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Something Rotten In The State?

Bertie Ahern brought the Green Party into the Government unnecessarily. He could have got by with the Independents.

The Green Party went into the Government unnecessarily. It might have kept its principles pure and unsullied by implementation, and been a meditative oasis in the midst of practical life. Fashionable opinion says that, by deciding to implement its principles as a party of government, it sold out its principles—the implication of that view being that Green principles are unrealisable and are suitable only to be a contemplative ideal.

That is the logical implication of criticism of the Greens for joining the Government. The practical reason for the criticism, however, is something entirely different. It is that the Greens have given aid and comfort to Fianna Fail, when it should be the over-riding purpose of all good people to destroy Fianna Fail.

The devil a saint would be, and this bunch of angels has agreed to help him with the imposture. That's the gist of it.

Matthew Arnold—a practical mid-Victorian Imperialist intellectual—described Shelley (a Green pioneer) as a beautiful angel ineffectually beating his wings in a void. That is how angels should be. They should not interfere with practical life. And that is how Shelley remained in England after he was adopted as an icon by the system which he hated.

The Greens have been very successful in Ireland in the way that Shelley was successful in England. After a certain point everyone approved of them, which meant nobody took them in earnest. Their rhetoric became the small change of other parties.

The remarkable thing is that the electorate returned enough of them to make it worthwhile for the major party of the state to proposition them, and that they took themselves seriously enough to respond to the proposition and undertake Government office.

It is not remarkable that Fianna Fail was the party that brought them into the corridors of power—and that they agreed to go into the corridors of power with. Fianna Fail is the party that is capable of acting purposefully in order to do things. Although it is now only

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The Pain Of Democracy For The Irish Times

There are few political concepts that are bandied about with such abandon as Democracy. It is put forward as self-evidently the best possible political system there could ever be for everyone at all times and in all places. It is painted as such a clear, simple and obvious form of government that nobody dare question its merits. Wars are justified to enforce it. It is now the ideology of the West for the rest of the world—as Christianity once was. How could any sane person have opposed the spreading of Christianity to pagans—and not be too squeamish either about implementing it despite the meek inheriting the earth etc, etc. It was and is no argument for the recipient peoples to say that they oppose these concepts from the West because what they had suited them better. They simply did not know what was good for them. Period.

Christianity is clearly no longer self-evidently the wonderful thing it was to be sold to the pagans. The same is happening to Democracy. It is being discredited by the day. To the very voluble promoters of democracy it is now clear that there are things, in fact many, many things, much

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A Visit To Iran Part One

The British Influence

Within two days of arriving in Iran I was struck by the influence of Britain on the country. It was to be one of many surprises. Wherever groups of flags are displayed, such as hotels, they include the Union Flag, though of course not the Stars and Stripes. The UK Embassy is the biggest and momost "in-your-face" that I've seen in any country. The compound is about 500m x 500m behind a not very

high wall and quite recently built. It has a giant British flag at the front on Ferdowsi Avenue, in the heart of Tehran.

Not on Bobby Sands Street which is a lane at the back. Photography in the vacinity is forbidden. There are only five guards—only one, so far as I could see, is armed. This implies that demonstrations are by permission only and spontaneous ones are not expected.

There is another imposing compound in Sulubrious North Tehran which is used as accommodation but whose main purpose is to act as the base for the British Council. This has got its message, its version of British and Iranian history, into every level of the society beginning with the schools.

The story peddled by the Council and the Embassy is that Britain is a natural friend of both the Iranians and the Arabs and that Blair was an unusual exception and anyway he is going. They can glibly badmouth the Americans and, for some reason the Germans, and distance themselves from them.

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

"The Duodecimo Demosthenes":

an obituary of John Wilson

a pale shadow of itself, it still retains something of the spirit which seeks office for something more than office. It remains the enabling party of the stat.

A generation ago Labour was in office along with Fine Gael, with C.C. O'Brien and Dr. FitzGerald holding senior Government positions. In the Autumn of 1973 they negotiated a power-sharing Agreement for the North. In the Spring of 1974, when an Amendment of the Constitution would have preserved the Power-Sharing Government in the North, O'Brien opposed holding a referendum on the sovereignty clauses because that was something only Fianna Fail could do. (Fianna Fail did it 25 years later.)

O'Brien's position was, in effect, that Fianna Fail was the only party capable of governing the state when anything more was required than holding office by routine for a few years. It was a realistic enough appraisal, but O'Brien—who had flipped over into an unreasoning hatred of Fianna Fail when he became a politician, after serving it diligently for many years as a civil servant—did not follow through into a consideration of why that was the case, what its political implications were, and what might be done to remedy it. He was therefore left in the incoherent position which viewed Fianna Fail as an incomprehensible force of evil which had somehow—by means of corruption—got

a grip on a viable system of democracy and distorted it to its own advantage.

The ideal of the modern system of representative government that is called democracy is that there are two parties capable of governing the state; that elections are held at regular intervals at which each party warns that the election of the other party would be catastrophic for the state; and that the party which gains less seats than the other gives way routinely as if there was really little or nothing at issue between them. That is the 'norm' postulated by the two states which have dominated world affairs in recent times, though it is far from being the normal situation amongst the states of the world.

Those two states have now congealed together, in their action on the world, to such an extent that they deserve a single name: USUK. They act freely on the world, legitimising all that they do by the combination of raw power and the ideology of democratisation. But, in their democratising activity, they accept as legitimate only developments which serve to maintain their world hegemony. They conceive of the world as a unit. That is the effective meaning of Globalism. And that globalised world is democratic, as a unit, to the extent that it submits to USUK dominance, or guidance, even though subordinate parts of it—taken by themselves—may seem far removed from democracy.

Saudi Arabia, for example, which is a state formed by a theocratic tribal aristocracy, is an integral part of the system of the free, democratic world. Venezuela—like many other South American states before it—is a threat to the democratic order of the world, even though it has an elected Government, because its local democracy is subversive of USUK hegemony.

That has now been the actual system of world order for about 17 years. It has been the aspirational system ever since the British declaration of war in 1914.

Britain declared war in the name of an integral world order with law and democracy at its core. It poised its propaganda between what existed and what ought to exist, with a rhetorical skill which blurred the distinction between the two. It purported to be going to war as a policeman to punish Germany for a breach of world law which either existed or ought to exist and it didn't really matter which.

It might be said that this propaganda was just camouflage for yet another Imperialist land grab—but while it is certainly the case that the Empire was greatly expanded in the course of the War, that fact does not exhaust the matter. If Britain deceived nobody else with its propaganda, it deceived itself very effectively. It became incapable of distinguishing between what is and what ought to be, between fact and ideal. It lost its sense of reality in moralistic humbug. And, when it acted catastrophically—as it has done much more frequently since 1914 than before 1914—it was incapable of seeing the factual consequences of its action. All it could see was the obscure purity of its intentions. Evidence? Read any Parliamentary debate on the invasion of Iraq.

Home Rule Ireland subscribed to the Imperial deception or delusion of 1914. Then it had second thoughts, and decided to avail of the principles, which the War was said to be realising as a world order, in order to leave the Empire. It voted itself independent—only to find that voting cut no ice with the democratic Parliament that was governing the Empire. So it established its own Government despite the Empire, and defended it in arms against the Empire so successfully that the Empire indicated willingness to make a deal.

If Britain had negotiated with the Dail in January 1919, or had made a deal on terms acceptable to the Irish Army in 1921-2, the democracy of the Irish state would not be the lopsided thing that it is.

'The North' was not the problem. The problem was the insistence of the Imperial democracy that Ireland should remain part of the Empire. The North was a means to an end for Britain.

Almost 40 years ago this journal (or its precursor) urged that the Ulster Protestant

community should be regarded as a distinct national community and negotiated with. That approach was rejected by every segment of the Dublin establishment. The 'two nations' view is still rejected by the 26 Co. parties, even though all of them now accord a veto on unification to the Ulster Protestants forming a majority in Northern Ireland. Ireland is a nation, but a political minority within the nation is accorded separate rights *de facto* against the majority. In the ideology of democracy, the nation is the deciding unit, yet in the case of the alleged all-Ireland Irish nation it is held that the decision of the majority is invalid.

The idea that a dissenting political minority within the nation might be coerced by the majority is held to be abhorrent, while at the same time the American Civil War continues to be glorified as a founding event of the democratic era—a war in which the majority coerced the dissenting minority at the cost of a million lives. And Martin Mansergh, who has monopolised intellectual life in Fianna Fail, condemns dissenting Republicans in the North for continuing to assert that a majority in Ireland has the right of decision—while he continues to reject the two nations view. And, while according a right of independent decision to the 6 Counties, he broadcasts a tirade against Carson for having brought about that right of independent decision.

Profound political and historical incoherence results from refusal to treat the Ulster Protestant community as a distinct national community combined with giving them a veto on the political unification of the nation.

There were many different ways in which the national complication in the North East might have been dealt with by Britain if that complication was for Britain anything more than a device for use against the national movement in Ireland. The obvious thing is that a very much smaller area, with a very much smaller Catholic minority, might have been held within the UK without being set up as something resembling a state, outside the political life of Britain.

What kept Anti-Partitionism alive as the necessary content of Northern politics was the excessive area of Northern Ireland and the cutting off of the large Catholic minority from the democratic political life of the state. Southern irredentism had little to do with it. If a much smaller Catholic minority, in a much smaller Partitioned region, had been included within the democratic political life of the British state, and had not been subjected to the harassment of the 'Northern Ireland state', it would hardly have mattered what

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The Casement 'Black Diaries'—An Overlong Controversy In Outline (Part 3)

I wish to state that I accept no extract from Roger Sawyer's 1984 book *Casement: The Flawed Hero* ever appeared in the *Sunday Press* as claimed in my article as titled above and in a follow up letter to the *Irish Political Review*.

What did appear in the *Sunday Press* in 1984 was an article by Dr. Sawyer concerning a proposed Hollywood film on Casement which was to have appeared in the 1930s. The film was never made. There were, apparently, efforts made to impede the proposed film going into production. The article covered these efforts.

I would like to take the opportunity to mention something I have recently learned which casts the 2002 Giles examination of the contested diaries and subsequent report in a strangely interesting light. In the introductory section of her report, under the heading *The Examination of Inks* reference is made to Ramon Spectroscopy, a technologically advanced technique which can detect chemical differences between inks. Such technologies are hugely interesting for those who contend the contested diaries were subjected to forged interpolation. Interpolated writing in ink, while appearing to match the writing in the rest of the page in colour and texture, would be chemically different to the point of having a different "chemical signature" which may be detected using Ramon Spectroscopy.

In the report from Dr. Giles we read: "*Destructive testing, using a variety of modern analytical techniques, including Ramon Spectroscopy, may reveal more consistent differences between the inks*" In an article in *The Sunday Tribune* of 3rd June under the heading *Book of Kells to Tell its Secrets* we learn that Ramon Spectroscopy has been in use for the past 18 months in Trinity College on the Book of Kells. This is part of a scientific project seeking to analyse the pigments used in the book. According to an article by David McKittrick on the project in the London published *Independent* of 8th June last the cardinal rule guiding the undertaking is that no harm must be caused to the ancient book.

The website of the UK-based manufacturer of the Foram685-2 Ramon Spectroscopy machine, Foster Freeman, describes the technique as:

"fast, *non-destructive*, can be performed on materials in situ and requires minimal operator training—an ideal technique for the examination of forensic evidence."

The organiser of the Giles examination, Prof. W.J. McCormack, gave a talk based on the research for his then recently published book, *Roger Casement in Death* at the annual Casement symposium in 2002. When discussion was opened to the floor it was put to him the examination was very incomplete owing to the failure to employ high-tech methods for detecting interpolation such as the above mentioned technique. His answer was that such methods were "*destructive*". Yet, regarding this destructiveness, the library authorities of Trinity College, Dublin and the manufacturers of forensic equipment, Foster and Freeman, appear curiously unperturbed.

Tim O'Sullivan

Mick Maloney Programmes

Just wanted to let you know that I'm presenting two programs on RTE, Radio One, on Thursday, July 19th and 26th at 9pm each night, as part of a series called *The Rolling Wave*.

They're on Irish and Irish American songs of WW1 many of them very rare and not the usual stuff you'd be likely to hear these days. They keep the programs up on the RTE web site for (www.rte.ie) several weeks afterwards.

Mick Maloney
(<http://cleclub.wetpaint.com/>).

Official Republicanism

Just recently I have had a lot of enquiries as to where people can get a copy of my book, "Official Irish Republicanism, 1962 to 1972". Perhaps the *Irish Political Review* would allow me a few lines to answer. It was never really intended to be a best seller and is only available online, but those who are interested can find it at www.lulu.com/content/644207. It's priced at £16.50 Sterling or €24.11 Euro.

Sean Swan

the Constitution of the 26 County Irish state said. And the prospect for unification would not have been less.

What counted was not 'the claim', but the communal antagonism on which the 'Northern Ireland state' was based and which it perpetuated and aggravated.

In the South, Britain's parting shot was the 'Civil War'. By conceding a degree of subordinate self-government to 26 Counties it managed to split Sinn Fein. Then it insisted that the part that it intimidated into accepting the authority of the Crown should be further intimidated into making war on the other part, and supplied it with arms—the alternative being a British reconquest.

The Dail voted for the 'Treaty' under duress, as did the electorate for a few occasions. The British political system fell into confusion in the mid-1920s as a result of over-exertion and self-deception in the Great War for world hegemony. The threat of re-conquest receded, and the electorate began to revert to Republicanism. But the Free State Government remained intransigently Treatyite, and refused to conciliate the electorate by taking Collins's steps towards independence. Less than ten years after winning the Treaty War it lost office to the Anti-Treaty Party, and it never again won back the majority from Fianna Fail. Its first response to the loss of office was to launch a Fascist movement.

The operation of democratic government—in which parties take turns at governing, and changes of government do not involve upheavals in the state—requires that there should exist a body politic of which the political parties form a part and to which they are subordinate. Where a democratic body politic exists, a governing party which loses an election cannot really be said to relinquish power voluntarily. If it tries to remain in office, it finds that it can't

Parties with fundamentally different aims with regard to the state do not constitute a body politic. The democratic system does not allow for a remaking of the state after every election, revolution and counter-revolution succeeding each other by turns. At the same time election campaigns must counterfeit the language of revolution and counter-revolution, otherwise they are dead.

It is a strange system, not easily contrived, and it is not surprising that it does not exist in most states.

The Treaty Party made no attempt between 1923 and 1932 to create a Free State body politic by means of a conciliatory inveigling of Anti-Treatyites into the accomplished fact of the Free State system. It did not avail of the freedom of action accorded by the fall of the War

Coalition in Britain to lure Anti-Treatyites into Free State politics. Its object seemed to be to justify the Civil War by excluding Anti-Treatyites from Free State politics through a procedure of humiliation at the point of entry. This approach was maintained, even though the Anti-Treaty vote increased at every election. In 1927 the Anti-Treaty vote equalled the Treaty vote, and deadlock or a genuine Civil War was averted by the minor parties. And there was a possibility of a recurrence of the 1919 situation of British government in Ireland, with a majority of the elected representatives being outside Parliament.

The Treatyite combination—it scarcely deserves to be called a political party—held office on intransigent Treatyite principles for ten years, and then lost it forever. During the following fifteen years the Anti-Treaty party created an effective national body politic which their opponents found it necessary to accept as the only possible framework of political action.

The outcome of this course of events was a lopsided party system. And that lopsided system has reproduced itself over time. It doesn't matter that this happened a long time ago. Time itself has no effects. Election material from 50 or 60 years ago might have been simply recycled for the recent election.

The system is functional though lopsided, and systems tend to reproduce over time if they are not disturbed by events.

Fianna Fail made two attempts to amend the system which came about under its hegemony in the 1930s. When introducing the new Constitution in 1937 it carried over a feature of the Treaty Constitution: Proportional Representation in multi-member constituencies. It held two referendums on a proposal to abolish PR, in 1959 and 1968. A straight vote system would probably have brought about a re-ordering of the party structure of the state. But the proposal was rejected—and those who are now to the fore in complaining that there is something undemocratic in the long Fianna Fail tenure of office were also to the fore in rejecting change: Labour and the *Irish Times*

In 1959 the PR referendum was conducted jointly with a Presidential election in which De Valera was a candidate. The *Irish Times* thought it would have been better if Dev had been given the Presidency without a contest:

"Fine Gael did wrong, even for political reasons, to offer a candidate in opposition to him... The question of PR is different altogether. On this ground there can be no surrender... The case against its abolition is formidable, the case for its abolition is specious, but unconvincing. This newspaper cannot hope to sway the opinion of the majority of voters. It

does hope, on the other hand, to influence that of the intelligent minority whose votes may make the difference between the success and defeat of today's referendum. This minority, unhappily, consists of the very people who are least inclined to take the trouble to vote. It is to these people that we appeal not merely to vote, but to vote "No"... (17.7.1959).

Todd Andrews writes that the post-independence *Irish Times* was "a stodgy and poor imitation of the London Times and was read almost exclusively by Church of Ireland clerics, Trinity dons and the remaining occupants of the "big houses" and their minions", but under Smyllie's editorship—

"its readership was extended to businessmen and bank clerks, members of rugby football clubs, academics of the national university and, even more significantly, civil servants and members of the government... The civil servants were in origin mainly of the lower middle classes, and having attained the first aim of job security they wanted social acceptance and respectability as well. The *Irish Times* was for them and, indeed, for all the rising lower middle classes the symbol of "ould dacency" and respectability, and they read it" (*Man Of No Property*, p137).

That is how it still was in 1949, as is evident from this editorial. It wrote for a rather exclusive social segment—the Ascendancy remnants and imitative native elements. A few years later it began to aspire to wider influence. In its first reaching out to the populace it published advice to emigrants, warning them against race-mixing, and especially warning girls to beware of the charm of black men in London. And a few years after that false start (understandable, given the essentially WASP character of the Ascendancy), it began to play the ideology of class struggle against the establishment of the Irish state, not for the purpose of making a socialist revolution, but in order to enlist the revolutionaries—who would never have made a revolution—in the business of weakening the state.

In 1968, addressing not so much a wider readership but a different one, it again urged a No vote. But it was then still in the process of feeling out ways of extending its range of influence—as distinct from exercising its influence dogmatically, by use of techniques which Connolly described as *Press Poisoning*, as it now does—and it published a range of articles from different viewpoints about PR. One of the articles was by Ernest Blythe, an Ulster Protestant who had been a founding member of the Treaty State. He had been active in the Treaty War, but 45 years later he was concerned about the

welfare of the state, rather than partisanship within it, and therefore he supported the abolition of PR, explaining that—

"because of special historical circumstances which have heretofore kept party politics in a rather abnormal state here, we have not yet had the experience of the kind of parliamentary situation which PR is calculated to produce. Though we see many new groups spring transiently into being because of its stimulus, and though we have for a couple of brief periods had in power ill-assorted patchwork Governments of the type in which doctrinaire proportionalists glory, they were not matched by the motley type of opposition which would have assured their replacement in each case by a similar crazy combination. Thus we have seen comparatively little of the anti-democratic effects of proportionalism" (*Why There Is A Need For Change*, IT 1.10.1968).

Blythe explained that PR was in the Free State Constitution because "*the system had been thrust upon us by the British Government*". And Dev explained that he had carried it over into the 1937 Constitution, leaving it over for subsequent amendment, because the important thing was to break the Constitutional connection with the British ultimatums of 1921-2, and he did not want to risk increasing opposition to the change.

The "*special historical circumstances*" referred to by Blythe are those we have described. Popular resentment at the British Treaty ultimatum of December 1921, and the 'Civil War' ultimatum of June 1922, and at the refusal of Free State Governments in 1923-1932 to avail of opportunities to reshape the Free State to Republican sentiment, was harnessed by the De Valera group to the formation of a party which defied the natural tendency of PR for a couple of generations, and is still resisting it to a considerable extent.

What the *Irish Times* now represents as a deviation from democracy is in fact what democracy becomes under PR, when Governments are not elected but are formed by horse-trading after elections.

Whatever influence the *Irish Times* had in 1949 and 1968 was used in favour of the system which it now criticises as undemocratic—because Fianna Fail, having failed to change it, operates it better than anyone else.

TO BE CONTINUED

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Pain Of Democracy

continued

more important than the actual practice of democracy. For example, when elections do not produce the right results they are ignored and defied. One of the first examples of this was the ignoring of the result of the 1918 Election in Ireland by the first democratic House of Commons—which responded to the implementation of the result by using the Black and Tans as the cutting edge of British democracy. This set the tone for many other situations. The Hamas result in Palestine is the most blatant and recent example at the moment. It has great similarity with the Sinn Fein victory in 1918, in that it was a clear cut result but was ignored and has now also necessitated a war to implement the result. Democracy is clearly a means to an end, not an end in itself for its greatest promoters—and when it does not produce the desired end it is ignored. Democracy in and of itself is for suckers.

