

# IRISH POLITICAL REVIEW

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## The Psychodrama Of Current Politics

Killing people in war is a good thing. It doesn't matter on which side you do it. It doesn't matter what the object of the Army in which you do it is. Doing it is good in itself.

That is the only meaning to be got from the decision of the Irish Government to celebrate the killing done in 1916 both by the Irish Army in Ireland and the British Army in Ireland, France, Gallipoli and Mesopotamia.

A War of Independence veteran, Dan Keating, is quoted in the *Irish Times* 1916 Supplement (15 April):

"I regard this thing in Dublin as pure nonsense. It serves nothing... The whole thing is just the Government preparing for an election. There has been an Irish Army for more than 80 years, but they haven't regained a single inch of our national territory... I think that the dead... should be commemorated by people who believe that we should have a 32 county republic. Ten per cent of the population is holding on to a larger population's land, for England. Where is the democracy in that? If I was invited to the event I wouldn't go. I will attend our own commemoration in Tralee as I always do."

He said: *"We can start something like that when we have a 32 county republic"*.

But it has started now. And we reckon it will stay started. We fear that Dan Keating is mistaken when he says it is nothing but a Fianna Fail election gimmick. There is a present purpose for it that has nothing to do with the North.

The Free State has been visibly militarising in recent years.

A couple of years ago the official emphasis was on neutrality. That was for the purpose of browbeating the electorate to vote for another EU measure they did not like. It was then stated that Irish neutrality in international conflicts would not be compromised by the proposed European Constitution. In the event it was not necessary to put the Constitution to the electorate, the French having disposed of it.

When the Constitution fell, it was found to have been unnecessary. The EU just carries on without it. In that more flexible arrangement, tricky ventures can be embarked upon more easily than when everything was put to referendum.

What exactly the EU Constitution would have done if it had been enacted was never clear, but there was a feeling abroad that it would have made the EU a coherent political entity, and that Ireland would have been dragged into participation in its Battle Groups.

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## Ahern's Path Of Glory

The Taoiseach set out a new scheme of the history of Irish independence in his speech at the opening of an Exhibition on the Rising: 1916, 1937, 1972, 1998. And he names two statesmen of the development: Sean Lemass and Jack Lynch. The leader of the Opposition complained that this was hijacking the Rising for Fianna Fail, and listed four other statesmen of the development, all Fine Gael: W.T. Cosgrave, who *"presided over the birth of democracy"*; J.A. Costello, who in 1949 made the formal declaration that the Irish State (made independent by De Valera) was a Republic; Liam Cosgrave, who *"led Ireland into the United Nations"*; and Garret FitzGerald, who *"signed the Anglo-Irish Agreement"* of 1985 (IT 14.4.06).

The glaring omissions from Ahern's short list are De Valera and Haughey. Kenny remedies this to the extent of saying that Dev, Griffiths and Collins all *"played an equal and honourable part in winning Ireland's independence"*. It is a strange state of affairs when it is left to Fine Gael to bring Dev into the Pantheon.

Let's go through Ahern's *"four cornerstones of independent Ireland"*, which are *"the foundations of the future"*.

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## 1916 And Democracy

How much longer will Maurice O'Connell keep stating the obvious about 1916—that it is was not democratic? (*Rising was noble but undemocratic*. Village, 13-19 April) It is getting rather tedious.

Rebellions are never democratic. They are either successful and retrospectively sanctioned by the people concerned or they are failures and are never heard of again except as footnotes in history. 1916 was clearly one of the former.

Democracy did not apply in Irish politics in 1916. Home Rule was the

democratic choice of the people (and of Patrick Pearse) but it was killed off by the Unionist armed revolt in 1912 and the Government accepted that reality. The Unionists were brought into Government in 1915 which copper fastened the death of Home Rule, as they would most certainly ensure it was never implemented.

Moreover, the Government that was in power in the UK in 1916 was not an elected government because it had suspended electoral government when its mandate ran out in 1915 and therefore the issue of democracy does not apply.

These are rather important 'democratic deficits'—to use the jargon of the moment.

In view of these basic facts, democracy was for the naïve and the ineffectual. The

Government had shown clearly how politics operated in Ireland and democracy did not come into it. They remained consistent in this because when democracy did again enter the equation in the 1918 Election they ignored the result in Ireland and thereby caused the War of Independence.

All these matters were as clear as daylight 90 decades ago and are even clearer in hindsight. Why is Maurice O'Connell determined to ignore them? While he does so he will produce a kind of history that is like something along the lines of one handed clapping, and equally pointless.

**Jack Lane** (14 April 2006)  
(This letter appeared in *Village* magazine in April.)

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### *Labour Comment*, edited by **Pat Maloney**:

EU Decision: One Of The Most Destructive In History Of Conflict In Middle East

Michael D. Higgins, back page

(Grand Kyklops) McDowell's Law (A Suitable Target For Labour?)

Seán McGouran, p 19

*"The Proclamation [of Easter 1916] was the foundation of our independent state".* It depends on what you mean by foundation. It was a piece of paper handed out by a group of conspirators attempting a *coup d'etat*, which was crushed within a week, leaving no form of organised existence behind it.

It was a striking event which acted as an inspiration. But, if one wants a foundation, in the solid meaning of the word, it comes in December 1918/January 1919 with the Election, the assembling of the Dail, and the Declaration of Independence as the expression of the settled will of a society.

Ahern leaps over the 1918 Election, and all that followed from it, to the 1937 Constitution.

If one is to find fundamental significance in the 1937 Constitution, it must be as a formal repudiation by the electorate of the 1922 Constitution. And what was so wrong with the 1922 document? That it was dictated by the British Government, made an Oath to the Crown a condition of entry into the Legislature, and included other measures of subordination. But, following the electoral defeat of the Treaty Party in 1932, the Oath was removed and other forms of the British incubus were dispelled. After all of that, the 1937 Constitution was more a flourish than a foundation.

From 1937 Ahern leaps forward to 1972. The reader is probably wondering what foundation event happened in 1972. Ireland accompanied Britain into Europe:

"Through our membership of the EU, we have emerged as a confident and achieving nation, sure of our place in the world. Over a decade previously, Sean Lemass had opened negotiations for Ireland's entry... Advocating Ireland's entry... Jack Lynch summed up our choice as being "the choice of Robinson Crusoe when the ship came to bring him back into the world again". The decision to join the EU was the moment when a confident and hopeful Ireland left behind what had become the dated and sterile ideology of "ourselves alone"."

Has Bertie forgotten his Irish as well as his friends? *Sinn fein* means "ourselves", and it was asserted against the most powerful Empire in the world which was trying to re-make us into something that was more serviceable to its interests than what we actually were. We preserved ourselves in some measure by means of 1916, 1918, 1919-21, 1932, and 1940. *Sinn Fein amhain* was never the slogan or the policy of any major policy or tendency that we ever heard of, or even a minor one.

What Bertie has been leaving behind is not the never-was philosophy of 'ourselves alone', but *ourselves* as a definite existence. His guff about us now being "*sure of our place in the world*" is the reverse of the truth, and "*ourselves alone*" was never as accurate a description of our attitude towards the world as it has been under his government. He has made the country a pliable instrument of US militarism, because he reckons America

would regard an assertion of neutrality as a hostile act. In doing this he has re-defined neutrality as according US warplanes re-fuelling rights at Shannon, and not probing the issue of rendition flights. He complies with US requirements, and casts principle to the winds, because all that counts with him is what will be advantageous to the total egoism of *ourselves alone*.

Entry to the EU, even as an appendage of Britain, was, of course, an event of great strategic consequence to Ireland. But not because it had until then been living in the "*sterile ideology of ourselves alone*".

Prior to 1972 the Irish economy was a dependency of the British free market. In 1972 it joined the protected market of the EU.

The Irish economy was predominantly agricultural. Britain had since the mid-19th century arranged things in the world in such a way that cheap agricultural produce flowed into it from all continents, subsidising its own farmers very heavily in order to drive down the price of imports. That was the market in which Irish farming, emerging from centuries of deliberate British destruction and distortion, had to make a living. Then in 1972 it gained access to the strong, protected market of the EEC, and began to flourish.

But economic development was very slow, and when it came it was not Lynch who brought it. He left the economy in a parlous condition, and in the 1980s the state was on the verge of bankruptcy.

The breakthrough came around 1990 when Haughey took personal control of the departments of state most relevant to the economy and, with his colleagues outside of politics (he had very few within politics) re-made the financial system of the state; and when for a few years he made Ireland appear to be an independent European state, no longer an echo of Britain, and hosted a major European event in Dublin Castle. Christian Democratic Europe in those years—not long before it was subverted—could see Ireland as part of itself, and welcomed it with an award of 8 billions (Irish pounds). That was the take-off point for the seething entrepreneurship that now characterises Irish economic life—and that appears to have subverted the major act of political independence that brought it about.

We will return in a future issue to the Taoiseach's new scheme of landmarks—and its omissions, which seem to be in line with Senator Mansergh's views—and to Fine Gael's alternative scheme.

Neutrality was emphasised in order to lull the electorate. There is no real doubt that the Government wanted to participate in the Battle Groups, but dissimulated for the purpose of winning the referendum. When the Constitution lapsed, it could ease off on asserting the right of neutrality and proceed obliquely towards engagement. And, as part of this development, the aspiration of the Defence Force to become a fighting Army was given freedom to express itself.

The revival of the 1916 commemoration as a militarist display fits in very neatly with this project.

RTE has been playing its part in developing a spirit of globalist militarism.

On the eve of the destruction of Falujah (Iraq) last year it carried a long interview with an Irish-American soldier who was to take part in the assault. The thing was presented in heroic—almost David and Goliath—terms. And we never noticed that much was said after the event about what was actually done to Fallujah.

Radio Eireann's *World Report* series is strongly Ameranglian in orientation. It is propaganda of the new Cold War—which becomes a hot war every couple of years because enemies are chosen which are incapable of defending themselves. The old Cold War—that resulted from the fact that Communist Russia won the war against Germany that Britain started but was unwilling to fight in earnest by any method other than by fire-bombing the residential areas of German cities—that Cold War stayed cold because the enemy had the means of self-defence, and Ameranglia would risk its own existence by attacking.

Until 1990 we were supportive of NATO, by and large, seeing it as an essentially defensive force. It has been made evident since 1990 that it is an aggressive force. The reason given for its existence before 1990 ceased in 1990 but it continued and, when its strong enemy collapsed, it selected weaker states to be enemies and attacked them.

We are still inclined to think that Europe in the era of Christian Democracy was essentially defensive, but it is now evident that Ameranglia was not. And one of the consequences of the ending of the Cold War was the destruction, by the force of Ameranglian globalism, of the Christian Democracy which re-made Europe after 1945.

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## Please don't read my book...

The Irish Academic Press has stolen a march on other publishers in the quantity of new publications they have published related to 1916. There is obviously some bright spark within the company who detects the way the wind is blowing and sees a future of commercial success with the anti-revisionist tide.

One of these books is a reprint of Ruth Dudley Edwards' book on Pearse *The Triumph Of Failure*. It, along with some others, was launched by the Irish Ambassador at the Embassy in London on 5th April. The Ambassador praised the book and its author while acknowledging that he had disagreements with her on Northern Ireland. He had clearly read all the books being launched and gave pertinent quotations from them to show, among other things, that the Rising was provoked by the success of 'Carsonism', i.e. the Unionist revolt of 1912.

Other authors introduced their books and were naturally delighted to have their books published and being given such a launch. One mentioned the positive influence of his grandparents on his work. This seemed to provoke the next author, Ms Edwards, to begin by denouncing her grandmother who had, she claimed, a picture of Hitler by her bedside. I think she may have said it was actually in her bed. I recall an earlier reference to this by Ms Edwards where I think the picture was described as being in the house or on the wall. I wonder will granny be sleeping with Hitler in its next outing?

She then made disparaging remarks about her own book that she was launching! This must have been a unique event in the history of publishing. She declared that she would not have written it now, being naïve when she did so. She omitted to explain what exactly was wrong with it and why she had changed her mind. Why did she allow it to be republished was an obvious question that struck people present. Will she disown the royalties, I wonder? I suggest they compensate the Irish taxpayer for the launch of the book she did not want launched. Let's hope that she is never asked to launch a ship.

There followed a general assault on the coming 1916 celebrations, but at least those who opposed the Rising in arms were being commemorated and that clearly gave her some comfort.

She therefore did not thank the publisher for publishing her book, the ambassador for launching it, nor did she encourage anyone present to buy or read it. A surreal and somewhat embarrassing atmosphere was created.

## And don't believe what we say.....

John Waters did some agonising in the *Irish Times* (10 April 2006) and admitted that he and others had engaged in spreading a pack of lies in recent decades and all was justified because:

"Many of us were convinced by the need to pull the historical rug from under the Provos, and were therefore acquiescent in the rewriting of the past; and yet we were at the same time secretly traumatised by the loss of our inherited sense of where we had come from. The revisionist project succeeded because of the urgency of shutting down the Provos, and for no other reason.... This idea will strike some people as morally dubious pragmatism..,

Although most of us have sullenly or silently acquiesced in the rewriting of the record, very many of us do not hold in our hearts the views we feel obliged to venture in the public realm."

What an admission of moral and intellectual cowardice. No abstract 'history', good or bad, produced the Provos. It was the internal dynamics of Northern Ireland. There was no need whatever to turn Irish history upside down because of their emergence. Waters shows the typical total ignorance of Northern Ireland prevalent among the chattering classes in the South.

The traditional nationalists had a blind spot about what the Northern Unionists actually were, but it was honestly held and they have adapted to the realities of the forces in N. Ireland in recent decades. They did not cause the war in Northern Ireland and they did not engage in intellectual trickery and lies and such pathetic displays of self-denouncement as Edwards and Waters. They had no need to do so.

