be included as a question in Census 2022 was carried out from October to November 2017.

Northern Ireland will hold its census on 21 March, 2021 – but won't ask its citizens to clarify their gender. (*The Journal* -10.2.2021)

JEWS feel unwelcome in the EU — "Pinchas Goldschmidt, the president of the Conference of European Rabbis, writes that religious freedoms of Jews are being eroded. A mass exodus from

the European Union could ensue.

"In some case, the Corona virus pandemic has served as a pretext to restrict worship. Jews in the European Union are deeply troubled by this development".

In December, the European Court of Justice upheld a ban on ritual slaughters — a religious and humane method for killing animals for consumption—in Belgium.

"Passover, which commemorates the Hebrews' liberation from enslavement in ancient Egypt, begins this weekend. But many European Jews don't feel like celebrating. Many feel that their religious freedoms are being eroded.

"For over a decade, the European Union has been preoccupied with itself and in permanent crisis mode, seemingly forgetting its much touted motto 'united in diversity'."

"The United States, in contrast, is much more outward looking. Speaking at an OSCE expert summit last month, US Deputy Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor Kara McDonald gave an outlook regarding President Joe Biden's agenda on tackling Anti-Semitism.

"The good news is that Biden plans to intensify the US's fight against anti-Semitism in accordance with the definition of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance.

"We want to see determined and positive steps by EU politicians to protect and foster Jewish life — and to prevent a looming exodus. This is not an exaggerated fear: It is already happening. Over the past decade, many Jews have left EU countries, feeling no longer welcome." (*Deutsche Welle* (DW) [claims to be] Germany's international broadcaster. 28.3.2021. <https://p.dw.com/p/3rHds>)

Sex Outreach

"An outreach worker is set to visit some of Cork's public sex cruising spots to offer sexual health advice and supports.

"Recruitment is now underway for the HSE-funded 'public sex environment outreach worker' role with the Sexual Health Centre in Cork city.

"Dr Martin Davoren, the centre's executive director, described it as a "challenging yet exciting new role". (*Irish Examiner*-3.2.2021)

EXECUTION of women:

What I do find interesting is the emphasis on the number of women executed. This tendency to exceptionalise women was also apparent in the media's reporting of a recent execution in the US.

It seems that liberal societies, despite all their emphasis on equality—which has included for a number of years the right of women to be front line troops and therefore have the right to kill other women—still retain a somewhat old fashioned attitude towards women as people who are worthy of extra consideration. This I find reassuring even though it means I could be accused of misogyny in modern terms. **E.D.**

WORLD WAR II:

“The occupation years, 1945 to 1955, would expose a glaring hypocrisy perpetuated by the United States. Black occupation troops were part of the effort to prevent the resurgence of Nazism, yet for years were housed in segregated quarters, barred from officers’ clubs (regardless of their rank) and openly slurred, harassed and physically attacked by white American service members.”

“...There were no “whites only” signs in Germany, and blacks could freely frequent shops, restaurants, parks, beaches and local bars. In some towns, white soldiers threatened to boycott German businesses if they continued to serve black troops. And it wasn’t uncommon for white military police to take their batons to African-American G.I.s if they refused to leave an establishment.” (*New York Times* magazine-19.2.2020)

BENJAMIN DISRAELI (1804-81).

Disraeli became leader of the Conservative party in Britain and Prime Minister (1868, 1874-80). He once described his Liberal opponent Gladstone as ‘a sophisticated rhetorician inebriated with the exuberance of his own verbosity’.

He had a very good relationship with Queen Victoria thanks to his tact and flattery, (‘Everyone likes flattery’, he remarked to Matthew Arnold, ‘and when you come to Royalty you should lay it on with a trowel’).

However, when Victoria proposed to visit him when he lay dying, the thought of the Queen’s devotion to her husband Albert, dead for twenty years, disquieted him: ‘No, it is better not,’ he said to the emissary. ‘She would only ask me to take a message to Albert’.

Ireland: “Thus you have a starving population, an absentee aristocracy, and an alien Church, and in addition the weakest executive in the world. That is the Irish Question.” (Disraeli-Speech in House of Commons, 16 February, 1844.)

Irish Weekly Independent 12.8.1916:

Casement’s Resting Place

“*The Star*” (London) states that after the execution of Roger Casement the body was interred in No. 2 burial ground, Pentonville, inside the north boundary wall, opposite the officers’ quarters. Casement’s grave is close to that of a Lascar who murdered a stewardess, and that of a man named Edwards, convicted of wife murder, in one grave. No. 1 burial ground, at the side of the execution shed, contains the bodies of 18 murderers, including Crippen. Quicklime was not used in these grounds and the executed were buried in coffins

"Traitor-Patriots in the Great War"

Roger Casement and Thomas Masaryk were both eminent public figures in their respective states: the British Empire and the Hapsburg or Austro-Hungarian Empire. And each committed treason to his state by going into the service of an enemy state during the Great War. Casement went into the service of Germany and Masaryk into the service of the British Empire.

Casement was hanged by Britain for being a traitor, while Britain recruited Masaryk to be a traitor. And, while in its treatment of Casement it suggested that treason was something essentially dishonourable and set in motion an underground slander campaign to destroy his private reputation along with his public, in the case of Masaryk it represented treason as an honourable patriotic activity.

Pamphlet Contents: Preface by Brendan Clifford; The New Statesman On The Casement Hanging; Traitor-Patriots by W. J. Maloney (Preface); President Masaryk by C. J. Street (Extracts); The Rise and Fall of Czechoslovakia by Brendan Clifford.

Traitor-Patriots in the Great War: Casement and Masaryk with a review of the Rise and Fall of Czechoslovakia. 56 pp (€10 postfree)

Available: patnoelmaloney6@gmail.com

Nick Folley

Dreaming!

I’m sure this must be old hat, but I note a similarity between the two poems...

YEATS (20th century):

The Lake Isle of Innisfree

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,

And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;

Nine bean rows will I have there, a hive for the honey bee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;
There midnight’s all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet’s wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,
I hear it in the deep heart’s core.

St Manchan of Offaly’s poem (9th century)

Grant me sweet Christ the grace to find—
Son of the Living God!—
A small hut in a lonesome spot
To make it my abode.

A little pool but very clear
To stand beside the place
Where all men’s sins are washed away
By sanctifying grace.

A pleasant woodland all about
To shield it from the wind
And make a home for singing birds
Before it and behind.

A southern aspect for the heat
A stream along its foot,
A smooth green lawn with rich topsoil
Propitious to all fruit.

My choice of men to live with me
And pray to God as well;
Quiet men of humble mind—
Their number I shall tell.

Four files of three or three of four
To give the psalter forth;
Six to pray by the south church wall
And six along the north.

Two by two my dozen friends---
To tell the number right---
Praying with me to move the King
Who gives the sun its light.

A lovely church, a home for God
Bedecked with linen fine,
Where over the white Gospel page
The Gospel candles shine.

A little house where all may dwell
And body's care be sought,
Where none shows lust or arrogance,
None thinks an evil thought.

And all I ask for housekeeping
I get and pay no fees,
Leeks from the garden, poultry, game,
Salmon and trout and bees.

My share of clothing and of food,
From the King of fairest face,
And I to sit at times alone,
And pray in every place.

Contributed by

Michael Robinson

The relevance to Trade Unions today of Pope Paul VI's Encyclical Letter,
Populorum Progressio

(On the Development of Peoples.

It is addressed to -

"To The Bishops, Priests, Religious, The Faithful And
To All Men Of Good Will."

... "56. The efforts which are being made to assist developing nations on a financial and technical basis, though considerable, would be illusory if their benefits were to be partially nullified as a consequence of the trade relations existing between rich and poor countries. The confidence of these latter would be severely shaken if they had the impression that what was being given them with one hand was being taken away with the other.

57. Of course, highly industrialized nations export for the most part manufactured goods, while countries with less developed economies have only food, fibres and other raw materials to sell. As a result of technical progress the value of manufactured goods is rapidly increasing and they can always find an adequate market. On the other hand, raw materials produced by under-developed countries are subject to wide and sudden fluctuations in price, a state of affairs far removed from the progressively increasing value of industrial products. As a result, nations whose industrialization is limited are faced with serious difficulties when they have to rely on their exports to balance their economy and to carry out their plans for development. The poor nations remain ever poor while the rich ones become still richer.

58. In other words, the rule of free trade, taken by itself, is no longer able to govern international relations. Its advantages are certainly evident

when the parties involved are not affected by any excessive inequalities of economic power: it is an incentive to progress and a reward for effort. That is why industrially developed

countries see in it a law of justice. But the situation is no longer the same when economic conditions differ too widely from country to country: prices which are "freely" set in the market can produce unfair results. One must recognize that it is the fundamental principle of liberalism, as the rule for commercial exchange, which is questioned here.

59. The teaching of Leo XIII in *Rerum Novarum* is always valid: if the positions of the contracting parties are too unequal, the consent of the parties does not suffice to guarantee the justice of their contract, and the rule of free agreement remains subservient to the demands of the natural law.[57] What was true of the just wage for the individual is also true of international contracts: an economy of exchange can no longer be based solely on the law of free competition, a law which, in its turn, too often creates an economic dictatorship. Freedom of trade is fair only if it is subject to the demands of social justice..."

(26 March 1967).

Donal Kennedy

In Memoriam: *The Irish Press*

I read the *Irish Press* all thru the 1950s. Also the *Sunday Press*.

During the French Algerian War you would often have a pretty terse paragraph saying the French had killed hundreds in a gunfight somewhere but no analysis and I never saw an editorial on the conflict.