This attitude has been confirmed nearer home by no less an authority than that self proclaimed paragon of virtue, the *Irish Times*, in its reaction to the June General Election that was won by Fianna Fail. It was simply the wrong result and the credentials of Irish democracy are now doubted by the IT.

When it started its latest campaign against FF last October, and suffered an initial rebuff by public opinion, it haughtily reacted by saying 'So, we are to hold our noses' (4 October 2006).

In its first thoughts shortly after the election (16 June) it said editorially:

"From a position where Fianna Fáil, in its pre-coalition days, had spent one third of its time in opposition and two thirds in power, the party has now done even better. Since 1989, the party has spent nearly all its time in government. And this prospect of Fianna Fáil in power in perpetuity, pausing only to change its minor partner (or partners) in government, is the spectre that now haunts the opposition benches. And it deserves to be carefully considered. *What may be good for Fianna Fáil is in fact very bad for Irish democracy.* Rotation does not amount to a change of government." (Emphasis added).

The Irish democracy has done as described above. And it has done so slowly, deliberately and democratically and the result must therefore be regarded as the considered view of the democracy. If this is what the people want at present and if they vote for it again in the future how

could it be automatically '*in fact very bad for Irish democracy*'? Can the results of democracy be bad for democracy? If so, the IT should consider rewriting the text books. Democracy is wonderful except in Ireland because it results in too many Fianna Fail Governments!

It is quite clear that for the IT there are some things far more important than a perfectly functioning democratic process and one of those things is to avoid having a number of continuous Fianna Fail Governments—it is not an acceptable price to pay for democracy. The *Irish Times* is being so true to itself. It opposed the Irish democracy at every stage of its history and that meant opposition to Fianna Fail at every stage of that party's history. It really is rich to read the IT pontificating about democracy in Ireland—but it thereby remains consistent in its historic arrogance.

The next edition of the paper (18 June) continued the lecture:

"With the resurgence of Fine Gael and the renewed power of Fianna Fáil, the solid, centre-right parties that emerged from the Civil War are now as dominant as they ever were. *Given the need in a strong democracy for real choices, this is not healthy.*"

So the two-party system as it exists in Ireland is not healthy. People have voted for and maintained these parties for decades and this is the real divide the majority consistently insist on choosing between, but again the democracy has produced the wrong process for itself, according to the IT.

Two competing parties for power is usually taken to be the essence of the democratic system for forming a government. But not in this case, as this practice in Ireland is 'not healthy' because for some reason they don't give 'real choices'. The Irish people can get nothing right in this democracy business. Both the process and the outcomes are wrong. How in the world have they managed to have one of the longest unbroken democratic systems in the world, I wonder?

In fact the Irish State since its foundation a relatively short time ago must have a unique democratic record in terms of continuity. Has the IT noticed the many unhealthy democracies there are in the world by this criteria of theirs? By these criteria the world is a very unhealthy place.

To the IT the two party systems in Ireland is meaningless because it is not something else that gives a different result.

But the divide between the two parties was and is a real divide. In fact, it reflects the deepest divide there could be in political life.

Originally it was between those who had the disposition to want to continue to fight to preserve what they had and

believed in (an elected government, by the way) and those who thought it best to compromise its continuance under threat of 'immediate and terrible war' to quote the elected Prime Minister of the new democratic House of Commons. (Do we need to say which side the 'journal of record' choose to wholeheartedly support?).

The issue at stake was summed up in Sean Moylan's contribution to the Treaty debate, his maiden speech:

"Some of you here have been talking about going into the Empire with heads up, and Deputy Etchingham spoke of marching into the Empire with hands up; and now what I say is this: "Hands off the Republic", and am I to be told this is a declaration of war on England? No English statesman will take it so. It is a definition of our rights, and Lloyd George if he wants war will have to declare war. If he is giving us freedom he can do so without declaring war. All we ask of Lloyd George is to allow us to carry on... If there is a war of extermination waged on us, that war will also exterminate British interests in Ireland; because if they want a war of extermination on us, I may not see it finished, but by God, no loyalist in North Cork will see its finish, and it is about time somebody told Lloyd George that." (The Dail was adjourned immediately afterwards to contemplate its stark choices bluntly presented to it).

This original divide was essentially one based on conscience, on attitude, on courage, on an independent spirit in the face of the problem then faced—and these factors continue to form a basis for a perpetual divide among people in dealing with serious all problems and choices. Which is why this divide in human qualities has proved more substantial and long lasting than all else and is as good a defining political party divide as one could ever invent. It is as good a way as any other in separating the sheep from the goats in political life.

Naturally, Fianna Fail, being now being representative of many shades of opinion, does not always have such incisive views on the issues of day as Moylan. I doubt, for instance, if the Dail will be shocked into silence by any of Martin Mansergh's soporific contributions though it may well fall asleep.

Nations are only of use to the world insofar as they bring an independent view to the issues of the world. For example, Scotland is becoming an interesting political entity insofar as it becomes more independent and its leader Alex Salmond does not echo Westminster in all its trouble-making in the world. What use is there, and who would be interested in being a Scottish or an Irish echo—apart from the *Irish Times*? (Now there's a suitably descriptive name for the *Irish Times*, the Irish Echo.)

It is doubly ironic to read the IT belittling Irish democracy when one considers that Ireland has one of the most extreme democratic systems in the world: multi-seat PR. All pure democrats should sit and marvel at it. This was a British gift to help ensure weak government as it tends to democratic chaos. It is rare in the world for that reason. The idea of voting for up to 10 different people from different parties to elect a government is self-evidently absurd to most people when they think seriously about it. It produces a great spectator sport at election time but that is only because FF has tamed it by its political skills. It tried to do the decent thing twice and get rid of it but the people liked the luxury that FF had created for them—the fun of PR without its natural consequences. It's a blood sport without blood—most of the time.

When FF then had to live with PR it had to develop an extraordinarily disciplined party structure to ensure at least one substantial party existed in the state. Eliminating PR would have tended naturally to develop a substantial two party system and make life easier for both. One such party is certainly healthier for democracy than none.

Now the IT blames FF for being too successful at what it tried to avoid. That party just can't win with the IT.

As the paper famously had to hold its nose a few months ago, it looks like it will have to do so for quite some time. It should really be more blunt, Irish democracy stinks.

Jack Lane

A Visit To Iran

continued

The English language papers, *The Tehran Times* and *Iran Daily*, give every impression of being produced by English people. An example is a story about the English living in India being referred to as "ex-pats"! Another story objecting to Blair's appointment as some kind of envoy to Palestine said he does not represent the historic pro-Palestinian position of the British. Many articles are supplied by Western agencies such as Reuters.

(By the way I see that Condoleza Rice has denied that Mr. Blair is the Quartet representative to Palestine. She is and says that his role is to help her out in some matters. So there!)

The assumption is that Britain was recently taken in by the Americans with no notion that the British are the ideological force behind everything that the Americans are doing. There seems to be a particular influence on some of the top leaders, especially the very rich Ali Akbar

Rafsanjani who the British and the "International Community" hoped and expected would win the last presidential election. He was thoroughly beaten by President Ahmadinejad—36% to 61%.

The President and the Supreme Religious leader, Imam Ali Khamenei, seem to be largely immune from British, or any other, influence. But they are fighting a daily battle with their opponents with the President going public in the press alleging, it seems to me reasonably, plots to undermine him.

Rafsanjani is openly lining himself up to replace the ailing head of the Assembly of Experts which has very wide powers, not least of which is the power to remove the Supreme Leader. It is a kind of stronger version of the US Supreme Court.

Rafsanjani is also conducting a public campaign for widespread privatisation. He has toured the universities telling the students that they would be the beneficiaries of privatisation and had a duty to study the subject and then go out and campaign for it. He claims that he is acting in the spirit of Article 4.4 of the Constitution. So I decided to see what that particular Article says:

Article 4.4

"The economy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is to consist of three sectors: state, cooperative, and private, and is to be based on systematic and sound planning. The state sector is to include all large-scale and mother industries, foreign trade, major minerals, banking, insurance, power generation, dams and large-scale irrigation networks, radio and television, post, telegraph and telephone services, aviation, shipping, roads, railroads and the like; all these will be publicly owned and administered by the State. The cooperative sector is to include cooperative companies and enterprises concerned with production and distribution, in urban and rural areas, in accordance with Islamic criteria. The private sector consists of those activities concerned with agriculture, animal husbandry, industry, trade, and services that supplement the economic activities of the state and cooperative sectors. Ownership in each of these three sectors is protected by the laws of the Islamic Republic, in so far as this ownership is in conformity with the other articles of this chapter, does not go beyond the bounds of Islamic law, contributes to the economic growth and progress of the country, and does not harm society. The [precise] scope of each of these sectors, as well as the regulations and conditions governing their operation, will be specified by law."

Hardly a ringing endorsement of privatisation! Also the question has to be

asked: who in Iran has accumulated the money to invest in such enterprises? Rafsanjani is not talking about small businesses. It is street gossip that several in the administration, though Rafsanjani himself was not named, are on wages from the British.

Unlike the Americans they do not usually dole out large sums of money but keep their puppets on a string. That is how they dealt with their Soviet agents and with the large number of Franco's generals who were on the payroll.

On a recent *Newsnight* programme, a former CIA operative explained that democracy was not only to do with voting but with liberalism. I assume he meant economic as well as social liberalism. In practice it is only economic liberalism that is meant.

It is not as though Iran has a general policy of being nice to countries which are also friendly to America. Not far from the British Embassy is the more modest German Embassy—where photographs are allowed. Directly in front of the building is a large stone monument with pictures of dead and dying victims of poison gas. But dominating the monument is the following inscription:

"In the Name of the Most High

To the Iranian people, the name of the German government is associated with the horrible catastrophe of chemical massacre perpetrated by the Iraqi Ba'ath regime during the war which was imposed on Iran. The German government, then, generously supplied Saddam's regime with chemical weapons and the technology for production of such weapons to slaughter Muslims in Iran and Iraq (Halabeheh). Iranian people who have been continuously witnessing the martyrdom of their beloved sons who had been the victims of such lethal weapons shall never forget the German government's complicity and undeniable role in this atrocious crime."

Everywhere in Iran I came across references to the *"Nest Of Spies"*. This is a reference to the former US Embassy which was seized after the overthrow of the Shah and the "diplomats" held prisoner for over a year. The reason for the seizure was the CIA control room in the basement and the fear that it would be used again to overthrow the new Government.

It is now occupied by a self-styled elite group of protectors of the revolution. They looked to me like a bunch of poseurs and I'm sure are not much depended upon by the Government.

The term *Nest of Spies* goes back to the overthrow of the Government in 1952. Then the Prime Minister, Mohammed Mossadegh, decided to nationalise the oil

industry. He was overthrown by the CIA with the aid of dirty tricks, such as bombings blamed on Communists and \$5m. That is the official story and it is true as far as it goes.

But the *coup* was actually thought up and arranged by the British SIS. Britain controlled Iran's oil through the Anglo-Iranian oil company—now that cuddly British company British Petroleum (BP). The plan to overthrow the Government came as a complete surprise to the Americans—who nevertheless went along with it. The *coup* organiser was one H. Norman Schwarzkopf—father of the leader of the more recent war with Iraq.

Another myth is that this was the beginning of the Shah's rule. The Shah was already in place but ran away when the *coup* ran into some initial difficulties, just as he ran away when Imam Khomeini returned, And he was in place because the British had overthrown his father,

There is a real *Nest of Spies* in Tehran. But it is not the former US Embassy. It is Dick Dalton, Matt Gould, Graeme Thomas and their merrie men at 198 Ferdowsi Avenue.

Conor Lynch

Gorgan, Iran
5th July 2007

Fuel Rationing In Iran

The one time I managed to see BBC World in Iran was when the petrol rationing was introduced. The reporter was happily excited to report trouble at some filling stations in Tehran. She explained that the 15 litres a day allowed would not get people to work as the distances were great in that city and there was little in the way of public transport.

This last statement is a lie. Public transport everywhere in Iran is second to none. It is based on the shared taxi system which will be familiar to anyone who has known Belfast over the last thirty years. You stand by the road and within a minute or two a taxi will be going wherever you are going—and all for less than a penny a ride. Taxi petrol allowances are far higher than those of private motorists.

There is also an extensive bus and minibus system. There is a wide rail network, and there is the ever-extending and very efficient Tehran Metro. Air fares between cities are a joke: they're really cheap. I suppose that for the BBC lady the system is so lower class that it might as well not exist.

She also made a fuss about the unfairness of the Government giving only two hours' notice of the introduction of the

rationing. The idea had been mooted some time ago but then dropped so that most people believed that it would not happen.

She wasn't the only one to make a fuss. There were, of course, the near-rioters in Tehran with their 20 litre drums. And there were members of Parliament and even members of the Government who said they weren't warned either. They weren't warned because they were bent.

The reason for rationing as opposed to price rises was to avoid inflation and a reduction in living standards, as well as avoiding favouring the rich. If notice had been given, the profiteers with the money would have bought up and hoarded almost every available litre of petrol and sold it at ten times its value to the motorists. Fine for the type of Iranian people that BBC reporters hob nob with. Not so fine for everyone else.

In one go petrol distribution would have moved from the public to the private sector and its price would have soared; to no one's benefit except that of the profiteers.

Why was petrol rationing needed? Iran has a superabundance of oil but it has only a tiny refining capacity, while the Iranians use the cheap oil like water. (There is a general rule that anything that is extensively used by the public is ultra-cheap—petrol, food, transport, cigarettes though frowned upon, accommodation for pilgrims, electricity, telephones, and so on.)

So most refined fuel has to be imported. Apart from the cost and inconvenience of this, it means that petrol is always vulnerable to US sanctions and worse. The Government building new refineries in the present climate is not considered a good idea.

What is being done is to get foreign private companies to build them. Then at least it will be their refineries that get shocked and awed. And, of course, there is the accelerated development of nuclear power. That answers the Western Media's question: why does an oil rich country need nuclear power?

There is also the matter of pollution and health. With every Tom, Dick and Ali driving around all day, Tehran has become one of the smog capitals of the world. And there are 16 million Toms, Dicks and Alis in and around Tehran. The largest mountain in the country looms over Tehran. Mostly it is invisible.

The Chelsea Tractor or SUV problem is not yet great here but I can see them in the showrooms. With the price of petrol here it was an inevitable move by the rich. With petrol rationing they will have to stay where they are 'til they rust. So all in all, and in spite of the BBC, petrol rationing day was a good news day.

Conor Lynch

Shorts

from
the Long Fellow

MEDIA BIAS DURING THE JUNE ELECTION

"...there is some evidence to suggest that there is a notable disdain for Fianna Fáil within much of the Irish media. RTÉ published a quantitative analysis of press coverage of the recent election campaign up until 21 May, which revealed that Fine Gael, Labour and the PDs received a disproportionate amount of press coverage relative to their size compared to Fianna Fáil, while Pat Rabbitte and Enda Kenny both attracted more coverage than Bertie Ahern. While the figures may have given Fianna Fáil some grounds for complaint, the bias against Sinn Féin was much more marked. They received a fraction of the coverage of both the Greens and the PDs, despite being significantly more popular than either."

The above refers to a quantitative analysis. It doesn't consider the 'quality' or type of coverage each party received, which would have been even more damning.

So, how can this imbalance in media coverage be explained? The following is Feeney's view.

"Did Bertie have a point when he claimed that journalists were being ordered to denigrate Fianna Fáil? The answer is almost certainly in the negative, for the mild hostility from sections of the media can easily be explained on a political level. The journalists who staff the more respectable media organs such as the Irish Times, the Independent and RTÉ, are generally drawn from the educated, professional, metropolitan middle classes and they often have an innate suspicion of the grubby populism of Fianna Fáil. The Irish Times in particular published several editorials in relation to Bertiegate which have expressed a barely-concealed disdain for the population."

So that's okay then! The bias is not being dictated from the top. The journalists are just been allowed to be themselves: snobby middle class types with a contempt for the democratic process.

But is it not significant that the journalists are allowed to indulge themselves. And how can disdainful EDITORIALS from the *Irish Times* be explained by the journalists being just middle class? Do the editorials not set the tone for the reporting?

And the personal affiliations of journalists do not account for the general policy of the paper. At one point in the election campaign the *Irish Times*

deliberately threw any pretence at 'balance' out of the window. So eager was the paper to prevent Fianna Fail returning to office that number of articles featuring 'Ahern corruption' and 'incompetence' eclipsed normal coverage of the election campaign. On some days there was virtually no other election coverage of substance. On May 4th there were 5 pieces on the 'scandal'; on the 5th there were 11 (counting the letters, but three out of four of these were against IT—a mistake that was not repeated, on the 7th there were 19 anti-Bertie mentions and 2 pro (and no letters on the matter at all); on the 8th - 6; and on the 11th - 4. There is no knowing what letters were suppressed. All we know is that reasonable like that of Cathal Brugha (*Irish Political Review*, June) on the Fourth Estate failed to be published.

It is hard for liberal journalists like Chekhov Feeney to admit that their beacon of liberal values is anything but that.

VICTORY FOR THE FRENCH RIGHT

The Presidential victory of Nicholas Sarkozy was a disaster for the French working class. And there was a real danger that the momentum of the victory would carry forward into the parliamentary elections on June 17th. After his election Sarkozy appointed Bernard Kouchner, the head of *Doctors Without Borders*, as Minister for Foreign affairs. This was seen as imaginative because Kouchner was once touted as a possible socialist presidential candidate. However, the latter's globalist philosophy made him an ideal choice from Sarkozy's perspective. Kouchner was originally a supporter of the war on Iraq by the US until such a position became unsustainable. Sarkozy also appointed Jean-Pierre Joyet as Minister for European Affairs. Joyet is a Socialist Party member who has been trying to move that party in a Blairite direction.

After the first round of the elections it looked like such appointments had disorientated the socialist opposition, but in the second round there was a revival of the Left.

The anticipated right wing landslide did not materialise. Sarkozy's party was returned with a reduced majority. It was the first time in 25 years that an outgoing French Government was returned with any kind of a majority. However, Sarkozy's policies represent a break (rupture) from the era of Chirac and he has never taken any responsibility for that Government's performance even though he was a member of it.

THE FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY

The anticipated demise of the Communist Party proved "premature and greatly exaggerated". It obtained about 5% of the vote but its representation was reduced from 21 to 18. Its future is

uncertain, but it remains influential in French life and will be to the fore in opposing the Sarkozy agenda. Its daily newspaper *L'Humanite* is one of the few national newspapers that is increasing its sales and recently it launched a Sunday magazine.

LAURENT FABIOUS

Laurent Fabius was the most influential politician during the campaign. His attack on the policy of financing reductions in Employers' social insurance by increasing VAT effectively prevented the anticipated right wing stampede.

Fabius's interventions were also decisive in ensuring a majority "no" vote on the referendum on the EU Constitutional Treaty a couple of years ago.

The Long Fellow thinks that the French Socialist Party made a big mistake in nominating Segolene Royal rather than Fabius as its presidential candidate. But as has been remarked before in this column the problem with Fabius is that he became too influential at too young an age. The arrogance of youth had not been knocked out of him when he became one of France's youngest Prime Ministers during the Mitterrand era.

Mitterrand said of Fabius that he spoke very well and would be interesting when he learned what to say. Unfortunately when he became interesting it was too late and was not enough to erase his youthful errors.

VIGNETTES FROM THE TRIBUNALS: THE RIGHTS OF INDIVIDUALS

Bertie Ahern has always been interesting or at least that is the view of the Mahon Tribunal.

His private financial affairs are being subjected to the most intense scrutiny. They have been leaked to the public in advance and the onus is placed on Ahern to account for all transactions relating to a period over 10 years ago. Failure to account for them is evidence of guilt, but no obligation is placed on the Tribunal to establish a link between the payments and what they are supposed to investigate, which is allegations made by a discredited witness, Tom Gilmartin, that corrupt payments were made to Bertie Ahern in relation to the Quarryvale site.

Listening to the Vincent Browne show (May 29th) it seems that the Supreme Court has had problems with the conduct of the Mahon Tribunal and in particular the suppression of evidence that would discredit Gilmartin as a witness. Vincent Browne asked *Irish Times* journalist Colm Keena if he accepted that individual rights had been trampled on. His reply was as follows:

"Tribunals are very rough instruments. They do intrude a lot without a doubt into people's rights. Things are done which you would never get a chance of doing in the courts, and which

arguably should not be done, but the deal we have all made in a way is that there were such terrible things going on that we set up the tribunals and reduced people's rights, and anybody who gets dragged into these tribunals have their rights walked over, rights that they would have if they were down in the courts, or anywhere else and we, I think, society as a whole, we need to do this, because we need to sort out this mess" (*The Irish Times*, 6.6.07).

So you start from the position that the society was corrupt. You gather evidence to prove this and such concepts as "due process", "innocent until proven guilty", "knowing what you are accused of", "rules of evidence" etc are obstacles which must be overcome to prove the original proposition. That appears to be the approach of the Tribunal. The enormous expenses incurred in its proceedings place greater pressure to make negative findings.