After such admissions by them, why do Waters and co. not just shut up and save us from any more of such ridiculous moralising about the traumas caused to themselves by themselves. After all, after such admissions why would anyone take them seriously again about anything?

Jack Lane

One of the first post-1990 aggressions was against Yugoslavia. This was a multinational state created by Britain in 1919, after it had decided to destroy the functional and democratic Austro-Hungarian Empire as punishment for being defeated in the Great War. Yugoslavia joined Serbia (whose ambition to absorb Bosnia led to the event which sparked off the Great War: the assassination of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, who was preparing to develop the Dual Monarchy of Austria and Hungary into a Triple Monarchy of Austrians, Hungarians and Slavs), with Croats, Moslems and other South Slavs, without regard for viability. The Croats were strongly Austrian in orientation and served the Empire until it was destroyed. The Serbs were the only people in the new combination who had conducted a state (which they had established by their own power in conflict with the Ottoman Empire). The Croats soon complained the Yugoslavia was in practice Greater Serbia, and a fierce anti-Yugoslav nationalism developed among them. In 1941 the Government, under Croat influence, made a Treaty with Hitler, which allowed him to pass an army through its territory to Greece. This led to a Serb revolt which overthrew the Government and revoked the Treaty. Hitler then invaded and was welcomed in Croatia as a liberator from Yugoslav oppression. The Serbs resisted, were defeated, and carried on a guerilla war under the authority of a Government in exile in London. Croats and Bosnian Muslims enlisted in the SS in large numbers; and in independent Croatia there was systematic extermination of Serbs.

The Serbs held together as a national community, loyal to the exiled King. Croats and Bosnians were disrupted internally, and divided on the ideological lines of the War, Nazi and Communist. (Britain was little more than an onlooker in 1941-2.)

A strong Communist resistance was developed from the disrupted Croats and Moslems by Tito, but gained little support in Serbia. The Royalist Serbian resistance scaled down its activities because of the massive scale of German reprisals against the civil society. But Tito's partisans, who had the purpose of destroying bourgeois society, were unconcerned about the scale of the reprisals. The Germans were helping with the destruction of a society which they were intent on doing away with anyway.

In 1943 Britain switched support from the Royalist Serbs to Tito's Partisans, because the Partisans carried out more attacks on the Germans, and the Serbs seemed content to allow Yugoslavia to disappear and let the different nationalities

live apart. Britain, intent on restoring its creation, compelled the exiled King in London to remake his Government in accordance with Tito's demands; through the World Service of the BBC it carried out black propaganda against the Royalists, painting them as allies of Germany; and it armed the Communists for the conquest of Serbia, which was carried out in 1944.

Thus Communist Yugoslavia was a British creation, not a Russian. From 1948 onwards it was effectively part of the West in the Cold War, though formally "*non-aligned*". After the first few years of Communist enthusiasm, it 'liberalised' its economic arrangements, introducing many market elements.

It was not part of the Soviet system, and therefore it stayed standing when the states of the Soviet system fell. But it had served its purpose for the West with the ending of the Cold War. Europe therefore decided to destroy it. The work was chiefly done by Germany (which had destroyed it once before, in 1941) and Britain, which had set it up twice (the second time as a Communist state).

The social tensions which made it easy to bring down the regimes in the other East European states after the Soviet collapse were not present in Yugoslavia. Britain and Germany therefore set about breaking it up territorially by encouraging nationalist antagonisms.

Under British and German influence, the EU disregarded the Yugoslav Constitution, which it had seen as a fine thing while the Cold War lasted. The component Republics were encouraged to rush into declarations of independence, which were immediately recognised as legitimate by the EU—even in the case of Bosnia, where the majority for independence was brought about by a voting alliance of Croat nationalists and Moslems, groupings which were profoundly antagonistic to each other and could never have formed a governing alliance.

The second declaration of Croat independence was fascist in ideology, being in many respects a repeat of the 1941 declaration. The EU studiously turned a blind eye to this, and the Americans armed and trained the Croats for war and ethnic cleansing.

When the Yugoslav Government acted to preserve the state and insisted that changes should be made in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution, the EU treated it as being engaged in conquest.

During the wars of the 1990s not a

word was said in the BBC propaganda about how Yugoslavia came about in the first instance, or the second instance. And it was not explained how it had come to be a Communist state. It was not actually said that it was one of the states set up by the Soviet Union, but that was allowed to be understood.

RTE played the same game. And one has to ask whether Irish neutrality is really worth a damn, if not only the Government propaganda but public opinion just echoes what's going on across the Channel and ocean?

Here is a recent *World Report* item from Sean Whelan, its Europe Editor, broadcast on 25th February. He began by saying that out of 161 Serbs indicted as war criminals 6 remain at large. But "*putting Karadic and Mladic into the dock alongside Slobodan Milosovic and forcing them to confront the consequences of their actions, is seen as a necessary psychodrama to bring closure to the Balkan wars*".

Was Milosovic forced to confront the consequences of his actions? The suggestion that he was murdered by the Court is made plausible by the fact that it seemed increasingly unlikely that it would be able to bring in a Guilty verdict, despite the way procedure was rigged in favour of the prosecution. And, if a Guilty verdict could not have been brought in without flying in the face of the evidence, the trial would have been a failure. The scenario was that guilt was assumed by the Court, and Bench and Prosecution collaborated in an effort to make a Guilty verdict follow from the evidence presented at a show trial against a procedurally-disabled Defence. But, despite the restraints placed on him, Milosovic succeeded in refuting one prosecution witness after another.

A commentator on Britain's Channel 4 television (the most objective in these parts) said that the difficulty was to devise an effective compromise between delivering justice and conducting a fair trial—a remarkable statement which presumes justice to be known independently of the trial. But all that is known independently of the trial is propaganda demonisation conducted by media functionaries acting on the instruction of hostile states—even if the instructions are only given with a nod and a wink, and the knowledge that failure to get the message would ruin a promising career.

Whelan continued that Kosovan independence is almost certain to come this year or next, with Montenegrin independence following soon after. But, because of concern in Macedonia, Bosnia, and Serbia, Kosovan and Montenegrin

independence—

"have the potential to destabilise the region... They need careful handling, and the less heroic nationalist figures there are in the scene in Serbia, the easier it will be for the Government there to make the deals and adjustments that will enable the country to emerge from isolation and economic ruination".

He then gave some figures for the economic ruination brought about in Serbia by EU sanctions. Then—

"It's felt most in Belgrade, the once thriving city that dominated the region. It's stepped over the past 15 years into being an isolated backwater. Serbs have watched a stream of regional rivals catch up and then overtake them, in terms of prosperity, development, and freedom." [The Serbs will become free, presumably, when they agree, under extreme pressure from outside, to do what they do not want to do.] "Even Rumania stands on the threshold of EU membership. On Monday the EU Foreign Ministers will almost certainly sanction the suspension of talks with Serbia on what is known as a stabilisation and association agreement. It's the lifeline that the Union throws out to drowning neighbouring states" [in this instance, a neighbouring state that is drowning], "or those that are floating without direction or purpose. It pulls them into the European way of doing things, opens access to funding, encourages the deep and thoroughgoing process of legal change known as adopting the *Acquis*. It's the first step on the road to EU membership, but it will be put on ice if Mladic is not sent to the Hague. It's now that the EU has most leverage to exert in using political pressure to bring Mladic to trial, one of the keys to unlocking change in the whole region. Public opinion in Serbia has shifted for the first time in favour of his extradition. The deep reason is the ongoing economic misery. A majority now accept that his trial is the price of access to the Western system. But a bigger blow against extreme nationalism, and its vision of the Serb as victim, occurred in June, when Serbian television aired the notorious tape of Serb paramilitaries executing prisoners captured in Srebrenica. This week one of the killers seen on the tape pleaded Guilty at his War Crimes trial in Belgrade. Between the political and economic calculus, and the shifting moral climate, there is no longer room in Serbia for Radko Mladic."

Whelan here describes the collective punishment of Serbs by the EU because of the failure of NATO forces to capture Mladic and Karadic, and then gives a description of Serbs who think they are victims of punishment as extreme nationalists.

They are being punished to make them do NATO's work for it. They refuse to do it because they see Mladic as having organised their protection against the great

upsurge of Croat and Muslim terrorism that started the whole thing off. (Those events were scarcely reported in the Irish/British/European media at the time, and have now been written out of history.) And the way Milosovic was treated in captivity, and died there, has not encouraged them to seek out Mladic and hand him over.

The EU has three ways of 'democratising' Eastern Europe: coercion, subversion, and purchase. Coercion and subversion have been practised in the Balkans. In other places 'democracy' is treated as a commodity and has been bought. It is pretty well admitted that there was wholesale purchase of votes with Euros and Dollars in Ukraine. And before that millions of Deutschmarks were spent in buying votes in the critical Serbian election, before it was decided in the final stage that a sort of *coup d'etat* was preferable, so that there would be regime change instead of a Constitutional change of Government.

All these states insist that there must be no external interference in their own elections, but they all favour extreme interference in East European elections. And in Belarus the EU diplomats were active election campaigners and street demonstrators—yet the electorate refused the bribes and disbelieved the promises. Information about the actual consequence of these revolutions engineered by US/EU money and propaganda seems to have got about. And, of course, the consequences brought about by US/UK arms in Iraq are plain for all to see.

The Iraqi state was smashed and the routines of political conduct bound up with it were swept away. Three elections have been held, but there is no Government. The business of elections is to choose the Government of a state, but there is no state. In place of a state there are only the Occupation Forces. And, although they control the territory called Iraq, they do not stand in the elections.

A black American Senator, whose name we cannot recall, was interviewed by RTE about two years ago about the delay in holding elections. He explained that, in the process of forming a state, elections do not come first. They come last. RTE does not seem to understand. But where is the state that has arisen out of social chaos by means of an election?

Mao Tse-tung said that States come out of the barrel of a gun. While that statement not be entirely true, it is close to it.

Perhaps the Irish state would have been peacefully established out of an

election if Britain had not used its power-of-state to set aside the election and obliged the Irish to resort to the gun in self-defence.

A new Irish state was formed in 1922. The republic of 1919 was destroyed by the gun, and the Free state was established by the gun, and people voted for it under the threat of the gun. A section of Sinn Fein bowed to a British threat of overwhelming force, destroyed the Republic with British arms and a largely mercenary Army, and set up a subordinate regime under the authority of the Crown. The Treaty Party governed in authoritarian style for ten years, and tried to negate the growing electoral strength of the Anti-Treaty Party by using the Oath to exclude its representatives from the Dail. But the 1932 election restored an anti-Treaty majority. It might be said that power was then transferred peacefully. But it was an armed peace. Fianna Fail was backed by the IRA, which existed despite the best efforts of the Treatyites to destroy it. And British power was not in 1932 what it had been ten years earlier. So there was a peaceful transfer of power, and the 'Treaty' was broken peacefully, though not constitutionally.

Before a state can become democratic it must in the first place be a state. Democracy is a form of state, not a form of election. A state is a form of organised and regularised power.

Iraq used to be a state. But the state power of Iraq was destroyed by the overwhelming military power of two other states.

The Iraqi state was described as a tyranny when it was decided to destroy it. It was only described as a tyranny by fringe elements on the Left before that. But its nature did not change at the moment when the major Western Powers decided to destroy it. It was not in the 1990s something entirely different from what it had been in the 1980s. Where the change occurred was in Ameranglian foreign policy.

There was extensive intercourse between Ireland and Iraq in the 1980s, and many Irish people went to work in Iraq. It was not on the basis of reports by those people that the people of Iraq were suffering under intolerable oppression that the Irish Government changed its policy towards Iraq. No such reports were made. There was no conflict between Ireland and Iraq. Ireland just followed Ameranglia when it became an enemy of the Iraqi state.

It is now said that, whatever else may have happened in Iraq recently, at least the Iraqi people have been freed from the

tyrant, Saddam Hussein—as if the destruction of the state and the overthrow of the tyrant was not the same thing.

It is said that the Iraqi people have been freed, which is a good thing, though the rest is regrettable. Three years ago we doubted that such a thing as *the Iraqi people* had any coherent existence distinct from that of the state, which would survive the destruction of the state. There were various peoples in Iraq, thrown together by Imperialist Britain for its own purposes in 1919 into what was called a nation state. They had no sense of national unity amongst themselves, but it seemed that they were acquiring a sense of national unity through being drawn into the functioning of the state. In that case the destruction of the state would have the likely effect of stirring up conflict between the various peoples in Iraq. And, if we could see that, we cannot suppose that the US-UK Government did not see it. And in fact they began talking up civil war within weeks of the invasion three years ago, indicating that they saw it very well.

Senator Mansergh is one of those who speaks of the good side and the bad side of the invasion. In another connection Fianna Fail has been dismissive of the suggestion that the two sides of another affair are distinct and might be addressed separately. The two sides of the coin are the same coin, they say, and you can't have one without the other. We suggest that there is substance to the distinction between Sinn Fein and the IRA—which they dismiss as spurious—but that there is no substance at all to the good side/bad side distinction with regard to invasion of Iraq.

Senator Mansergh says that Ireland is now obliged by international law to support the invasion of Iraq because the UN Security Council gave it retrospective validation after the event and made terrorist rebels of those who resist it. And he says:

"Despite vehement criticism of the US and its allies, its conduct does not begin to compare in savagery with the suicide attacks against civilians or the abduction and beheading of hostages that have been the tactics of the insurgents" (IT 17.12.05).

The Iraqis did not do such things under the regime of the tyrant. The great bulk of them lived ordinary routine lives, and by all accounts, Baghdad, even during the years of the sanctions, was one of the safest cities of the world for foreigners (and women) to walk about in, day or night.