During the French Indo China War I understood the French to be defending civilisation from Communist aggression.

In the early 1950s the *Irish Press* had a Buck Rogers strip cartoon. Bucks chief enemy was a pipe-smoking tyrant called Joe who ruled the Red Planet. When his subordinates failed him Joe would blow smoke in their faces and they'd die choking on it. He was the spittin image of a contemporary statesman.

When that statesman died in 1953 I

was amazed to hear him praised on the BBC. I remember the bulletin saying —and then, "in June 1940 Germany invaded the Soviet Union", and was amazed that the Brits and the Soviets had been bosom friends.

The Press group were good on Kenya and Cyprus. I can't remember any coverage of Malaya.

I read the serialisation of Robert Brennan's *Allegiance* in 1950 and Frank Gallagher's *Four Glorious Years* in 1953. My sister was in class with Frank Gallagher's daughter and I bought the book with a book token sent me by an aunt, and had it autographed by the author.

It's a shame that the *Press Group* folded.

But the swine Stephen Collins cut his teeth there.

Throwing Off The Overalls!

There was a mantra in the Belfast shipyard of Harland and Wolff: *"Throw off the overalls if you want to get somewhere."* It was 1953 and I had finished my apprenticeship as joiner/carpenter/cabinet-maker, so I did and applied for the job of a ballroom supervisor that was being advertised by the Plaza Ballroom in Chichester Street, Belfast. After joining a long queue and being interviewed I got the job. That meant I had to go and buy a dress suit, a tuxedo with satin lapels and trousers with satin stripes down the outside seam, a black bow tie, plus a white tuxedo for Summer, to be worn with the same trousers but with a red bowtie. That was to cost £20 when wages were just over £6 for a skilled worker and £5 for the unskilled.

The job came under the category of under-management. You kept order by word of mouth. Threats of violence or actual violence meant the sack. Any violence was met by calling in the RUC or, if soldiers were involved, the military police. There were three ballroom supervisors, one of whom was English, an former lieutenant in the British Army. He had been cashiered for photographing a couple of massacres by the army of villagers in Malaya and Singapore. The photos had been confiscated but he had hidden copies showing a pile of bodies.

The three of us were still in our early twenties, and he decided he wanted the army to take him back so he began showing the photos around and claiming they were the massacres of communist insurgents. He wasn't taken back, though he appealed to the then Lord Major of Belfast, the eternal Unionist in the job, for help. He did this through the Lord Mayor's secretary, an Englishman, whom he seemed close to. His efforts failed and he returned to showing the photographs and describing them as scenes of British Army massacres. He carried the photographs everywhere with him. He never seemed to carry family photos or discuss family matters.

The third ballroom supervisor was a Belfast man. He had lost an eye and sometimes wore a black patch over it when the ballroom was crowded and he wanted to have a sinister look. Other than that he wore dark glasses.

A year previously, a US warship had visited Belfast and the sailors naturally made for the Plaza. There were two dance periods—afternoon and evening. The sailors were at both on a Saturday. The afternoon one was more relaxed, with not so many dancers, so the sailors were allowed to jitterbug/swing, as long as it didn't get too wild. There was a large notice at the entrance of the ballroom saying: *"No Jitterbugging."*

The manager normally wanted this rule enforced. He made some excuse that Belfast was not too keen on glimpsing girls' knickers. He understood that, as an Englishman in a different country. The truth was jitterbugging/swinging took up too much room when Mecca Dancing wanted to pack them in. The huge Plaza could accommodate up to two thousand on a Saturday evening.

The evening session was different. No alcohol was sold at the Plaza but dancers could ask for a pass out to go to a nearby pub. Anyone returning drunk was refused re-entry. It was suspected that the American sailors were smuggling in alcohol in coca-cola bottles. This ballroom supervisor decided to check at one table by politely reminding everyone that there was an alcohol ban, and it was not to be drunk on the premises. The sailor in question invited him to have a sniff at his coke bottle to prove there was no alcohol in it. When he did it was rammed into his eye. After the hospital and recovery he got £200 in compensation and his job back, with a warning to ignore the usual rules when the US Fleet was in, and create good relations between Northern Ireland and the United States of America! Now he wore the black patch when he felt scared in order to try and scare others.

Usually Swing would break out in the middle of the floor on a Saturday night. The middle of the floor would be fenced in by the wall of those doing the normal ballroom dancing. You had to make your way through the walls to reach the centre to stop the Jitterbugging/Swing. This could be dangerous. You were dressed like the upper class and they didn't like your sartorial elegance.

One crowd said throw off the overalls and now another crowd was telling you to put them back on, for, who the hell do you think you are! Well, I was earning £6.4s.6d instead of my shipyard wage of £6.14s 6d. A reduction of 10 shillings (a week's rent) made a difference.

In the end, it was the technicians in the light box who did something about Swing. They did it with a high-powered arc lamp. The heat of it stopped the jitterbugging. The lamp then followed the dancers involved, as they left the floor. They were identified and warned to dance ballroom or else they could be barred. Nobody wanted to be barred from the Plaza.

There were other dance places in Belfast but the Plaza was the centre of it all. It attracted world champion racing drivers, actors and show business people, who were in town. There wasn't much of an alternative in Belfast, with only one seedy night club called *The Ambassador*. The Plaza was part of the Mecca Dancing circuit that was then number one all over the UK. The era of the Big Bands was coming to an end and Swing was the evidence of finishing them off. In a few years it would be The Twist with Chubby Checker and then Elvis Presley. The 1930s Big Bands, controlled by Gerald, Bert Ambrose, Joe Loss and Harry Gold, to name but a few, now had to find work outside the Ritz and expensive London night spots, so many of them joined the Mecca Dance circuit to earn a living.

Every Mecca ballroom had to employ a local band in rules laid down by the Musicians Union. At the Plaza it was a four-man band from the Falls Road area. Mecca's policy in Belfast was to mix its staff equally, Catholics and Protestants. It didn't want to be known solely as a Protestant entertainment centre. The manager, for an Englishman, was quite well-up with what was happening with NI. He was appalled at the armed police in the street, and was aware of Catholic inequality. In the job interview he apologised for asking me my religion. After being an underground Catholic in the shipyard, I was determined not to deny my identity in future jobs. Easier said than done in Belfast. I said I was a Catholic. The manager explained that he had to balance the books here in Belfast and cater for everyone. In coming to Belfast he was wondering why he had fought in WW2.

As ballroom supervisors we had our own table in the ballroom at which tea

was served by the female staff. One of the girls I asked for a date. her answer was: "*I'm bitter.*"

Meaning: I don't like Catholics very much.

When chatting to her again, she made it clear she didn't like serving RCs their tea. She could have got the sack for that and later asked me not to report what she had said to the manager. I didn't intend seeing anyone lose their job, especially this pretty 17 year old girl, whom I wanted around.

I was still surprised at the composition of the workforce. It was absolutely 50/50 right through: from the cloakroom attendants to the Falls Road band, the lighting box and the uniformed female ushers.

The clientele were also mixed to some degree. Two criminal gangs I knew of came most Saturday nights. One was from the Catholic Markets area. They were taller and heavier than the usual half-starved looking residents of that area, and were well-dressed. unlike the poor older women who still wore black shawls and carried a many-layered small leather purse containing pennies and smelling of snuff.

Dealing in stolen car tyres seemed to be the big thing in 1953. They were also said to *protect* the fruit and vegetables stalls of the market, as well as the nearby abattoir. They somehow heard I was a Catholic and became friendly. My task was to warn the gangs about maybe having disputes within the Plaza. On one occasion during the quieter time of the afternoon dance, I caught two of them holding someone as big as themselves by the arms as they thumped him hard against the wall shouting: "*Apologise!*" The two other supervisors decided to ignore it but I – where angels fear to tread – asked them to stop. The reply was: "*Finished in a minute, Mac, sorry about this.*"

Everyone was called *Mac* then. I just couldn't figure them out. They were criminals but spoke of the Feast of the Assumption, or Our Lady's Day, as they called it. Inviting me to visit for the 15th of August when the tables would be taken out of the houses of the Markets and lined up the centre of the street. These would be laden with bottles of wine and titbits.

The independence of India would also be celebrated as it also fell on the 15th of August. When they overheard the English ballroom supervisor, and former army officer, running down the IRA, they

threatened him. Yet, neither India nor the IRA would have them in their ranks. The lads disapproved of Silver McKee, a street-fighter, also from the Markets. He was too violent, didn't dress properly, was a cattle-drover, and beat the poor cows until they bled as they made their way to the abattoir. "*And them dying anyway.*"

I didn't tell them I had been to the streets of the Markets in 1950, knocking on doors with the Protestant members of the Young Worker's league, asking people to sign the *Stalin Five-Point Peace Plan*. I could have, I suppose, for all I had to be for them was to be a Catholic. We were well received in the Markets as any rescuer was better than living under Unionism.

The other gang was run by a street fighter called Stormy Weatherall of the Protestant Shankill Road. His gang were only part-time and so had to make a living. But they also were well-dressed. They were said to be mostly street fighters and there wasn't much profit in that. Stormy worked in a flour mill and had the name of being a good Trade Unionist. If it's NI then there's also contradiction!

Both gangs had to be read the Riot Act on occasion, though neither gang were into any serious physical conflict within the Plaza. Both gangs got on well together, despite Catholic/Protestant differences.

But then came conflict, but it had nothing to do with the gangs. It was still 1953 and it was the Queen's coronation. It wasn't to do with a semi-conscious Silver McKee either, as he was being carried by four RUC men low enough for his head to hit each curb they went up on – a scene I witnessed a couple of times as it passed the Plaza on a Saturday night. The conflict was within the Plaza.