VIGNETTES FROM THE TRIBUNAL: UNDERMINING THE STATE & IRISH BUSINESS

"Mr O'Brien said he had concerns about the role played by tribunal counsel Jerry Healy SC, who acted in the past for Persona, a losing consortium in the competition won by Esat Digifone. He said solicitor Gerald Moloney, acting for Persona, had been seeking to collect information in Ireland, England and Belgium which was damaging to Mr O'Brien and which could be fed to the tribunal through Mr Healy. Referring to a case for damages Persona is taking against the State arising out of the licence competition, Mr O'Brien said: *'Is Persona using the machinery of the State to act as a stalking horse in a massive financial claim that it has taken against the State? If so, this is an extraordinary situation. Why bother spending money pursuing your case in the High Court when a tribunal will do the job for you?'*

Mr O'Brien said the activities of Mr. Moloney were only learned of by his legal team as result of the O' Callaghan v Mahon tribunal judgement in the High Court.

The Tribunal had taken 'astonishing steps' over a considerable period of time to prevent this information coming into the public domain. This bore 'testament' to the fact that the tribunal know precisely how much, and how far, it has compromised its own position in its pursuit of negative findings" (*The Irish Times*, 6.6.07).

VIGNETTES FROM THE TRIBUNALS: STUPID QUESTIONS

Here is an example of the type of questions that are asked at the Tribunals. The question concerns two letters relating to former Minister for the Environment Pdraig Flynn's decision to grant tax designation to Blanchardstown shopping centre.

"Judge Mahon asked if Mr Matthews (principal officer of the Department of the Environment) thought that they had

been misfiled, purposely never filed, or filed and subsequently removed.

"Mr Matthews, who was not in the department at the time, said each explanation was a possibility, but that it would not necessarily serve any purpose, since they were still on file at the Department of Finance" (*The Irish Times*, 29.6.07).

VIGNETTES FROM THE TRIBUNALS: THE MIND OF TOM GILMARTIN

"There is things, which was in my imagination that does exist that I invented, and if you would like to know about them I will tell you. But they were creatures of my imagination, but this definitely isn't. I don't need to reduce myself to petty little gossip." (Tom Gilmartin cited by Ronan Quinlan in the *Sunday Independent*).

Mr. Gilmartin is the star witness for the present phase of the Mahon Tribunal enquiry and has been granted legal immunity for his own possible past transgressions because of the value of his testimony.

THE MIND OF THE IRISH TIMES

The Irish Times made a brief concession to reality by publishing an article from the authors of a new ESRI report on the social impact of the Celtic Tiger. Here is what the authors say on the subject of national identity:

"One important piece of evidence is that Irish people's level of pride in their national identity is way above the European average. Furthermore, since the early 1980s there has been a striking increase in such expressions of pride among younger age groups" (*The Irish Times*, 29.6.07).

This, of course, contradicts the editorial line of *The Irish Times* which considers national identity is always problematic. And predictably Fintan O'Toole responded with a sneer in the opening sentence of his column:

"Smugness is, after all, justified" (*The Irish Times*, 3.7.07).

THE MIND OF THE LABOUR PARTY

But Fintan O' Toole can take Hart!

The Labour Party has placed itself in the vanguard of the counter revolution and has achieved initial success in Limerick. On 2nd July Limerick City Council passed a motion to restore posthumously Lord Dunraven to the Roll of Freeman of the City. The motion was approved unanimously by the Council following a recommendation of the Protocol Committee the previous week.

Dunraven was originally given the honour of Freeman of the City in 1908, but was struck off in 1918 when he supported the campaign to introduce Conscriptio. The 1916 Rising two years earlier had a revolutionary effect and the 1918 General Election demonstrated that the Irish were not prepared to be used as

cannonfodder for the British Army in the Great War. This was the basis for the independence struggle and the formation of the new state.

So why overturn the 1918 decision? According to the *Limerick Post* the initiative did not come from the Dunraven family so it could not be to redress a family grievance. The Dunraven family settled down in the new State and appear to have been well liked within the local community.

It was Kieran Walsh—the leader of the Labour group on the Council—who put in a "notice of motion" on 28th May. The matter was referred to the Protocol Committee before being approved in July. Walsh, who is a final year history student as well as the youngest Labour representative in the country, was assisted by a local military historian Pat McNamara and Matthew Potter, from the University of Limerick History Department.

Walsh has been reprimanded by the leader of the Labour Party for his views on the electoral pact with Fine Gael, but not a word from the party hierarchy on this occasion.

The Labour Party has abandoned the principles of James Connolly without even a murmur.

Whack Fol The Diddle

(Peadar Carney)

I'll sing you a song of peace and love,
Whack fol the diddle all the di do day.
To the land that reigns all lands above.

Whack fol the diddle all the di do day.
May peace and plenty be her share
Who kept our homes from want and care,
God bless Mother England is our prayer.

Whack fol the diddle all the di do day.

cho:

Whack fol the diddle all the di do day.

So we say, Hip Hooray!

Come and listen while we pray.

Whack fol the diddle all the di do day.

When we were savage, fierce and wild
She came like a mother to her child.
She gently raised us from the slime
Kept our hands from hellish crime,
And sent us to Heaven in her own good time.

Now our fathers oft were very bad boys.
Guns and pikes are dangerous toys.
From Bearna Baol to Bunker Hill
They made poor England weep her fill,
But ould Britannia loves us still!

Now Irishmen, forget the past!
And think of the time that's coming fast.
When we shall all be civilized,
Neat and clean and well-advised.
And won't Mother England be surprised?

(Recorded by Clancys. All the West Cork rebel songs are left out of the 300 songs in a Songbook recently produced by Sinn Fein. **Conor Lynch**)

RTÉ's *Hidden History* Documentary on the Pearson Executions

Atonement: Ethnic Cleansing in the Midlands

In Autumn of this year an RTÉ documentary in the *Hidden History* series is scheduled to be broadcast. The working title for it is *Atonement*, and it has been referred to in RTÉ as *Atonement: Ethnic Cleansing in the Midlands*.

The theme of the documentary is the execution by the Offaly IRA, on 30th June 1921, of the brothers Richard and Abraham Pearson of Coolacree. In 2005 Alan Stanley, distantly related to the Pearsons but socially connected on a more intimate basis, wrote a book called *I Met Murder On The Way*, which represents the executions as sectarian murders in furtherance of a land-grab, in which the IRA men who shot the Pearson brothers went on to squat the Pearson farm; and the Land Commission in 1923 finalised the murder/ethnic cleansing by granting legal title to the squatters. The academic advisers for the documentary are Terence Dooley, NUI Maynooth, who is an extreme adherent of Peter Hart's discredited sectarian/ethnic cleansing theory of the War of Independence; and Richard English, QUB Belfast, revisionist historian.

I grew up in Co. Kilkenny, not too far from this part of Offaly, and through farming connections I know of the Stanleys of neighbouring Co. Laois, and when I was younger I heard a little bit about the 1921 trouble there.

I read Eoghan Harris's articles in the *Sunday Independent* in 2005, and, like many other people I suppose, I thought the story was a horrific one, but I also thought that perhaps some things like this might indeed have happened under cover of the War of Independence.

Of course the overall context was perfectly clear. In a series of elections, the Irish independence movement had secured an overwhelming democratic mandate to form an independent Irish Government. The Imperial Government ignored the election result, imposed military rule to suppress the democratic Government in the manner of the various revolutionary fascist movements which were taking off around the world, and waged a ferocious terror campaign of assassination and imprisonment of elected representatives, random shooting of civilians, summary execution of prisoners, burning of houses, villages, towns, cities; hostage taking, torture, imprisonment—the whole dreadful story of Black-and-Tan Terror. The volunteer Irish Army resisted the terror, and retaliated by executing

collaborators and informers, just like the French Resistance against the Nazis.

We know the French Resistance sometimes executed innocent people by mistake, and popular vengeance when the Nazis were driven out was often cruel and excessive, even if understandable. Some private vendettas were conducted under cover of the Resistance. Likewise some unsavoury necklacing episodes attributed to Nelson Mandela's African National Congress. So something similar could have happened in Ireland.

When I read Eoghan Harris's article it seemed this might have been such a case. So I bought Alan Stanley's book. On initial quick reading, and taking everything he said at face value, it seemed to confirm Eoghan Harris's story. But on a more careful reading, many problems came to light.

First, his overall view of the Troubles was that it was an outbreak of rebel sectarian criminality, that the British Government was itself criminally negligent in using merely policing methods to stop it (this is the Black-and-Tans, mind), that they should have used military methods. Think what this means. The British Army was used in war mode to smash the 1916 Rising. That meant flattening the centre of Dublin with artillery involving wholesale slaughter of civilians over a few days. So Stanley wanted the same methods to be used all over Ireland, no doubt also using the RAF, carpet-bombing, gassing, concentration camps for disaffected population, and so on. This is what the British Empire did in Iraq after its war in Ireland, when the Black and Tans moved straight from Ireland to Iraq.

So I just began to wonder what planet did Stanley belong to, what century did his mind inhabit, that he should think that a touch of the bayonet, bomb and bullet would bring the revolting natives to submission.

His story was that the Pearsons were innocent farmers, inoffensive religious people like Amish or Quakers, and they were ruthlessly murdered for their land. But he also describes them as engaging in a senseless sectarian quarrel over a Mass path in which they threatened terrified women and children with firearms and spread human excrement (presumably their own) on stiles that the people would have to climb over on the way to Church; he says the Stanleys sheltered his father

who was kicked out of Co. Laois for organising an armed loyalist sectarian gang which was collaborating with the Black and Tans; he says they fired shotguns over the heads of some trespassers who were cutting down a roadside tree adjoining their property.

Alan Stanley describes the IRA party that the Pearsons fired on as Rebels and criminal sectarian gangsters, when they were in fact operating in the name of the elected Government, and were the direct lineal antecedents and ancestors of the present Republic of Ireland—its President, Government, Opposition, diplomats, courts, officials, police force, armed forces. In the teeth of a vicious revolutionary fascist campaign to smash democracy in Ireland, this IRA unit was part and parcel of the huge effort which originated the present Irish State.

From their own testimony, their very own words, the Pearsons were sectarian squabblers, they were trigger-happy gun-toting loyalists, they were friends and shelterers of on-the-run paramilitaries. These were Amish with attitude, Amish with form, Amish with guns. If this whole grotesque comparison, concocted by Stanley and Harris, were not so offensive to the Amish or Quakers, you could say that the Pearsons were the Amish from Hell.

Now, I have worked with Quaker colleagues most of my life. I live beside the Amish colony in Co. Waterford, which was featured in a recent RTE documentary. The Quakers and the Amish do not threaten people with guns. They do not engage in ridiculous sectarian squabbling over trivialities such as Mass-paths. They do not pull guns on people going to Church service or fell trees to stop them. They have no truck with violence of any kind. Absolutely the last thing they would ever do would be to make common cause with somebody like Alan Stanley's father who was a ringleader in an armed loyalist gang, a Johnny Adair type. It is an absolute insult to compare the Pearsons with non-violent, non-belligerent pacifists such as the Quakers and the Amish.

The Pearsons were not killed because of a ludicrous sectarian squabble over a Mass path, for felling trees across the path, for pulling guns on Mass-goers and for spreading excrement on the stiles. They were not even executed because they were informers. That is what all the IRA reports declare. And that is what the official RIC report declares. They were killed because they attacked an IRA party which was blocking the road at Cadamstown as part of County-wide manoeuvres to carry out an ambush on British forces in Birr. The Pearsons observed the party, threatened them verbally, returned with shotguns, and they

shot two men, one of them in the stomach. That is what happened.

It was an act of violence in support of the occupation forces which were trying to destroy the democratically elected Government, in the first post-War attempt at fascist revolution. The Commanding Officer for Offaly investigated and ordered that the three brothers be executed and the house burned. The CO was not a local with land grabbing on his mind; some poverty stricken cabin dweller or landless labourer with a hungry family, looking down from the mountainside at the Pearsons' fat cattle, glossy horses and lush crops in the fertile plain. Thomas Burke could not have been further removed from such an agenda. He was a medical student sent down from Dublin to Offaly by the C-in-C Richard Mulcahy with the authority of the Government to take over command and to raise the level of military resistance to the Black-and-Tan presence in Offaly, and to deal with rampant informing and collaboration which was decimating IRA ranks.

In his book Stanley says the Pearsons were irate Amish-Quaker types who did not actually believe in turning the other cheek and loving their neighbour, but instead pulled out their illegal firearms and fired a warning shot over the heads of trespassers who were felling one of their trees to make a roadblock. The Pearsons, says Stanley, were protecting their property—a roadside tree adjoining their land. He says that a party of RIC, Auxiliary, Black-and-Tans then turned up at the roadblock and attacked the party of volunteers at the roadblock and shot two of them. So it wasn't the Pearsons who shot the two volunteers (and a third person, who would seem to have been a loyalist civilian arrested by the volunteers as he made his way to the Pearsons).

Stanley might as well say that a herd of flying pigs turned up out of nowhere and did the shooting. The whole of County Offaly was blockaded for an IRA ambush on Crown Forces at Birr. Every Active Service Unit and every reservist was in action that night. Nothing could move in the County without the IRA knowing about it. Nothing could get through the blockades without a fight. To get to this one particular blockade at Cadamstown the Black & Tans from either Birr or Tullamore would have had to fight their way through 15 miles or so of IRA-held countryside. All the testimony on the IRA side confirms that the Pearson brothers did the shooting. The RIC testimony at the military enquiry says that the Pearsons did it, and were executed by the IRA in punishment. And are we seriously expected to believe that, if the Black-and-Tans managed to knock off two IRA volunteers, that they would have given the credit to an unlikely bunch of so-called Amish Quakers, as the RIC

did in their official report? And just when the British Government was desperate to publicise any success of its forces against the "rebels"?

THE SHOOTINGS

Here is a summary of the propaganda version of the executions:

"The two available Pearson brothers were put up against a barn wall. Their mother, three sisters and younger brother were lined up in the yard to watch. The firing squad took aim at the men's genitals and fired dum-dum bullets into them. All this was so that they would accomplish five particularly brutal and heinous purposes. Firstly, by blasting away the men's genitals they would make some barbaric point about ethnic cleansing. Secondly, the victims would take a very long time to die. Thirdly, they would suffer the most horrific pain while they were dying. Fourthly, the family members who were forced to watch this atrocity would themselves suffer the torments of hell. Fifthly, the shock waves of this sectarian atrocity would send shock waves of fear and terror through the local Protestant landowning community and get wholesale ethnic cleansing and landgrabbing under way."

But the eye-witness accounts tell a different story. Matilda Pearson's account in the following week's local newspapers says that her two brothers were taken away from the other family members. Dave Pearson's 1981 letter to Hilary Stanley, quoted in Alan Stanley's book, says that he and his mother and sisters were taken away separately. Michael Cordial's Witness Statement on the events (Bureau of Military History) says that the condemned men were separated from the rest of the family. In the Military Court of Inquiry held at Crinkle Barracks, Birr on Saturday 2nd July 1921, Ethel Pearson (sister) said that she and her sisters, mother, cousins and brother David were moved into a grove of trees at the back of the house just before it was set on fire, while her brothers were taken away to a yard among the farm buildings. So the executions took place at a separate location from where the rest of the family were moved to by the IRA.

The fact is, executions are a horrible business. But they are part and parcel of warfare, and everyone knows that War Is Hell. The war in Ireland was precipitated by the revolutionary fascist military response of the Imperial Government to the election of a democratic Government in Ireland. The Black & Tans carried out many assassinations, executions, torture and burnings. Mick Heaney was shot in the stomach with a shotgun blast by one of the Pearsons, and eventually died of his injury. His stomach wound caused him great pain over a very long time indeed,

before he eventually died in consequence.

After an enquiry which established their guilt, the Pearson brothers had been condemned to death by the Offaly commander who had been sent down under orders from Dublin. Executions are done by a squad of soldiers rather than an individual executioner, so no single person has to bear the whole responsibility. And they retain anonymity. For instance, nobody asks the names of the soldiers who executed Pearse or Connolly—a convention which has not been adhered to by the *Hidden History* team, who are resolutely trying to get the names—no doubt in order to begin to make Atonement for the alleged crime against the Pearsons.

The medical report of the British Military Enquiry says Richard Pearson received wounds in the left shoulder, right groin, right buttock, the back, and left lower leg—all of them superficial. Anatomically, the groin is the hollow between the thigh and the torso. We have two groins, for left and right thighs. Contrary to the euphemism, the actual genital area is between the two groins, whereas the groin actually lies between the thigh and the stomach. They might easily have received wounds to the genital area. But what Richard Pearson actually received was a superficial wound to the right groin.

Now, Mick Heaney received a stomach wound. But Mick Heaney was quickly brought to a secret ward in Tullamore Hospital, and his life was saved, at least for the time being. The execution of the Pearson brothers was botched. These soldiers were not experienced, battle-hardened fighting men like those in Dublin and Cork. Their war up to Summer 1921 had consisted mostly of sabotage work. Their new OC, Thomas Burke, had been sent to Offaly by General Richard Mulcahy, under the authority of the Government, in order to step up the resistance effort in the County.

If I was sentenced to be executed I would definitely prefer a botched execution by amateurs in which I was left alive suffering only superficial wounds.

Unlike Mick Heaney's treatment, what was also botched was the medical treatment given to the Pearson brothers. They were shot about 5 pm and Richard Pearson died about 10 pm on a mattress in a field at Coolacree, from shock and blood loss. Abraham Pearson died from the same cause about 6 am the following morning in the hospital in Crinkle Military Barracks near Birr. The doctor from Kinnitty only arrived to tend to these superficially wounded men at about 7.30 pm, nearly three hours after the shooting. He administered antiseptic treatment to

Richard Pearson, according to the *Kings County Chronicle* and his own statement to the Military Enquiry two days later. In other words he cleaned up the wounds, but performed no surgery. He did nothing to stop the bleeding. The military from Birr arrived about 9.30 pm, and presumably got the brother who was still alive (Abraham) into the military hospital in Crinkle Barracks, Birr, by about 10.30 or 11 pm. The military physician in Crinkle, also called Woods, was summoned to attend to him at 2 pm. He dressed his wounds, which were superficial, he says, and went back to bed. Abraham Pearson died at 6 am.

Why all the delays? Why were the two men not brought directly to hospital to get treatment for their superficial wounds? What were the sisters doing? Running to neighbours who refused to help? Ethel Pearson (sister) says she rode a horse to Cadamstown (about a mile away) to get help. We know that 14-year-old Dave Pearson called in to the Jacksons (Protestant neighbours) and was sent away, told that they had brought this trouble on themselves by the way they had conducted themselves. That has been the general reaction on all sides to the Pearson question ever since, until Alan Stanley's fanciful revision.

The brothers received superficial wounds, none of them to the genitals, but wounds which caused shock and bleeding from which they eventually died, after quite a long time, for lack of medical attention. What would their condition have been that afternoon as they lay on a mattress in a field, perhaps without covers to keep them warm? We were told they went into shock, the reaction by which the body protects itself from trauma by restricting the blood flow to all but essential organs. So they would have trembled, become cold and pale, but perhaps recovering their senses sufficiently to talk. So their sisters may have thought they were ok after all, and did not rush for the Kinnitty dispensary doctor about four miles away. Then the men would have started drifting in and out of consciousness as they lost more and more blood. Were they screaming in agony? Probably not, from the superficial nature of the wounds (and from the physiological process of shock which they entered) described in the medical report, as opposed to the propaganda statements of Dublin Castle and Alan Stanley. But we can only surmise.

What about the execution party? These inexperienced soldiers fired at the condemned men, who they hit with several shots. At the same time the fire which had been prepared in the house was lit, and the house went up in flames. Michael Cordial in his report, now available in the Military History records, says explosions blew the roof off the house, so explosives may have

been stored there. The fire, smoke and explosions could be seen and heard for miles in every direction. The men were on foot. They had every incentive to get away as quickly as possible, and that is what they did. Did they know the condemned men were still alive as they left? Again we can only surmise.

There is no mention of dum-dum bullets in any contemporary account. Not even in the Dublin Castle propaganda statement which would have made great fuss of this if there had even been a suspicion that dum-dum bullets were used. This dum-dum allegation seems to be a later propaganda invention, perhaps by Alan Stanley himself since I have not seen it anywhere else. If a dum-dum bullet struck the right groin or left shoulder, the right leg and left arm would have been practically torn off, and death would have been very quick. Similarly for the back and buttock wounds.

(Dum-dum bullets are named after the district of Dum-Dum outside Calcutta where the British had a factory for making these bullets. Calcutta airport is now located there. Formerly called Dum-Dum Airport, it is now called Subhas Chandra Bose Airport after the legendary Indian resistance hero who organised an Indian Army in 1941 in alliance with the Japanese, and precipitated the termination of Britain's Indian Empire, as part of a political movement which was heavily influenced by the Irish independence movement.)

THE LAND GRAB

Stanley says that after the shootings, the locals moved in on the Pearson farm, and the Land Commission in 1923 accepted this as *fait accompli* and awarded the squatters full title.