What Mansergh describes so moralistically is the conduct of people whose state—whose framework of normality—has been deliberately and systematically wrecked by invading

armies with overwhelming force at their disposal. They have been thrown back into a state of nature with a vengeance. They did not do it themselves in a destructive revolution. Ameranglia destroyed the state, and instigated looting by social elements that in another situation they would be at pains to put down. And we helped.

In the same column, Mansergh condemns the President of Iran for suggesting it was for the peoples who set out to exterminate the Jews to provide them with territory for a state, instead of facilitating them in the enterprise of a colonial conquest of Palestine. And he says: "*the State of Israel was created by the international community*".

We will take a closer look, in a future issue, at the international community that created Israel, and the way it created it. And at the morality which says that it is right to take a country away from its inhabitants and give it to another people.

Here we will only remark that the attitude of Mladic and Karadic towards the United Nations was strongly influenced by Israel, which was their only supporter. They thought it was open to anybody to treat the UN with the kind of contempt that Israel does.

Finally, we must express our gratitude to Sean Whelan, Radio Eireann's naive globaliser, for the term, "*psychodrama*" to describe the way the dominant Western powers manipulate world affairs at this juncture.

## Editorial Commentary

May 2006

**Plan B** For eight years since 10th April 1998, on various pretexts, the British Government failed to pressurise recalcitrant parties to the Good Friday Agreement to work the institutions. The threat of developing Joint Authority with the Irish Government was never applied.

On 6th April, after some weeks of leaks the 'stick' was finally brandished—9 months after the IRA agreed to decommission its weapons (which was not a requirement of the Agreement as voted on in two Referendums). A shadow Assembly will be established on 15th May. There will be three chances to set up the Ministerial arrangements under the GFA between then and 24th November. If the DUP does not nominate its Ministers, the representative aspects of the GFA will be ended and Joint Authority will be fleshed out.

The pressure is all now on Unionists. That, however, could change if IRA 'criminality' should resume/continue—depending on whether one believes the reports of Lord Alderdyce's International Independent Monitoring Commission. So far, every report has dove-tailed with Blair's strategy.

Presumably the *Irish News* was reflecting Northern Catholic opinion when it consigned news of Blair's initiative to a minor place on its front page on 6th April, preferring to lead with *PSNI Gives Stab-Proof Vests To All Officers*. On the same day the *Irish Times* led with *November Deadline Set For NI Parties To Work Together*. Both SF and the SDLP had lobbied against the Shadow Assembly plan. Even Tom Kelly, a former SDLP member who usually supports the NIO position, described it as a "*betrayal*" of nationalists (IN 3.4.06).

**Denis Donaldson** The timing of the murder of this IRA informer for the British was reminiscent of previous Northern 'psycho-dramas' intended to derail devolutionary *rapprochements*. However this time the Blair Government ignored the securocrats' offering. There can be little doubt that he was killed by his former handlers, who will not have liked his preference for Provo debriefing to exile and a new identity. Not that there was not reason enough for republican revenge—not by Provos, but by others who split off from the mainstream during the period of his perfidy. What makes this theory of a Provo assassination incredible is that his 'hideaway' was no secret to them. He was in a family holiday cottage which had been used as a retreat by various republicans. The killing followed just days after the Stickie-orientated *Sunday World*, in a *World Exclusive* authored by Hugh Jordan, made public the fact that he was in a remote area of Donegal and showed aerial pictures of the cottage. Donaldson told Jordan that Stormontgate was staged—and himself sacrificed by the British authorities—so that republicans would bear the blame for the suspension of the Northern Executive and Assembly:

"It was for whatever agenda they were up to—and that agenda is all too obvious.

"The plan was to collapse the institutions to save Trimble—David Trimble was trying to out-DUP the DUP and in the end the DUP swallowed him up.

"The whole idea was to get Trimble off the hook and get republicans the blame. But it didn't work, because Trimble is history now.

"There was never a spy ring at Stormont..." (19.3.06)

Why should the Provos kill this person when he was confirming that they were

innocent in the 'Stormontgate' affair?

An *Phoblacht* reported Gerry Kelly MLA as follows about the murder:

*"Donaldson Death—Serious Questions For PSNI* by Laura Friel

"We are told that the man who led *Sunday World* journalist Hugh Jordan to Denis Donaldson's home in Donegal and who secretly filmed him was a former member of the RUC, Colin Breen. Shortly after the *Sunday World* exposé Denis Donaldson was killed..."

"Given the role played by Special Branch in Denis Donaldson's life over many years, the revelation of the involvement of Colin Breen in this story is extremely sinister..."

"According to the *Sunday Business Post*, the former officer, Colin Breen had worked in Tennent Street RUC barracks in Belfast before his retirement. Breen travelled with the *Sunday World* journalist to the Glenties area of County Donegal to track Donaldson down.

"Breen... is not a member of the *Sunday World's* staff and photographers employed by the newspaper were not used... Hugh Jordan made no mention of Breen's role.

"Breen secretly filmed Donaldson... video film was sold to a number of British television stations and broadcast... Within days of the coverage Donaldson was killed.

"The timing of the killing, just two days before the British and Irish governments unveiled their plans, has been seen by many as a deliberate attempt to thwart the political process..."

"This is not the first time Hugh Jordan has been the media conduit for Special Branch's dirty war. In the late 1990s a former Special Branch agent, Thomas Douglas who worked as part of a black propaganda group, claimed he had fed Jordan fabricated stories designed to undermine the IRA cessation at that time.

"It's not the first time that an agent, apparently considered more useful dead than alive, has been killed. William Stobie, a Special Branch agent who supplied and later disposed of weaponry used in the murder of Pat Finucane, was shot dead after he backed the call for a public inquiry and appeared willing to co-operate with the Steven's probe..." (13.4.2006).

The family has said they do not believe the Provos were responsible for the killing, as does Andrew McIntyre (the dissident whose views often dovetail with British strategy).

The *Irish Times* has suggested Donaldson was really working for the Provos, both editorially some months ago, and in its lead story, *Double Agent Found Murdered In Donegal Cottage* (5.4.06). It has not explained the grounds for the suggestion that he was working for the IRA, rather than against. The paper is well connected to British Intelligence circles, and is probably just repeating what it was told by them.

The Fine Gael leader, Enda Kenny,

in the Dail rejected republican denials of complicity, saying the killing "*bore the hallmarks of the execution of Eamon Collins outside Newry*" [an informer killed by the IRA]. (Kenny was quoted approvingly by Eoghan Harris in the *Sunday Independent* 9.4.06, under the title, *Donaldson Did Some Service To Two States.*)

But readers can rest easy: in an editorial, *Time To Face Political Realities*, Geraldine Kennedy assures us that Lord Alderdyce will say 'who dunnit'. More significant is the news that NI Police Ombudsman, Nuala O'Loan, will undertake an investigation.

**Troop Reductions** Over the coming two years the British Government plans to dismantle the five remaining Co. Armagh spy towers and reduce troop levels to 5,000.

**Policing** *Denis Bradley* is withdrawing from his position as Policing Board Vice-Chairman. He suggested that PB members elect a Catholic Chairman this time around (a suggestion criticised by Tom Kelly, IN 31.3.06), and this would have happened if the UUP had followed through on its threat to boycott the PB (see April *Irish Political Review*). Sir Desmond Rea was re-elected Chairman, with Barry Gilligan, a property developer, as his deputy.

In an interview with the *Irish News* (23.3.06) Denis Bradley said that, though he and his home had been physically attacked, "*from the start Sinn Fein and the IRA never intimidated him*" or "*were anything but properly adversarial at a debate level*". Indeed, "*on many occasions senior Sinn Fein figures were the first to call at his home after an attack*". The former PB Vice-Chairman also described "*the decision to hand security over to MI5*" as a "*mistake*".

**Mervyn Gibson**, a former Special Branch officer who became a Presbyterian Minister in 2000, has been ousted as Chairman of the Loyalist Commission as the UDA and UVF say he was involved in secret talks with the NIO about parades (IN 5.4.06).

**Omagh Relatives** met Chief Constable Hugh Order, who rejected their challenging questions, saying he did not wish to be "*interrogated*" (IN 4.4.06).

**DUP Life Peers** For the first time the DUP's mandate has been recognised, with the appointment of three peers: Mrs. Eileen Paisley, Maurice Morrow (Chairman), and Wallace Browne (Belfast Lord Mayor).

**Eileen Bell** of the Alliance Party is to be the new Presiding Officer of the Shadow Assembly.

**Eddie Espie**, an SDLP member since 1991 (and a Protestant) has resigned as Vice-Chairman: "*The party today is a shadow of the party I joined based on the*

*founding principles of democratic nationalism*" (IN 30.3.06).

**Martin Mansergh** has apologised to the 'Shot At Dawn' campaign (which seeks retrospective pardons for soldiers executed for cowardice in the Great War) for the role of his relative, Temporary Major Robert Otwayáðæ Mansergh of the 6th Battalion Royal Irish Rifles (related to the Senator's grandmother) of Cork. Major Mansergh presided over the court-martial of Patrick Joseph Downey of Limerick in 1915, who was accused of disobeying orders. Private Downey was undefended. Dr. Mansergh said:

"Obviously I'm not responsible for what happened but I am a member, albeit a distant one, of the family..." (30.3.06). —is the Senator assuming a genetic blood-guilt here?—a position with racist overtones. Moreover, as Martin Mansergh justifies Britain's role in the Great War, surely he should defend the means necessary to prosecute it?

## The Somme Commemorations

The Government proposes a new postage stamp and other steps to commemorate the Battle of the Somme. But unless this experiment is finely calculated it could, like the attempt to put a loyalist parade through O'Connell Street, go horribly wrong.

Should all of the foreign wars in which Irish people participated be commemorated, whether or not there is now a consensus in favour of the objectives for which they fought? Should we commemorate those Irish who fought on the pro-slavery side in the American Civil War? Should we commemorate the battles of Cremona, Blenheim, Ramillies, Oudinard, Malplaquet and Fontenoy? The first question we must ask is whether we understand what was at issue in the Irish involvement in these battles. War is about killing people. Killing people is a serious thing and there has to be a very good reason for doing it. Though the issue continues to be debated, the political consensus in favour of the 1916 Rising has been confirmed.

But what about the Somme? By that point in the Great War, the decision had been made by the Irish General Kitchener (are we going to honour him?) and others on the British side that Germany could not be beaten by military science, and the only way to win the war was by attrition. This meant that the fighting had to be arranged, not to obtain a strategic advantage which would bring the killing to a stop, but to

maximise killing on all sides. The calculation being that the Central Powers, the European Union of the day, had a smaller population than their enemies to draw from, and would be exhausted first. Thus the purpose of the planned conscription in Ireland was to provide raw material for butchery. This is Britain's *Crime Against Europe*, accurately predicted by Roger Casement in his book of that name.

The Somme is a prime example. In twenty four hours of fighting there were about ten thousand Irish casualties. On a one for one killing ratio, the Irish must have been responsible for about ten thousand Bavarian, Pomeranian, Saxon and other casualties. Do we now stand over those killings to the extent that we wish to publicly honour the killers? Were those deaths justified? What was it all for?

About half of the ten thousand Irish casualties were for King and Country. In other words they were fighting for the British Empire, the three hundred year project of world conquest, colonisation, ethnic cleansing and genocide which reached its apex in the first half of the twentieth century. This part of the Irish war effort was supremely successful, as the British Empire gained vast territories in Africa and the Middle East from the Great War, and went on to pile horror upon atrocity right up to Palestine and Iraq today.

The other half thought they were fighting for the freedom of small nations. It became increasingly obvious that they were the unfortunate dupes of Imperial politics. So their killing of others, and their own deaths, were a tragic mistake to be lamented, not celebrated.

By glorifying the tragedy as a positive event in history we are in danger of a miscalculation which would make the recent events in O'Connell Street look like a Sunday afternoon stroll in the park. Perhaps the way ahead is, like Holocaust Day, to acknowledge the Great War as a *Crime Against Europe*, in the tradition of Irish foreign policy pioneered by Casement and Connolly.

**Pat Muldowney**

(6.3.06, published in *Village* magazine)

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## Geopolitics And Race In Britain's Strategy Towards Iraq, 1916

In the decade before the First World War, British policy towards the Ottoman Empire included a concerted attempt to secure control of the provinces of Mesopotamia and the Gulf. Under the Young Turks, the Ottoman Empire for its part sought desperately to balance its relations with both Britain and Germany and avoid involvement in any greater conflict. Among modern day American "Arabists" these projects of the previous Anglo-Saxon world power are of obvious contemporary interest. The books they produce—such as those of the prolific Rashid Khalidi of the University of Chicago—are often of interest.

One he edited, titled *The Origins Of Arab Nationalism* (Columbia University Press 1991), includes an article by one of his students, Mahmoud Haddad, on *Iraq Before World War 1: A Case of Anti-European Arab Ottomanism*.

Haddad starts with a very convoluted statement to explain the awkward fact that the most vigorous political tendency in Mesopotamia (the socially advanced area of "Iraq") prior to 1914 was a modernising pro-Ottoman movement, coordinated initially through the local branch of the Young Turk Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), while anti-Ottoman Arab nationalism was a totally negligible force, explained away by Haddad as "*proto-Arab nationalism*", the only meaning of which can be the Arab nationalism that does not yet exist:

"The first idea that springs to mind when addressing the topic of Arab nationalism, or more precisely proto-Arab nationalism, during the period of the Young Turks (1908-1914) is the idea of Arab versus Turk, or the Arab provinces versus the Ottoman central government. While this is a proper approach, it is incomplete, because we may speak of two general patterns within "Arab nationalism" at that stage. One reflected a reaction to Turkish domination, the other reflected a reaction to European or Western economic, political, and cultural penetration. Although the first pattern was not marginal and should not be taken lightly, it was, relatively speaking, minor. It was overshadowed and dwarfed by the anti-European pattern that was more important, more broadly based, and more socially and politically significant, at least in the case of Iraq" (p 121).