It was Saturday night and the Nat Allen Band was playing the British national anthem every hour they came on. I usually had to turn the rotating stage every hour on a music cue to bring on the alternating Big Band and local band. The local band had played the anthem once, but the Big Band was playing it every hour in celebration of the coronation. Everyone had stood to attention for the British national anthem but, when it started a second time, the Catholic dancers just sat down in protest. The loyalist dancers then started trying to pull the Catholics out of the chairs and fights broke out with the unbreakable coke bottle being used as weapons. We

thought it was time to call the RUC but the manager didn't want this to happen. He had phoned the London headquarters and they said no police.

He didn't want the Plaza to seem like a Protestant monopoly and neither had London. He swore it wasn't Mecca's policy to play the national anthem so many times in one evening. So, was the band leader responsible? The supervisor with the black eye patch suggested it was: "*The Jews trying to be English?*"

The bandleader Nat Allen was Jewish, and English, as were most of his musicians. Unfortunately for "*eye patch*", so was the manager. He was transferred to the Glasgow Mecca ballroom soon afterwards. I heard later he had been stabbed to death on the dance floor.

During the near riot in the ballroom, the Markets gang joined in the fighting for what they later said was for their own protection and for the protection of every Catholic there. I was asked by the manager to find them and tell them to stop. He claimed they had already tried to *protect* the Plaza but he had countered with threatening to call in the London gangs who had a lot of murders under their belt whereas the Markets gang were just punch-up artists.

I told him I had carried out his orders by asking them to stop fighting. But I didn't tell him that one of them had half-pulled a luger pistol from his pocket and indicated what he was doing was nothing to what might happen. I felt strangely flattered that he had let me into his secret. He trusted me. At the same time I would have preferred not to know that one of them was armed. What if he was betrayed?

It was a relief to hear Nat Allen shouting over the microphone that he no longer would play the national anthem. Some of the Protestants were whooping and calling for it to be played but the fighting did die down before it spread. It was in the end only a small minority who had started it. The bulwark against violence at the Plaza was the huge ex-boxer in the gigantic gold-braided uniform as the doorkeeper. He looked like the General of a Military Junta in a Latin American country. But his job was on the pavement outside. Behind him were the tuxedos.

He was not allowed to operate inside nor come with two of us when he had to take the substantial weekly take to the bank. The bank was on the edge of the Markets area. Now and then we glimpsed

a gang member watching us (the former army officer and myself) but luckily none of them made a move. It was possible they might have attacked the ex-Army officer if he had been with someone else. I liked to think that there was some sort of Catholic alliance around after my family's bad experience living in extreme loyalist areas.

I began to tire of the shift work and having to cycle five miles home to Hollywood after midnight. Between the two shifts of afternoon and evening there was a gap of a number of hours to be filled in but not enough time to go home. It was also hard to keep a relationship going with this six-day week. Luckily the Lord's Day Observance Society had forbidden dancing on a Sunday, though the Catholic areas ignored this. Sunday evenings could then be spent on a busman's holiday in the dancehall at Hannahstown or St Mary's Hall, or the dance hall of the Past Pupils of the Christian Brothers, of which I was never a pupil.

I left the Plaza and returned to the not very glamorous shipyard as an underground Catholic with a Protestant profile. I was then pointed out as that

hard nut who was a chucker-out at the Plaza. I tried to explain that it was all a game of bluff, that being violent would have got me the sack. But no one would accept that explanation. I had to be some sort of legend to them.

Going through the centre of Belfast I came across the leader of the four-man local band, now the ex-leader, looking down a manhole to the sewers. He was wearing overalls. He had also got tired of shift work, six days a week, and for him, it was playing the saxophone every hour, afternoon and evening, and playing the same old tunes.

I wondered how he got the job in the Belfast Corporation when they didn't employ Catholics. It seems the head of personnel was a regular Plaza-goer and particularly liked how he played the saxophone. He was thus interviewed as a Protestant, and recorded as such. As I left he said, with a wink and with typical West Belfast humour:

*"Fuck the Pope!
I've got a job in the sewers."*

1.3.21.

letters or visits from her son.

For further evidence of her on-going *"nerves of steel"* we have to look elsewhere—to Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, in fact. We are therefore indebted to Margaret Ward for her monumental and magisterial volume, *'Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, Suffragette and Sinn Féiner: Her Memoirs and Political Writings'*, published in 2017. For, included in that volume is the following tribute from one formidable woman to another, as published in the IRA newspaper *'An Phoblacht'*.

"Catherine Wheelwright: an appreciation of her services"

By Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, *'An Phoblacht'*, June 25, 1932:

The death in Rochester, New York, of Éamon de Valera's mother recalls vividly a memory of how I first met her, in April 1917, a few days after the United States had entered the Great War on the Allies' side. Rochester, though in New York State, is not far from Canada and was then much influenced by British feeling: British influences were felt in business and banking circles and among the wealthier citizens, many of whom, they had lived in USA for many years, remained British subjects in heart and in fact. There were not many Irish in Rochester, and some that were Irish, were ashamed of the fact.

British Militarism in Ireland

I had been speaking under the auspices of the Friends of Irish Freedom and kindred groups from my arrival in USA in December 1916, the title of my theme being 'British Militarism as I have known it', covering 1916 and the Easter Rising. Until the USA entered the War (on Good Friday 1917, with Wilson's Fourteen Points policy) the Irish and other race-groups in the United States, arranged many meetings, being eager to hear at first hand of Irish conditions. Rochester happened to have already booked a meeting for me in the City Hall: to follow one by Major Ian Hay, one of Britain's propagandist lecturers. The date had been fixed well ahead - it fell on Easter Monday, three days after USA ceased to be 'neutral!' The Committee - the Chairman, a certain judge with an Irish name, a politician who liked to parade Irish sentiments when these were safe and helpful to his career - had no time to get in touch with our New York Committee: I was already on the way, and their frantic wires and phone-calls did not reach me.

The Runaway Committee

Panic seized them: the judge was hurriedly 'called away' out of the town for the day, leaving his poor secretary to explain matters as best he could. The rest of the

Manus O'Riordan

In Praise Of Catherine Coll De Valera Wheelwright

She was a woman with *"nerves of steel"* too often overlooked by the academic establishment, *"a quiet and steadfast worker, and one that could be depended upon in a crisis to stand firm"*.

Even when they had been political allies and associates, the personal relationship between Hanna Sheehy Skeffington and Éamon de Valera had never been close. Nonetheless, after Hanna had broken politically with Dev in 1927, she continued to retain the warmest memories of his mother.

It is quite noteworthy how biographers of de Valera have neglected to observe how politically formidable and astute a personality in her own right had been his mother, Catherine, or Kate, Coll. In *'Judging Dev: a reassessment of the life and legacy of Eamon de Valera'* (2007), Diarmaid Ferriter treated Kate Coll as an otherwise irrelevant nonentity beyond the nine months Dev had spent in her womb. Ferriter's sole

mention of her is contained in his reference to Dev's New York birth to *"an Irish emigrant mother"*, but one whom he chose not even to mention by name!

In what is the best biography, *'De Valera: Rise 1882-1932'*, David McCullagh does indeed refer to Coll respectfully, beginning with her maiden name, Kate Coll, and subsequently under her successive married names of de Valera and Wheelwright, as in the following account of her actions in respect of Dev's imprisonment in the wake of the 1916 Rising:

"Kate Wheelwright was also determined to play her part. 'Although I am old and frail now Almighty God has given me nerves of steel.' She was convinced her son had been badly treated and collected documents to prove his American birth."

Thereafter, however, McCullagh only features Kate as the passive recipient of

Committee had likewise mysteriously scattered. At the hotel where rooms had been booked, the proprietor was embarrassed and could only supply addresses of the absentees. The secretary said that His Honour the judge had left word that the Irish meeting was cancelled. True, the City Hall had been booked; the street-cars and hoardings had been posted with preliminary announcements, for there had been no time to cancel these, but that could not be helped: the meeting must be abandoned. I did not see it in that light myself, and was wondering what could be done with only a few hours left to do anything, and in a strange and unfriendly town.

Mrs Wheelwright to the Rescue

Then a phone bell rang: a lady called me up. It was Catherine Wheelwright. Her son was then serving a life-sentence in a British convict-prison. I took a taxi to her home: we discussed the situation and formed a joint plan of campaign. Together we visited a few citizens, but shortly gave up the effort as vain. Then to the City Hall, where we were told that the fee must be paid down in advance and in full—it was 80 dollars and it cleaned out the treasury. But the blue-eyed white-haired lady said with a smile that we would collect that much in the hall later. We did and more. Then in a taxi to the press: we had a 'good press', for it was a good story, of the judges and bankers who ran away and the meeting to be held notwithstanding. It all came out in the evening editions and 'tickled' the town. When we reached the hall we found a throng waiting outside. We had the platform all to ourselves, but we managed. Mrs Wheelwright took the Chair. And the 'real Irish' came along, took off their hats and collected in them more than enough to defray all expenses. The meeting was a success: the stampede was stopped: no other town followed Rochester's bad example. I suppose the judge and the others eventually returned.

Her Later Years

That was my first meeting with Mrs Wheelwright. She inquired for news of her son, but was not unduly worried, for she had feared that he would be executed. So she could wait and be patient, she said. A serene, placid woman, Irish to the core, full of memories of Ireland and of her own Bruree, which I happened to know very well from my own childhood days. Later, in 1922, I met her again, frailer, but still the same. She had no use for the Treaty. In national affairs she had a true instinct: in judging of men a native shrewdness, a kindly sense of humour. She helped our mission for the Republican Prisoners' Dependents Fund, came now and then to New York to attend Republican meetings. A quiet and steadfast worker, and one that could be depended upon in a crisis to stand firm. Such is my memory of Catherine Wheelwright." *

Peter Brooke

Solzhenitsyn's Two Centuries Together.