William Pearson bought 341 acres, dwelling-house plus outhouses in Coolacree in about 1911 for a payment of £2000, according to the unionist *Kings County Chronicle* of 13th October 1921. Allowing for further investment of machinery, equipment, stock, we can estimate total investment of £3000, = approx Euros 300,000 (at rough equivalence £1 in 1900 = Euro 100 in 2007).

In 1922 he received from a Free State Court compensation of £1500 (2007: Euro 150,000) for the death of two sons, plus £2300 (2007: Euro 230,000) for burning of house and outhouses. Total £3800 (Euro 380,000). The Court offered him a further £4000 (about half a million Euro) to repair or renew the buildings, but he refused. Previously the Republican or Sinn Fein Court had obtained for him restitution/compensation for some small thefts from the farm—some pigs and an iron gate. In 1923 he sold the land to the Land Commission for £6000 of which £1700 was held back in lieu of annuities due to

the Land Commission.

In addition two applications were made by the Pearsons to the London *Distress Committee*. The first was by Sidney Pearson, and the Committee found it "*not unamusing*" before they threw it out unceremoniously. The second application by William Pearson in 1927 was composed with the help of King's Counsel, accountant, auctioneer/valuer, and various chancers and fraudsters. It is a compendium of flagrant lies intended to play on the sympathetic feelings of the Committee, and was successful in obtaining a grant of approx £5000.

So Wm. Pearson's investment of £2,000 (probably borrowed from the Land Commission, as he repaid Annuity dues of £1700 to them in 1922) turned into £10,500, courtesy of the taxpayers of the Irish Free State, having already made a fortune from inflated wartime agricultural prices. With these monies, the surviving family members quite literally never looked back.

In 1923 the Land Commission bought the 341 acres of Pearson land at Coolacree (without dwelling or buildings, which were destroyed) from William Pearson for about £6000, which was several times the amount that Wm. Pearson paid for the land, large dwelling plus valuable farm buildings, in 1910 or thereabouts. The Land Commission then divided the land among eight people, the first three being ex-British soldiers, none of these 8 were Republicans or IRA. Because the annuities (mortgage payments or annual re-payments to the Land Commission) of the new proprietors were excessively high on account of the excessive amount paid to William Pearson (and on account of the agricultural slump in agriculture following the war-time boom), a number of them failed and eventually gave up and sold off their little farms. At that point two former IRA men obtained small-holdings. The initial allocation of these small-holdings in 1923 was done by the Land Commissioner William Blackham (who was Commissioner under the previous (British) Government), in consultation with the Parish Priest of Kinnitty, Fr. Holohan. The latter was fiercely anti-Republican and had been arrested at gun-point by the Republican Anti-Treaty forces in the battle for Kinnitty against the Free State forces in 1922. All of the people involved in the Pearson executions went anti-Treaty. They were all either dead or interned in 1923. There was no possibility they would get land. Michael Cordial got none.

In his 1927 statement to the Distress Committee, Wm. Pearson complained that he was boycotted and trespassed (not squatted), and that because of this intensive boycotting he was unable to get full price

for the sale of his land to the Land Commission (and because of intimidation, not even allowed to offer it for sale in the open market), and therefore had to sell to the Land Commission at loss of £5000 (2007: Euro 500,000 approx). The Distress Committee awarded him approx this amount in 1929. Using this and 1923 Free State compensation of £3800 (2007: Euro 380,000 approx) the Pearson family members acquired the following farms: 162-acres in Suffolk (Home Counties England); 205 acres in Stowmarket, Suffolk; several dairy farms in Australia (precise details unclear from Stanley's book). And they added a variety of other businesses, mainly property dealing, to their portfolios over time.

Wm. Stanley's statement to the Distress Committee consists mostly of flagrant and obvious lies, many of them detected by the Committee, and some of rejected even by Alan Stanley. But the crucial lie which enabled him to win £5000 (2007: Euro 500,000 approx) was his claim that he could not hold an auction to sell his land because of intimidation and the extreme and total boycott against him. But the local Unionist paper, the *King's County Chronicle* has a report of an auction in October 1922, in which the highest bid for Coolacrease (by Mr Finnamore of Knockhill, Kilcormac) did not meet the reserve price demanded by Wm. Pearson.

There were and are many large Protestant landholders in the area. None of them were troubled by land grabbing. Alan Stanley's propaganda, which appears to be the basis of the *Hidden History* documentary, is the direct opposite of the truth.

LOYALISTS—BUT DID NOT JOIN UP?

One of the arguments being promoted by the *Hidden History* documentary is that the Pearsons could not have been loyalists since, they say, none of them joined the British Forces in the Great War. So how could they be loyalists?

This is a question which could only be answered by the Pearsons themselves. William Pearson said they were loyalists, loyalists who helped the Crown Forces against the rebels in every way they could. That is what he said. All the evidence confirms that this was what they actually did during the Black+Tan terror. Why did his sons not join up for the War? We can't answer, but we can only speculate. It seems Offaly was the outpost of Empire for the Pearsons, surrounded by treacherous natives whose only thought was to grab back what had been grabbed off them in the first place. The Pearsons were already doing their bit for the Empire, holding out against treacherous rebels.—Not an Inch, What We Have We Hold—the whole loyalist ideology. In more practical terms: they had a big farm; they would not employ locals; but there were

three adult sons, a younger son, and three daughters who could run the lucrative dairying side of the business—milking cows and so on. So they had a complete work force all of his own, they did not need to engage any natives or have anything to do with them at all. But Wm. Pearson could hardly manage to run such a farm in those days without all four of his sons. So how could he allow any of them to leave the farm to join the War effort?

But what I really think was going on with them is that, with agricultural prices going sky high during the war, there was no way Pearson was going to miss this opportunity to make a pile of money by letting any of his sons join up. There is ample evidence that William Pearson and his son Sidney Pearson were extreme mercenary types driven by insatiable desire for land and money, for which they were quite prepared to lie and cheat. Their submissions to the Distress Committee prove this beyond a shadow of doubt. Their acquisitions of farms and businesses in England and Australia demonstrate what they were really about.

SPIES AND INFORMERS?

Hidden History questions whether they were spies and informers. Wm. Pearson said himself that they did everything they could for the Crown Forces during the rebellion, and he wasn't talking about cooking their food and washing and ironing their uniforms. If they were prepared to shoot up an IRA roadblock, it is most unlikely they were withholding information about their rebellious neighbours from the Crown Forces.

The day after they pulled guns on Mass-goers, the two IRA men (J.J. Horan and John Dillon) who intervened to restore order were arrested and jailed. The day after their road-block attack, the Crown Forces made their way to each of the houses of the volunteers involved and arrested them all, except for Mick Heaney who was hidden in hospital getting treatment for the shotgun wounds to his stomach.

The Pearsons' mail was intercepted, they were found to be reporting to Dublin Castle intelligence. The British military were on intimate terms as visitors to the Pearsons. An English soldier, Charlie Chidley, deserted to the IRA and was an important source of evidence about the Pearsons as he was the driver for the intelligence officer who worked with them. Later he took the anti-Treaty side, and married and settled in the area.

COONEYITES?

While the Pearsons were executed for firing on the IRA, not for their religion, both Alan Stanley and Eoghan Harris have compared them to Amish or Quakers. The comparison is bizarre in the extreme. In comparison with the *Cooneyites* the Free

Presbyterians are New-Age Buddhists. Originating in Co. Fermanagh about 1900, they spread to Scotland, England, France, Germany, USA, Canada and Australia. Their main enemies were the other Protestant Churches, whom they regarded as corrupt and unbiblical, almost as bad as papists. There are newspaper reports of their activities instigating riots and street-fighting in Fermanagh, Newtownards, Suffolk (where the Pearsons bought farms with the compensation money) and various other places.

Their founding text is Matthew 10 (Chapter 10 of the Gospel according to Matthew).

Here is a sample of Matthew 10:

"...go, preach, saying the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Provide neither gold nor silver nor brass in your purses. Go not into the way of the gentiles, but rather to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. Be ye therefore wise as serpents. Beware of men, for they will deliver you up to their councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues. Think not that I am come to send peace on earth. I am come to set a man at variance against his father and the daughter against her mother and the daughter in law against her mother in law. The brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child. And the children shall rise up against their parents and cause them to be put to death. Ye shall be hated by all men for my name's sake, but he that endureth to the end shall be saved."

Pat Muldowney

Sources

- Paddy Heaney, *At the Foot of Slieve Bloom*, 2002.
- Paddy Heaney, *A Place with a Tragic History*, Offaly Heritage Journal, Volume 4, pages 220-225.
- King James Bible.
- Philip McConway, *The War of Independence in Offaly*, Public Lecture, Offaly Historical & Archaeological Society, 2007.
- Doug and Helen Parker, *The Secret Sect: The Nameless House Sect and Annual Conventions; the Cooneyites also known as Two-by-two Preachers, Die Namenlosen, Les Anonumes, The Way*, Sydney, Australia, 1982.

Errata in July IPR:

The first sentence at the top of page 16, where Manus O'Riordan refers to Jim O'Regan's involvement in the 1930 IRA bombing campaign, should read:

"Even though Jim himself may not have fully agreed with that campaign, his IRA loyalty and discipline – unlike that of my father – was unconditional and remained intact."

In the middle of that same page 16, the last sentence of the second paragraph of Michael O'Riordan's 1939 letter should read:

"Roughly they [the British] hold a quarter of the area of Ireland still."

IRB Corrections And Questions From Joe McCullough

INTRODUCTION BY MANUS O'RIORDAN:

As related in Part 2 of my "To Be Or IRB" series (*Irish Political Review*, September 2006), Denis McCullough had been President of the Supreme Council of the Irish Republican Brotherhood 1915-16. He took the Treaty side in the Sinn Féin split and served as a Cumann na nGaedheal TD 1924-27, before retiring from politics to devote himself to business affairs, including his Chairmanship of the New Ireland Assurance Company. McCullough's wife Agnes was a member of that well-known Ryan family from Wexford which was to figure so prominently in the struggle for national independence. Her sister Min played a most important role in the 1916 Rising as the key Cumann na mBan courier. She had also been the girlfriend of the 1916 Rising leader Seán Mac Diarmada, and he was to write on the eve of his execution of "*Miss Ryan, who in all probability, had I lived, would have been my wife*". Min Ryan subsequently married Richard Mulcahy, second-in-command to Thomas Ashe at the 1916 Rising's successful Battle of Ashbourne, Chief of Staff of the IRA 1918-22 during the War of Independence, and Commander-in-Chief of the Free State Army 1922-23 during the Civil War. Mulcahy was the Cumann na nGaedheal Government's Minister for Defence 1922-24, while two decades later he went on to become President of Fine Gael 1944-59, as well as serving as Minister for Education in two post-War inter-Party Governments.

Agnes McCullough's brother Dr. Jim Ryan fought as an Irish Volunteer in the GPO during the 1916 Rising, where he attended to the wounded James Connolly. Taking the Republican side in the Civil War, he went on to serve as a Fianna Fáil Government Minister in several of de Valera's administrations. Two more of the Ryan sisters—Kit and Phyllis—also figured prominently on the Republican side. Both Kit and—following her death—Phyllis would each be married to de Valera's Tánaiste Seán T. O'Kelly, who was subsequently elected President of Ireland.

It can be seen that Ryan family politics were severely polarised by the Treaty split. But the Civil War was a taboo family topic for their children, so that the various groups of first cousins were encouraged by all of their parents to mix together in a wider family circle that disregarded which of the opposing sides of that Civil War those same parents might have taken. That older generation's patriotic sense of public

service and a commitment to the historical legacy of the Irish War of Independence was, in turn, to be communicated to the next generation. Dr. Risteárd Mulcahy's evaluation of the Treaty and Civil War would not be mine, but in *Irish Political Review* May 2007 I have referred to our indebtedness to him for the research material he brought together for the portrait of his father, *Richard Mulcahy—A Family Memoir*. We are also indebted to him for the firm stand he has taken in exposing the revisionist falsehoods that deny the democratic mandate underpinning the War of Independence. In a letter under this heading, published in the *Irish Times* on 30th September 2003, Risteárd Mulcahy pointed out:

"The Irish Volunteers were initially formed in 1913 as a defence force to ensure the implementation of Home Rule. Like its predecessor, the General Headquarters Staff of the Volunteers was established in March 1918 by the Volunteer Executive as a defence force in response to Lloyd George's conscription threat and at the time of the 'German plot'.

"Dermot Meleady (September 24th) is correct when he acknowledges that the GHQ Staff was not responsible for the isolated events in 1919, nor did it approve of these events. It remained quiescent as a military force until the end of 1919, but was then obliged to take action because of the British campaign of intimidation and imprisonment of Sinn Féin speakers, the suppression of Sinn Féin, the Gaelic League and the Volunteers in June 1919, and the suppression of the Dáil later in the Autumn. Military action started in January, 1920, with the attacks on RIC barracks, carried out initially in association with the Cork Volunteers. There is no reason to believe that GHQ would have commenced military action without the draconian attempts adopted by the RIC to suppress the activities of the representatives elected by the people.

"Dermot Meleady is not correct in implying that the War of Independence, extending from January 1920 to July 1921, was not based on democratic principles. The decision to commence hostilities was approved by Cathal Brugha, Minister for Defence in the first Dáil, and responsibility for the war was subsequently accepted by Dáil Éireann. One must agree with Mr. Meleady that it was unfortunate that Home Rule was not established in 1914. It was equally unfortunate that the 1918 election did not evoke a conciliatory response from Lloyd George and his Cabinet."

Risteárd Mulcahy had indeed written very much to the point. I am also very grateful that Joe McCullough, second youngest child of Denis and Agnes McCullough, has read my IRB series with such keen interest as to offer some supplementary information and point out some errors in my account. On 15 May 2007 Joe McCullough has observed:

"It might be of minor interest to you that my father told me he was sent (I think by Collins) to Belfast to ascertain the attitudes of Belfast IRA leaders [to the Treaty—MO'R] and reported back that they would accept the Collins line. Séamus Woods (whom I knew in later life) was one of them. Subsequently, as you know, some of them recanted. The relationship between Collins and Mulcahy is intriguing. The General would not accept any criticism of Collins, despite the confused formal relationships. Mulcahy's unawareness of Free State Army leaders' IRB membership is hard to fathom."

But it was on 5th September 2006, in a detailed critique of my first two articles, that Joe McCullough has been particularly helpful. I therefore greatly appreciate Joe's permission to now reproduce it in full hereunder, and I have added my own reply of 20th September. He emphasises that some of the points made are based on impressions, guesses and suspicions, rather than on facts known beyond doubt. Would that each Witness Statement in the Bureau of Military History also carried such an honest-to-God health warning!

Comments by Joe McCullough:

Your two articles cover a wide range of interesting subjects. I have selected for comments just a few views which might be of interest:

- You say my father was elected President of the IRB in September 1915. I think he was in prison under the DORA [Defence of the Realm Act—MO'R] that September and could not attend that meeting. He was elected President in December 1915, shortly after his release.

- My impression is that a military committee was set up after a Supreme Council meeting early in 1915, after which the committee seemed to take on a life of its own, virtually ignoring the SC and appointing whom they thought best.

- The December meeting of the Supreme Council also was for going ahead with a Rising and delegated the implementation to their Executive, comprising Clarke, McDermot and my father. I guess that McDermot and Clarke simply continued with their existing military

committee and had no intention of forming a new one subject to the SC. One reason my father was not consulted further was because he was based in Belfast (as he himself had pointed out); but I suspect that another reason was that they feared he might insist on reporting back to the SC, with uncertain consequences.

- The conversation between Clarke and my father, as reported by Mrs. Clarke, echoes closely what my father reported. When Clarke told him he knew little or nothing about the detailed plans, I feel that my father believed him. He always said that Mc Dermot was the key man.

- The references to the Cork leaders being kept in the dark echoes the Northern experience. Not alone was little or no information given to the Northern leaders (although my father was able to extract some information from Mac Diarmada in the final days), but I guess that the Military Committee in Dublin had come to realise how unworkable their original plans for the North would be.

- That the IRB was an essential component of the 1916 Rising is certain; that it operated in great secrecy (a conspiracy within a conspiracy) may have been essential to its relative success in broadening the drive towards independence.

- The question of the IRB Presidency and of Pearse being elected instead of Clarke is an interesting one. You mention that Clarke held no position in the Volunteers and that may well have been the deciding factor in making a choice. My impression is that Clarke admired Pearse, not for his executive ability but for his literary and presentation skills (you allude to that).

- You quote a report that McDermot got MacNeill's agreement to stand in with the rebels and to put his name on the Proclamation. I do not recall hearing that before. Can you tell me about it? It puts quite a different slant on what went on at the critical time.

- It is clear that in the 1919/21 period the IRB was intimately involved in military activities, mainly by having IRB men appointed to leading positions, but I wonder was the organisation run more as a person fiefdom of Collins than through the traditional 'elected' Supreme Council. Have you info on that?

- The IRB's continued existence was no doubt a source of discord. You mention that—along with Dev and others—my father expressed the view that post-1916 the IRB should have been disbanded. Although I am sure he did not say that lightly, he seems subsequently to have carried out a number of tasks at Collins' request, presumably in keeping with the IRB code. Whatever resentment he may have felt about being supplanted, apparently without consultation, from the SC, it does not seem to have reduced his commitment to the struggle.

- Finally, I think you make the valid point that the election result of 1918 should have led directly to SF/British Government negotiations—indeed the British would have done themselves a great favour by taking that line. But, I suppose that—seen from London—such a concept was unthinkable.

A Reply to Joe McCullough:

Dear Joe,

Many thanks for taking so much trouble to comment in such detail on my earlier IRB articles. I am in basic agreement with your own overall assessment: that a secret IRB organisation was essential for 1916; but that your Dad—having been the 1916 IRB President—was also correct to question its legitimacy during the War of Independence that was waged to give effect to the democratic will of the 1918 General Election.

Your two most difficult questions arise from my use of secondary sources:

[1] Was your father elected IRB President in September or December 1915? You very reasonably query September, as your Dad was still in prison. My source was a quote from Brian Murphy, but on checking back I see that his source was Ruth Dudley Edwards's reference to September on page 241 of her Pearse biography. She in turn cited her source as Mulcahy MSS: Mc Cullough to Mulcahy, P7/D/14-15. Perhaps

in a personal letter from your Dad to your Uncle Dick there was more concern with the story being told than the precise date, or perhaps there was human error in reading his handwriting, and Edwards misread December as September. I see that—on page 101 of his Seán Mac Diarmada biography—Gerard MacAtasney refers to "the end of that year", citing the more detailed account of the same story given by your Dad in his Witness Statement to the Bureau of Military History, when he would have been particularly careful to be accurate in all details. [I presume you have that book; on page 182 MacAtasney cites you as the source for Seán Mac Diarmada living at one stage with your family on Belfast's Grosvenor Road.]

[2] Did Eoin MacNeill agree at one stage to sign the Proclamation? I quoted Kathleen Clarke re Holy Tuesday, based on her recall of what she said her husband Tom Clarke had told her. But this cannot have been so. It had to have been the morning of Good Friday, when Mac Diarmada convinced MacNeill that German aid was arriving. See page 112 of MacAtasney.

Best regards,
Manus

Postscript, 3rd & 4th July 2007:

Dear Manus,

Yes, I have MacAtasney's book. I don't know where he got his 'end of year' reference, but it seems to square with my belief. I read my father's statement to the Military History Bureau some time ago, but I cannot remember the detail. From what you say, the Statement seems to confirm what I report about the date of his election as President. I note what you say about Mac Diarmada's Good Friday meeting with McNeill, and that seems to tie in with what I had understood.

Just last night I noticed that in Richard Kirkland's biography of Cathal O'Byrne (page 133), it is recorded that my father became President of the IRB in November 1915. As you may know, O'Byrne was one of F.J. Bigger's Ardrigh set (in Belfast), interested in the nationalist cause, but mainly in its literary and artistic aspects. He acted as best man at my parent's wedding. For what it's worth, it seems to confirm that my father could not have been elected in September.

Kind Regards.
Joe McCullough

Old Irish And The Market

Part One

The authorities of University College Dublin have provoked one of the rare outbursts of protest against the totalitarianism of commerce in Irish life—the assertion of merchant values in areas where some other sort of values were supposed to apply, like, for example, the universities. The Old Irish Department in UCD hadn't been proving very marketable, so earlier this year UCD closed it down. And this has led to some protest.

A whole generation ago, before the Deluge, I spent three years in University College Cork. I had emerged from secondary school with a powerful but unfocused desire to know. Since I had little idea of what was knowable or what was worth knowing, I would have welcomed guidance. I was ready, I think, for something like the University of Berlin in the 1830s—or even in the 1900s, when Heinrich Zimmer was there. Anything at all might have caught me up and swept me away—number theory, Spanish poetry, Celtic philology, even history—if only a professor could have communicated the conviction that this was the most important thing in the world.