So there we have it. Arab anti-Ottoman nationalism did not exist beyond a "*proto*" phase which was totally "*dwarfed*" by the main political tendency in Mesopotamian

society, which was pro-Ottoman and anti-European. Except that the "*European penetration*" it was resisting was not "*European*" at all, but purely British!

Haddad describes the nature of British "*penetration*" of the region, and one of his main sources for this is a lengthy "*Memorandum*" by the British Consul-General in Baghdad, Lorimer, to Sir G. Lowther, the British representative in Istanbul in January 1910 (see PRO-FO 424/222). Haddad explains—though for "*European*" the reader clearly should read "*British*":

"The anti-European pattern developed in opposition to two particular schemes ... The first was the attempt of foreign capital to monopolize the rights of navigation on the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, while the second was related to other attempts by foreign capital to penetrate agriculture. It appeared in two phases—an initial phase at the end of 1909, and a later... phase during the second half of 1913...

"The 1909 phase started when the Ottoman cabinet approved a project to amalgamate the Ottoman steamer line, the Nahriyya, with the British Messrs. Lynch Brothers Company. For all practical purposes, the project meant the absorption of the former by the latter. Messrs. Lynch was to enjoy a virtual monopoly for navigating the Tigris and the Euphrates for seventy-five years, subject to termination by the Ottoman government after thirty-seven years..." (pp121-2).

This led to strong protests to Istanbul by a group of leading merchants from Baghdad, Basra and Mosul, "*Christians and Jews as well as Muslims*", against the decision of the Chamber of Deputies to sanction the sale of the *Nahriyya* to Messrs. Lynch and grant them the navigation concession. They feared British trade advantage and its use to advance British political designs to control the region. In addition, they argued that the British would use this position to manipulate the desert tribes and later use tribal disturbances as an excuse for military intervention, specifically citing India as an "*excellent example*" of how political designs were advanced under the guise of trade.

The entire incident helped precipitate a popular anti-British movement, and also led to the fall of Hilmi Pasha's government in Istanbul as "*it could neither grant the concession for fear of British expansion in Iraq nor reject the British for reasons of foreign policy*" (p143).

The concession to Lynch finally went



ahead in a modified form against the protests of a majority of Arab delegates in the Istanbul Chamber, but with the strong support of the Young Turk CUP which was very keen on building good relations with Britain. When in the wake of the Young Turk revolution a related incident arose—the proposed sale of concessions in former crown lands to raise loans for the hard pressed Ottoman state—the political society in Iraq broke with the CUP and began re-organising itself along anti-Turkish lines but espousing the Ottoman Caliph and a future within the Ottoman realm. In 1913 rumours were rife of concessions to up to 20 million acres being offered for sale at short notice to former crown lands in the provinces of Baghdad, Aleppo, Beirut and Syria. Jewish and English money were regarded as the prime element behind the proposed purchases and a movement rapidly emerged to oppose the sale.

The Istanbul regime was being squeezed by Britain as the latter's geopolitical schemes for the Arab lands of the Ottoman Empire took final shape in the context of preparations for launching a war against Germany. Istanbul capitulated:

"At the beginning of 1913, ... the CUP, once again in power in Istanbul, started a fresh effort to improve British-Ottoman relations. In this context, Hakki Pasha, minister plenipotentiary and extraordinary of the Ottoman government arrived in London in February 1913. His instructions were "to leave no stone unturned to settle outstanding differences with Great Britain". After months of negotiations between Hakki Pasha and Sir Edward Grey, the British secretary of state for foreign affairs, an Anglo-Ottoman agreement was reached in May 1913. Britain was to support an increase of 4 percent of the customs duties of the Ottoman Empire. In return, Istanbul recognized the special position of Great Britain in the Persian Gulf, pledged a policy of noninterference in the affairs of Kuwait, agreed to make Basra (not Kuwait) the terminus of the Baghdad Railway, and permitted the election of two British citizens to the board of directors of the Baghdad Railway company. Furthermore, navigation by steamers and barges on the Tigris, the Euphrates and the Shatt al-'Arab was to form a monopoly granted to an international company of which the shares were to be divided equally between Great Britain and the Ottoman government. The international company... was to be headed by Lord Inchcape (chairman of the Peninsula and Oriental and the British Steam Navigation companies), who would also represent British interests (Haddad, pp132-3).

The agreement also established a joint Ottoman-British commission to police the Shatt al-'Arab waterway and to levy dues and exercise the rights the Government

would normally possess at the Port of Basra when its construction was complete, concessions which *The Times* of London described as being essential for "giving British trade an independent right of access to the markets of Mesopotamia". Though the agreement was concluded by early 1914, Britain stalled in ratifying it, and, on the very outbreak of war, Istanbul desperately though in vain tried to expand it into a tripartite Anglo-German-Ottoman convention in July 1914.

Mesopotamian antagonism to Britain were driven by deep suspicions of British intentions, particularly the irrigation schemes being undertaken by Sir William Wilcocks on commission from the Ottoman government, which, according to the British consul general in Baghdad, "are regarded as a British rather than a Turkish concern". The *London Times* reported large meetings denouncing the "sinister intentions" of the Wilcocks project.

That these concerns were not without foundation is revealed by Haddad:

"We do not know for certain what specific "sinister intentions" the demonstrators were attributing to British enterprise at that point. We can only draw attention to the fact that Sir William Wilcocks himself mentions in his memoirs his preference for settling Indians in Iraq. For him: "The Euphrates-Tigris delta will be reclaimed and settled by millions of natives of India, who will make it again the Garden of the East." Although the British government did not seriously consider such a project until 1914-15, some British officials entertained the possibility of utilizing Iraq as an "outlet for the surplus population of India" as early as 1906. We also know that certain elite groups in Iraq were not unaware of these ideas..." (p126; Wilcocks' memoirs are entitled *Sixty Years In The East*, London 1935).

According to Lorimer, leading merchants in Baghdad and Basra were convinced that the British intended that "the drama of Egypt shall be re-enacted in Iraq". The irrigation scheme, they believed, would require the service of 25,000 "coolies and agriculturalists from India". Transporting produce would be an argument for a railway, requiring a further 10,000-15,000 Indian employees. As the Ottoman Government was insolvent, financial requirements would be met by raising a loan in England. Frictions would lead to a raid on the Indian colony by a "foolish Arab tribe" and military intervention would become imperative: "Occupation follows and Mesopotamia becomes Egypt."

With the outbreak of war and the British expeditionary force to Basra confirming these pre-war "suspicions", new oppor-

tunities were also believed to have emerged for the most radical designs to be implemented. In 1916, Haddad quotes an unidentified "British editor" as writing of the revival of the racial plan for re-settling the Euphrates basin:

"a change of rule would be beneficial to all inhabitants of Mesopotamia with the possible exception of the Bedouins. We sympathize with them, but of course they could not be allowed to occupy indefinitely such splendid lands they neither use nor allow others to use" (p137).

The very negative development of the war for Britain from 1916—and particularly the spectacular retreat through Mesopotamia—put these plans indefinitely on ice, though as Wilcocks' memoirs show, the dream never fully faded. It was precisely this type of ruthless colonial policy of racial uprooting and resettlement which so enamoured Hitler to the great example of the British Empire.

Philip O'Connor

## Report

### A Labour 1916 Commemoration (Of Sorts)

The SDLP joined with SIPTU and the Irish Labour Party to hold a 90th Anniversary meeting at Transport Housie (Belfast) on April 10th.

*Sena Farren*, whose grandfather, John, was with Connolly in Belfast a hundred years ago, said that the leaders of the Rising gave no thought to what it was in nationalism that made it objectionable to Unionists, and they underestimated the strength of the Unionist resistance. Unionism remained to be dealt with by the post-independence agenda, but was not really addressed until the Good Friday Agreement, which launched a course of "non-coercive persuasion" towards nationalism of those who were opposed to it. With the GFA there came "an offer for the first time ever, of a covenant of honour between nationalism and Unionism", and the Unionists did themselves no good by opposing it. But the SDLP looked forward towards making considerable progress through non-coercive persuasion during the ten years leading up to the Centenary. And it proposed that the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation should be re-convened.

*Joan Burton* of the Irish Labour Party said that, when Connolly was executed, Labour lost its leader, and stood aside as a consequence. This led to the two-and-a-half party system.

The Labour Party was not much given to 1916 commemorations, but it commemorates the date of Connolly's execution instead of making fiery speeches at Bodenstown. It was wrong to think that, because of its abhorrence of the physical force position, it doesn't commemorate Connolly.

Connolly had had many disappointments, and he got involved with the IRB as a last resort.

1916 should be seen in the light of the consequences of 1913.

The third platform speaker, *Eamon Phoenix* (actually the first) gave an academic account of the 1916 event.

From the floor, *Alban McGuinness* said he had real difficulty about coming to terms with 1916 and its value system. How could that event be reconciled with the goal of reconciliation shared by the people there that night?

*Ronan Farren* questioned the role of Connolly as an icon. He was a successful Trade Union organiser and writer, though his writings were of their time and not very readable today. But he failed as a politician, and he was truculent in character. Then came 1916 and the transformation. And weren't we exaggerating his importance?

*Phoenix* said in response to this that there were 20 Labour Councillors amongst the 60 members of the Belfast Council, but many of them were Unionists, and there was a basic job of socialist evangelism to be done. And, though Connolly's language now smacked of the Victorian era, he was an important socialist in his time, and was known to people like Trotsky.

Some people now think that, if the Rising had lasted for three weeks, Pearse would not be as famous as he is. He spent most of the week behind a typewriter hammering out the *Irish War News*.

It was a problem that the Rising did not have a mandate. The SDLP said last week that it looks back to Wolfe Tone and '98 rather than 1916. But they were men of violence too. But of course people did not have the vote then and violence was the only way. And it was true that 1916 was different in that regard.

*Sean Farren* made a second statement, on education, during which my mind wanders, as it always does in the vicinity of that subject. But it perked up and brought me back to attention when it heard him say that the forcible mixing of Catholics and Protestants in work place had not led to socialising, and the opportunities for progress in that regard did not prove to be as great as they appeared at first.

(My last campaign in Belfast politics, before I threw in the towel, was against Fair Employment social engineering. It appeared to me that forcing employers to take on Catholics and Protestants in proportions reflecting their numbers in the general population of regions would have a divisive rather than a uniting effect. I argued this on a number of occasions with the Fair Employment boss, Bob Cooper. But he had his vision. He was certain. The laws were brought in and enforced. Employers were compelled to employ Catholics and Protestants in the quotas laid down, while at the same time denying that they were applying a quota system, and going through convoluted employment procedures to disguise it. Possibly it served some other purpose than reconciliation, but reconciliation was its declared purpose. It seemed to me that its effect would be to increase the feeling of demoralisation in the Protestant community, and I never found it believable that its architects did not see the same thing.)

*Joan Burton* said that Church leaders had been against violence in 1916 and later. But the brutality of the repression had an ongoing effect. Regarding the position of Connolly, she said that writers had an advantage over speakers, whose words die with them.

Civil rights and negotiation was the only way in the North. But you couldn't retro-fit from the present to the past.

*Glyn Roberts* of the Federation of Small Businessmen condemned the waste of time since 1998. There were still more people employed in the public sector in Northern Ireland than there had been in Communist Hungary. How stupid we must look to the rest of the world. That's what politics was about.

*Boyd Black*: Where did Labour reconciliation fit in? What was happening was increasing polarisation. Only the Labour movements of these islands working together could bring about reconciliation.

*Joan Burton* said Labour had been in at the beginning of the peace process. (That was news to me.)

*Sean Farren* spoke about the reconciliation of identities coming about through people working together with a sense of social justice. If there was a distinctive Labour way to reconciliation, he would like to hear of it, because he didn't know of it.

"*Dr. Black*: It's suppressed.

*Alex Atwood*: Well, we'll suppress it for a wee bit longer then".

(*Atwood* (SDLP) chaired the meeting. Until this moment I had never suspected him of having a sense of humour.)

*Eamon Phoenix* subscribed to the song, *No more heroes anymore*. The IRB group of the Rising was a minority of a minority.

Somebody asked if the logical working out of the GFA was a united Ireland.

*Joan Burton* said some of us were repelled by Pearse and the notion of blood sacrifice. But there was another side to him: his writings and activity in the sphere of education. And in 1998 the Republic relinquished its earlier irredentist claims on the North.

*Sean Farren* said that at least the Proclamation was printed in Liberty Hall, whoever wrote it. And he did not suggest that Irish unity was the inevitable working out of the GFA, which was the template under which we could engage in non-coercive persuasion.

*Eamon Phoenix* said that this was because in 1998 the South bought into the 1970 SDLP programme.

#### COMMENT

That's what I noted down when the meeting turned out to be much more interesting than I expected. I recall in addition that Joan Burton said that, growing up in Dublin, she witnessed many Republican demonstrations and ceremonies at Arbour Hill. She later rather went off the Republican view. But she spent many years doing social work in North Africa, and in Tanzania Julius Nyerere told her that the Easter Rising was one of the events that inspired him.

\*

Dr. Boyd Black's contribution was a disembowelled and castrated adaptation of an idea which I put into circulation in the early seventies, which built up to a fairly impressive cross-community political force for a few years after the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985. It was that a common ground of political action for both communities could only be established through the party-politics of the democracy of the state. The essential thing was the participation in the central political conflict of the state in pursuit of power. It was certainly not that Labour, detached from the politics of the state, had any special aptitude for reconciling.