Part 16: *Kishinev (The Pogroms, Part 6)*

Self-Defence

Jewish Self-Assertion In Gomel

Solzhenitsyn's main argument throughout the period covered so far has been that the Russian Government was not involved in fomenting anti-Jewish pogroms:

"Why has the simple truth about the Kishinev pogrom seemed to be insufficient? Probably because the truth would have revealed the real nature of the government - an organism that had become sclerotic, guilty of anti-Jewish provocations [brimades in the French translation] but which remained unsure of itself, incoherent. So, with the help of outright lies, it has been represented as a deliberate persecutor, sure of itself, wicked. Such an enemy could only deserve a complete annihilation."¹

The importance of this argument (and modern academic research seems to agree with it) is that throughout the world many people—the great majority of people who took an interest in the matter and certainly the great majority of Jews, saw the Tsarist Government in much the same light as they were later, with much more justification, to see Nazi Germany. Within the Russian Empire itself the sense of moral outrage led many Jews into the Revolutionary movement, with intense divisions as to whether Jews should work with other radical forces, Socialist or Liberal, or assert their own separate interest—an autonomous legal system, territorial or non-territorial, within the Russian Empire, or seeking a territory of their own outside the Empire, whether it had to be Palestine or not.

What all the tendencies had in common was a contempt for the Tsarist system. It should be said that this was not absolutely universal. In his book *The Education of a true believer*, Solzhenitsyn's old friend Lev Kopelev (the sympathetic 'Stalinist' Lev Rubin of *In The First Circle*) talks of the portrait of

¹ Although I am still giving page references to the French translation I have found that an unofficial translation of the whole text can be found on the internet (previously there was a selection, mainly from Vol ii, the Soviet period) at <https://mlpol.net/images/src/65A1DD03A79064CE0A0D0A173D863245-20619817.pdf>

the Tsar and family loyalty in his own Jewish childhood home in Kiev. Which he presents as having been wholly sincere. But one of Solzhenitsyn's recurrent complaints is that many professional or commercially successful Jews who themselves had done well out of the Tsarist system (and for that very reason tended to move in Liberal circles) still gave moral support to their own more radical children.

The Kishinev pogrom was followed in August 1903 by a pogrom in Gomel. Gomel, or Homel, in the south eastern part of modern Belorussia, had been the site of a major massacre of Jews during the Khelmnitsky Rising in the seventeenth century. It had been incorporated into the Russian Empire in the first Polish partition. According to an account in the Jewish Encyclopaedia:

"Anti-Jewish outbreaks occurred in Gomel in Sept. 1903. Rumours of impending riots had been circulated in the latter part of the previous month. The trouble arose on Friday, Sept. 11, when a watchman wished to buy from a Jewish woman a barrel of herring worth six roubles for one rouble fifty copecks. In the fight which followed between the Jewish pedlars of the market-place and the Christians who came to the aid of the watchman, one of the Christians was injured and died the same day. The riot was renewed on the following day, and when it had been quelled the town was practically under martial law. Meanwhile a number of anti-Semitic agitators, probably executing the orders of the authorities, inflamed the passions of the mob, exhorting them not to leave their fellow Christians unavenged. On Monday, Sept. 14, about 100 railway employees gathered and began to break the windows and to enter and plunder the houses of the Jews in the poorest quarters of the town, one of which is called "Novaya Amerika" ("New America"). A number of Jews armed and began to defend themselves, but the soldiers prevented them from entering the streets where the plundering was going on, and forced them back to their homes, beating and arresting

those who resisted. According to a reliable report, other soldiers and the police looked on in an indifferent way while the mob continued its plundering and committed all kinds of excesses. The shrieks of children could be heard in the streets which the soldiers had blocked against the Jews without; and when some of the Jews tried to force their way down the side-streets, the soldiers fired on them, wounding several among them and killing six. The total number of Jews killed is given as 25; seriously injured, 100; slightly injured, 200. Three hundred and seventy-two Jewish houses and 200 stores were plundered and destroyed." ²

Solzhenitsyn, basing his account on police reports and on the accounts of the trial, describes it as confrontation between two equally aggressive sides. In March 1903, he says, the Bund had organised celebrations of the assassination of Alexander II. We saw in the article on Kishinev ³ that one of the major effects on Jewish consciousness was shame at the failure to fight back (though we also saw from Steven Zipperstein's account that there had been more resistance on the part of the Jews than was publicly acknowledged at the time). An article by Stefan Wiese quotes "a leaflet published soon after the pogrom and authored by eminent Jewish writers from Russia, among them Bialik, Simon Dubnov", and Ahad Ha'am' as saying:

"Had we not been deprived of fundamental human rights, had the masses not seen us daily in our humiliation in this country and not felt the hatred and contempt showered upon us from on high, the power of a few agitators would not have been strong enough to lead the masses to robbery and murder in broad daylight. But [...] as the boorish masses see our degradation and hear our shame day in and out—it is only natural that this constant agitation implants a strong belief in the hearts of the rabble that a Jew is not human; that there is no obligation to treat him justly, like other human beings; that his property, his honour, and his very life are disowned, and for spilling his blood no one is held accountable. [...] Do we still intend to remain contented with tears and supplications in the future? It is a disgrace for five million human souls [...] to stretch their necks to slaughter and cry for help, without as much as attempting to defend their own prop-

erty, honour and lives. [...] Brothers! The blood of our brethren in Kishinev cries out to us! Shake off the dust and become men! Stop weeping and pleading, stop lifting your hands for mercy to those who hate and exclude you! Look to your own hands for rescue! A permanent organisation is needed in all our communities, which would be standing guard and prepared to face the enemy at the outset, to quickly gather to the place of riots any men who have the courage to face danger."

He continues:

"This new development among Jewish intellectuals coincided with another among socialists. Not long before the onset of the new wave of pogroms, various revolutionary parties began to establish their own armed detachments as a defensive measure against the government's apparatus of repression and, in the long run, as a nucleus for a future revolutionary uprising. The Bund, for example, established its first "battle squads" in 1902 and re-designated most of them as self-defence units in 1903. Since Jewish and socialist circles most widely interpreted the pogroms as instigated by the state, there was a great tendency to see the goals of opposition to autocracy, resistance to pogroms and an emotional rehabilitation of Russia's Jews as being congruent.

"This was the situation when, after the Kishinev pogrom, a self-defence movement emerged. Young men (and some women) willing to risk their lives joined with experienced political activists providing organisational knowledge and skills, while the more wealthy Jews granted material support. When the next significant pogrom came in September 1903 in the city of Gomel, a well organised self-defence unit was present, and its actions were seen as a major success. It motivated Vladimir I. Zhabotinskii to modify Bialik's then famous words on Kishinev ("the grief is huge but so is the shame"). With regard to Gomel', Zhabotinskii wrote:

"The Jewish street before and after Kishinev is by far not the same [...] The shame of Kishinev was the last shame. Then came Gomel'. Jewish grief was repeated even more merciless than before - but not the shame". ⁴

⁴ Stefan Wiese: "Spit Back with Bullets!" Emotions in Russia's Jewish Pogroms, 1881-1905, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft—Gefühle gegen Juden*, October - December 2013, pp. 472-501. Passages quoted, pp.488-90. Stefan Wiese is (or was, in 2016), Research assistant at the Department of History of Eastern Europe in the Humboldt University of Berlin. The lacunae in his quotations ([...]) are in his original.

At the trial in October 1904, according to Solzhenitsyn, the Jewish lawyers walked out because Jews (the self-defence groups) were being tried together with the Christians (44 Christians and 36 Jews). Solzhenitsyn also says (p.371) that in Autumn 1903, liberal lawyers had been willing to defend those accused of engaging in the Kishinev pogrom provided they gave evidence that they had received government support; they resigned collectively because the court had refused to arraign the Minister of the Interior, Plehve.

1905 - War And Revolution

There was a large increase in Jewish emigration to the US in the years 1904 and 1905. Solzhenitsyn attributes this not to Kishinev or Gomel but to the desire to avoid conscription in the Russo-Japanese War, which began in February 1904 (NS) with the surprise Japanese attack on Port Arthur in China, which had been leased to Russia as the only port on the Pacific that the Russians could use all the year round. The War turned on rivalry between the two Powers for influence in China and Korea.

He quotes the *Jewish Encyclopaedia* saying that the proportion of Jews in 1902 was 30 and for 1903, 34 for every Christian evading Conscription. But he also quotes the *Encyclopaedia* saying that, during the War, there were between 20,000 and 30,000 Jews serving, together with 3,000 Jewish doctors, and that both the generally anti-semitic journal *Novoe Vremia* and General Denikin paid tribute to the quality of their service (Solzhenitsyn, pp.386-7).

Nonetheless the Japanese military effort, and eventual spectacular victory, were rendered possible by a huge loan —\$200 million—from the American Jewish banker Jacon Schiff. Schiff also used his very considerable influence to prevent any American loans going to Tsarist Russia. Assuming that his intention was to improve the conditions of Jews in Russia it doesn't strike me as a good way of going about it.