But UCC had professors and lecturers of another sort. For even the more lively and interesting of them, it seemed that the most important thing in the world was to be a certain kind of Cork bourgeois. There were coteries that some people were able to get into; there one could get some more insights into the subject and into Cork intellectual bourgeois existence. I had neither interest nor talent. I spent three years doing what an outsider's cold eye might see as drifting, though I regard it as waiting. There is a time to wait.

I am grateful to UCC for two things, and neither of them has got much to do with the university's normal activities. First of all, it enabled me to encounter the Maoists. They actually came the closest to what I had wanted from the university: they had the intellectual earnestness and bold scope of thought. And secondly, because Irish students were allowed to do holiday work in the USA, I managed to spend two summers in the breath-taking city of Boston, and because I worked there I began to get a focus on urban society, which in Cork was like a riddle in a foreign language. Previously I had known only isolated rural life and the barracks-life of a secondary boarding school. (I fully appreciate the point John Waters made in one of his books: if you grew up somewhere like Castletreagh or Kenmare or Skibbereen—some place where milk

came in bottles and there were rows of poles with lamps on them—then you've got the basic urban experience, and you can relate to New York, Tokyo, Sao Paolo, with no bother. And if you didn't, you can't.)

But though I find little pleasure in remembering UCC, at this remove I would wish to be just to its memory. And in my opinion, at that time if one was to conceive of UCC then as merely a business like Easons or Dunnes Stores, one more commercial racket, it was necessary to do some counter-intuitive thinking. The thing wasn't perfectly obvious. Around UCC there still hung the atmosphere of an earlier stage or state of Western metaphysics, as described by Heidegger. (It was just a few years into the post-World War Two period, I think, when he said that in the last stage of Western metaphysics everything would be exploited as raw material, *"including that raw material called man"*. He was human enough to be shocked, twenty years or so later, at how far things had gone. That was around the time when I was in UCC.)

On one level, it was obvious that UCC served Irish capitalist society, providing it with practical experts—in particular, engineers. The engineers were the pioneers of the coming values, but they still only half-knew it. They were made to co-exist with a great many of us who were not at all as practical. The university was engaged in teaching history, languages, classics, philosophy, and these studies were thought to have value, even if they couldn't just be price-labelled. There was a notion of the mental culture of society, that society would be enriched by a work of thinking which was various and had an extensive range. The engineers, with their cheerful, loud vulgarity, were just one element of the blend. I hung around with them for a while; they intrigued me. *"We are, we are, we are, we are, / we are the engineers; / we can, we can, we can, we can / demolish forty beers"*: I thought that had a touch of *Carmina Burana*.)

Old Professors Breatnach, Ware, Fogarty, they of the slow dignified steps and swishing gowns—well, they were certainly no Schellings, no Zimmers. But they would never have admitted to being merchants. As a Maoist, I loved to argue with their younger versions, proving that the university, beneath all its gowned pretensions, was a vulgar capitalist enterprise. It was fun because the point was contested. There was something to argue about.

But no one will have that fun any more. I am told that UCC now refers to its students as 'customers'. And UCD is openly bringing advertising, marketing and selling into every breath it draws. This culture is identified especially with the President, Hugh Brady, a medical doctor by background. He too spent some time working in Boston: he was a consultant there. It's to him that the protesting professors from elsewhere addressed their complaints when the Old Irish department was abolished, and I suppose if someone is specifically responsible for that decision it has to be him. So let's take a look at the one-sided argument (because Brady and all executives of his enterprise have scorned to reply to criticism).

For some time UCD's Old Irish department had been ailing. After the last professor retired a few years ago, the authorities made no move to fill his chair. There were only two students doing the degree course. Last year UCD made the decisive move.

"As I understand the situation, the department had been reduced to two lecturers, the absolute minimum required to maintain the core; only one of these was permanent, and the opportunity was taken not to renew the contract of the other lecturer in order easily to achieve the aim of putting an end to Old Irish in UCD" (Professor Liam Breatnach, *Irish Times*, 19.06.2007).

All of this was clear by the beginning of the new school year in Autumn 2006 and was immediately commented on in the UCD student newspaper. Now in fact UCD had been the only university in Ireland where students could do a full Basic degree in *"Early and Medieval Irish"*, i.e. the Irish language as it appears in works composed before about 1250 A.D. And since UCD is Ireland's largest and wealthiest university, the move could be seen as pioneering. Professors of Irish elsewhere could see danger signals. A number of them got together and sent a private letter to the President of UCD, asking him to stay his axe. The President simply ignored them.

On 13th March 2007 twenty three of them went public, through the Letters' Column of the *Irish Times*. The list included Liam Breatnach and Pádraig A. Breatnach, Senior Professors at the Institute of Advanced Studies, Professor McCone of Maynooth and MacManus of Trinity, Professor Corthals of Hamburg, and others from Ireland, Europe, America and Australia. To be fair to these people, I must strain the reader's patience so far as to reproduce their letter in full.

"Madam,—Professors of Irish and Celtic Studies from universities in Ireland and abroad wrote some months

ago to the president of University College Dublin to express grave disquiet about a proposal by UCD to discontinue early and medieval Irish (old Irish) as a full degree subject. As no response has been forthcoming and as UCD has gone ahead with its proposal, we feel bound to draw the issue to public attention.

"Together with Latin, old Irish is the linguistic bedrock on which all study of the sources for the early history and literature of Ireland is founded. For more than 150 years, ever since the study of Irish and the other Celtic languages was first placed on a scientific footing by the great German scholar Johann Caspar Zeuss (in whose honour An Post recently issued a commemorative stamp), the subject of Old Irish has been a focus of academic study for historians of language and literature the world over.

"The primary responsibility for cultivating the study of Old Irish rests with Irish universities and learned institutions. For much of the 20th century UCD enjoyed a distinguished national and international reputation as a centre of Old Irish, and its professors and alumni have played a pivotal role in developing Irish and Celtic studies generally.

"As Ireland's largest university, UCD has a special obligation to continue to foster and develop the training of students in the vernacular language and literature of early and medieval Ireland. It cannot be allowed simply to place the onus of doing so on other universities with fewer resources.

"By withdrawing Old Irish as a degree subject, whether to save money or for any other reason, UCD is undermining its own standing as well as that of Ireland as an international centre of learning in the humanities.

"It is also failing in its constitutional obligation to cherish and support the study of Ireland's cultural heritage. We believe it is incumbent on UCD to retain the capacity to provide full-scale degree training for students in the subject, and we wish to urge that all necessary measures are taken to ensure this.

"Now more than ever, in a prosperous country facing the future with self-confidence and optimism, the obligation to provide the means for teaching and research in the areas of culture that are unique to Ireland should be self-evident."

This provoked a correspondence which went on fitfully in the *Irish Times* letter column for the following three months. The correspondents, so far as I can see, were mainly pretty much of a mind with the professors. In fact, many if not most of the correspondents also seemed to be professors. They included Seamus Deane, for whom UCD's decision exemplified "our idolatry of the market".

The undoubted high point of the campaign was on April 6th, when Mary Hanafin, Fianna Fail's Minister for

Educaton, "expressed concern" about UCD's decision. But this had all the appearances of a token gesture. I don't know if any other politicians 'expressed concern', but I think it's safe to say that no politician said anything more forceful.

President MacAleese, visiting the United States early in May, was invited to comment. Typically—

"the President declined to be drawn into the dispute about UCD's decision, but she welcomed this week's announcement that Cambridge University is to offer a course in modern Irish. "Isn't that the most extraordinary sign of the vibrancy of Irish culture? And the fact that it's not just offered, of course, to an Irish audience. This is for a scholarly audience drawn from all over the world, drawn from all sorts of perspectives", she said" (Irish Times, May 5.)

Our President speaks the most charming newspeak.

This was too much for eight academics from Cambridge, who wrote in to point out to her ladyship that—

"The University of Cambridge does so against the background of a long-established tradition of teaching in Old and Middle Irish, without which this new course would not have been established.

"This year, as in previous years, students graduating from Cambridge will include those whose main focus of study has been the vernacular language and literature, as well as the history, of Ireland in the early medieval period. It is astounding and dismaying that students in UCD should not have the opportunity to follow a similar course of study."

Liam Breatnach is no doubt justified in claiming (IT, 19.06.207) that "all of the correspondents to the *Irish Times* regard (UCD's decision) as unjustifiable". But all of this unanimity has not managed to force any utterance from UCD. "No one responsible for the decision in UCD has yet offered any explanation of any kind for it," Breatnach adds. What did occasionally happen, however, was that people who were not responsible for the decision, but who belonged to surviving departments that included Irish or had some connection with Irish, wrote in to enthuse in market-friendly language about the wonderful things they were doing now. Professor Liam Mac Mathúna produced an article in the MacAleese dialect for the *Irish Times* (06.06.2007): "These are exciting times for Irish language studies". L. Breatnach (19.06) had no difficulty ripping him to shreds.

On June 12th there was a letter of a different kind by Caoimhín Breatnach, Senior Lecturer in the School of Irish, Celtic Studies, Irish Folklore and Linguistics. (Consumers require choice, and I can't see why UCD restricts it so much: why not the

School of Irish, Celtic Studies, Irish Folklore and Linguistics, Archaeology, Ancient Art and Applied Irish Traditional Medicine?) Breatnach said: "I have consistently voiced my opposition to the decision not to fill the chair of Old Irish and to discontinue Old Irish as a full degree subject." One can imagine that in present-day UCD this takes a certain amount of courage.

As a revealing contrast, there is the pitiful story told by Fintan O'Toole (IT Weekend Review, 26.05). O'Toole is one of the very few non-academic writers who felt that this argument was worth getting into—if a string of unanswered protests in much the same key, and pretty well confined to the same newspaper, can properly be called an argument. (The other whom I'm aware of is Ulick O'Connor in the *Irish Independent* of June 10th). After some interesting reflections on UCD's presentation of its history as opposed to the facts, he mentions its previous high reputation for Gaelic scholarship and remarks: "Hard as it is to believe, the new commercialized regime has abolished the chair of Old Irish. Sadly, it seems the world of academia in Dublin has become infected with the most common virus of our time—developer's disease.")

In an article published in April, O'Toole quoted UCD's decision to end Old Irish as evidence of a narrowing of minds in the universities. On May 26th he returned to the theme. After the publication of the previous article—

"I received a long letter from a very senior Irish academic. He is in many ways an exemplary figure: a hugely popular teacher but also a prodigious writer and researcher who regularly publishes work of the highest quality. But I can't tell you who he is. The saddest and most startling line in his letter is one in which he says that, although he would be quite happy to speak out for his own sake, he fears that doing so would have adverse consequences for his department.

"It is possible, of course, that such fears are unfounded. But my correspondent is a calm, amiable man, not given to obvious paranoia. His anxieties are ones that I have heard expressed by a number of academics in a number of institutions. And the very fact that such fears exist within our universities is itself a cause for deep concern. Universities are supposed to be centres of free inquiry and of intellectual curiosity. Whatever the rights and wrongs of the radical restructuring that is currently affecting most of them, there is something utterly askew when even very senior academics feel that they cannot engage in an open and honest discussion of what is happening around them.

"My correspondent's letter is about what he calls the "managerialist" culture, "which is running riot in our

university system, particularly in the two largest universities, Trinity College Dublin and University College Dublin". His view of this process is worth detailing, especially since it involves subjects other than his own, and cannot therefore be dismissed as the mere product of academic amour propre.

"Classical languages", he writes, "once a distinguished tradition in UCD, scarcely are known any more. Ireland used to produce distinguished classicists; nowadays we import them from Britain and elsewhere. Medieval studies in UCD, once a jewel in the intellectual crown, is being let die; again, we used to produce medievalists of world stature, now we import them. Similar and equally scandalous assaults on the teaching of modern languages have gone unnoticed by Irish journalism. Again, the attempts to force shotgun marriages on subjects that are dissimilar have been ignored. History, sociology and political science have been forced together in Trinity in a way that threatens the identity of all three. At one stage UCD proposed a shotgun marriage between classics and philosophy, betraying a ludicrous ignorance of the nature and content of both intellectual areas."

(This) is not, however, an argument against "intellectual synergy". On the contrary, he argues from his own experience the relevance of a broad, open-minded education, even to specialised areas of research such as his own. "...The old Irish system of broadly-based undergraduate degrees in the humanities", he argues, "has offered historically an extraordinarily rich variety of subject combinations to generations of undergraduate students. It has produced a large share of our writers, academics, public servants and political leaders, and Ireland would be much poorer intellectually and culturally without it. That richness is under threat . . ."

I dare say it is, if its champions have to cower in anonymity! There were some who did not. "*Old Irish language and literature are vital not only to the understanding of Irish origins but also for modern Ireland's perception of itself*", said George Huxley of the School of Classics, TCD (March 29). And he added two sentences that made me think back to UCC and its gowned professors:

"The self-congratulatory, oligarchic, over-paid managers at UCD have been behaving as though they were CEOs of a pharmaceutical corporation or other conglomerate. They should be reminded of the true purposes of universities and of the enduring merits of learning for its own sake without regard to soulless utility and impertinent quantification."

About the same time there was Mary O'Carroll from Letterkeny, very much to the point:

"It's a funny sort of university that refuses to provide teaching of the native

language and culture of its own people at undergraduate level.

"Could you imagine Oxford University refusing to teach Early and Middle English, or Heidelberg University refusing to teach Old and Middle High German, or Oslo University refusing to teach Old Norse? One could go on and on..."

"What is a university? Is UCD a university?"

To sum all of this up, once more we may quote Liam Breatnach's letter of June 19:

"All of the correspondents to the Irish Times regard (the decision) as unjustifiable, and as the authorities in UCD can present no justification for it one must conclude that they too find it unjustifiable."

Actually, I wouldn't conclude that. I would conclude rather that Brady and Co. do not feel that getting involved in a controversy in the *Irish Times* will help them sell their products. But if they judged differently and they weren't too busy, I suppose they might say: "Our job is to offer customers what they want or what they realistically might want, and not to try telling them why they should have things we know they don't want. Old Irish wasn't selling, and our judgement was that there was no one around who could make it shift."

What immediately strikes one about the Professors' letter is the impoverishment of its argument. When electing to go onstage in the *Irish Times* they presumably did intend to appeal to some sort of public—indeed, they say so themselves. Therefore they needed to be able to show that this matter was of public concern, and that UCD's decision was against the public interest. After all, even if Ireland and UCD are very rich, funding is still not infinite and money can still be used wisely or unwisely, and space for classrooms etc., time and energy are precious things. Why is it so important that UCD should commit its precious resources to Old Irish?

The Professors' letter begins well enough. The first paragraph is okay as an opening, the first sentence of the second paragraph might be passable. But after that, despite a certain urgency of tone, despite a certain gift for phrasing things sharply, the argument flags and fades. Many readers must have given up reading it somewhere in the middle. The absences are glaring.

What I think is most glaringly absent is something on the following lines: "Old Irish is a national treasure. In order to have access to it we must continue the efforts of previous generations, and as a precondition and foundation there must be intensive professional studies. Old Irish has already enormously enriched our nationhood and

national well-being, in ways that could not have been predicted and to an extent that we cannot now calculate. We must see to it that we are able to draw on this inexhaustible treasure also in the years to come."

(If anyone were to ask how Old Irish has enriched Irish nationhood—well, the question can be asked in many ways. There's Yeats's way:

"When Pearse summoned Cuchulainn to his side,
What stalked through the Post Office?"

What indeed! It might take a lot of describing. But it was something; it was not nothing.)

But the Professors seem to be debarred from this kind of argument. There might be a very faint hint here and there ("*Ireland's cultural heritage*"), and some of the signatories would be aware of these aspects in private. But a respected Professor cannot now say these things publicly for fear of shooting himself in the foot, because Ireland has gone global. So what suitably global argument can be presented?

There is one at least. We can argue that Old Irish is a major challenge to global pedantry. And since this is Ireland, and it was here that the materials for this branch of pedantry were produced in past ages, "*in a prosperous country facing the future with optimism and self-confidence*" the obligation to cultivate his pedantry at its point of geographic focus "*should be self-evident*".

On behalf of the global *Fachmannschaft*, the professors from Dublin and Oxford, Cork and Santa Cruz, Harvard and Hamburg have appealed to the Irish public. And presumably they're surprised that, for all the unanimity of those responding (in a case like this, a sure sign that nothing is happening) they have not even been able to force Hugh Brady to come out for a moment from the back of his shop.

In a book of mine published about 13 years ago, *The Christian Druids*, I presented what I believe to be the key to early Irish culture. (I discovered it independently, but I was not the first modern writer to do so.) Christianity in Ireland was uniquely assimilated and naturalized by a pre-existing order of philosopher-poets. The successors of these men, the poets who dominated Gaelic thought for as long as any of that ancient high culture still continuously existed, are those whom I call the Christian druids.

Along with this contention, I presented an argument about the poetry, which, viewed purely from an academic angle, might have seemed to multiply the difficulties of making contact with these

ancient minds. But I know that for many people that book of mine brought 'Old Irish' to life. Some of them were poets, painters and musicians; others were just curious-minded people, of whom there are a fair sprinkling in Ireland still.

I devoted one chapter of my book to the Amra Senáin, a truly magnificent blend of praise to the river (Shannon), praise to the moon (Sen-án, 'Old Bright One') and praise to the saint (Senan of Scatterry). Some years previously the poem had been edited and translated by one Professor Liam Breatnach. That is to say, the poem had been massacred by Professor Breatnach. He squeezed every drop of historical and cultural sap from it and left it dessicated in his litter of apparatus. In twenty five packed pages he devoted thirteen lines to the poem's content! He was resolutely deaf to that wonderful poem, and reading his translation is a miserable experience.

We approach Irish materials with a certain poetic spirit, or we kill them stone

dead. (Father Dinneen, now—he didn't kill his materials! Occasionally, perhaps, he committed the great crime of letting imagination fly where knowledge couldn't plod. But he didn't kill the poems.)

There's a proper place for specialist pedants even in fields of living knowledge, and even in the knowledge of Irish, but that place is not at the forefront, where they are now. The disease of pedantry is certainly worst among those who are dealing with the older Irish materials, but it's general in 'Irish Studies' and spreading. Brady could be writing the Mene, Thecel, Upharsin for the whole lot of them. Dead (i.e. murdered) poetry won't have that many takers in the long run.

To prove that it doesn't have to be so, even at the summit of academia, that it hasn't always been so, I need only mention one name: James Carney. In a future article I intend to say something about this admirable poet-academic, and the sad state of Celtic Studies after his passing.

John Minahane

Back In The Box

Back in the Box was a very apt phrase—which was used in the June 2007 issue of the *Irish Political Review*—to describe Northern Ireland's new makeover on community politics. Sinn Fein's poor showing in the Republic has sent waves of cynicism through the Northern Catholic community. On a short visit to Belfast recently I had a number of discussions with sections of Catholic community living in Republican areas. Many of them now claim that a new Stormont has been foisted on them. Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness are seen to have been placed in a glass cage by the Brit and Ahern Governments as an exhibition of cod-democracy.

Northern Catholics were never much interested in what happened south of the Border. For many years it seemed to be mostly about the battle of small farmers against the state. Rural matters are of no interest to the townies of Catholic West Belfast. Fianna Fail and Fine Gael had very little to say about the Catholic Northerner. They were more likely to kiss Protestant arse as they now kiss English arse.

Two-faced and brutal against their perceived enemies many even denied the Orange in the Irish tricolour, calling it green, white and gold. In all honesty I couldn't see a Gerry Adams or a Martin McGuinness thinking they had reached the promised land when going south of the Border.

The Provo war was mainly a Northern Catholic uprising against Protestant rule by proxy on behalf of England. The British Army came to the rescue of their surrogates and the uprising became a protracted war.

Since the lack of progress in the South, Northern Sinn Fein is now being seen by some as a war party in the manner of Hezbollah. It wins solid votes in once battle-torn areas and among supporters in the largely Republican County Donegal Border area. But unlike Hezbollah they had few friends in the immediate surrounding countries and had to rely on their own ingenuity and resourcefulness. Even today many Catholics say they prefer the honest Orangeman to the antics of some Southerners in making their careers in England. Southern-based IRA dissidents are unlikely to make any progress among Northern Catholics. They are already facing the same disaster as the Southern-based IRA in the 1956-1962 campaign. Not many Northern Catholics were willing to die for an united Ireland but when pushed they died for their own community.

This magazine has repeated over and over again—and it is worth repeating over and over again—that the territory at present known as Northern Ireland has no political input into either the British nation nor into the nation known as the Republic of Ireland. Thus we have community politics in the community building known as Stormont where discussion is on a razor's edge in case it offends the opposite community.

Scotland and Wales, as part of the UK, have the Labour Party, Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats that could could act as a buffer against community politics in Northern Ireland. And neither is an input into Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and the Irish Labour Party available in the North.

Many of the writers on this magazine has been saying this for decades now.

People like Kate Hoey, the Ulster Unionist, sitting as a Member of Parliament in the London Vauxhall seat for New Labour, has denied this truism, thus helping to deprive the Protestant community she came from of some measure of democracy.