Dr. Black was one of those who brought that movement to nothing 15 years ago by use of Unionist shibboleths. Having helped to destroy the live movement that existed then, and that was exerting strong and increasing pressure on the Labour Party by mass lobbying at Party Conferences, he and his colleagues went to law and compelled the Labour Party to admit them to individual membership on the condition of not engaging in political activity. And, in any case, they are not a political movement on the ground, as the Campaign for Labour Representation was.

With regard to Connolly and his status as an icon, it seems that what the speakers knew of his last years was what they gleaned from the falsification of Robert Lynd, a British Home Rule militarist of the Great War, who in an Introduction to the post-Rising edition of *Labour In Irish History* presented him as a rather simple-minded working class socialist (an intellectual marvel, of course, for a working man, but also of restricted outlook because a working man), who could not cope with the situation in which Britain found it necessary to make war on Germany in order to save civilisation, lost his bearings, and hit out in despair.

Connolly's more recent biographer, Ruth Dudley Edwards (literary collaborator of Sean O'Callaghan, Informer and murderer) also misrepresents Connolly's last years on similar lines. She conceals the fact that he was, from September 1914 onwards, an active participant in the Great War, as an ally of Germany, on socialist grounds which he spelt out clearly (and readably).

Lynd's self-justification, I presume, is that he thought that in his work as a war propagandist he was helping to save civilisation, and that something had to be done to negate Connolly's bad example. I can't guess what Ruth Dudley Edwards's justification might be.

Donal Nevin has published a very factual biography of Connolly. The Editor of *History Ireland* (who, I gather, was once a revolutionary socialist) gave the task of reviewing and disparaging it to the real godfather of revisionism, Professor David Fitzpatrick. (Foster is only the showman.)

It was reviewed on Radio eireann by Mairin de Burca and Joe Higgins. The falsifications of Lynd and Edwards did not seem to have been removed from their minds by Nevin, judging from their comments.

**Brendan Clifford**

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## The Reality Of 1916

This book in my opinion has four major parts:

One: *Six Days of the Irish Republic*

Two: A pamphlet on Sir Roger Casement entitled: *A Character Sketch without Prejudice.*

Three: *Ireland, The Peace Conference and the League of Nations.*

Four: *An Irishman's Home or The Crisis,* a play in one act by L.G.Redmond-Howard, and Harry Carson. (son of Sir Edward Carson)

I think it is too important a work, and in many ways too complex a work, and too dense a work for all four parts to be pushed into one review. So I will start with what I call Part One: *Six Days of the Irish Republic.* So here goes.

When I was asked to review this book my immediate reaction was: Not another work on the 1916 Uprising! My brain was already tired at the thought of it.

When I was born in Belfast in 1932 sixteen years had passed since 1916, and eleven years had passed since the Unionist regime had been established in 1921.

On top of that there was mass unemployment that gave rise to the Outdoor Relief Riots. The smell of burning potato peels and paper, as a substitute for a coal fire—the down-draught from chimneys filling the streets during the 1930s—on occasions, still fill my nostrils when I think back to that period.

I have always had an extremely good memory of my childhood, starting from the age of eighteen months. At that age it was a series of images much like the photographs of a still camera. At about the age of four this gave way to images as if from a cine camera. You may wonder what this has got to do with 1916 but young children are also recorders of grim times. At the age of nine, when I had achieved elementary reading and writing skills, I was able to interpret that part of an image seen merely as a blur at eighteen months old—the writing on the side of a horse-drawn van I saw from the upper window of room near Carlisle Circus, Belfast. I could now read it as Red Hand Oatmeal—a Protestant Porridge. The date 1934.

Those cine-camera images at the age of four are of Crossley Tenders full of the paramilitary RUC sitting back to back holding .303 rifles. Following the tenders came grey-painted lorries—the upper part

a cage against stone-throwers—and containing B-Specials with the same rifle. They are racing up the Donegall Road (yes, Donegall with two lls) towards the nearby Falls Road. At some stage shots are fired and two bodies lie in the street. One is of a man lying beside his motor cycle with the wheels still spinning. Nothing now moves, trams and other traffic have stopped and lie empty, people have disappeared like magic and I am being held down on the ground by someone for safety while bullets chip the road. The date 1936.

I, as a Catholic, was brought up in Protestant areas and went to Protestant schools. My father was a Protestant who confined his communism to Northern Ireland. My mother was a Catholic who didn't agree with the 1916 Uprising because she thought it suicidal and therefore against her faith. But she and her family actively supported the War of Independence from their home in Omagh and suffered for it.

So, 1916 was not a topic in our home. It was only at the age of 16 when I was in contact with the communist Young Workers League, and meeting with other teenage Catholics there, did I learn fully of the 1916 Uprising. Looking back to those 1936 cine images I began to realise I had been witnessing an RUC punitive action against the celebration of the Twentieth Anniversary of the 1916 Uprising being held in nearby Catholic West Belfast.

It wasn't long before I caught up with the history of 1916. I didn't think, when picking up L.G. Redmond-Howard's book that I was to learn very much more.

Brendan Clifford begins his excellent introduction by reminding us that Louis George Redmond-Howard is the son of John Redmond's sister who married an Australian called Howard. He was orphaned in childhood and brought up as a member of the Redmond family, and was adopted by Redmond as his son.

An industrial strike has many of the elements of a revolutionary uprising—it seems

to happen instantly, it surprises all those outside it, workers once too timid to even look the foreman in the eye are facing up and eyeballing the executives of the company without a care for the future, some of the workers are forever radicalised

by the action while others slip back to take up their former roles when all is finished and may or may not come out again when the call is given.

I feel that L.G. Redmond-Howard himself had been radicalised by the 1916 Uprising. He begins as the outsider in Chapter One, called *A Bolt from the Blue*. He is there witnessing that action and he rightly calls himself a privileged witness. He begins with Larkin's Citizen Army without being fully aware of James Connolly. It is like writing of New York before the Statue of Liberty has arrived. Later from his hotel window he hears James Connolly being addressed as Mr. Connolly. I thought for a while he was just going to pounce about from one hotel balcony to another forever. Though he does have one unique opportunity to view from the balcony of the Metropole Hotel the settling-in of the rebels into the GPO. Eventually he does take to the streets and with the cheek of the devil goes to the GPO and asks to see the *President* in order to interview him. Ordered to leave he returns to the Metropole where from the balcony he is able to take a snapshot of the raising of the new flag of the Republic and another of the cheering crowd. At this point he doesn't seem to think much of this crowd.

"Thought this was very insignificant and in no way represented any considerable body of citizens, any of the better class having disappeared, leaving the streets to idlers and women and children or else stray sightseers."

Of course he doesn't see himself as an idler and stray sightseer. Women and children also seem to him to be part of the street debris.

I was still not convinced, at this stage, that he views the 1916 Uprising as anything more than a riot by "*thugs, dockers and others of the lower classes*". He seems too concerned about wounded British Tommies lying in the street and is proud to see young girls risking their lives by going out under fire to give some of them a drink of water. He castigates the looters from the slums more than the British who are doing terrible damage to Dublin with their gunboat on the Liffey and their heavy artillery, some of which is entrenched in Trinity College.

Later he comes to realise that the rebels have integrity. Some are sent to the Metropole Hotel to requisition some food supplies but they later come back with a ten pound note.

There is an apparent change in his views and the way he is now looking at the Uprising. He becomes the fanciful military tactician—why didn't the rebels capture the British wireless communications

which included the telegraph and telephone system, with links to submarines engaged in WW1, and make the enemy blind and deaf? That would have been like taking over today's Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) in Cheltenham in England. Why did they not capture Trinity College? His enthusiasm for the Rising grows. Later a wireless station is seized and messages about the Uprising are flashed to the four corners of the earth about the establishment of an Irish Republic. He delights in the idea that messages are picked up at sea by special envoys, who had been forewarned, and sent on to New York and Petrograd. He says:

"The amazement of Russia and America must have been considerable."

In Lower Abbey Street he notes that a formidable barricade was composed partly by paper taken from the stores of the *Irish Times*. So the *Irish Times* did play its part in the Rising after all. Over in the Four Courts a barricade is made of wills.

From here onwards there are so many quotable pieces that this review could become a re-printing of the book so I must be selective.

I was unaware in my reading of the history of the period some years ago that the training of the Citizen Army was mostly carried out by Captain J. R. White, DSO. He was the son of the late Field-Marshal Sir George White, and his "*...Labour ideas got him three months imprisonment only a few weeks ago*", writes L.G.Redmond-Howard.

When James Connolly is under sentence of death, Captain White appeals to the South Wales miners to help save him. We are not told how the miners reacted.

I think the stuff I read years ago did not allow for any outside intrusion into the history of 1916 even when it was benign. The puritanism of Republicism put me off it for a time.

Continuing to develop, L.G.Redmond-Howard has another look at that "lower class" who previously did nothing but loot and set fire to buildings for good measure while British incendiary shells hitting every building at will is somewhat downplayed. He now realises that the 1913 lock-out by Dublin employers had caused a third of the population to starve. Mr. Connolly becomes James Connolly and therefore comes more fully into his vision:

"They should look at the soldier for a week; they must examine the life-long student of economics and read his *History of Labour in Irish History* and *The Reconquest of Ireland*, for it is here we have the revolution in its cause, which was just as much economic as political."

He re-prints a letter in the Irish Times from Æ on the bad citizenship of the "*aristocracy of industry*".

"There are twenty thousand rooms in Dublin in each of which live entire families and sometimes more, where no functions of the body can be concealed, and delicacy and modesty are creatures that are stifled ere they are born."

And this:

"True, the revolt was not with any concrete economic end in view; but none the less, it was coloured throughout with economic grievances."

I think those today in Ireland who think there might have been another way to bring about at least a partial cutting off from England should consider those twenty thousand rooms in Dublin, and the hideous poverty of the rural areas.

I found it interesting to see how his style of writing also changes as he progresses in his thinking. He leaves behind his heavy Victorian style—probably learnt at Trinity College—for a more direct one in keeping with a revolutionary time:

"It is the custom to speak of the Larkinites with scant respect, as if they were the mad, blind multitude of the 'have nots' in perpetual prey upon the 'haves'; but it is quite a false idea, for they have in their movement some of those who count socially and intellectually."

After this he goes on to mention Captain White. I did consider this to be class upmanship for after all this was the early Twentieth Century and he had been to a Jesuit College in Clongowes, to Douai in France, to Trinity in Dublin and Bonn in Germany (as Brendan Clifford points out in his introduction). Then I began to think that maybe he was saying he was of some worth after all and not just a stuffed shirt amidst the making of revolutionary Ireland.

I can never forget the image in one of the early Cuban films of the 1960s, after the revolution, of a bourgeois who hasn't made it to Miami lying listless on his bed oblivious to the sound of tanks and artillery pieces passing his door as they make their way to the Bay of Pigs where they will defeat a CIA backed invading Cuban exile army from Miami. (The film was called *Memories Of Underdevelopment*, 1968. The blurb said he was "Too lazy to go to Miami, too decadent to fit into the new Cuba.") Happily L.G. Redmond-Howard didn't lie on his bed oblivious or we wouldn't have had his personal experiences of the Rising.

He gives the Cunard shipping line a good hammering worthy of a James Connolly when five hundred young West

of Ireland men arrive in Liverpool and are booed as cowards because they won't join the British Army and die for England. Cunard has reported their existence on board to the authorities. He reminds us that Cunard made their fortune from the coffin ships that carried the Irish to America—not wanted in Ireland and not wanted in America either, they had been enticed with lurid Cunard coloured posters depicting the joys of the New World merely for the profit of the company.

He defends Sinn Fein (though I don't think he supported that party) against the accusation that it is taking German gold. Of course he was aware that his uncle John Redmond had been accused of taking American dollars.

As in Iraq today civilian casualties are not counted nor is anyone welcome to count them. L.G. Redmond-Howard also wonders how many civilians are dead. There was talk of secret carnage:

"Which was supposed to have taken place during what was euphemistically called 'the rounding-up of the rebels' and 'house-house visitation' while the citizens of Dublin were confined..."

Francis Sheehy Skeffington, a pacifist, and out in the street during the Rising in order to help the wounded of either side, is picked up, blindfolded and executed as a rebel on the 26th of April, 1916. A British officer is arrested and an enquiry is promised. (Much like today.) As a pacifist he loathed violence and was able to pinpoint where most of it might be coming from. L.G.Redmond-Howard integrates into his book a very important letter written by him:

"Probably, however, the best diagnosis of the situation immediately proceeding the outbreak was the letter published by the *New Statesman* on May 6th, that had been written as early as April 7th, and which, coming from the most imminent victim of the danger so clearly foreseen by him, must have special force at the present moment."

There then follows Francis Sheehy Skeffington's letter in which he accuses General Friend of the British Army of being on the point of setting Ireland ablaze:

"Twice already General Friend has been on the point of setting Ireland in a blaze—once last November, when he had a warrant made out for the arrest of Bishop O'Dwyer, of Limerick; once on March 25th, when he had a detachment of soldiers with machine-guns in readiness to raid Liberty Hall. In both cases Mr Birrell {Chief Secretary for Ireland. WJH}, intervened in the nick of time, and decisively vetoed the militarist plans. But some day Mr. Birrell may be overborne or may intervene too late. Then, once bloodshed is started in Ireland, who can say where or how it will end?"

L.G.Redmond-Howard goes on to write about the constant pinpricks of the enemy.

"Thus, if we take the issue of the *Worker's Republic* of April 22, 1916, we find an account, quoted from the *Liverpool Courier*, of how Connolly, the Commandant of the Citizen's Army, stopped the police raid, in search of papers, on the shop of the Worker's Co-operative Society at 31, Eden Quay, having being informed of their intention."