In his account of the 1905 Revolution and the events surrounding it, Solzhenitsyn lays great stress on the role of the Jews, in this case acting in support of the general revolutionary cause rather than a specifically Jewish interest. Notable examples include Grigori Gershuni and Mikhail Gots, who feature among the founders of the Social Revolutionary Party. Gershuni in particular was active,

² *Jewish Encyclopedia* (1901-1905), Volume 16 p450-451

³ *Church and State*, No.142, October-December, 2020 and <http://www.peterbrooke.org/politics-and-theology/solzhenitsyn/pogroms-4/>

together with Mikhail's brother Abram Gots, in the Party's '*Combat Organisation*', responsible for a number of important assassinations including, in 1904, Vyacheslav von Plehve, accused of being behind the Kishinev Pogrom, and in 1905, Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich who, as Governor of Moscow had been responsible for the mass expulsion of Jewish artisans in 1891.⁵ Gershuni was arrested in 1904 and replaced as head of the Combat organisation by Yevno Azef, also Jewish, later revealed as having been a police informer and agent provocateur.

Frankel (whose concern is mainly with specifically Jewish politics, rather than Jews involved in general revolutionary politics) mentions Gershuni in passing as one of an array of revolutionaries who visited the Jewish community in New York in 1906, raising money for a variety of causes. He quotes the Jewish Socialist leader Moyshe Baranov, writing in January 1906:

"Never has one danced in the Russian colony in New York as during this last year. One danced for the Bund; one danced for the free-thinking Socialist-Revolutionaries; and one even danced for the scientific Social Democrats. One danced for the Jewish widows and orphans in Odessa, for the revolutionary sailors in Sebastopol, for the Latvian socialists and the Polish socialists... The more they went on strike and went hungry in Europe, the more one danced in New York. The more the shooting over there, the more the quadrilles danced over here." ⁶

In particular, Solzhenitsyn (p.396) draws attention to the interesting case of Pinchas/Pyotr Rutenberg.

The starting point for the 1905 Revolution is generally seen as 'Bloody Sunday' on the 9th (20th) January, when troops fired into a crowd of workers and peasants advancing on the Winter Palace in St Petersburg. The crowd was led by an Orthodox priest, Father Georgiy Gapon, and was carrying icons and portraits of the Tsar. It was, in appearance at least, anything but revolutionary.

⁵ After the assassination, his wife Elizabeth—like her sister the Tsarina Alexandra, a grand daughter of Queen Victoria—became a nun and founded an order which, unusually for Orthodox monks and nuns, was devoted to good works among the poor. She was killed by the Cheka in 1918 and is recognised by the Orthodox Church as a saint and martyr.

⁶ Jonathan Frankel: *Prophecy and politics—Socialism, Nationalism and the Russian Jews, 1862-1917*, Cambridge University Press, 1984 (first published 1981), p.492.

Gapon had been the founder in 1904 of the '*Assembly of Russian Factory and Plant Workers*'. This was one of the 'police unions' set up following an initiative of S.V. Zubatov, Chief of the Moscow *Okhrana* (political police), with the intention of emphasising purely economic rather than political demands. Zubatov had been appointed head of the whole *Okhrana* in August 1902 but was dismissed by the Interior Minister, Plehve, after the contradictions between the police and the police union were drawn to breaking point by a General Strike in Odessa in 1903. However, Plehve continued to experiment with officially recognised unions. To give the account by Richard Pipes:

"One of the post- Zubatov unions which he authorised was led by a priest, Father George Gapon. The son of a Ukrainian peasant, Gapon was a charismatic figure who genuinely identified with the workers and their grievances. He was inspired by Leo Tolstoy and agreed to cooperate with the authorities only after considerable hesitation. With the blessing of the governor-general of the capital, I. A. Fullon, he founded the Assembly of Russian Factory and Plant Workers to work for the moral and cultural uplifting of the working class. (He stressed religion rather than economic issues and admitted only Christians.) Plehve approved Gapon's union in February 1904. It enjoyed great popularity and opened branches in different quarters of the city: toward the end of 1904, it was said to have 11,000 members and 8,000 associates, which overshadowed the St. Petersburg Social-Democratic organisation, numerically insignificant to begin with and composed almost entirely of students. The police watched Gapon's activities with mixed feelings, for as his organisation prospered he displayed worrisome signs of independence, to the point of attempting, without authorisation, to open branches in Moscow and Kiev. It is difficult to tell what was on Gapon's mind, but there is no reason to regard him as a "police agent" in the ordinary meaning of the term—that is, a man who betrayed associates for money—because he indubitably sympathised with his workers and identified with their aspirations. Unlike the ordinary agent provocateur, he also did not conceal his connections with the authorities: Governor Fullon openly participated in some of his functions. Indeed, by late 1904 it was difficult to tell whether the police were using Gapon or Gapon the police, for by that time he had become the most outstanding labor leader in Russia." ⁷

⁷ Richard Pipes: *The Russian Revolution*,

The period prior to 1905 saw intense activity on the part of the 'Union of Liberation' whose main activity in Russia consisted of a series of 'banquets' in which toasts were proposed demanding constitutional reform, following the example of the revolutionaries in France (and Britain) in the late eighteenth century. This was the movement that later in 1905 gave birth to the Constitutional Democratic Party—the 'Cadets'. Dismissed by the Social Democrats as 'bourgeois', its leading theorist, Peter Struve, had previously been responsible for the first programme of the Russian Social Democratic movement and the Liberation movement was closely allied with the Social Revolutionaries. If we follow Pipes's account it was this movement that provided the main political impetus through most of the events of 1905.

It also attracted the support of many Jews. Quoting Solzhenitsyn (pp.387-8):

"Like all the Russian liberals they showed themselves to be "defeatists" during the war with Japan. Like them they applauded the "execution" of the ministers Bogolepov, Sipiagin, Plehve."

It was in this context that the '*Society for the attainment of full civil rights for the Jewish people*' was formed and its demands became a central feature of the Cadet platform.

Pipes quotes Gapon's own account of his involvement with the Liberation Movement:

"Meanwhile, the great conference of the Zemstvos took place in November, and was followed by the petition of Russian barristers for a grant of law and liberty. I could not but feel that the day when freedom would be wrested from the hands of our old oppressors would be near, and at the same time I was terribly afraid that, for lack of support on the side of the masses, the effort might fail. I had a meeting with several intellectual Liberals, and asked their opinion as to what the workmen could do to help the liberation movement. They advised me that we also should draft a petition and present it to the Government. But I did not think that such a petition would be of much value unless it were accompanied by a large industrial strike."

Pipes continues:

"Gapon's testimony leaves no doubt 1899-1919, Fontana Press, 1992 (first published 1990), p.22.

that the worker petition that led to Bloody Sunday was conceived by his advisers from the Liberation Movement as part of the campaign of banquets and professional gatherings. At the end of November, Gapon agreed to introduce into his Assembly the resolutions of the Zemstvo Congress and to distribute to its members publications of the Union of Liberation.

"The opportunity for a major strike presented itself on December 20, 1904 with the dismissal of four workers belonging to his Assembly by Putilov, the largest industrial enterprise in the capital. Because the Putilov management had recently founded a rival union, the workers viewed the dismissals as an assault on their Assembly and went on strike. Other factories struck in sympathy. On January 7, an estimated 82,000 workers were out; the following day, their number grew to 120,000. By then, St. Petersburg was without electricity and newspapers; all public places were closed.

"Imitating the banquet campaign, Gapon on January 6 scheduled for Sunday, January 9, a worker procession to the Winter Palace to present the Tsar with a petition. As was the case with all the documents drafted by or with the assistance of the Union of Liberation, the petition generalised and politicised specific and unpolitical grievances, claiming that there could be no improvement in the condition of the workers unless the political system was radically changed. Written in a stilted language meant to imitate worker speech, it called for a Constituent Assembly and made other demands taken from the programme of the Union of Liberation. Gapon sent copies of the petition to high officials. Preparations for the demonstration went ahead despite the opposition of the socialists" (pp.22-4).

Pyotr/Pinchas Rutenberg— Social Revolutionary And Pioneer Of Electrification Of Palestine/Israel

What Pipes doesn't mention is that marching at Gapon's side was the Social Revolutionary Pyotr Rutenberg who, after his student days, had become a worker in the Putilov Works. According to Solzhenitsyn (p.396):

"In 1905 he trained groups of fighters in Petersburg and furnished them with arms. Inspirer of Gapon, he was at his side on the 9th January, 1905."

More detail is given in an article on the Tel Aviv street name website, based on research by Tel Aviv University Professor Matityahu Mintz (presumably

translated rather awkwardly from an original in Hebrew).⁸

"Rutenberg heard from the workers at the Putilov factory about the intention to hold a mass march headed by Father Gapon. The march was supposed to march toward the Winter Palace to present a petition to Tzar Nicholas II of Russia. This demonstration took place in January and was called "Bloody Sunday". It marked the beginning of the revolution of 1905. Rutenberg reported the plan to his party leaders and they ordered him to take part in the demonstration and supervise its actions. He was an activist and also engaged in political assassinations, so he knew a thing or two about organising and demonstrating. He tried to persuade Father Gapon and his men to equip themselves with weapons and prepare escape routes... Gapon never imagined that the revered ruler would shoot his soldiers / loyal sons. Of course, the naïve predictions did not materialise, and the soldiers fired at the unarmed crowd. The only one who did not lose his temper was Rutenberg. Having been ordered to follow Gapon. Rutenberg convinced Gapon to quickly cut his hair and shave his beard, and dress in ordinary clothes. Rutenberg then transferred the wanted priest by the authorities from one apartment to another until they hid him in the apartment of his best friend, the writer Maxim Gorky.