Westminster, the master forger, has been quite blatant about these missing parties and their intention of sweeping their partial province under the carpet from worldwide view.

Members of the Protestant community are no less discontented. Many of them feel they have been defeated and that this new Stormont is a farce, that it is only making money for the politicians and turning toads into princes.

The rise in house prices is battering both communities, where wages has scarcely shifted above two or three percent for five years. There appears to be an economic boom in the making but most working class people know that it won't effect them very much. There is worry about a new rate system and the dishing out of direct water bills. It is said that Broadmoor in England will transfer many of its criminally-insane patients to the Purdysburn Psychiatric Hospital in Carryduff, County Down. They feel they have become a dumping ground. On top of this MI5 are apparently building new headquarters at Palace Barracks in Holywood, County Down.

Palace Barracks is next to a large housing estate and locals there don't welcome this move. They also say that MI5 is getting as far away as possible from the Muslim communities in England and bringing potential danger to them.

The infrastructure needs rebuilt—which includes the overflowing sewer system in Belfast which caused flooding in recent heavy rain. Westminster is claiming that £5 billion or more will be poured into this never-never land over the next few years. This has caused a stampede of carpet-baggers rushing into Belfast. The plane I went over on was three-quarter full of the suits, their laptops, and light hand-luggage.

Hilton recently built a high-rise hotel in Belfast. There is now the choice of at least ten expensive hotels in the city. Once upon a time only two top hotels existed—the small Grand Central Hotel and the equally small Royal Avenue Hotel. The tourist trade is expected to develop with

war-zone tours as a big attraction. But does peace reign?

Sickening sectarian attacks, mostly against individual Catholics, have multiplied. There is no evidence that this is coming from Protestant paramilitaries but is thought to be initiated by small numbers of individuals.

A horrendous attack on a Catholic man recently didn't attract that much media attention and wasn't mentioned at all in the British media in England.

The Catholic is attacked in the Ballymena area by three men. He is hit with an axe and then shot. Now on the ground feigning death he hears his attackers discuss what they will do with the body. It is decided that it should be sawn up and disposed off in bin bags. Two of the assailants go off to find a saw and bin bags while the third one guards the *body*.

While they're away the *body* struggles to its feet and overpowers his third assailant and dashes off and into hospital intensive care.

So-called integrated schools of both Catholics and Protestants are also not working. The main aim seems to be to manufacture little Catholic Stormontees. After which, when lessons are over, each community goes back to their segregated areas to learn the more bitter lesson of community politics. Getting to know one another might be useful in creating social skills but that is merely skin-deep in the make-believe world of Northern politics.

One such integrated school has had a wall built to protect it from missiles coming over from a Protestant area. That could turn out to be an honest reaction to attempted but puny social engineering.

On a personal level I felt my survival radar turning on after a day in Belfast. I began to want to know who and what were those nearest people to me in a street crowd, a bus, a train, a shopping centre. Eyes narrow as most people seem to scan faces momentarily. I began to guess again, in a city I had left over fifty years ago, who were Protestants and who were Catholics.

In the small town of Carrickfergus they have built a couple of small shopping malls. Walking around there examining clothes on the racks I noticed I was being followed by a security guard who was feeling the clothes for incendiary devices. Carrickfergus is small enough for most people to know one another and a stranger there gets that furrowed brow look. King William the Third (a Dutch stranger) landed there at Carrickfergus Castle (The Rock of Fergus) in 1688 to begin his re-conquest of Ireland and to destroy whatever religious freedom existed. The local Orange Hall remembers all of this with its massive show of Union Jacks and bunting. The town is on the tourist trail and a number of new

restaurants have been built for this trade (with atrocious food). It boldly proclaims itself as a Protestant town and its history speaks of torture, hanging and mutilation.

"*See the iron ring in the old fort (now a farm building) from which people were hanged.*" says a tourist brochure, without mentioning who the victims were. Dutch and German tourists seem to be welcome but my wife, a Filipina, got the furrowed brow look.

Back in Belfast and wherever you get a bunch of Catholics the subject soon turns to munitions. Knowing little about this I was soon elbowed out of the conversation. The few in the discussion were not and had never been part of any belligerent organisation but were probably bonding or dog-marking their territory. For a Northern Catholic not to know their munitions is to be illiterate.

Though it is Stormont again, and in the box, the population generally are too war-weary to care that much at present. Some IRA dissidents may burn down the odd store but they are unlikely to get any mass support this side of twenty years.

Sinn Fein seems content at the moment to record and publicise worldwide the many sectarian attacks on the Catholic population without effectively being able to, or unwilling, do anything about it. This kind of politicising of tragedy has to compete with the horrors of Imperialism in Iraq and Afghanistan. And I know who is getting the most cover. I am reminded of Government ministerial road rules in England for traffic black spots. Three people have to die before a pedestrian crossing is put there, four deaths for a set of traffic lights. How many Catholics have died and are dying for community politics at Stormont?

Wilson John Haire

Collusion And A 'Truth Commission' in Northern Ireland

The following letter by Niall Meehan, submitted on 23rd June 2007, failed to find publication in the *Irish Times*

Peter Hain writes, "nearly 30,000 republicans and loyalists were imprisoned" during the recent 'Troubles'. (June 22nd) The Northern Secretary proclaims "the sheer scale of the conflict", as part of an argument that boils down to 'let us not dwell so much on the past, as it is too huge to contemplate'. He unwittingly undermines past British characterisations of the violence: that it was the work of a small minority of criminal psychopaths and/or religious fanatics. Hain's new argument of convenience now wants to turn away

from official concentration on previous wrongs. It is clear to see why. Most of the crimes now being exposed are official, or state, crimes. These are, in the main, the crimes that remain unresolved, that were never investigated in the first place, and that in themselves explain a large proportion of, in particular, loyalist violence.

Justice Henry Barron's exposures of past British complicity in mass murder, and of British refusal to aid enquiry into that exposure; the Bloody Sunday Enquiry; the recent Ombudsman's exposure of the activities of RUC Special Branch and British intelligence in both tolerating and directing loyalist violence, the Stevens Enquiry exposure of the protection of the killer of Pat Finucane; all point to one thing. Britain was part of the conflict, of the problem. Britain provoked sectarian conflict as means of managing the problem, of deflecting criticism, and of undermining its primary enemy, the IRA. As a result of the measures instituted as part of the resolution of the conflict, it is now a serious question: how should the deaths of Miami Showband members be apportioned? Their killers included members of the British Army and killers under the control of the British Army.

Of the 30,000 Hain says populated the prisons, how many were in there for state killing? Was it 30? Or was it less than 0.1%? And of those who did time behind bars, how many were above the rank of, say, corporal? How many were readmitted to the British Army?

It is ridiculous to see 'local' politicians staring each other out in TV studios discussing their 'hurt', fingerpointing, and indulging in the blame game, without the maestros of misery in the uniform of authority also being present to share in the guilt.

If Peter Hain wants to develop the logic of his argument, he must extract the conflict from out of the realm of policing and place it in the realm of history. To do this he must acknowledge political responsibility for the conflict and historical responsibility for the problem. If he wants to set up a "small, independent consultative group" to enquire into how this might be achieved, I am sure he has the ingenuity and the experience required to have it so arranged.

Liberty

"Experience should teach us to be most on our guard to protect liberty when the Government's purposes are beneficent. Men born to freedom are naturally alert to repel invasion of their liberty by evil-minded rulers. The greatest dangers to liberty lurk in insidious encroachment by men of zeal, well-meaning but without understanding."

—Louis D. Brandeis (1856-1941) US Supreme Court Justice 1928 Source: Justice Louis D. Brandeis, dissenting, *Olmstead v. United States*, 277 US 479 (1928)

RTE Gives Madame A Dig-out

Geraldine Kennedy, Editor of the *Irish Times*, was interviewed on 'Conversations with Eamon Dunphy' on Saturday June 23rd on RTE radio 1. The programme follows the format of BBC Radio 4's 'Desert Island Discs', where a well known personality talks about their life and chooses a few pieces of music. It really belongs under the category of light entertainment and eschews probing or aggressive questioning. On this basis RTE is to be criticised for inviting Kennedy as a subject for the programme at a time when she is involved in controversy and facing into a court case.

What the interview was really about was RTE showing solidarity with the *Irish Times* when its role was in danger of coming under public scrutiny. Dunphy's interview was effectively a political intervention aimed at raising Geraldine Kennedy's profile in a sympathetic way.

Despite the political bias surrounding the interview, some of the statements made by Kennedy provide useful insights into what has been going on at the *Irish Times* under her Editorship. It also showed how the world of the Irish media is really a small club in which the members back each other up before meeting their avowed public obligations.

Dunphy introduced her as "the most distinguished journalist of her gender", the Editor of "not just any old newspaper". Gender was one of the first topics touched on. Ms Kennedy described her upbringing in a village near Carrick-on-Suir in Tipperary. She is the eldest of four daughters, and her father, a beef farmer, was disappointed in not having a son. She clashed with her father as he held the conventional view of the role that girls and women should play in society. Had she been male her father would have wanted her to attend university, but being female he wanted her to join the right social circles and get 'married off'. She felt she had succeeded in educating her father about the changed role of women. Irish society was still in a 'transition phase' regarding gender roles, she stated.

She was of course pressing all the right buttons for the womens lobby in all of this but her criticism of her father sounded patronising and adolescent from someone who has attained an eminent position in society.

She decided to do a course in journalism for no particular reason and found she liked it. She started as a journalist with the

Munster Express and then moved to the *Cork Examiner* before being recruited to the *Irish Times* by Donal Foley. Foley was famous at the *Times* for recruiting women journalists who were known as the 'Foley babes'. These included Mary Maher, Mary Cummins and Renagh Holohan. Ms Kennedy never mentioned Nell McCafferty until Dunphy did. In any case she was the last of the 'Foley babes'.

She worked as a news reporter with the *Irish Times* for seven years. Acquiring the ambition to become a political correspondent, she calculated that there were too many others in front of her at the *Times*, so she left to join the *Sunday Tribune*. As political correspondent there she broke important stories about the factional rivalry in Fianna Fail. Once, on returning to her car after a meal at the Trocadero restaurant, she found a broken bottle with a message saying 'We are watching you'. She received anonymous phone calls late at night and cars were driven at speed near to her house. She was told that her security could not be guaranteed at the Fianna Fail Ard Fheis.

Her description of her response to this intimidation was somewhat 'un-Irish Times like'. She spoke to the effect that the founding fathers of the state would have seen giving way to this intimidation as a betrayal. She was also careful to opine that Charles Haughey was not behind or aware of these tactics.

At this point, to great laughter from Dunphy, she announced her first choice of music: a piece by Michael Nyman called 'Chasing sheep is best left to shepherds', which she dedicated to politicians and her journalistic colleagues. The choice was obviously a metaphor for journalists keeping politicians on the straight and narrow. It might equally be applied to newspaper Editors not taking on the role of political Opposition; but it would have been asking too much for Dunphy to have probed the point.

The next topic was the phone tapping controversy and her successful court action about it. (At this stage the *Sunday Tribune* had run into financial trouble and she had moved to the *Sunday Press*.) When asked was she shocked to learn that Charles Haughey had authorised the tap, she was quick to say, "Not at all". She was careful to describe the court case as the event that propelled her into politics. Rather than writing the story she had become the story. Her successful court action won recognition for private phone conversations

coming under the Constitutional right to privacy. So she agreed to stand for the Progressive Democrats in the General Election of 1987 in Dun Laoghaire.

Interestingly, having thought that she knew everything about politics, she discovered she knew nothing. She found that politicians are so busy coping with a constant state of crisis in one form or another, they have no time for long term strategic planning. After two and a half years she lost her seat.

It was during her first election campaign that she met her husband, David Hegarty, a barrister. Unfortunately Eamon Dunphy never asked if he had any connection with the Mahon Tribunal.

She expressed gratitude to Conor Brady, her predecessor as *Irish Times* Editor, for giving her a job at the paper after she lost her seat. Many of her colleagues considered she had given up her standing as an objective journalist by entering politics. So she had to spend three years in a 'decontamination chamber' as public affairs correspondent before winning the right to write about politics again.

However it was she who wrote the story that brought down the Fianna Fail/Labour Government of Albert Reynolds. Strangely she stated that all was forgiven after that story. I cannot see the logic of that assertion. She needed decontamination from having been a PD TD, holding an anti-Fianna Fail position in politics. When she wrote the story about the Duggan case which brought down a Fianna Fail Government, she was to be forgiven? Surely in writing that story she was re-affirming her political bias?

Dunphy put it to her that her treatment of the Duggan case had since been shown to be false. She replied that the real issue was the lack of trust between Reynolds and Dick Spring, that the minutiae of the case were irrelevant. To me that came across as poor form of professional responsibility. The facts she provided in the story were wrong and the story had important consequences, but she admitted to no fault. So much for journalistic ethics!

Eventually, she realised she might have a chance of getting the Editor's job, so she widened her management experience. When Dunphy asked what her vision for the paper was when she went for the job she said: Douglas Gageby had enhanced the paper's standing by tackling the Northern Ireland issue; Conor Brady kept up the reporting of Northern Ireland and also embraced social reform (contraception, divorce etc); but by her time the social reform agenda was pretty much fulfilled; her vision was countering the

mean-spirited response of Irish society to the new wealth emanating from the Celtic Tiger.

Interestingly she stated that at the interview she had said she hoped it would not be held against her that she was a woman. To which Conor Brady replied: if you think that would be hard, try being the first Catholic Editor! More interestingly she prefaced this remark with the hope she wasn't breaking any major confidentiality clause.

Towards the end of the interview she made some revealing comments. Asked whether she thought the *Irish Times* was the paper of official Ireland, the paper of the ruling class, she said it was the paper of modern Ireland but it was also an anti-establishment paper. "*It has a strange profile and we often do research on it*", she said. Being owned by a Trust was an advantage, she thought.

Defending her decision to publish Colm Keena's story about the Taoiseach's finances she said she had a clear conscience. She had asked for the documents to be destroyed when the Mahon Tribunal came after them because she was mindful of the Tisdal case in Britain where the Editor of the *Guardian*, Peter Preston, had handed over a document and the source of the story had been traced by testing the document. The impending court case would be extremely difficult to win but was an important case for journalism. She said the Constitution recognises freedom of expression as a right. Journalists exercise that right on behalf of the people.

Many of the statements she made required serious probing. Eamon Dunphy provided none. If anything he was sycophantic to his former colleague (they had worked together on the *Sunday Tribune*). The entire interview sounded as though Dunphy was angling for a future job with the Times.

Somebody in authority in RTE decided that Geraldine Kennedy should be given a boost at this time, when having thrown the full force of her paper into preventing Fianna Fail from winning the election, Bertie had won. It was time for the broadcast arm of the journalistic profession in Ireland to come to the rescue of the 'paper of record'.

By broadcasting this interview Eamon Dunphy, his producer and the powers that be at RTE have shown their prejudice. They pose as defenders of free speech and mature democracy but their priority is to defend fellow members of a cosy media club. By their actions they make Irish society a much smaller place than it deserves to be.

David Alvey

Post Script: Earlier in the week that the interview was broadcast I issued a press statement on behalf of the Irish Political Review Group (reproduced below), which criticised the role played by the *Irish Times* in the General Election campaign and described a long memorandum we were submitting to the Minister for Justice on the matter. No paper or media outlet gave any coverage to the statement. A short toned down letter was finally published in the Blog section to the Village magazine website (see below). Apart from that the statement was blacked by the media. That is the context in which the Irish media's Constitutional function as champions of free expression should be viewed.

LETTER TO VILLAGE

The Irish Times and the General Election

Now that the new Government is installed in office, the roles played by the Irish Times and the Mahon Tribunal in the Election should not be forgotten. It may be tempting for those directly concerned to draw a veil over the entire saga, but actions that have been described as a threat to the electoral process should not be allowed to fade so easily from public memory.

Our Group has supplied a Background Memorandum to the new Minister for Justice, Brian Lenihan, urging that the controversy should be examined by a competent official body. At the least, we are looking for assurance from the Minister that future Elections will not be undermined by sensational leaks from Tribunals or similar bodies.

If we must have newspapers acting as arbiters of political morality and moulders of public opinion during Election campaigns, we should be entitled to full information about their long term agendas. Our democratic freedoms, expressed in Bunreacht na hEireann, were hard won; they should be jealously protected.

David Alvey

Wednesday, 20 June 2007

PRESS STATEMENT from The Irish Political Review Group

The Irish Times must be held to account

Now that the new Government is installed in office, the role played by the Irish Times in the Election should not be forgotten. The threat to the electoral process posed by its witch-hunt against the Taoiseach needs to be examined by a competent official body. It also needs to be seen in the context of the paper's long-term agenda for this Republic.

There is evidence that the Managing Director of the Irish Times, Major Thomas McDowell, sought direction on policy from Downing Street and the British Embassy in Dublin in 1969. The paper has never provided an explanation of that evidence.

The paper also requires its Directors and Editor to sign an extraordinary Oath of Secrecy every year. Aspects of its financial history, particularly a huge bank loan granted in 1974, also raise questions that have never been satisfactorily answered. In short, Irish affairs of state are being influenced by a highly political newspaper whose owner/Managing Director invited the British Government to become involved in its control in 1969, whose change of control structure was bankrolled in 1974 in questionable circumstances and whose current management is an oath bound Directorate.

Beginning in September last year at the start of the unofficial Election campaign, the paper initiated a campaign to discredit the Taoiseach based on leaked documentation from the Mahon Tribunal. In response the Tribunal commenced a court action including contempt proceedings against the Irish Times. Undaunted, the paper prosecuted its campaign all the more vehemently, castigating the Opposition for failing to take full advantage of the Taoiseach's difficulties and putting intense pressure on Mr Ahern to resign. These manoeuvres failed but when an opinion poll taken at the height of the controversy showed increased support for Fianna Fail, an Irish Times editorial put the blame on defects in Irish political culture.

From that time until polling day on May 24th the Irish Times harnessed the full weight of its influence, especially over other media organisations and other political parties, for the purpose of preventing Fianna Fail from winning the Election. Following the beginning of the official Election campaign it re-instigated the earlier attack against the Taoiseach based on fresh leaks from the Mahon Tribunal. That body adjourned its deliberations until after the Election in apparent deference to the electoral process, yet the effect of the renewed Irish Times campaign was to multiply the prejudicial effect of sensational publicity from the Tribunal by a factor of ten. By this time the tactics being employed by the paper were attracting public attention. Among those making detailed criticisms were John O'Donoghue, the then Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism, Liam Young, who had a letter published in the paper, and ourselves, the Irish Political Review Group. The Taoiseach also made a considered criticism without explicitly naming the Irish Times.

As a final kick the paper sought to portray the television debate between the leaders as a draw and in some articles as a

victory for Enda Kenny, even though objective observers were united in describing it as a clear victory for Bertie Ahern. When the Election was over, Fintan O'Toole, the paper's Deputy Editor, wrote that the debate had been decisive and that the Taoiseach had won the day by having the courage and skill to attack the Opposition's strong point, health. It was entirely in line with its coverage of the Election that the Irish Times could only publish that truthful assessment *after* the Election.

Incredibly, the danger that pressure from the Irish Times or other sections of the media could interfere with the right of the electorate to choose a Government did not disappear following the Election and the formal declaration of results. Events at the Mahon Tribunal on Monday May 28th and following days were used to ignite yet again the campaign against the Taoiseach. An article entitled, 'Mahon casts cloud as parties study options' (May 30th) by the Political Editor of the Irish Times, Stephen Collins, contained the following sentence: 'One of the issues being considered by all Fianna Fáil's potential partners is the discrepancy between Mr Ahern's account of a lodgement made to an AIB account in Dublin's O'Connell Street in December 1994 and the Mahon Tribunal's investigation of that lodgement, which casts serious doubt on Mr Ahern's account.' So once again under the guise of describing events, pressure was being applied against the Taoiseach but this time through the medium of political parties and independents some of whom were likely to be more susceptible than the electorate to moral pronouncements from the Irish Times. But it was all to no avail. On June 14th, despite the best efforts of Ireland's 'paper of national record', the wishes of the electorate were finally executed and the Dail elected Bertie Ahern as Taoiseach for a third term.

By way of response to the electorate's decisive rejection of its witch-hunt, it is a matter for the Editor, Geraldine Kennedy, and for the body that controls the Irish Times, the Irish Times Trust, whether or not she should resign. However, personnel changes among the paper's Editorial staff will not be enough. Our electoral process needs to be protected from a recurrence of the media interventions and agendas witnessed in this Election campaign.