From the *Liverpool Courier*:

"Connolly, says an account, arrived on the scene just as one of the police got behind the counter. Inquiring if the police had a search warrant, they answered that they had not. On hearing this, Mr Connolly, turning to the policeman behind the counter as he had lifted up a bundle of papers, covered him with an automatic pistol, and quietly said: 'Drop those papers or I'll drop you.' He dropped the papers. Then he was ordered out from behind the counter, and he cleared. His fellow-burglar tried to be insolent, and was quickly told as they had no search warrant they were doing an illegal act, and the first one who ventures to touch the papers would be shot like a dog. After some parley, they slunk away, vowing vengeance."

L.G.Redmond-Howard goes on to say that the story runs for a column or more.

Liberty Hall is then garrisoned by a 150 determined armed men and more were trooping in every few minutes followed by the Women's Ambulance Corp and the Boy Scouts. The Irish Volunteers were also on the alert. Liberty Hall then began to be guarded day and night.

In the meantime Carson's Ulster Volunteers had been blatantly given two years immunity by the British Government.

My conclusion from this report and from Francis Sheehy Skeffington's letter is that the 1916 Uprising stopped something much worse to come. The Rising was not so much an offensive action but more of a defensive action. Ireland was no stranger to the art of guerrilla warfare. Labour had acquired premises like Liberty Hall and printing presses, the Volunteers drill halls and other property. The leadership was well-known to the authorities and thousands of other personnel were on their books. Even at that time the camera was being used to build files plus the sketch artist was at work in Dublin Castle. Patrick Pearse had his school running and his poetry and essays had been published. Thomas McDonagh was a university lecturer. He was a published poet and his plays were appearing on the Dublin stage. Connolly, a nation-wide Trade Union organiser, also had his work published. Such a solid

edifice of revolutionary endeavour could not up and go at a moment's notice even if they had a will to do so... and they were living in their own country. The Republic had been born and now it had to be defended. Most births come at an awkward time for everyone—native and foreign occupier alike. The midwife was this deep pool of talent. It was not a time to take to the hills. Thomas MacDonagh was very aware of static warfare and guerrilla warfare when he said:

"In a nation on the run only the portable arts survive."

Augustine Birrell, Chief Secretary for Ireland, was as shrewd as they come. He noted:

"A genuine literary Irish revival, in prose, poetry and drama which has produced remarkable books and plays, and a school of acting, all characterised by originality and independence of thought and expression, quite divorced from any political party, and tending towards and feeding latent desires for some kind of separate Irish national existence."

What he was witnessing—and I'm sure he felt it in his bones—was the cultural revolution which usually proceeds the military one.

George Bernard Shaw, Irish butler-cum-clown to English dramatic circles, is not so generous when in the *London Daily News* of May the 10th, 1916, he castigates the British Government for turning minor poets in heroes and martyrs.

"Now they will take their place beside Emmet and the Manchester Martyrs."

I suppose if left alone they could be getting the odd poem into *Tit Bits*.

I wonder what GBS would have thought of Bobby Sands? Persuade him take his porridge and he might get a poem into *Village or Fortnight*?

Give me the poetry of Bobby Sands any day. His work is made of flesh and blood unlike the *uncommitted* Seamus Heaney whose poetry rings mostly of University shall speak unto University, don upon don, sinecure upon sinecure. But back to reality.

The Ulster Volunteers were also mainly holding defensive positions. It is mentioned in this book that if it wasn't the GPO in Dublin being burnt to the ground it could have been the City Hall in Belfast—a hefty Portland stone building with a mighty dome built to reflect Belfast's city status granted by Queen Victoria in 1888.

Francis Sheehy Skeffington was convinced that:

"The British military authorities

in Ireland know perfectly well that the members of both these organisations {Irish Volunteers & Citizen Army WJH} are earnest, determined men. If knowing this, General Friend and his subordinate militarists proceed either to disarm the Volunteers or to raid the Labour Press, it can only be because they want bloodshed—because they want to provoke another '98, and to get an excuse for a machine-gun massacre."

At that time, in my opinion, it was either wait to be massacred in the open or make a defensive stand. No amount of constitutional horse-dealing could have reversed this situation. It was all too late. There stood the fully-fledged Irish

Republic and its Government in waiting. There was no going back. To defend her meant death.

Not to defend her meant death.

And to those charlatan Irish history revisionists boiling over with money from the elite universities of England who think it could have all been done differently: think again about what Thomas MacDonagh said:

"No man has the right to fix the boundaries to the march of a nation."

**Wilson John Haire.**  
19th April, 2006

**To Be Continued**

Review: *Eoin O'Duffy—A Self-Made Hero* by Fearghal McGarry, Oxford University Press, 2005, Euro 35 /£25

## Eoin O'Duffy—A Cautionary Tale

Fearghal McGarry first made his mark as a historian with *Irish Politics And The Spanish Civil War* (1999), described by me as "the definitive textbook on the subject" in the Fall 2003 issue of *Irish Literary Supplement*. This was in the context of a review of his second book, *Frank Ryan* (2002), a biography criticised as both disappointing and sensationalist, with little evidence of the depth of research and analysis required to do justice to its subject. The hope was nonetheless expressed that the author's future work would demonstrate a return to the "high standards of scholarship, balanced presentation and conscientious evaluation" that he had previously shown.

How then does McGarry's third book, a biography of the Irish fascist leader, Eoin O'Duffy, measure up to such hopes? The author states that he has attempted to explain rather than condemn such a life, but that he has uncovered little to warrant revision of previous negative assessments of O'Duffy. But this is not for the want of trying. In contrast with his previous biography, this work is meticulously researched. It is the story of a one-time avowed champion of democracy who had fought to vindicate the will of the Irish people in the 1918 Election, being transformed into a convinced fascist who sought to crush the will of the Spanish people after their 1936 election; of a highly disciplined and impressive military leader, who had led by selfless example during the War of Independence, becoming the high-living commander who selfishly abandoned his own troops during the Spanish Civil War.

McGarry begins by portraying the younger O'Duffy's devotion to duty through tireless work on behalf of the

Gaelic Athletic Association. His leadership qualities would subsequently come to the fore as IRA leader in his native County Monaghan during the War of Independence. In contrast with much latter-day writing of Irish history, it is to the author's credit that he begins by clarifying the essential character of that war: "Established by democratic means, the Republic would be defended by violence". And, when O'Duffy personally led the attack on Ballytrain RIC barracks in February 1920, he took the opportunity to give the police the following lesson in democracy:

"At the general election the people had voted for freedom. The police were acting against the will of the Irish people. He appealed to them to leave the force and join their brother Irishmen."

A year later, in January 1921, there was a sharp escalation in the Monaghan war. McGarry conscientiously chronicles the complexity of such a war in an Ulster border County that not only had a 25 percent Unionist minority, but also a sullen hardcore of defeated Redmondites—which ensured that local hostility to the Republic amounted to as much as a third of the population. The minority was furthermore a very powerful one, in terms of property, influence and guns. McGarry describes the town of Clones as "a Protestant stronghold", while there were as many as 1,800 UVF members throughout Monaghan County as a whole.

In such a frontier society it was inevitable that there would be an inter-ethnic aspect to the conflict. McGarry, however, does himself an injustice by comparing his own detailed narrative of the war in Monaghan with Peter Hart's earlier approach to Cork in *The IRA And Its Enemies* (1998), although he does

acknowledge that other historians have questioned the accuracy of Hart's research. But it should also be pointed out that Cork was no border territory. The minority of Cork Loyalists who supported Britain's war against the Republic were against self-government for any part of Ireland. In contrast, the two Ulster communities involved in a conflict of nationalities in County Monaghan can be viewed, at least in retrospect, as having been engaged in creating their own *de facto* Boundary Commission, through a struggle to determine on which side of a future border they would lie. That this was essentially a conflict between two national allegiances rather than a religious war was underscored by O'Duffy's willingness to embrace an Ulster Protestant like Ernest Blythe who had crossed over from his own community in order to give his allegiance to the Irish independence struggle.

It was, of course, a conflict that could very easily have degenerated into something far more ugly. McGarry writes that "Republican violence in Monaghan was inevitably more sectarian than much of the rest of the country", but he also gives credit to O'Duffy for "the relative restraint demonstrated by the IRA during this period". In terms of the ruthless pursuit of informers, the author recognises that "order could not be maintained without discipline". He concedes that, notwithstanding the high proportion of Protestant targets, "few, if any, people were shot solely because of their religion". And where he does speak of "questionable murders", it is to his credit as a historian that he presents the pros and cons of each individual case surveyed, allowing the reader to come to different conclusions than his own. For this reviewer there is just one such killing that remains questionable as to whether the motivation might have been less a suspicion of informing and more a desire to eliminate a vociferous political opponent who had disrupted a local authority vote of sympathy on the death of Cork Lord Mayor Terence MacSwiney. However, that particular victim had not been some Unionist opponent but rather a Redmondite Hibernian one; not at all a Protestant Orangeman but a Catholic "Molly Maguire".

Eoin O'Duffy emerged from the War of Independence with a well-deserved reputation that his Civil War opponent Ernie O'Malley described as "energetic and commanding". How then, in the years before his death in 1944, did O'Duffy end up being described in intelligence reports as the "representative of the Axis powers in Ireland" and a "potential Quisling, suffering from acute alcoholic poisoning"? McGarry retells the story of O'Duffy's disastrous 1937 intervention on behalf of the fascist side in Spain that

“cost Franco a small fortune—and killed more of his own soldiers than the enemy”. He presents some new research in this area, notably O’Duffy’s recently-found diary of that escapade, and he quotes the description of O’Duffy as an “*Operetta General*” penned by one of Franco’s own Generals. McGarry concludes that Spain destroyed O’Duffy’s reputation as a man of action, as previously “*the General’s reputation as a politician had been destroyed by his leadership of Fine Gael*”. But how had this degeneration come about?

McGarry devotes a lot of attention to O’Duffy’s position as a protégé of IRB President Michael Collins, who would eventually promote him to Treasurer of that body’s Supreme Council. While the IRA itself was a democratically-structured organisation, the continued existence within its ranks of a secret society like the IRB was to have a profoundly destabilising effect, both North and South. Collins hailed O’Duffy as “*the coming man*”, proceeding in July 1921 to pull off a stunt behind the back of Minister for Defence Cathal Brugha by unilaterally making O’Duffy Deputy Chief of Staff of the IRA for the post-Truce period. Collins brought O’Duffy with him to London for the start of the Treaty negotiations and it was O’Duffy who would obtain the artillery from Britain’s General Macready in order to commence the Civil War in July 1922.

Meanwhile the IRB leadership was the behind-the-scenes manipulator of another little war. In the Summer of 1921 O’Duffy had already explicitly criticised de Valera for suggesting that Counties with a Unionist majority should be allowed to opt out of a unified Ireland if Britain would agree to a Republic for the rest of the country. With Collins by his side, O’Duffy delivered an inflammatory speech in Armagh in September 1921 in which he threatened the majority of people in Belfast that, if they were not going to accept being part of the Irish nation, “*they would have to use the lead against them*”. Such bombast only had the effect of intensifying the horrific Orange pogroms against that city’s Catholic minority, just as in the post-Treaty month of March 1922 the murder of the McMahan family followed a Collins/O’Duffy military offensive in West Ulster. Without the knowledge of the Free State Cabinet, O’Duffy and Collins were to be responsible for yet another failed Northern offensive during the month of May that ended in further disaster for Northern Ireland’s Catholic minority. O’Duffy had indeed subdued the Unionist minority in his native Monaghan, but to ham-fistedly dream of similarly taking on the Unionist majority in Antrim and Down was quite a different proposition.

During the course of the Civil War, as well as in his capacity as Commissioner of the Garda Síochána for the first decade of its existence, O’Duffy continued to employ the rhetoric of democracy in his public utterances. McGarry, however, also highlights O’Duffy’s cultivation of a highly-orchestrated personality cult on his own behalf at the same time as the Commissioner’s private reports to Cabinet were complaining that “*the Irish public is rotten*”. The General even began to alarm his own ruthless Minister for Home Affairs, Kevin O’Higgins who, in the months prior to his 1927 assassination, had been on the point of sacking O’Duffy.

Knowing the threat that O’Duffy had come to pose to their own regime makes the Cumann na nGaedheal leaders all the more culpable in their attempt to bring down the Fianna Fáil Government in 1933 with a strategy of installing Blueshirt leader O’Duffy as the first President of Fine Gael. McGarry provides chapter and verse to demonstrate just how thoroughly fascist-minded and anti-democratic O’Duffy’s own personal philosophy had become at this stage. And while quibbling with a statement of my own in a 1984 study—that anti-semitism had also come to form an integral feature of O’Duffy’s personal ideology—he nonetheless provides year-by-year examples of such anti-semitism that actually confirm my conclusions. But McGarry does not always get his facts right. When he quotes Seán MacEntee’s accusation that one particular Blueshirt had personally murdered a Dublin Jew, he states in a footnote that this had occurred during the Civil War. It had not. It had occurred six months after the conclusion of that particular conflict, in November 1923, and the subsequent escape to America of the army officer charged with that murder had been facilitated by both Garda and Free State Army authorities.

The very last words of McGarry’s narrative sum up O’Duffy’s biography as “*a cautionary tale*”. What makes it all the more so is the author’s determination to demonstrate that O’Duffy was not just some solitary freakish individual. He highlights how the Cumann na nGaedheal leadership’s own virulent propaganda had already begun to publicly question the legitimacy of the Fianna Fáil Government’s election victories of 1932 and 1933, before they ever came a-courting O’Duffy to become the leader of their blueshirted second coming. But McGarry also says a lot more. In the first history of that movement, *The Blueshirts* (1970), Maurice Manning of Fine Gael had expressed some disquiet at one or two of Ernest Blythe’s 1933 utterances. Blythe’s importance as an ideologist of the corporate state was more specifically highlighted by Mike Cronin in *The Blueshirts*

*And Irish Politics* (1997). McGarry, however, takes research in this area very much further by providing a systematic narrative of the highly racist and violently anti-democratic hate-propaganda penned by Blythe throughout the course of 1933 and 1934.