"On the orders of his party leaders, Rutenberg smuggled the priest out of Russia and accompanied him on his tours of European cities. The arrival of Gapon aroused great excitement with the leaders of the various camps of the Russian revolutionary movement. He became a sought-after guest in the home of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin and Krupskaya, as well as in the home of Plekhanov, the father of Russian Marxism. Rutenberg even brought him to Paris where he met Georges Clemenceau and Jean Jaures. As a faithful, conservative, and monarchist cleric, he did not find a common language with the radical revolutionaries. The only one with whom he had created a friendship with, was Rutenberg, whose status in the party because of his connections with him had been upgraded. In the meantime, the revolution in Russia gained momentum and Gapon missed his homeland and its workers rising on barricades. Rumours circulated [sic. circulating? - PB] in Russia about his hedonistic way of life, his visits to the casino and his contacts with women caused him to seek to purify his

name again. He applied for a return and his request was accepted."

In 1906, however, after his return, Gapon was accused in Social Revolutionary circles of being a police agent and Rutenberg was instrumental in his execution. Since Azef, who really was a police informer, was involved in the accusation the whole affair is very murky.

Rutenberg's subsequent career is interesting. Apparently upset by his role in Gapon's murder, he took refuge in Italy, where he became friendly with the still Socialist Benito Mussolini. There, according to Mintz,

"he began to remember his Jewishness. Along with the understanding that the revolution would not, as many Jews believed, defeat anti-semitism and the atmosphere of national awakening that enveloped everything, made him "return to his people". (Grammar as in original).

During the First World War he took up the idea of a Jewish Legion formed in support of the British 'liberation' of Palestine—an idea mainly associated with Jabotinsky, but Mintz felt Rutenberg's role had been underestimated. Mintz also argues that he continued his allegiance to the Russian Social Revolutionary cause:

"The evidence of maintaining the connection and preference for the interests of the party will be its [sic. his?] rapid and smooth integration in the future at the top of the government during the Kerensky Social Revolutionary period."

Kerensky appointed him Deputy Governor of Petrograd,

"where he took a hard hand against opponents of the regime. It was reported that he had proposed to arrest and hang the Bolshevik leaders, Lenin and Trotsky, but the liberal and hesitant Kerensky refused."

He was one of the last to hold out against the Bolshevik coup in the siege of the Winter Palace. After a period of imprisonment he escaped Russia and turned up at the Versailles Peace Conference where he met "*his great friend Nahman Syrkin*" (who will be discussed in the last article in this series) in arguing for a recognition of Jewish national rights.

Subsequently, in Palestine, he introduced electricity to the country through the 'Jaffa Electric Corporation' (1921) which became the 'Palestine Electric Corporation Ltd' in 1923 (and the 'Israel

8 <https://www.en.tlvstreets.com/Pinchas-Rutenberg.html>. Mintz, a Polish Jew who escaped to Israel in 1941, died in 2016.

Electric Corporation' in 1961).

Solzhenitsyn, with his Zionist sympathies, approves:

"In 1919 he emigrated to Israel where he distinguished himself in the electrification of the country. There he showed that he was capable of building; but in the days of his youth in Russia, he was far from any work of engineering, he was a destroyer!"

He was one of the founders of the *Hagannah* and, with a well established strong man reputation, became leader of the Jewish National Council in the crises of 1929 and 1939.

Self-Defence —

The Bund And Zhitomir Pogrom

Solzhenitsyn (pp.400-401) tells us that the Bund played a central role in the events following Bloody Sunday:

"The Bund immediately published a proclamation ("with around 200,000 copies"): 'The revolution has begun. It has taken fire in the capital, its flames will cover the the whole country... To arms! Seize the armouries by force and take hold of all the weapons... Let every street become a battlefield.'

"According to the Red Chronicle⁹ account of the beginnings of the Soviet régime, "the events of the 9th January in Petersburg struck a chord with the heart of the Jewish workers movement: they were followed by mass demonstrations of the Jewish proletariat throughout the Zone of Residence. These were led by the Bund." To ensure mass participation in these demonstrations, detachments from the Bund visited workshops, factories, installations and even the homes of workers calling on them to stop work; they used force to empty boilers of their steam, tore out drive belts; they threatened the owners of the enterprises, here and there shots were fired, in Vitebsk one of them had sulphuric acid thrown at him. It wasn't "a spontaneous mass demonstration but a carefully prepared and organised action." N. Buchbinder regrets, however, that "almost everywhere the strikes were followed only by the Jewish workers... In a whole series of towns the Russian workers put up a strong

resistance to the attempts to stop factories and plants." There were week-long strikes in Vilnius, Minsk, Gomel, Riga, of two weeks in Libava. The police had to intervene, naturally, and in several cities the Bund constituted "armed detachments to combat police terror." In Krinki (the province of Grodno), the strikers shot at the police, interrupted telegraphic communications, and for two days all the power was in the hands of the strike committee. "The fact that workers, and among them a majority of Jews, had thus been able to hold power from the beginning of 1905, was very significant of what this revolution was, and gave rise to many hopes." It is no less true that the Bund's important participation in these actions "might lead one to believe that discontent was above all the doing of the Jews, while the other nationalities were not as revolutionary as all that".

The last quotation comes from Semyon Dimanstein, an Old Bolshevik active in Vilnius in 1904 in opposition to the Bund. He was appointed head in 1918 of the Commissariat for Jewish National Affairs, and a supporter of the Jewish Autonomous Oblast in the Russian Far East (Birobidzhan). Executed in 1938. *The Bund*, it should be said, are barely mentioned in the 840 odd pages of Pipes's book.

Solzhenitsyn goes on to talk about the pogrom which occurred in April 1905 in Zhitomir, quoting Dimanstein as saying: "*It wasn't a pogrom but a fight against the forces of the counter revolution.*" Stefan Wiese, whom I quoted earlier on Jewish determination to fight back against violence and insults, has an account of the events in Zhitomir which partly confirms Solzhenitsyn's view, but only partly. One is left with the impression of two different confrontations, one of which could be described as a confrontation between two equally aggressive parties, but the other is more like an old fashioned nineteenth century pogrom.

Zhitomir is situated to the West of Kiev, on the main road between Kiev and Brest. Jews constituted about a third of the population. The Christian population was divided almost equally between Catholic and Orthodox. There was a Catholic Cathedral. The fact that modern Zhitomir has at least three Orthodox churches claiming to be 'cathedrals'—one attached to the Moscow patriarchate, one to the Kyiv patriarchate and a third I think attached to the older Ukrainian Autonomous Orthodox Church—suggests, together with its situ-

ation to the West, that there is a strong sense of Ukrainian national identity. So the rumour that Jewish self defence groups were using a portrait of the Tsar for target practice may not have been quite as offensive to the sensibilities of the Orthodox population as Solzhenitsyn thinks it should have been. Nonetheless, the fact that Jews were retiring to the woods to train in the use of firearms was worrying enough in itself.

The inspiration for the development of self defence groups was Gomel, seen as the beginning of the reassertion of Jewish pride. According to Wiese:

"Large swathes of the local Jewry supported the foundation of a self-defence unit in Zhitomir. But organising the illegal battle-squads, obtaining firearms and establishing conspiratorial commando-structures was impossible without the resources of local socialist networks. In Zhitomir, the main players were the SR and the Bund [...] It must also be acknowledged that a conflict of interest existed between the majority of the Jewish population, that strove to prevent or minimise violence, and the agenda of revolutionary parties which, by their very nature, thrived through the destabilisation and discrediting of state order.

This conflict inspired the battle-squad units of Zhitomir from the point of their first public action, which occurred during demonstrations against "Bloody Sunday" in January 1905. On 15 January, they participated in a rally, accompanying their revolutionary songs and slogans with revolver shots. Then, from 25 to 26 January, local socialists planned to impose a general strike on the city. Groups armed with knives and revolvers threatened those employers who were unwilling to close their shops down; some additionally had their windows smashed."

As a result, despite the opposition of older Jews, "*The message of the revolutionary self-defense was thus construed by large parts of the non-Jewish population as ethnic, not social or political opposition.*"

In addition, as a result of the new Jewish self assertiveness there were repeated gentile complaints about Jews jamming the sidewalks and unwilling to give way to passers-by. Some of them were, allegedly, even insulted and attacked by young men out of a Jewish crowd. Consequently, "*people in the city began to say: The Jew is revolting, the Jews must be curbed.*" The quotation is from a letter sent by the Attorney of the Zhitomir regional court to the Minister of Justice.

⁹ According to the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia (3rd ed, 1970-9), The Red Chronicle (Krasnaia letopis') was 'a historical journal of the Petrograd (later Leningrad) Institute of Party History ... Krasnaia Letopis' was published from 1922 to 1934 and from 1936 to 1937. The journal published memoirs and articles on the history of the Bolshevik Party and of the Great October Socialist Revolution, devoting its main attention to the history of the Leningrad party organisation and the history of Leningrad's factories and plants.'

Ziev continues:

"It was the self-defence itself that added one more disquieting ingredient to the already delicate situation in the city, as its leadership began to convene secret meetings for the purpose of military practice and political agitation. For conspiratorial reasons, they usually took place in the forests outside the city; but here they could not pass unnoticed by local peasants. In the villages, news spread about hundreds of Jews, who practiced shooting at a portrait of the Tsar. While contemporary press accounts depicted the latter as a mere myth, an investigation by the deputy Director of the Police Department produced considerable if not definite evidence to suggest that the gunshots at the Emperor's portrait had in fact occurred. For instance, on 13 April 1905, a self-defence meeting close to the village of Psyshche with speeches and shooting practice dispersed into small groups. One of them headed for the village crossing a sown field and was attacked by local peasants. Despite having defended themselves with firearms, one Jew was seriously wounded, while the peasants were left unharmed.