Regardless of what happens at the paper, we hereby call on the new Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Brian Lenihan, to instigate an inquiry into the Irish Times. Our case is detailed in a Background Memorandum, which can be downloaded from www.atholbooks.org/dublin/memo.php

D. Alvey, J. Martin, M. Lawless
on behalf of IPR Group

Iraq And Palestine

The following letters from David Morrison have recently appeared in the *Guardian* July 3:

Your leader (July 2) is strangely hesitant in acknowledging that there is a link between Iraq and the al-Qaida threat to Britain. MI5 shows no such hesitation—its website says: "In recent years, Iraq has become a dominant issue for a range of extremist groups and individuals in the UK and Europe." Even more bluntly, a Joint Intelligence Committee assessment from March 2005 states: "Iraq is likely to be an important motivating factor for some time to come in the radicalisation of British Muslims and for those extremists who view attacks against the UK as legitimate."

July 20:

Jonathan Freedland writes that Hamas has been "shoved to one side" in Palestine. In reality, what has happened in Palestine is another "regime change" in the Middle East engineered by Washington and London. Prime minister Ismail Haniyeh, the leader of a party which won 74 out of the 132 seats in the Palestinian Legislative Council in January 2006, has been replaced by Salam Fayyad, the leader of a party with two out of the 132 seats, without the approval of the Palestinian legislative council, as required by Article 79(4) of the Palestinian Basic Law, which says: "The prime minister and any of the ministers shall not assume the duties of their positions until they obtain the confidence of the legislative council." You can see what George Bush means by bringing democracy to the Middle East.

Editorial Note:

The July issue of *Labour & Trade Union Review* carries a forensic examination by David Morrison of the plot initiated by the Bush Government, immediately the Palestinian democracy put Hamas in power, to subvert that decision and overthrow the Government. Bush prevented Fatah in joining in the Unity Government offered by Hamas immediately after the election. He also encouraged Mahmoud Abbas to contravene the Palestinian Constitution in establishing an Emergency Government in defiance of Parliament.

Letter To Editor

Thoughts of Tony Blair, Envoi

The following is an extract from remarks by Blair on Iraq at the House of Commons Liaison Committee on 18 June 2006:

"You can have this argument about de-Ba'athification, the disbandment of the Army, and I am happy to go through that with you but, in reality, even if you had taken different decisions on those things, that is not what has created the problem. What has created the problem is that the people we are fighting have decided to give us a problem. What they have decided is that if they can hang on long enough in Iraq or Afghanistan or anywhere else, then we will lose the will, and that is their argument, that is what they are doing" (see <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmliaisn/uc300-ii/uc30002.htm>).

What sort of a mind a has the man got? It amounts to saying that the problem in Iraq is the insurgency.

David Morrison

<http://www.david-morrison.org.uk>

Blair's Retirement Speech

Tony Blair's Sedgefield speech, in which he said—"The British are special. The world knows it. In our innermost thoughts, we know it. This is the greatest nation on earth"—can be read in full in the August issue of *Labour & Trade Union Review*. Contact the magazine at—

www.lturview.com

Editorial Note

Due to pressure of space, a number of articles have been held over. These include Manus O'Riordan's *Hidden History Of Ireland's Nazis' Programme* and Mark Langhammer's speech to the Tom Johnson Summer School.

On Nationalist Ideology

I am not sure that Desmond Fennell is right when he says that two objectives summarised nationalism: the replacement of English by Irish as the language of Ireland and a United Ireland.

Certainly those two objectives were part of the official ideology of the State, but were they the driving force behind its foundation? All ideologies contain beliefs that are of fundamental importance and others which, although sincerely held for a time, can be discarded.

How can one know which are the fundamental beliefs and which are not? In the case of an ideology, which led to the formation of a state, there are two ways of knowing. The first is to examine the seminal event in the foundation of the state. The second is to examine what the state did, as distinct from said, in the course of consolidating itself.

The seminal event, which led to the foundation of the state was the 1916 Rising. It was a last ditch attempt by a small minority to preserve the tradition of rebellion against Britain. The majority of nationalists supported John Redmond, who had been recruiting Irish people into the British army in exchange for a very limited form of local government. The Land Question had largely been solved following the 1903 Land Act and it looked as if Ireland was about to settle down within the United Kingdom.

But the experience of the First World War had a revolutionary effect on Irish politics. Redmondism was ultimately rejected and the ideas of the fringe came to occupy the centre ground. The central idea of the 1916 Rising was the principle that Irish people would no longer fight Britain's wars. Indeed the 1916 leaders went further than that. They placed themselves in opposition to Britain. Although "*we serve neither King nor Kaiser*" is the most well known slogan, the two leading political thinkers—James Connolly and Roger Casement—were not neutral. They supported Germany against Britain. When Britain saw the phrase "*our gallant allies in Europe*" in the Proclamation it knew that the Rising was an attack at the heart of the Empire. This phrase more than any other led to the executions. It has been said recently in an academic book that "*the origins of the modern Irish State lie in its foreign policy*" (*Irish Foreign Policy 1919-1966: From Independence to Internationalism*, edited by M. Kennedy and J.M. Skelly). This is true, even if the said academics made no attempt to examine what that foreign policy was.

After the Treaty the emerging state, whether under Pro-Treaty or Anti-Treaty Governments, did not make a serious attempt to invade Northern Ireland. Joe Keenan has pointed out in this magazine that Fianna Fail under de Valera resisted calls by northern nationalists for Fianna Fail to organise along United Ireland lines. It also resisted pressure to give some northern representation in the Dail.

During the second World War Churchill offered de Valera a United Ireland in exchange for abandoning neutrality. De Valera's son said that his father thought Churchill was drunk when he made the offer. But de Valera made no attempt to explore this opportunity. In my opinion, even if the offer were serious, de Valera would still have rejected it. The ability to pursue an independent foreign policy took precedence over a United Ireland.

I have no doubt that de Valera's approach was realistic. There has always been a pro-British element within the 26 Counties and this is not confined to the Anglo-Irish. There was a danger that the country would revert to a Redmondite position. In such circumstances it was prudent for Fianna Fail to concentrate on consolidating the 26 County state.

Another consideration was that Britain never accepted that the 26 Counties would remain outside the United Kingdom. It has used Northern Ireland as a lever to influence politics in the South. It is no accident that the newspaper of the Anglo-Irish, *The Irish Times*, favoured a United Ireland as a means of preserving the imperial connection.

The policy of ever closer relations with our "*gallant allies*" in continental Europe has been a constant theme of Irish Governments. Recently, the British Ambassador was given an opportunity to reflect on Anglo-Irish relations in the pages of *The Irish Times*. He said that they had never been better. The only point of substantial disagreement was the Irish Government's views on the Common Agricultural Policy. Roger Casement felt that our connection with Britain had prevented closer relations with Continental Europe. I remember once reading Todd Andrews's autobiography in which he enthused about air travel. He thought it was great because one could fly to the continent without stopping in Britain. (The fact that it was not necessary to stop in Britain by boat doesn't invalidate the depth of his emotion).

In the matter of the Irish language it could be said that the state's policy on the language has been a failure, but only if the replacement of the English language in Ireland by Irish is considered the criterion for success.

A language is very difficult to learn and

the replacement of such a pervasive language as English in this country would have been an extraordinary achievement. Compulsory Irish in schools, which I support, has meant that every Irish school child has a basic understanding of the language. It's over 25 years since I studied Irish and at this stage I can hardly put two words together. But I can understand the *Nuacht* and if I applied myself to learning it as an adult I could become quite proficient, something which would be impossible if I had not the basic knowledge obtained from school. Eamon O Cuiv seems to be encouraging the development of the language by requiring that Irish speakers should be facilitated in their interaction with State services.

That having been said, fluency in Irish has never been a requirement of holding high public office (the partial exceptions to this are the Minister for the Gaeltacht and probably the Minister for Education as Gemma Hussey discovered). So I can only conclude that a Gaelic Ireland was not a core value of Irish nationalism.

All of this is not just of theoretical significance, but is of profound practical importance in understanding political developments of the last 40 years and therefore finding a political orientation in the current situation.

The Irish political class was busy tending to its affairs when Northern Ireland exploded in 1969. The Irish Government in 1969 proved incapable of dealing with it. The official ideology of advocating a United Ireland came into conflict with the practical task of protecting the Catholic population from loyalist mobs and elements of the State. This contradiction had not resolved itself when the Government attempted to bring the crisis to the attention of the United Nations. Because it was unclear in its own mind, the Irish Government was vulnerable to manipulation from Britain.

When Britain discovered the Irish Government's attempt to send arms to the Catholic population it prompted the leader of the opposition Liam Cosgrave to raise the matter in the Dail. The Government panicked and when it could no longer deny involvement it brought a legal case against members of the Cabinet, who were directly involved. By any standards this represented a moral collapse on the part of the Government. It meant that the Irish State had no influence over the subsequent struggle of nationalists in Northern Ireland. The moral collapse also had a profound effect in the South and was one of the factors enabling historical revisionism to flourish in our universities.

The most serious evidence of a crisis in Irish nationalism is not the abandonment

The Two Tiers of the Irish Nationalist Mind

In his review of my *About Behaving Normally in Abnormal Circumstances* (IPR, July) Jack Lane made a couple of acute criticisms of the Irish section of the book. Reflecting on his objections, I realise that I could have expressed myself more clearly on the matters in question.

Jack's principal criticism has to do with my depiction of how the Irish, from the Revolution up to the 1950s, saw themselves through the collective self-image projected by Irish nationalism. I recount how, starting my writing career in the later 1950s, I found myself in one fundamental respect in disagreement with this national self-image.

The English colonisers, I say, had long propagated an image of the Irish as, in intellectual and practical respects, less endowed than normal human beings. In other words, in those respects subhuman. And the impoverished Irish, in the wreckage of their broken nation, came to accept this self-view. Irish nationalism, then, in reacting defensively against that downgrading, did not directly contradict it. Instead, in order to fortify the nation with self-confidence, it convincingly depicted the Irish to themselves as by nature morally and spiritually superior to the human norm; in these respects, therefore, as *superhuman*.

As a consequence of the notion of Irish inferiority in intellectual and practical respects not being challenged by Irish nationalism, it slipped uncontested into the national self-image which that nationalism projected, at least in its popular, most widely diffused version. That self-image, and the nationalist self-view it gave rise to, was therefore in fact two-tiered. Nationalists, while *consciously* believing they were morally and spiritually superior to the human norm, continued *subconsciously* to feel inferior to it in intellectual and practical matters. (My disagreement in the 1950s with this two-level self-view was that I saw the Irish as human beings like others, and their self-

view, therefore, as doubly unreal.)

Very reasonably, Jack Lane objects: How could people who dwell in a doubly illusory view of themselves, and who subconsciously accept that in practical matters they are by nature inferior, win a war of independence and establish an effective state? After reflecting on the matter, I make two responses.

I should have spelt out more fully what I meant. Modifying Jack's claim somewhat, I accept that the Irish fought an effective war of independence which, though it didn't achieve national independence, won a substantial basis for achieving that. And they then did in fact take over a functioning modern state and managed it effectively in Irish interests. My point is, first, that during the post-Treaty decades when they were managing that state, and up to the 1950s, many of them publicly proclaimed, and many more believed, that the Irish were by nature morally and spiritually superior to the nations around them. An illusion certainly, but an innocent one which did no harm to the nation. And it doubtless inspired to saintly virtue, and courageous action, thousands of those men and women who took part in the greatest organised overseas venture of Irish history, the Second Missionary Movement.

My point is secondly—and this was seriously damaging to the nation—that, *with very few exceptions*, those same Irish nationalists who believed in that illusory superiority were subconsciously victims of the equally false notion that they were in intellectual and practical respects sub-standard human beings: less endowed than the English in particular, and than foreigners in general.

This illusion was reflected in the Irish takeover of the English state in Ireland. Far from transforming it into an instrument shaped to reflect and serve the Irish nation rather than to disfigure it and hold it down, the nationalist Irish occupied it uncritically. Reverently, they maintained it intact down to the most minute civil-service ritual and territorial administrative unit. They modelled their Dáil procedure on the House of Commons. They operated the legal system and laws the English had made for Ireland since the 1200s. Moreover, apart from making Irish a compulsory school subject, they continued the pre-Treaty educational system in a similarly uncritical manner. In other words, in all these fundamental respects, our nationalists took for granted that the English, and not they themselves, knew how best to order these central aspects of Irish life.

Then again, because Irish businessmen and intelligent young people—nationalists all—grossly undervalued their entrepreneurial capacities in the context of Ireland's natural resources, geographical location, native skills and importable technology, post-Independence Ireland did not produce an economic take-off (such as Norway's, say, after its independence). No merchant fleet worthy of the name was created, and fisheries—with a great ocean at hand—declined. And while Irish nationalists were ignorantly undervaluing their entrepreneurial abilities, they were doing likewise with native intellectual capacities. When Irish nationalist governments sought expert consultants, foreign, usually British, consultants were hired. And when pronouncements on general matters of the world—financial management, literature, art, human history or whatever—were uttered by British professors, scholars or experts, these were treated by educated citizens of the Irish state as authoritative in a way that no similar pronouncements by Irishmen were. In short, what is called 'the Irish inferiority complex' prevailed because, generally speaking, the nationalist Irish took a poor view—a still colonised view—of Irish intellectual and practical capacities.

My second response to Jack is this. In depicting in my book the Irish nationalist self-view as the two-tiered mindset I described again above, I omitted to say that, with regard to the lower tier—the subconscious assumption of Irish intellectual-practical inferiority—there was a relatively small number of individual exceptions. When I wrote above 'with very few exceptions', I was beginning to correct this omission.

Central to the thinking and passion that motivated the Irish Revolution was a desire to restore the abject Irish to full humanity (see 'The Humanism of 1916' in my book). With that desire went an affirmation that such full humanity was latently present in the Irish, only waiting to be possessed. A fair number of the young men and women who took part in the revolutionary movement from the early 1900s onwards seem to have taken this effectively to heart. They seem to have experienced a sort of Damascene conversion out of abjectness into conscious and proud possession of an autonomous humanity entirely equal to the norm. They became persons confident that they could conceive and execute anything that man could, anywhere. Some of these men were shot in 1916. Some, in the aftermath of the Revolution, left Ireland. Others, men and women, marked indelibly, as it were, by that flash of revolutionary light, went on to serve the nation notably in various capacities while their generation lasted.

Nationalist Ideology continued

of Articles 2 and 3 claiming the national territory is the island of Ireland, nor is it the failure to replace English with Irish as the language of the country. It is the re-writing of the history of the First World War and the events which led to the 1916 Rising. The proposal that we should celebrate the blood sacrifice of Irishmen who fought in the Somme strikes at the heart of this State's *raison d'être*.

John Martin

Desmond Fennell

Does it Stack up?

Marianne Elliott: When the news was released that our Government was giving the sum of €7.4 Million Euro to the creation of a Tony Blair Chair in Irish Studies in Liverpool, one could have reasonably expected a hostile reception from Irish History Departments in our own universities. But none came and the *Irish Times* thrilled to the announcement writing that the Irish Institute in the University of Liverpool had since its foundation in 1988 "played a key role in developing and informing peace programmes in Northern Ireland and has worked closely with both the British and Irish governments during the peace process". Professor Marianne Elliott, director of the Institute, said "that the chair was "a dual testament of both the prime minister and the institute in promoting greater understanding between the people of Britain and Ireland". Interestingly, in the quoted statement by the *Irish Times*, Elliott never mentions our Taoiseach and his contributions to the peace process. But then, why would she? For Elliott in October 2002 was given an OBE by the British Queen "for services to Irish Studies and the Northern Ireland peace process" and was also in that year elected a Fellow of the British Academy.

The Belfast-born Elliott is a notable historian garnering great reviews for her books on 'Robert Emmet' and 'The Catholics of Ulster: A History' and it is her revisionism that most generates the plaudits. I remember reading in 2003 her 'Robert Emmet, The Making of a Legend' and suffice it to say that when I saw her dedication: "For Roy Foster", I knew what was in store for me. Does this sound familiar? "The power of the Emmet legend came from its reduction to a very basic narrative. It is a story of heroes and villains, romance and betrayal and a process of saturation, simplification and hyperbole" (p142). Remember Foster's 'The Irish Story' with its *very similar* theme and language? But Elliott goes even further that Foster, if that is possible, and accuses the Irish Catholics of "*unmistakable necrophilia*" with our regards especially for the details of Emmet's execution. "The obsession with the beheading part of the execution drama is one example, though there are others" (p152).

And Elliott, like Foster reads Sinn Fein as "Ourselves Alone", though it is correctly translated as '**we ourselves**', but then their little minds might not cope with a bit of Irish translation. If it was as they say, then the title would be *Sinn Fein amháin*. Got that?

In the *Guardian Unlimited*, Professor Marianne Elliott named her "*top 10 Irish history books*" and they are very revealing. They are in this order: 1. The Making of Modern Ireland 1603-1923 by J.C. Beckett. 2. Modern Ireland 1600-1972 by R.F. Foster. 3. Ireland: A Social and Cultural History 1922-1985 by Terence Brown. 4. The Narrow Ground: Aspects of Ulster 1609-1969 by A.T.Q. Stewart. 5. Scripture Politics: Ulster Presbyterians and Irish Radicalism in Late 18th Century Ireland by I.R. McBride. 6. Small Differences: Irish Catholics and Irish Protestants 1815-1922 by Donald Harman Akenson. 7. Oceans of Consolation: Personal Accounts of Irish Migration to Australia by David Fitzpatrick. 8. Armed Struggle: the History of the IRA by Richard English. 9. The Oxford Companion to Irish History by S.J. Connolly. 10. Home Rule: An Irish History 1800-2000 by Alvin Jackson. For someone who served on the Opsahl Commission in 1993, Elliott is not very—how shall we say—oh yes that much used peace process word: inclusive? And when shall we see a British University honouring our Taoiseach Bertie Ahern with his Chair and of course the associated funds? Parity of esteem and all that surely doesn't still flow the one way *always*?

Christians Today: In the *Christian Today* (posted June 17th, 2007) we are informed that the retired Church of Ireland Primate, Robin Eames (who sits of course in the House of Lords) has been awarded one of the "most prestigious awards by the Queen—the Order of Merit. This is restricted in only being given to 24 living members. Lord Eames, 69, received the award by personal appointment from the Queen, who decides upon this particular award *without* any ministerial advice. The Order of Merit was founded by Edward VII in 1902 and is awarded for "especially eminent service in the armed forces or for those who particularly distinguished themselves in science, art, literature, or the promotion of culture. It is purely the gift of the Sovereign and is awarded only on rare occasions. From its inception there have only been 96 awards and these include Sir Winston Churchill, General of the Army Dwight David Eisenhower (later President of the USA) Field Marshal Alexander and Admiral of the Fleet Earl Mountbatten. The very fetching badge is worn suspended by a ribbon at the collar. The ribbon on the left displays the colours of the Order. The blue represents the Order of the Garter and the Red, the Order of the Bath." (Spink's Catalog of British Orders, Decorations and Medals, 1983.)

In 2006 the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Revd Dr. Rowan Williams paid tribute to the outstanding ministry of the Most Revd Dr. Robin Eames, Archbishop of Armagh by making him a "*presentation of the highest award in the Anglican*

Communion—an award for Outstanding Service to the Anglican Communion..." (*Christian Today*). When Desmond Tuto retired, the then Archbishop of Canterbury *invented* the Archbishop of Canterbury's Award for Outstanding Service to the Anglican Communion. This is the second time this has been awarded.

When Tony Blair was doing his international 'long goodbye' he finally arrived at the Vatican at the end of June. Many thought it was a done deal that he'd come out a Roman Catholic but Pope Benedict XVI had other thoughts. One insider likened the encounter to the bumpy Blair-Putin encounter at the G8 summit. The stopover was certainly not the mere courtesy call that it has since been made out to be by stropky commentators. David Adams, in his *Irish Times* column, was damming the Pope for having the effrontery to stand up to a Prime Minister, as he saw it, of a liberal democracy. Well that last idea was well scotched in a brilliant letter by Tom Cooper. But Blair knowing his new job entailed bringing peace to the Middle East (can one write that without breaking down?) hoped the Pope would give him the official backing of the Catholic Church and was given a flea in his ear for his pains. His Holiness, according to a well placed source, is now much more assured of how he will steer the Church making it pivotal to His pronouncements and activities.

Tribunals: *Business and Finance* (13.7.07) ran an exclusive interview with Denis O'Brien titled 'Trial by Tribunal'. It is a stunning piece of work and should be read by everyone. Just to sample what he said here is one piece that is as frightening as it is real.

"If I had one piece of advice to any citizen who finds themselves embroiled in an Irish tribunal of inquiry, it would be this: take every notion of law or due process that you have, be it presumption of innocence, a right to face your accuser, a right to properly defend yourself; take anything you think you know about our legal system and just throw it out the window. None of this applies in tribunal land... Not a single person who becomes involved in a Tribunal manages to escape without harm—mud sticks, plain and simple..."

In his report into the 'Haughey' modules, Mr. Justice Moriarty stated that he did not feel bound by these fundamental standards of proof that exist in all other legal processes. He went on to articulate a completely new (and uniquely low) threshold in Irish law by introducing the concept of his "*...reasonably informed expression of opinion...*" as the basis for his findings. The fundamental objective of any Tribunal is to make findings of fact based on evidence properly adduced and heard. Not so with the Moriarty Tribunal.