O’Duffy’s own personal pietism has sometimes led to a far too simplistic classification of Blueshirt fascism as being little more than an excess of Catholic zeal. Blythe, of course, also knew how to opportunistically play the Papal Encyclical card, but he himself never ceased to be an Ulster Protestant. Blythe’s fascism was profoundly political and was in many ways much more alarming than that of O’Duffy, because it was all the more coherently thought out. McGarry notes that Blythe’s fascism continued unabated throughout the war years and that Irish military intelligence also viewed him as another potential Quisling. Blythe surely merits a biography in his own right. Having produced such a comprehensive biography of O’Duffy, one hopes that Fearghal McGarry might be motivated to do just that.

**Manus O’Riordan**

First published in *Irish Literary Supplement*, Boston, Spring 2006. Manus O’Riordan will return to the issues raised in Part One of this series in a future issue.

**Report: launch of *The Origin And Organisation Of British Propaganda In Ireland, 1920* by Professor David Miller of Spinwatch; Chair: Danny Morrison**  
Aubane Historical Society, 9 Euro, \$6

## Propaganda Then And Now

Reading Brian Murphy on how the British manipulated the truth in 1920 “*made the hairs stand up on the back of your neck*” said Danny Morrison. The parallels between events in that one year and British activities many years later in Ireland are striking, he said.

The one time *An Phoblacht* editor and Sinn Féin Publicity Director, now author and playwright, launched Brian Murphy’s *The Origin And Organisation Of British Propaganda In Ireland, 1920* on March 24th in the Teachers’ Club in Dublin.

The 100-page work was also launched by Professor David Miller of Strathclyde University and by the author, Brian Murphy.

*A major addition to our understanding of media manipulation*

Morrison detailed the way in which Murphy’s book outlines how the British plotted to kill a solicitor who defended IRA prisoners, how they abolished inquests, and how they utilised the

"language of criminalisation" in the attempt to marginalise resistance to British rule. The false accusation that prisoners' injuries were "self-inflicted" was the same as that attributed to prisoners in Castle-reagh in the 1970s, said Morrison. The *Defence of the Realm Act* (DORA) and the *Restoration of Order in Ireland Act* (ROIA) legislation would also be familiar to those who experienced or studied the recent conflict.

#### *Damned lies and statistics*

Reading Murphy's account of the British manipulation of statistics with regard to IRA actions called for a reconsideration of recent statistics on the conflict in the North, said Morrison. Killings attributed to the UDA or UVF should rightfully be attributed directly to British forces, which set up and controlled such paramilitary proxy forces or 'counter gangs'. Morrison mentioned the attempt on the life of former Sinn Fein Lord Mayor of Belfast, Alex Maskey. British agent Brian Nelson, who telephoned British Army Headquarters in Lisburn to confirm Maskey's identity, coordinated the unsuccessful attempt. Morrison referred to Sir John Stevens of the British Metropolitan Police who spent 15 years, or one third of his professional life, investigating British collusion with unionist paramilitaries. Stevens published 17 pages of a 3,000 page report. Morrison asked, "How much more is in there?"

The point leads directly to the question: who should the 34 deaths in the 1974 Dublin-Monaghan bombings be attributed to statistically: the UVF, the RUC, the British Army, or all three?

#### *How the truth was "mutilated"*

Morrison said that Brian Murphy's book should be commended for the way in which it showed how the British created a "false narrative" about the conflict and how modern history books reproduced that narrative. Morrison referred to the "official" account of British soldiers being "hacked to death" and of "mutilated" bodies after the IRA's Kilmichael ambush in November 1920, an account that was the concoction of the chief propagandist, Basil Clarke. This is the account that revisionist historian Peter Hart asserted "should not be so completely dismissed" in his *The IRA And Its Enemies* (1998). Besides Hart, the historians Roy Foster and David Fitzpatrick were mentioned in this context.

The book contains an appendix in which Brian Murphy questions Peter Hart's omission of a section from an internal British intelligence document, *The Record of the Rebellion*, detailing British forces' racist and sectarian view of the Irish. This is in Hart's edition of *The Record*, entitled *British Intelligence In Ireland 1920-21* (2002). Murphy, in addition, questions Hart's failure in this book to account for a

previous misrepresentation of a section of *The Record* in Hart's *The IRA And Its Enemies*. An *Irish Times* reviewer of Hart's *British Intelligence In Ireland*, Brendan Ó Cathaóir, referred to Hart as "disingenuous" (28 January 2003) on this point.

#### *Spin yesterday and today*

Professor David Miller, co-editor of *Spinwatch* (<http://www.spinwatch.org>), contributed a Foreword to Murphy's study and outlined the connection with wider aspects of British policy. Miller has researched extensively the origins of British propaganda and its connection with the development of public relations. Both were originally designed, said Miller, to preserve the British Empire and also to subvert democracy in Britain itself.

Miller outlined how Basil Clarke, who ran the propaganda operation in Ireland, was a key member of British imperialist networks.

According to Miller's foreword, Clarke and his colleagues, Hugh Pollard and C.J. Street, worked closely with the head of Special Branch in London, Basil Thomson.

"Through him they were connected to the key imperialist lobby networks in London. These individuals were not abashed about their politics, describing their network as the 'diehards' and the 'London Imperialists'. Central to it and very close to Thomson was Admiral Reggie 'Blinker' Hall, who was the director of Naval Intelligence in the 1914-18 war. Together with Thomson, Hall interrogated Roger Casement in 1916 and personally leaked his 'black diaries' to the press in order to ensure that Casement would not be reprimanded as a result of the campaign being run by Arthur Conan Doyle. According to historians, Hall's ensuring that Casement was hanged 'was all very gratifying; an object lesson in secret service power which Hall... was never to forget'."

Clarke went on to set up the first public relations company in Britain, and he was associated with the setting up of 'National Propaganda', later to become 'The Economic League' in 1924. Clarke and his associates recruited former Black & Tans after the war in Ireland to break up strikes and to infiltrate Trade Unions and left-wing organisations. The Economic League was notorious up until its demise in the 1990s for blacklisting workers on a massive scale and for other forms of clandestine reactionary subversion of left wing and industrial politics. Another of the Dublin propaganda group, Hugh Pollard, flew Generalissimo Francisco Franco from the Canaries to Spain in 1936 to enable him to start his fascist coup that led to the Spanish Civil War and nearly 40 years of brutal dictatorship.

#### *Photographing torture*

Miller indicated how propaganda was

an essential part of Britain's attempt to hold on to its empire. He said that lessons on media manipulation were passed on and honed from conflict to conflict. Miller, Editor of *Tell me Lies*, which deals with the conflict in Iraq, drew parallels with that conflict. Miller observed:

"One of Murphy's most extraordinary revelations is that the techniques, which shocked the world in Abu Graibh, have a history longer than perhaps anyone outside the military and their political masters has suspected. He quotes the records of the torture of Tom Hales and Patrick Harte who were viciously attacked, kicked, punched, hit with revolver butts and tortured with pincers. They were threatened in a mock execution. As Murphy notes 'attempts were made to humiliate them by making them hold the Union Jack and photographs were taken of Harte with the flag held loosely in his hand'. These photographs still exist, and in a telling aside Murphy simply notes that it is one of these torture photos which adorns the front cover of revisionist historian Peter Hart's book, *The IRA at War 1916-1923* (2003).

There were also parallels with the photographs taken of torture by British troops in the 1970s. Miller referred to a recent article by Gerry Adams in *The Guardian* on this point.

#### *IRA 'criminality' in 1920*

In his talk on the work Murphy quoted propagandist Major John Street as saying "the IRA rank and file" were "poor dupes of the designing criminals who pose as their officers". Street's views are positively civilised beside those of Hugh Pollard: "The Irish problem is a problem of the Irish race, and it is rooted in the racial characteristics of the people themselves", wrote Pollard in 1922. The Irish he thought were "racially disposed to crime", have "two psychical and fundamental abnormalities... moral insensibility and want of foresight" which "are the basic characteristic of criminal psychology". Furthermore, noted Street, warning to his theme, "the Irish demand for an independent Irish Republic is... a purely hysterical manifestation".

#### *Correcting Kevin Myers*

Murphy outlined how propaganda and media manipulation was organized and how this propaganda 'spin' had a shelf life that infected modern day accounts. Kevin Myers in *The Irish Times* republished one concoction of Clarke's that attempted to discredit hunger striker Terence McSwiney. McSwiney was accused of plotting the assassination of the Bishop of Cork. Uniquely, Myers later apologized for recirculation of this defamatory lie.

However, it was only at the book launch that we found out how and why Myers



came to apologise.

McSwiney's grandson, spoke during the Q&A session afterwards about how getting the apology published was "not easy". He accompanied his mother, Maura McSwiney Brugha, "as her assistant" in pursuing Myers into *The Irish Times* building and pressurising Myers to listen to his mother's account of how he got it totally wrong. Myers was later to admit publicly that he had been "duped" by, "the insidious concoctions of the black propagandist", Basil Clarke.

However, subsequently, Clarke's other "insidious concoctions" found in the post-apologetic Myers a willing receptacle for publication of further propaganda.

Myers did not detect Clarke at work in the British account of the Kilmichael ambush. In *The IRA And Its Enemies* Peter Hart thanked Myers for his help. Myers returned the compliment by praising the 1998 revisionist account as a "masterpiece". Myers wrote in his *Irishman's Diary* how Tom Barry and the IRA allegedly "systematically slaughtered disarmed RIC Auxiliaries after they had surrendered". This account, following Peter Hart, is from the Basil Clarke school of media manipulation and, as Clarke puts it, "verisimilitude" or the appearance of truth.

#### *The role of Erskine Childers*

Brian Murphy outlined the very significant role of Erskine Childers in exposing publicly the extent of British terror in Ireland. Childers also wrote extensively on the nature of British propaganda as part of the strategy of a military machine. This work deserves to be republished and perhaps the Aubane Society will consider doing so. Murphy made observations about the significant role of Childers and other Irish Protestants in the national struggle that are still relevant today. They helped expose the nature of British terror and set up organizations like the White Cross Society, founded in 1921 for relief in Ireland. This is another part of the narrative of the Independence struggle that revisionist voices seek to stifle.

Murphy made the point that the mass imprisonment of Sinn Fein members in 1918 in conditions of blanket censorship and other forms of repression makes the election victory that year all the more impressive.

Erskine Childers was astonished at the imprisonment of his cousin, Robert Barton, after Barton won a seat in the 1918 General Election. Barton was one of many imprisoned Sinn Fein TDs. The attempt by revisionists to undermine that victory is made seemingly plausible by leaving out these and other important factors. Notably, revisionist critics habitually attempt to suggest that Sinn Fein winning 48% of the first reference vote in 1918

was a true measure of its support. They leave aside the inconvenient fact that 25 seats were uncontested by Sinn Fein's opponents, so pathetic was the level of (non) support for opponents of the republicans. No vote took place in those seats. A more accurate measure would be closer to 70% Sinn Fein support on the island of Ireland, a truly phenomenal achievement.

Murphy also made the point that the non-appearance in the historical narrative of the role of the ultra repressive ROIA and of its predecessor DORA in 1914, "has also contributed to a flawed analysis" of the causes of the 1916 Easter Rising and of subsequent Irish history.

#### *British Empire and "capitalistic imperialism"*

Murphy said that events in Ireland had implications for Britain's Empire and the policy of developing an Anglo-American alliance. Murphy quoted Childers on the post World War One Paris Peace Conference that resulted in the Treaty of Versailles, a treaty that sowed the seeds of the Second World War. Childers wrote: "it has not been difficult to stifle the voice of Ireland at Paris. Her independence has no market value, while its repression on the grounds of military necessity was the best of all precedents for similar policies elsewhere." He concluded, "the subjection of Ireland is international poison contaminating the politics of the world".

Murphy said that:

"Great Britain was free to develop its empire and its quest for oil in such areas as India, Mesopotamia (modern Iraq) Afghanistan and Africa. The War of Irish Independence was fought out in the context of these and other battles by British forces to make good their claim to these new zones of imperial expansion".

In the context of the third anniversary of the present Iraq war Murphy said it was—

"sobering to consider that at that time, the much vaunted Irish-American influence in America counted for nothing in comparison with the powerful Anglo-American interests that dominated the corridors of power in Washington. An interest that still exercises far more sway than the Irish over American policy today, despite the generous gift of Shamrock and Shannon Airport to President Bush".

Childers said in 1919, "look behind the force that holds down Ireland and you will recognize, in one of its unnumbered forms, the ugly face of capitalistic imperialism".

#### *Lively discussion*

A lively discussion took place afterwards, with speakers asking whether

propagandists believe their own propaganda, if there was anything on the situation in the North at the time, on the role of the Internet in creating an alternative view, and observations about how the *Irish Times* permits letter writers to question Kevin Myers' use of language but not to correct abuse of the facts. Manus O'Riordan, author of a recent pamphlet on James Connolly, took up Murphy's invitation to discuss the problem of censorship on the *Irish Times* letters page. Murphy asserted that he was able to have a letter published recently when "Madam" was "away", apparently at a funeral.

Danny Morrison suggested that Kevin Myers "as a human being" might change his opinion if he took up Morrison's invitation to visit West Belfast during the West Belfast Festival and see for himself. Unfortunately, Myers has perennially been unable to take up the invitation, on one occasion, as he informed Morrison, because he was unaware that his wife had simultaneously organized a barbeque in the Myers back garden.