"News about the shooting of the Tsar's portrait spread rapidly in Zhitomir and its surroundings, and so did the idea that Jews might seek vengeance for their defeat near Psyshche. Peasants began to guard their houses at night fearing Jewish attacks or arson. In more general terms, the very emergence of the self-defence was interpreted as a threat, because rumour had it that "the Jews intend to retaliate against the Christians for the pogroms of Kishinev and Gomel." As Easter approached, it was even said that the Jews planned to blow up the (Orthodox or Catholic, by different versions) cathedral and to "massacre the Christians." In the mind of the populace, thus was the message of active self-defence mingled with current fears of terrorist attacks and prevalent understandings of reciprocal violence. Hence, large parts of the gentile population expected a major outbreak of violence as much as did the Jews, but with the inverted role of prospective victim and perpetrator."

Trouble was expected at Easter and the governor had ordered a massive increase in military and police patrols but the actual confrontation began on St. George's Day, when a group of Jews out on a boating trip were stoned by a group of peasants enjoying a picnic on the bank. This produced a standoff the following day on the Cathedral Square *"between a group of some seventy 'tidily dressed Christian workers' that occupied*

the one side, and a number of Jews on the other".

In the middle of this news spread of the assassination of Police Superintendent Kuiaarov, head of the First Police District of the city, accused of "excessive violence" in putting down the troubles that had followed the events of Bloody Sunday. Later accounts attribute to Kuiaarov a role similar to that of Khrushchev in Kishinev of fomenting anti-Jewish sentiment in the town, but Ziev finds this very doubtful. He also points out that Kuiaarov was in trouble with his own superiors:

"Zhitomir's police chief stated that he was more than willing to have Kuiaarov removed from office, the Governor confirming the necessity of this measure; his dismissal was imminent at the time of his assassination."

By Ziev's account the assassination had the effect of scaring Chief of Police Ianovitskii, into inaction, leaving the responsibility for dealing with the situation in the hands of the army which, however, was forbidden by its rules of engagement from using force without the permission of the civil authority. Ziev stresses, as did Klier writing about the nineteenth century pogroms, that in any case the Russian police were grossly undermanned and underfunded.

The Jewish group on Cathedral Square eventually broke when they realised that—

"the real pogrom was not going to take place in the city centre, but in Podol. Within the "Christian" crowd, one more Jew was beaten to death before the military encircled some 50 members of the mob and took them in the police station. Yet, even as they were escorted, two pogromists managed to stab another Jew, an accidental bystander, while the convoy was interrupted by a trolley car."

"Podol was the poor Jewish district of Zhitomir, situated along gulleys running down to the Kamenka river. A bridge connected it to the even poorer outskirts of Malevanka, inhabited predominantly by Russian old-believers,¹⁰ who were notorious for their unruly and criminal behaviour."

10 For those who don't know, 'old believers' were Orthodox Christians who had refused to accept certain liturgical reforms introduced by the Moscow Patriarchate in the seventeenth century. Solzhenitsyn often draws attention to them as a religious minority who suffered more legal restraints than the Jews.

Jews had been guarding the bridge in anticipation of trouble until the evening, when:

"some dozens of the hooligans bypassed the bridge and crossed the river at a nearby ford to enter into the Podolian "rear". Taken by surprise, the Jews at the bridge panicked, and the self-defence was crushed. In the course of a few minutes at least six persons were killed and 30 wounded. The pogromists began to sack shops and houses and to smash whatever valuables could not be carried away, such as stoves and window panes. Only around 11 p.m. the state showed up in Podol in the shape of some soldiers, who by their mere presence brought the pogrom to a preliminary end."

But the violence resumed the next day until, *"On 26 April, the Governor finally issued a conclusive firing order, military reinforcements arrived and the pogrom came to an end."*

One interesting aspect of this is that the Christians were in general armed with sticks, stones, knives, while the Jews were armed with revolvers, which they made a point of displaying prominently. Yet, according to Wiese:

"Of the 18 persons killed during the pogrom, 16 were Jews. If one adds Nikolai Blinov [a Christian who tried to intercede with the Christian mob on behalf of the Jews—PB], there remains one person killed under unclear circumstances. Nine Christians were wounded so gravely that they required treatment in one of the city's hospitals - compared to 82 Jews."

As Wiese comments: *"Although insufficient firearm skills and nerves may have played a role, it seems that in Zhitomir the "battle squads" largely confined themselves to warning shots above the heads of the attackers."*

Wiese doesn't say it but I think one can assume that, despite the new aggressiveness of the Jews, there was a feeling that actually to shoot one of the 'Christians' would have terrible consequences. Either that or among Jews of revolutionary sympathies the notion of shooting peasants and workers was intolerable. It was much better to regard them as the dupes of dark forces.

The main lesson Wiese extracts out of all that is that the self defence groups were more effective in provoking pogroms than in preventing them. He concludes:

"The local Jews, it seems, did learn a lesson from the events. When a wave of

over 600 exceptionally cruel pogroms swept across the Pale of Settlement in October and November 1905, Zhitomir was spared. No commentator attributed this to a success of the local self-defence. Instead, a crucial role was played by the conservative parts of local Jewry that had formed a "Union for the pacification" in the wake of the April pogrom. They understood the prevalent pattern of pogroms arising from patriotic manifestations and organised an ostentatious Jewish demonstration of devotion and loyalty to the Tsar with several thousands of participants at the very day a pogrom was expected to break out. Even the progressive Jewish journal "Voskhod" assumed that this step was the single decisive measure to prevent a new pogrom. Efforts to avert pogroms were not the exclusive domain of

young radicals, and self-defence was not always the most promising way to prevent anti-Jewish violence ...

"The battle squads were designed to prevent and to limit pogroms, but at the same time, they were part of a political, generational and emotional project. The self-defence promoted, at least indirectly, a socialist revolution; it was an instrument of the young and unattached to claim power over the elderly, conservative and well established. Additionally, it emphasised Jewish self-assertion and pride. The conflict of objectives that prevailed between these goals has not yet been fully recognised by historiography, although it significantly contributes to the explanation of the self-defence's failure, at least in Zhitomir."

TO BE CONTINUED

Mr. Geldof is entitled to his opinions but in making those statements he would have known that the Rising has special significance for many Dubliners and indeed for many people, Irish and non-Irish, across the world.

Mr Geldof chose to return the honorary scroll that granted him Freedom of the City as part of a publicity stunt that was unnecessary in the sense that members of Dublin City Council were already taking steps to remove the accolade from Aung San Suu Kyi. Now that he has by his own actions opened the question of his suitability for the honour, I hope that the Council will note that Mr Geldof no longer enjoys anything like the unanimous support of Dubliners. His name should not be reinstated on the city's role of honour.

D. Alvey"

A Spurious Comparison

Republicans and citizens sympathetic to the politics of the Irish national tradition will readily recognise Geldof's grandstanding for what it is but it is still instructive to spell out the spurious nature of the comparison he made between the 1916 rebels and the perpetrators of the Lahore bombing of March 2016.

It is well known that James Connolly was taken aback when the British army used heavy artillery to bomb rebel positions in 1916. His surprise on that point shows that he and the other leaders considered the danger to civilians in planning the Rising. They had assumed that the welfare of civilians in what was then viewed as a British city would be considered by the military, that the risk to the lives of non-participants was relatively low.

Likewise when Pearse declared the surrender his order met with resistance from some of the other rebel garrisons. The insurrection could have been sustained for a further period but, as commander-in-chief, Pearse considered that without a chance of overall victory the risk to life occasioned by continuing the conflict was unjustifiable.

It is also relevant that the peaceful democratic avenue to political change was closed off in 1916. A change in Government without an Election had occurred in 1915 in which a number of the most inveterate opponents of Irish Home Rule, including Edward Carson and F. E. Smith, were granted official positions. John Redmond's party failed to demand an Election at that time, opt-

Dave Alvey

Boomtime Bob Caught In His Own Rat Trap

Bob Geldof, a former rock star whose band was called the *Boomtown Rats*, has for some time used the cult of celebrity to give himself a political platform. He has regularly described Ireland as a banana republic and, before and during the centenary year, he persistently denigrated the legacy of the 1916 Rising

Geldof has been in the news because Dublin City Council, under Sinn Féin Lord Mayor Mícheál Mac Donncha, refused to reinstate his Freedom of the City award after he handed it back. He handed it back with much fanfare as a way of demanding that Aung San Suu Kyi should be removed as a recipient because of her alleged complicity in the violent expulsion of Rohingya from Myanmar.

In its Irish aspect the controversy cries out for satire and the prize for best satirical response so far must surely go to the following letter which reproduces the punch line from Geldof's most famous hit song, 'Rat Trap':

"It's ironic to hear Bob Geldof isn't happy that Dublin City Council removed him from the city's roll of honour, after he handed back his Freedom of the City award. His big statement

of protest against Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi's honour has backfired on him. What does he expect in a banana republic?

Put simply, you can't have it both ways. It's a rat trap ... and you've been caught.

Brian Cullen"

(*Irish Times*, 16 December)

A more pedestrian letter, which has not been published, which I submitted to the *Irish Independent* on December 18th, fills out some relevant political context behind the controversy. It reads:

"Since Bob Geldof was awarded the Freedom of Dublin he has used his standing as an international figure to insult the memory of the rebels of Easter Week, 1916. In an interview for Event Magazine that accompanied the Mail on Sunday of April 3rd 2016 he compared the actions of the Irish rebels to those of the jihadi suicide bombers who caused the deaths of 75 people in Lahore, India.

Asked in the course of a 2016 documentary on the Rising commissioned by RTE whether he considered the GPO to be a sacred place he said it 'represents the birth of a pious, bitter and narrow-minded version of Ireland I couldn't wait to escape.'

ing to comply with all actions deemed necessary to the war effort.