After spending almost 10 years and running up costs probably close to €100m, the Irish public (and indeed the legions of affected witnesses) are to be treated to Mr. Justice Moriarty's "opinion". Minor matters such as actual evidence and due process are the victims in this incredible sleight of hand.

It is now not what was proven true or untrue in evidence—it's what the Tribunal thinks might have happened that passes muster.

Quite apart from this complete abandonment of legal norms and protection of constitutional rights, it is almost universally realized that the Tribunal process is a massively expensive process that has resulted in little more than the creation of franks of elitist "tribunal lawyer multimillionaires"—many of whom have earned well in excess of €6m for their "work". Euro 2,750 (€55k per month at least) for turning up to work every day is nice money if you can get it. And when Denis O'Brien asks "To whom are tribunals accountable?" His answer to this is spot-on: "absolutely no one". And he ends his interview by saying "At some point in time, someone, somewhere, must call a halt to this madness."

And the real heartbreaker is that we do live in a constitutional democracy *where the constitution is being ignored* with all the ramifications that that entails.

Michael Stack.

Unionism and Zionism — same struggle?

On Wednesday, June 13, the *Guardian* carried a full page advertisement (on page 22). At the foot of the page was the slogan *Stop The Boycott*, and an electronic address: www.stoptheboycott.org. The boycott in question being that by the UCU (University and Colleges Union—the union of NATFHE and the AUT—the National Association of Teachers in Higher and Further Education and the Association of University Teachers, which absorbed the Polytechnic teachers union).

It is a boycott of institutions of higher education in Israel—all of them, and not just those directly involved in supplying the military with physical and psychological support.

The headlines to the advert are: **Bad for Britain. / Bad for academic freedom. / Bad for Palestinians. / Bad for peace.** None of these points is explained—possibly they are on the website, but there is, here, a full 'Berliner'-sized page for them to be addressed. There is also the following legend: "We the undersigned condemn the recent decision of the University and Colleges Union Congress to promote a boycott of Israeli universities as the actions of a small and

unrepresentative minority that flies in the face of academic freedom and is bad for Britain. We therefore call on the General Secretary to honour her pledge to ballot all of the UCU's 120,000 members so that the true voice of British academia can be heard."

There are a lot of holes in the above argument. Every Union congress, whether of lecturers or lorry drivers is 'unrepresentative'. They are attended by people who are committed to Trade Unionism. And, in the nature of things, to other aspects of social and political life. Roman Catholics, as such, used to be a strong influence (in the plebeian end) of British trade unionism, as were Jewish people.

Most of the 'undersigned' are Jewish (there is nothing remotely sinister about such a matter—Israel is after all The [one and only] Jewish State—they have every right to oppose the UCU's decision. Though it is reasonable to ask if they would have taken the same attitude if a punitive attitude had been taken to academic institutions in an Arab, or any Muslim state.

The most striking thing about this advertisement is the number of Ulster Unionists who have appended their names: Professor Lord Paul Bew, Professor Arthur Aughey, Professor Henry Patterson, Prof Liam Kennedy, Professor Greta Jones (all from QUB or the University of Ulster). There is also Dr. Denis MacEoin, who teaches at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. Some of these might object to the 'Ulster Unionist', or even just 'Unionist' description but it is difficult to define them otherwise. They are hardly signing this document because they cling to an old fashioned Irish Nationalist fondness for elements of Zionism.

Seán McGouran

The Indo's Guilt Complex

The *Irish Independent's* Review (Saturday 16.06.07) had a full page item by Willie Dillon headlined *Our Dirty Secrets*.... Unusually for the *Indo* these days it was all in the upper case: *OUR DIRTY SECRETS*..., presumably to emphasise the sheer awfulness of it all.

There is a set of three captioned pictures above the actual article.

The first 'dirty secret' proves rather bathetic. Dev's 'puritanism' was 'Overstated', he "opposed John Charles McQuaid" (the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin and Primate of Ireland, during most of De Valera's period in office). Surely only the conscientiously closed minded do not know that Dev (and Fianna Fáil) had a strong Fenian streak? Dev was evenhandedly courteous to all religious faiths in Ireland, Catholic, Protestant and Jewish (a courtesy which has been extended to Orthodox Christians and to the Muslims who have come to the State in recent times) but pursued his political objectives politically. He "opposed the GAA ban on foreign games"

- surely 'everybody' knows Dev was a rigger man? Dev "also enjoyed a drink" [!].

Then we have 'Overlooked', the "estimated 70,000 Irish who fought for the British in World War 2". This figure must include the Northerners who volunteered to fight "for the British". Most of this alleged 70,000 went to fight fascism and racism and an even uglier form of imperialism than that of 'the British'. "Some felt less welcome afterwards than the fleeing Nazis who settled here." The 'fleeing Nazis' (which phrase clearly includes ordinary German citizens) largely came to Ireland in the 1950s. If they had been involved in anything unsavoury they would have paid for it in prison. The real Nazis were brought to the US to teach the Western Allies, among other matters, Gestapo refinements of torture which were then inflicted on upstart colonials from Malaya to Algeria to Viet Nam. (One could mention 'white noise' and other 'cruel and unusual punishments' inflicted on Internees (who had not been tried, sentenced, or convicted of any infringement of the law) in Northern Ireland — but that might be over-egging the thing.)

The Falls Road's Jim Magennis,

definitely "felt less welcome afterwards" and had to go to Sheffield to find a job. Geoffrey Roberts, a UCC (and CPGB) historian tried this piece of sleight of hand some years ago. He claimed that Irish Army personnel who had served in the British armed forces were court martialled for desertion on returning to Ireland. It was accurate, but not truthful: deserters who had joined the British (and presumably 'Commonwealth' or US armed forces) were court martialled. Persons who had resigned, or asked for leave of absence, were treated like ordinary citizens, and in the latter case accepted back into the Irish Defence Forces.

The third is 'Glossed Over' featuring Casement. The *Indo*, possibly in deference to Sir Anthony (the Owner, pro tem.) refer to him as 'Sir Roger'. Here is the legend

continued on page 28, col. 1

WILSON continued

On the day, we obtained two tea chests which snugly fitted over the pillars which dominated the entrance to the Tech. The portrait of Dev could be seen from every compass point approaching the polling station.

However, if innovation was not readily received in Letterkenny in the 50s, political innovation was bordering on sacrilege!

The doyen of Donegal East Fine Gael, Cllr. Hughie 'Guts' McKendrick arrived on the scene and began to detail the electoral discrepancies of advertising in such close proximity to the polling booth. Rebuked we were but repelled, No! And 'Guts' 16 stone was too much to scale the heights of the pillars.

He was then joined by a female 'blue shirt', Ms. Nellie Tedd, who near butchered us with a big black umbrella.

Into the 'Clochemerle' of Free State politics struts Professor John Wilson of St. Eunan's College—a mighty presence

amidst feuding apparatchiks. He sized the situation up and yes, he may have been voting Dev but he still picked on the warriors in short trousers—"You skitters, you wouldn't even know what the term *Fianna Fail* means?".

Oh, aye, Professor, with a unitary chorus—"We're the Soldiers of Destiny".

There was no classical quotes after that and if a political lesson was learned : who knows! John Wilson's political progress was of the nature of Fabius.

The Professor went in and voted Dev and eventually ended up Tanaiste in a Fianna Fail Government. Hughie 'Guts' went home and the tea chests triumphantly stood their ground until close of polling.

John Wilson has a regard for our Da, a stone mason, they enjoyed many hours of dialogue in gaelic.

In fairness also, he never hesitated to share his knowledge and skill as a grand gaelic footballer with those of us from the council estates in the town in the grounds of the College Park, which was the Raphoe Diocesan Seminary.

RTE CONTEMPT

In the *Sunday Independent* on 12th July 2007, Cathal MacCarthy took justifiable exception to the manner in which John Wilson's passing was mentioned:

"And his reward, his public obituary as decided upon by our state broadcaster, was 30 seconds of spiteful contempt and snickering by a group of nonentities. This was nasty and pathetic and all involved should be embarrassed."

RTE may be the state broadcaster but it makes a damn bad hand at being a national broadcaster. "*The dirtier the cow, the dirtier the kick*", that's RTE.

Like the majority of people in life, John Wilson found it easier to go for the point rather than the goal! Charles Haughey first sought the goal and took the point in his stride.

(John Wilson was born July 8, 1923 in Kilcogy, South West Cavan; teacher, professor, politician. He died in Dublin July 9, 2007).

under his photo: "Gay patriot Sir Roger Casement's Black Diaries, filled with rampant graphic sexual encounters, with a predilection (sic) for younger boys." The word 'gay' was a New York underground word for 'homosexual' (and possibly bisexual, in so far as these words mean anything) in the 1930s, and spread rather slowly out from there over decades. Dillon's use of the word is presumably due to a lack of perspective on this, or any other, matter. The Black Diaries (complete with Capital Letters) were probably so called by the British authorities for melodramatic effect. They are ordinary black cloth covered Letts pocket diaries. Far from being 'full' of 'rampant' sex they are full of calculations of Casement's day to day expenditure. He *was* brought up in Ballymena after all. And more to the point he was not exactly overpaid for most of his career in the Consular Service. The reference to "younger boys" is (probably deliberately) ambiguous. The 'Black Diaries' refer mostly to conscript soldiers or similar working class men.

Presumably this is included to form a link with the section on Pearse. In mid-page is a selection of photographs of Pearse. The main one seems to have been doctored to make it appear he is wearing make up. (Another smaller one is actually of Willie Pearse, who leads a rather anonymous afterlife despite 'the British' executing him in 1916).

The sub-heading is *Padraig Pearse's*

Erotic Fantasies, it quotes some lines from *Little Lad of the Tricks*. These lines "*read like the unguarded yearnings of a confirmed paedophile*", what an 'unconfirmed' paedophile might be is not vouchsafed. "*It's pretty conclusive when you look at it with today's knowing mind,*" says Professor Declan Kiberd." What is 'pretty conclusive' is not made at all clear.

Today's knowing mind' is just that — today's— there is, here, a refusal to accept that sexual culture can change as drastically as any other aspect of culture. Most of this short passage is dedicated to claiming that Pearse did not act on his "erotically charged fantasies". To which one's response is: 'big deal'. The charge (and it is a charge) has been made against a man who is dead 91 years. Finding him not guilty of, in essence, contemplating rape is a cowardly escape clause.

As ever, no mention is made of St Ita's the school for girls, which was run in tandem with St Enda's. It was separate because the educational authorities ('Castle' as well as Catholic) would have gone berserk if he'd attempted to teach them in the same premises.

There is the further problem of the parents of the pupils. Are we being asked to believe that, as an example, the Sheehy-Skeffingtons would have tolerated their children being taught by a glazed-eyed militarist and (even merely potential)

child-molester? The question essentially answers itself. (In his *Century of Endeavour* Roy Johnston mentions in passing that St Enda's (and presumably St Ita's) had a "science teacher", a man called David Houston. Clearly it wasn't all pageants and patriotism. Has anyone produced a serious study of Pearse's educational experiment in St Enda's and St Ita's?)

These ruminations may imply that we are taking this page-filler too seriously, here are the last sentences: "*Being openly gay was seriously frowned upon. It would almost certainly have disqualified him from leading the 1916 Rising, Diarmaid (sic) Ferriter believes. "I can't imagine him flouncing into the GPO on Easter Monday in a skirt. I don't think that would have gone down too well."*"

If this is the new, sleazy, *Indo's* notion of sexual subtlety it should get back to prissiness pronto.

It is almost certainly an attempt at a snide dismissal of Pearse, as a person of little consequence, but it backfires on Dillon and Ferriter. Pearse, even assuming he was an innocent minded paedophile, is of very great consequence in our history and culture. Instead of endless speculation about his sexuality, putting his educational notions into circulation (or even practice) would be worthwhile.

Seán McGouran

WORLD-VIEW

Around the year, 2000, the Virginia Vocational School in Co. Cavan launched a little "Retrospective" volume. "A Backward Glance at the 20th Century." John Wilson featured in the book amongst 60 other contributors.

Allowing that perhaps as a scholar of classics, his outlook and world-view would be restricted by the fish bowl politics of graft and stroke of the parish type, he might be worthy of a higher stage but alas.

When asked: "What was the most significant event of the 20th century and why?", he declared: "The foundation of the United Nations. Because it gave a voice to small nations, which have no friends, only interests and provides peace guarantees, however, inadequate. Because it has established various agencies for economic, social and educational development.

On the "Great disaster of the 20th Century", that was "The rise of Nazism. Because of its diabolical racism e.g. its Holocaust and its ambition to rule all inferior races, including the Irish race, and its policies resulting in the death of millions of human beings."

And of course, the person he most reviled in that century, you have it, J. Djughashvili (alias Stalin).

His Fenian grandfather would turn in his grave—did he never hear of the First World war or the British Empire.

Incidentally, in a book containing the opinions of Taoisigh, TDs, Bishops and Journalists not a single one mentioned the fall of the British Empire as the greatest event of the 20th century—contemporary Irish opinion unanimously directed their ire at the Soviet Union and Germany. Its a sad ould country.

WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN?

He was a potential Taoiseach; he was a potential President, so all the media swear.

"During leadership heaves, he was sometimes spoken of as a potential leader and Taoiseach." (*Irish Times*, 10.7.2007).

He joined Fianna Fail in the early 1970s, he was then 50 years of age and was elected to the Committee of 15. Setting his sights on a Dail seat, he returned to Cavan and was elected in 1973.

He knew the Fianna Fail leader Jack

Lynch from their days in the GAA. Indeed, in 1945 they faced each other in the All-Ireland Football final.

"...though Wilson came to politics late, Jack Lynch appointed him to the front bench on the very first day in the Dail, in 1973." (*Sunday Independent*, 15.7.2007). No, Wilson didn't come to politics, politics came to Wilson and that sums his career and his outlook!

He served under three Taoisigh: Jack Lynch, Charles Haughey and Albert Reynolds.

He was also part-owner of Wilson Brothers, Auctioneers.

He supported "George Colley in his unsuccessful contest for the leadership against Haughey" in 1979. He was "seen as a member of the Hillery/Colley/O'Malley wing of Fianna Fail as distinct to the brash new TACA fundraising faction..." (*Sunday Independent*-15.7.2007).

In 1990, he succeeded Brian Lenihan as Tanaiste. He had already fought Lenihan from the Presidential nomination. There is no doubt had Wilson been the candidate, Mary Robinson would have been elected President and the world would have had two President Wilsons' in the 20th century.

"He recalled in an interview, shortly before he retired from the Dail, that the Northern Troubles drove him into politics. "Quite bluntly, the political division of the country does not make any sense." (*Irish Times*, 0.7.2007).

"Mr. Wilson, he said, loved learning and teaching. 'A classics scholar, he was intimately aware of and attuned to the very foundations of our civilisation. He knew the names of the gods on Mount Olympus and he understood the common bond that binds all of humanity together from modern Shercock to ancient Sparta.' (Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern on John Wilson, *Irish Times*, 13.7.2007).

"Civil servants found him easy to work with, but he was not methodical, one senior official said. 'There was no plan and since he was not a bureaucrat, it was difficult to see him organised.' Pinning him down was like trying to 'harness the whirlwind.'" (*Irish Times*, 14.7.2007).

"Michael McDowell, a former pupil and later minister for justice, said in 1990: 'He never made as much of

himself as he might have done; maybe it was due to the fact that he was concerned never to make a mistake.'" (*ibid*).

"A seminarian at Maynooth for four years, he decided that the priesthood was not for him." He later studied at the University of London, where he secured a post-graduate classics degree.

He served as ASTI (Secondary Teachers) President 1959-1960. Colleagues in the ASTI remembered him as "a good trade unionist".

John Wilson's time in Education:

"...he defused problems rather than solved them."

"In response to the accusation that schools in his constituency benefited disproportionately from departmental spending, he said: "If you don't look after your constituency, your constituency won't look after you" (*Irish Times*, 14.7.2007).

Spoken like a true county councillor—certainly not like a national politician.

"Listing his influences for an *Irish Times* survey in 1987, he mentioned his grandfather, who was a Fenian, his father, who was a great de Valera supporter ('more de Valera than Fianna Fail even'), Eamon de Valera himself, Terence MacSwiney and Cathal Brugha, Sean Lemass and Jack Lynch also impressed him, he said in an interview a few years later, and he stated his belief that history would be kind to Charles Haughey." (*Irish Times*-14.7.2007).

Father Des Wilson, the outspoken Belfast priest, and cousin of the late John Wilson celebrated his funeral mass.

EARLY DAYS

John Wilson had an imposing presence, that's what us young fellows in Letterkenny felt in the 1950s. He had claims to be a classicist, I suppose he was—he definitely was : in the company of us Latin scholars whose mere grasp of the language of Rome was our experience as altar boys in the good old days of the tridentine mass. We called him the professor.

But we had the pleasure on an occasion of stumping Wilson on linguistic terms. It was the day of polling in the 1959 Presidential Election. Eamon de Valera was opposed by General Sean MacEoin. The present writer and a brother were manning the polling booth at the local vocational school. There was no limit in our ability to improvise any and every propaganda device which advanced the cause of Dev and Fianna Fail.



OBITUARY: JOHN WILSON, former Tanaiste.

"The Duodecimo Demosthenes"

John Cooney attempted a political analysis of the life of the late John Wilson in the *Irish Independent* (14.7.2007).

"...he never attained the kind of national acclaim in life which accompanied his death this week, aged 84.

"Yet, had he been able to hear the cascade of eulogies heaped over his coffin, Mr. Wilson, with his Cavan cuteness, would have been the first to question whether he was, indeed, the icon, the wise man and elder statesman of Fianna Fail that he has been portrayed by colleagues and foes alike.

"This picture of a man of unswerving loyalty smacks of more than a tincture of political propaganda being mobilised to distort his actual career." (*Irish Independent*, 14.07.2007).

Cooney states that this adulation of the 'dead hero' has been done for "*the purpose of healing past divisions within a party now led by the commanding presence of Mr. Ahern*".

He maintains that for years he was perplexed as to how Wilson's stature managed to survive unscathed by the scandals of the Haughey days.

Cooney writes that: "*The key to the Wilson Enigma lies in his background—he was the descendant of a Fenian and the son of a staunch supporter of the founding father of Fianna Fail, Eamon de Valera—and his entry into political life as a supporter of his friend, Lynch.*" (ibid).

And why was he retained in office by Haughey?

"The key to Wilson's survival was that he represented the old Fianna Fail that pre-dated Haughey's autocratic and self-serving dominance of the nation's largest political party. In Wilson, Haughey saw a party loyalist who would not threaten his position.

"And Wilson was to live up to Haughey's perception, remaining an obedient servant of the Lord of Kinsealy until his fall in 1992." (ibid).

"The decisive juncture in Wilson's promising career, however, came in

late 1979 with Lynch's retirement, and his support for George Colley in his unsuccessful contest for the leadership against Haughey.

"This was the fatal faultline that almost rent Fianna Fail asunder. It led to the formation in 1985 of the Progressive Democrats by Desmond O'Malley, Mary Harney and Bobby Molloy." (*Irish Independent*, 14.07.2007).

Had Wilson and several other leading cohorts of the Lynch Fianna Fail wing been true to their conviction, they would have done the 'right thing' and trooped out after O'Malley.

Haughey had their measure—Wilson's staying had little to do with a Fenian grandfather or being the son of a staunch de Valerite. Pragmatism prevailed over any national principle, he might have had.

Had he any real political beliefs, he could have taken a page out of the book of his great Cavan predecessor, Paddy Smith, who resigned as Minister for Agriculture in October, 1964 "*against 'the tyranny' of the trade unions*". A course unheard of in

Leinster House politics, imagine throwing up a ministerial career all over some stupid principle. But a man sentenced to death for treason is never under any doubts about what principles mean!

Fianna Fail are no better or no worse than any of the major political parties which make up the European democracies today—they are all things to all people, bereft of a single political principle.

Cooney's reference to "*casades of eulogies*" on the death of Wilson amounts to nothing more than 'Balaam'—lengthy obituaries to make up for the 'gooseberry season' when the hacks run out of jam.

"Thought in mid-seventies to be future leadership material but that prospect regressed because of an indifferent performance in Education from 1977 to 1981. He supported George Colley in the 1979 leadership crisis but remained on the fence during the O'Malley challenge before coming down on Haughey's side once the tide had clearly swung in the latter's favour. He is an engaging speaker and has considerable ability, but there are doubts about his seriousness in politics."
(*The Magill Guide to Election '82*).

The present writer is constantly perplexed by the perplexities of modern journalists in their understanding of how life and politics works! Capitalism is based on corruption—once you understand that—the rest is easy.

When we had little or no corruption in the state, we survived hand to mouth. The old tiger hadn't a 'pick' on him!

The march to prosperity and the Celtic Tiger era simply meant that the greater the prosperity—the wider the corruption. Look at the poor ould journalist, Conrad Black.

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