Brian Murphy was encouraged by many speakers to continue with his valuable and stimulating research and, as Terence McSwiney's grandson put it, to "keep seeking the truth".

*The Origin And Organisation Of British Propaganda In Ireland, 1920*, by Brian Murphy is available from <http://www.spinwatch.org> and <http://www.aubane.org>.

(This account first appeared on Indymedia)

#### NEW PAMPHLETS

**Britain's Great War, Pope Benedict's Lost Peace:** How Britain Blocked The Pope's Peace Efforts Between 1915 and 1918 by *Dr. Pat Walsh*. ISBN 0 85034 114 6. 60pp. ABM No. 27, March 2006. E6, £4.

**August 1969: Ireland's Only Appeal To The United Nations:** a cautionary tale of humiliation and moral collapse by *Angela Clifford*. Captain Kelly/Arms Trial Series, No. 1. ISBN 0 85034 113 8. 96pp. ABM No. 27, March 2006. E7.50, £5.

**James Connolly Re-Assessed, The Irish And European Context** by *Manus O'Riordan*. ISBN 1 903497 26 4. 60pp. AHS, Feb. 06. E6, £4.

**Was 1916 A Crime? A Discussion from 'Village' Magazine.** Intro: Jack Lane. ISBN 1 903497 25 6. 48pp. AHS, Jan. 06

## McDowell continued

“loyalist Belfast” speciality. “*The international Marxist view*”, according to McDowell, is that nobody should be turned away. It is doubtful if Loyalism is politically advanced enough to be anything as definite as racist. They’ve probably been promised weapons by their racist (spook-ridden) ‘friends’ in England, if they make life hard for immigrants.

The “Marxist” jibe is possibly a dig at the ‘Stickies’ embedded in the Labour Party. But the PDs were, like the Workers’ Party of Ireland, a product of the Cold War. The Stickies abandoned the ‘Fenian faith’ for Leninism: which then collapsed. The PDs were ‘modern’ in the 1980s and so decided that ‘Fenian’ indifference to Leninism and liberal-capitalism was ‘parochial’, ‘provincial’, or something—Old Ireland at its insular worst. The fact that Old Ireland was intimately engaged with every continent through the ‘missions’ does not exercise the minds of the PDs, not even for the sake of analysis, or reviving that energy in the interests of the ‘Celtic Tiger’. The PDs are inverted (crude) Marxists: they believe that economic relations are paramount—that is the reason for McDowell’s law. It was

to keep out unproductive elements, like children or migrant’s families, who might be a drain on the economy.

The fact that it was racist in effect means that the Ku Klux Klan was closer to the mark politically than the author of the law. He blames “*the media*” for not publishing the truth when he enunciates it. The innocent reader might come away with the notion that the Irish media is ferocious in its pursuit of the PDs and Mr. McDowell, which is nonsensical. This small faction has (largely through the good offices of former ‘Stickies’) had a luxuriant BMW-like ride through the media. The senior partners in the current coalition, Fianna Fáil are the objects of abuse. Mr. McDowell adds some venom of his own in this ‘interview’, sneering at Bertie Ahern’s ‘socialism’, though Ahern probably had in mind the decidedly social aspect of Haughey’s politics. And that social (Labour-leaning) aspect which was part of Fianna Fáil’s make up since its foundation in the 1920s.

A genuinely Labour Irish Labour Party (founded by James Connolly) would concentrate its fire in the up-coming general election on McDowell. He *is* the PDs in most people’s minds, and this

interview is a major hostage to fortune on the part of the Progressive Democrats. The Labour Party has gone into alliance with Fine Gael, which is the real origin of the PDs ‘philosophy’ (as opposed to its personnel). The Irish Labour Party ought to be aiming for a grand alliance of Fianna Fáil, Sinn Féin, and possibly the Greens.

While sympathetic to Declan Bree and others, Labour should stand for election on the current ticket and try to work from within to push for a more realistic alliance. The current stitch-up between Pat Rabbitte and Enda ???, leader of Fine Gael, appears to be based on mutual, apolitical distaste for Sinn Féin. SF wins elections in the Republic, marginally because it is attached to Sinn Féin in the North, but mainly because it works for its constituents and puts forward policies which make sense to the average voter. Bree, and others, could argue such a case in the Party. Especially as Rabbitte is an electoral liability. His adventures in Sticky-land have been the subject of a number of letters to the press by Fianna Fáilers. They point out that he now expounds policies, similar to those which led him to leave the Labour Party in the 1970s. The Official IRA has not really been alluded to but as we get closer to the election, he will be asked what he knew about its ‘fund-raising’ activities.

Seán McGouran

## Irish Backwardness?

In his review of *Remembering Beckett*, *Beckett Remembering*, John Banville casually refers to Ireland in the early 1970s as “*a country that was, even then, beginning to transform itself at last into some sort of a 20th-century nation*”.

Coming from a leading novelist, the comment itself demands comment. There are contexts in which becoming a twentieth-century nation might mean developing into a fascist or communist state, engaging in genocide or in large-scale, murderous civil war, or indeed patenting the notion of the concentration camp and participating in numerous colonial wars.

But John Banville is not thinking of any of these. Nor is he thinking of a small nation challenging Britain’s long disregard for the democratic wishes of the majority of Irish people and setting an example for other colonial struggles.

No. Writing for a British audience, Banville’s main concern—marked by the rhetorical double-jab “*even then*” and “*at last*”—is to assure his readers that he is untainted by association with the stew of Catholicism and nationalism in which, as he and they know, Ireland has long festered.

Would a writer who was truly confident of his cosmopolitanism need to make this gesture?

Many of us, including John Banville, broke with our Catholic upbringing several decades ago. At the time, we did not pause to question certain glib polarities—Irish/European, backward/twentieth-century, religious/modern, and so on—and some have built their careers on them. It is not entirely surprising, then, that, under the endlessly polished carapace of Ireland’s leading Middle-European stylist, we should glimpse provincial insecurity and the most conventional of thinking.

**Barra Ó Seaghda**  
(Submitted to the *Guardian*,  
30.3.06)

## Book Launches

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by  
**Brian P Murphy osb**

and

***Florence and Josephine O'Donoghue's War of Independence***

by  
**John Miller Borgonovo**

All Welcome

**jacklane@aubane.org**

### (Grand Kyklops) McDowell's Law

(A suitable target for Labour?)

*Magill* Magazine for May 2005 had an interview with Michael McDowell, effective leader of the Progressive Democrats, Minister of Justice, and 'ideological' centre of the government. The questions put by deputy editor Andrew Lynch, were hardly penetrating. An introduction claims McDowell is not universally popular: Charlie Haughey and Alan Dukes (a former leader of Fine Gael) are quoted, in unflattering assessments of the man. Lynch says: "most of the left-leaning press" don't like him either. What 'left-leaning press'? The mainstream press in Ireland is conservative or reactionary-'revisionist'; some local and regional papers might take a non-'revisionist' line, but that does not make them 'left-leaning'.

The intro admits that, while he is "the most influential man in Irish politics", he has "twice lost his Dail seat". According to his own answers he "started out as an organisation man in Fine Gael...". He helped found the Progressive Democrats, wanting to be party chairman and not a TD (didn't internal democracy matter?). When he did "step into the breach", he thought he would "give politics ten years", which implies a very odd attitude to the national assembly. He became reconciled to parliamentary life, but in 1997, he was voted out, was made Attorney General and then re-elected to Dáil Éireann.

He is a "conviction politician", "in 1985, everything was so horrifically wrong in Ireland, I argued that we had to embrace the liberal economic model". This is a piece of PD *shlick*. What happened from 1985 onwards was that Charlie Haughey reorganised the economy, included the Trade Unions in a social contract, and playing the *Communitaire* game, got huge quantities of money from the EU. He made Ireland safe for capitalism. A serious liberal-capitalist political party would have made him a hero. The PDs have joined in traducing Haughey (and Fianna Fáil), debilitating domestic politics in Ireland.

Much of what McDowell says bears this out: "I'm opposed to the socialist model, because I think that historically it's turned out to be a disastrous mindset." This is yet another piece of *shlick*, it is essentially meaningless: 'mindsets' and what happens in society are not the same thing. McDowell may be thinking of 'welfarism', the sort of thing Fianna Fáil and Labour argue about in the Irish political arena. But that is not socialism, or 'the socialist model'. Even the least attractive 'socialist model', the Soviet Union, is now seen to have had a number of virtues. McDowell's remark is 'Cold Warrior'-speak from fifteen years ago, when the 'Soviet Empire' was (it was believed) about to leap into a future of, national independence, unbridled capitalism (of the sort that has not been seen in 'the West' since the 1890s) and galloping consumerism.

The 'capitalist model' has been proven beyond peradventure to be just as synthetic as the Leninist one. It is genuinely synthetic. Leninism appealed to ideas like social solidarity and equality of opportunity, as did Social (and Christian) Democrats in west Europe. McDowell is unable to see what happened in the rest of the EU beyond the UK: he believes what he is told by the 'Euro-sceptic' media.

We have been told for at least a decade that Germany has an 'ailing' economy. According to the *Economist*, *Financial Times*, and *Wall Street Journal*, Germany became the world's—yes, you read that right—the world's largest exporter in the last quarter of 2004. These exports are not 'invisible earnings' accruing to the UK economy, due to money-shuffling. They consist of machinery of every sort from motor vehicles and printing machines to optics and the innards of electronic equipment (and food). McDowell clearly prefers the 'Anglo-Saxon' model of recycling money, importing basic items, and creating 'MacJobs': the USA is dependent on the economies of China and Japan. Despite the Mississippi Basin being essentially one big field, and despite 'agribusiness', it does not produce all its own food. The UK economy is going the same way, one of the most noticeable things about the [London] 'underground bombings' of July 7, 2005, was that few of the people killed or injured were going to an economically useful job. They were not engaged in manufacture, or otherwise making things—it was the tail end of the rush hour in a huge city, admittedly, but

practically nobody is so engaged in a city with a 'catchment area' of 20 million.

"Our critics accused us of being Thatcherite, rightwing, selfish... our years in office have been years of unparalleled success for this island." Surely 'this island' is a bit over the top: he had no responsibility for 6 / 32s of 'this island', and he is shy of naming the 'critics' of the PDs, possibly because many of them are members of the party they share government with, Fianna Fáil. He does not, probably cannot, put the years of PDs success into context, provided by Haughey and his FF successors.

Andrew Lynch got him off the economy and onto his job as Minister for Justice. It seems he knows about human nature because he was a criminal lawyer! The Irish are not 'militaristic' like the Germans, or 'the British', and so are inclined to be disrespectful of the State. Lynch puts the question: "You have been uncompromising in telling the truth about Sinn Féin and their links with criminality. But do you ever worry that those attacks might be counter-productive?" McDowell tackles this ruthless questioning head on, attacking "...columnists who say that I shouldn't tell the Irish people who's on the IRA Army Council..."; he 'regards that as the antithesis of journalism'. It does not seem to have struck him that membership of the Army Council might enhance reputations.

McDowell rants about the behaviour of the IRA, and claims that the State did not take part in a 'dirty war' on the Spanish model, which is not entirely accurate. The UK state definitely authorised some very dubious activities, some of them on the soil of the Republic. Some of the "people found dead on the border with a bullet in their head" were victims of the British Army, Loyalists under its instruction, the RUC, or semi-autonomous 'securocrats'. Justice Minister McDowell may well think he is expounding a morally courageous position, but the average reader can't help thinking that the Progressive Democrats got six Dáil seats with 3% of the vote. And Sinn Féin got six Dáil seats with 13% of the vote—ex-Blueshirt McDowell is a worried man.

Lynch raised immigration. McDowell (who introduced a law making genes, rather than residency) the basis of Irish citizenship (and was congratulated by the Ku Klux Klan), rejects the notion that he is racist: "genuinely nasty racism" is a

*continued on page 18*



**LABOUR**

# Comment

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## EU Decision:

### One Of The Most Destructive In History Of Conflict In Middle East

**Michael D. Higgins TD**

*Labour President and Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs*

The decision taken by Foreign Ministers of the European Union at the General Affairs and External Relations Council meeting in Luxembourg this week ranks among the most negative decisions in the history of the EU's relationship with the Middle East.

By this decision, the European Union has cast aside the final shreds of credibility that it may have left in the region, said Deputy Higgins.

Effectively, the EU has decided to punish Palestinians for the outcome of an election that the EU itself, among hundreds of other international observers, monitored and concluded to have been democratic and run, in all of the circumstances, and with all of the difficulties, in an exemplary fashion.

Additionally, and perhaps most important of all, the European Union is adding to its comprehensive silence on the issues of international law involved.

The Council calls on Israel to desist from settlement activity and construction of a separation barrier, both of which are contrary to international law, but announces no strategy of vindication for such law. For those breaching international law and UN resolutions, it uses moral suasion. For the victims of illegal occupation, it threatens sanctions.

A useful step, which could have been taken far earlier than this, would have been for the EU to have organised an international conference that enabled the Palestinian Authority and Israel to engage in the new context that the Palestinian and Israeli elections provided. This is now unlikely to happen.

This week's decision taken comes in the light of the disappointing failure of the European Union to engage with the relatively moderate recent statements by Hamas, which suggested a role for the international community in the initiation of talks taking as their starting point the international legal position of the 1967 borders. Such talks may lead to recognition of the state of Israel by Hamas.

Condemning Palestinians to poverty, dispossession and humiliation on the one hand, and future generations of Israeli citizens to insecurity on the other, is something from which governments of the European Union, in particular, and indeed the international community generally, will not be able to escape the judgement of history as constituting one of the greatest moral evasions of our time.

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