Meanwhile violence on an industrial scale was being perpetrated in the trench warfare in Flanders and Northern France, and Irish males who had enlisted in the British forces under Redmond's influence continued to suffer disproportionate losses as the possibility of Home Rule faded as a realistic proposition.

Casement's influence

One aspect of the Rising that is rarely commented on is the background influence of Roger Casement's writings. From his inside knowledge of British Foreign Office diplomacy Casement became an informed opponent of British Imperialism. As Brendan Clifford states in the introduction to the Athol Books edition of Casement's book, *The Crime Against Europe*, it was Casement's reading of international affairs that placed him in sympathy with Germany, not the opportunist view that England's difficulty was Ireland's opportunity.

Referring to *The Crime Against Europe*, Clifford states

"It is a book *about* British foreign policy and, because of what followed from its publication, it is a book *of* Irish foreign policy."

He continues:

"Casement... gave a pro-German orientation to the Volunteer minority which rejected Redmond's leadership. He had a presence in world affairs as the diplomat who had exposed the Belgian atrocities in the Congo and the atrocities of international capital in South America. So his identification of himself with both the German cause and Irish separatism gave the Irish cause an immediate German orientation in the sphere of international opinion, *de facto*. This orientation was confirmed *de jure* when it was given Fenian backing" (*The Crime Against Europe*, Athol Books 2003, p. 5)

It is strange that some of Casement's political writings are only now being re-published, that his influence is only beginning to be understood a hundred years after his death. This new thinking about Casement is not confined to writers and researchers in the Athol Books camp; Angus Mitchell of the University of Limerick, and Margaret O'Callaghan of Queens University Belfast are also making important contributions. For the

purposes of the present discussion the point that needs to be made is that an important legacy of the 1916 Rising is the conviction, expressed through the diplomacy of Eamon de Valera in the League of Nations during the 1930s, that an alternative to the militarism of the Great Powers is possible in the realm of international affairs.

The Lahore bombing

The Lahore bombing of March 2016, referred to by Bob Geldof, was carried out by an affiliate of the Pakistani Taliban known as *Jamaat-ul-Ahrar*. The target of the bombing was a group of Pakistani Christians who had gathered in a public park as part of their Easter celebrations. Christians make up 2 per cent of the population of Pakistan and are a frequent target of Islamist attacks. 75 people died in the blast and 340 were injured; the casualties included many Muslims.

How the force of Islamic radicalism was won over to violent nihilism is a complex subject but one of the factors known to have caused it is collusion between US Intelligence and the Afghan Mujahideen during the Soviet-Afghan War (1979-1989). In other words, the modern scourge of violent Islamic extremism had its origin, partially at least, in a US tactic of weaponising Muslim radicals. As an act of Islamic terrorism, the Lahore bombing had the additional characteristic that, in targeting Christians, it had the purpose of inflaming inter-religious hatred.

Geldof's comparison between the Dublin Rising of Easter 1916 and the Lahore Bombing of Easter 2016 is a calculated affront to anyone who holds the Rising as important. It fails to stand up on any count. The two events are the products of radically different sets of circumstances and reflect opposite attitudes to the preservation of human life and the fomentation of sectarian hatred.

The 1916 Rising had a global significance as a revolt against the senseless militarism in which the major Powers were then engaged and its legacy favours collective security as a foil against the might of militarily powerful nations.

These points are beyond Geldof's ken for the simple reason that he is on the other side. It was no surprise to learn that, when discussing Irish politics, he quarrelled with Nelson Mandela. Nor can there be any doubt that the knighthood he holds from the Queen of England was richly deserved.

High stakes

In the course of the controversy the argument has been made that the City Council was wrong to remove Aung San Suu Kyi's name from the Dublin's Roll of Honour and that the line should therefore be, as between Geldof and the Council, '*a plague on both your houses*'.

This viewpoint ignores the high stakes that are now being played for. As this is being written, news has come through that Fianna Fail Leader Mícheál Martin is demanding that Geldof's name be re-instated on the Roll of Honour. Geldof himself has announced that he is donating the documentation associated with *Band Aid* to the National Library. Pressure, clearly, is being brought to bear on Dublin City Council.

So, should Lord Mayor Mícheál Mac Donncha be supported in the stance he is taking against Sir Bob? I say yes. Re-granting Geldof the Freedom of Dublin would represent an endorsement of the views that he has expressed on the Rising. In truth he has done more than express an opinion. In 2015 he participated in the making of a special centenary DVD that had to be withdrawn, such was the outcry against it for ignoring the actual history of 1916.

In April 2016 he gave the interview to the *Mail on Sunday*, discussed above, and later in the year the documentary on Yeats was released in which he again moralised on the baleful influence of the event that led to the founding of this State. (See the last issue of this magazine for transcripts and commentary, Ed.)

Geldof has strong views about 1916 and chose to weigh in as a combatant in a culture war that the centenary heightened. He has effectively disqualified himself from receiving an honour that is supposed to have near unanimous support from the citizens of the city.

Before and during the 1916 Centenary a tug of war was waged between the elite and the general public over how the Rising should be regarded. Fortunately, the anti-national forces have been held off!

The Origin Of Irish Catholic-Nationalism,
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136pp. Illus. Index. €14, £11.50

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36pp. €6, £5

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VOX

Democracy
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Blackballed!
The Religious Revolution

PAT

Democracy!

Believe it or Not? *Ireland* is the sixth most democratic country in the world, according to a new report.

In their newly-issued research into democracy around the world in 2019, the *Economist Intelligence Unit (The EIU)* states that there are only 22 truly democratic countries in the world, with Norway, Iceland and Sweden being the most democratic, and Ireland in sixth place, just ahead of Denmark.

The United Kingdom lies in 14th place.

The *Democracy Index* is deemed important in matters of trade—democracy means stability and a marked lack of corruption, two factors crucial in commercial as well as social development in any country.

Ireland's improved position on the index is due to advances in civil liberties in recent times in issues such as gay rights and abortion.

The EIU's *Democracy Index* provides a snapshot of the state of democracy worldwide in 165 independent states and two territories. The survey covers the vast majority of the world's states, encompassing almost the entire population of the world.

Ranking is judged on five categories: electoral process and pluralism, functioning of government, political participation, political culture, and civil liberties. Ireland, scoring high in all categories, has steadily moved up the index since 2011.

Based on its scores on a range of indicators within the categories, each country is itself classified as one of four types of regime: "full democracy", "flawed democracy", "hybrid regime" or "authoritarian regime"

Five EU countries are regarded as having flawed democracies: Portugal, Malta, Belgium, Cyprus and Greece. The rest of the EU countries, including Ireland, are regarded as full democracies.

According to the EIU's measure of democracy, almost one-half (48.4 per cent) of the world's population live in a democracy of some sort, although only 5.7 per cent reside in a "full democracy".

This is down from 8.9 per cent in 2015 as a result of the US being demoted from a "full democracy" to a "flawed democracy" in 2016.

The world's least democratic country is adjudged to be North Korea, just behind the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic.

Age Concern!

What next for the old? The blessings of Covid!

Some cultures acknowledge the wisdom of the aged—ours is increasingly becoming one in which they are considered a damn nuisance.

Blackballed!

"When Michael Smurfit took over Helys, the largest trading company on the Irish Stock Exchange in 1969, he was surprised to see in the articles of association that no Catholic may become a director of Helys. Well, perhaps not so surprised. His father Jefferson Smurfit was shunned by the predominantly Protestant business elite when he arrived from England in the 1930s, to start his box making company. When he applied to join a golf club, possibly the Strand in Clontarf, it was not for the sufficient reason of being Roman Catholic. It was instead assumed that anyone with "an unfamiliar name, a big nose and a successful business must be a Jew"— see *Embers of Revisionism*, p11" <https://www.academia.edu/34075119/>. (Niall Meehan, 1.2.2021.)

Battle Of The Sexes?

I think I read some years ago that a

reputable study had shown that generally women do talk more than men and are generally more articulate. It also found that boys learn to talk later than girls and girls make friends more easily. I'm not sure if academia has since moved to a more fashionable position. But is anything truer than the *Book of Common Prayer*?

"Man, that is born of a woman, hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery. He cometh up, and is cut down, like a flower; He fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay."

E.D.

The Religious Revolution

The *Parish Mission* movement was the single most important factor in the making and consolidating of the Devotional Revolution that took place in Ireland between 1850 and 1880. Within the space of a single generation, the majority of the Irish people were transformed into those pious and practising Catholics they have essentially remained almost to the present day. The first formal parish mission in Ireland was given by the Irish Vincentian fathers in the town of Athy in the diocese of Dublin in November and December 1842. The Rosminians began their parish missions in Ireland in 1848, and the Jesuits in 1850. They were followed by the Redemptorists in 1851, the Passionists in 1855, and the Oblates in 1856.

Soon afterwards the older religious orders in Ireland, such as the Dominicans, Franciscans, Capuchins and Augustinians, all also began to give Parish Missions. In the twenty-five years after the first Vincentian mission in 1842, therefore, not only were virtually all of the thousand parishes in Ireland visited by the missionaries of the above Religious Orders, but by 1880 nearly all of those parishes had been visited again, and some even a third and fourth time. The cumulative effect of these more than 2,000 missions was a remarkable national religious revival that profoundly affected both the character of the Irish Catholic people and the course of their history. (*A Redemptorist Missionary in Ireland, 1851-1854. Memoirs by Joseph Prost, C.Ss.R.*, Cork University Press, 1998, p.11)

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