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Warding Off The Inevitable?

"Never! Never! Never! *Och alright then*" : that's the headline of the April issue of the Loyalist *Shankill Mirror*.

Why was it alright then? Paisley says it's because the alternative would have been worse. But the alternative of joint British/Irish rule was entirely lacking in credibility. Paisley, who has never been a ranting simpleton, must have had other reasons for doing what he did.

He has let down many people. Dublin die-hards, such as Conor Cruise O'Brien and Bruce Arnold, were relying on him to hold the line against the party for which they have an irrational hatred. But he sold the pass and opened the gate—and now they can only gnash their teeth as public statements are issued jointly in the names of Martin McGuinness and Ian Paisley.

So why did he do it? And why did he give an implausible reason for doing it?

We take it that he pretended to be frightened by the alternative in order to frighten stubborn elements in his party. The alternative of London/Dublin collaboration was likely to be much ado about nothing. Bertie Ahern has never had a Northern policy, and even if he had, it is unlikely that Gordon Brown would screw the Unionists for him.

Perhaps Paisley, who has been waiting for Gordon during the past year, reckoned that Tony would try to do something drastic during his last weeks in office unless a concession was made on March 26th. And the Water Rates had to be taken account of. But those considerations do not explain the way Paisley has been acting since he made the concession. No doubt he is still waiting for Gordon, but he is doing more than that. He is attempting to bind the Provos into 'the Northern Ireland state'.

Once of his first actions was the letter he sent to the Secretary of State, jointly with Deputy First Minister-to-be Martin McGuinness, instructing him to vacate Stormont Castle—an old centre of aristocratic power that became the site of the Unionist Cabinet when the 'Northern Ireland state' was concocted. It is far removed from the gaudy Stormont Parliament that nationalists have grown accustomed to attending.

It is only forty years since Paisley undermined Captain O'Neill. Now, having

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Peter Hart— A Last Gasp?

Peter Hart's latest effort to defend his thesis on the Irish War of Independence took the form of a review of John Borgonovo's book, *Spies, Informers And The 'Anti-Sinn Fein Society': the intelligence war in Cork City 1920-1921*, in *History Ireland*, March-April 2007.

In case readers need reminding, Hart's thesis is that—

"...the Dail had no legal standing and was never recognised by any foreign government. Nor did the IRA, as a guerrilla force acting without uniforms and depending on their civilian status for secrecy, meet the requirements of international law. The British government was therefore within its rights to give courts-martial the power to order executions" (Irish Times, 23 June 1998).

And furthermore

"Nor were members of the IRA protected by the Hague Convention, the basis for the law of war on land. The British government and its forces were not at war in this sense. To be recognised as belligerent soldiers, the guerrillas would have had to be fighting for a responsible established state, wear a recognisable uniform or emblem, carry their arms openly, and not disguise

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Reflections On Palestine *Part 4*

Politicians And Pacifism

I don't tend to get along with politicians and tried to spend most of my two visits to Palestine speaking to people in the streets and in the cafes or in their homes. This was very easy as everyone wanted to speak to the stranger—if only to find out who he is and to make sure, as far as is possible, that he is not a spy. But generally Palestinians are simply a sociable and curious people.

It was normal for both adults and children to introduce themselves and walk

along the street with me, giving their views and asking for mine. Their knowledge of the world and its history is extensive except, in many cases, when it comes to their next-door neighbours. Languages are taught at a very early age.

I was taken to task on a few occasions by "high ups" for perhaps talking too much to "the wrong type of person" and was introduced to politicians. Mostly I was pleasantly surprised. They were decent, hardworking, welcoming and, so far as I could see, honest. What little corruption there is seems to be the province of advisors and hangers-on who are very

much approved of by that wonderful discovery of the 21st century, the International Community.

Of course people help their friends and families. That is socially a good thing—within limits. But most people with a lot of money in Palestine have got it through the normal unpleasant ways that people use to acquire more than their fair share of the social wealth. Robbing from the 'State', such as it is, is unusual.

Robbing from the State, usually covered legal fig leaves, is the norm in American politics and has become almost an art form among the Blairs, the Jowells, the Milburns, etc., in Britain. In Israel

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corruption is massive. The Sharon scandal is the mere tip of the iceberg. Indeed I have noticed that whenever the International Community takes sides in the internal affairs of a country, it takes the side of the crook, or of the most crooked.

The problem that I found with Palestinian politicians was their meekness. Time and again I heard them calling themselves "*soldiers for peace*". And they meant pacifists. Their plan seems to be a combination of absorbing suffering with making dramatic public concessions. All with an eye on the International Community.

Well, the Israelis will dish out all the suffering they can absorb and more, and nobody will give a damn. This I tried to explain. Even their Arab neighbours won't care. They regard the Palestinians mostly as a pain in backside, a source of trouble who can't sort themselves out. America and England, who constitute the International Community, are every bit as enthusiastic as the Israelites for a bit of applied smiting. They have no respect for anyone who puts up with it.

Concessions offered are instantly forgotten as more is demanded and reciprocation is denied. Any time that the Palestinians are taken to be in breach of some accord, Israel and its friends create an international outcry. I am told that Israel is in breach of some 30 UN resolutions and nobody cares.

After the Mecca Agreement there was much fuss about the new Hamas-led

Government refusing to abide by previous accords with Israel. The Israelis have never been asked to declare that they will abide by these same accords. Nor are they taken to task for breaking them.

A great hero in Palestine is Mahatma Gandhi, especially among Fatah politicians. There is the notion that Gandhi brought about Indian independence by non-violent means, and that all Palestine needs is a charismatic figure to follow Arafat and the world will support his peaceful leadership of the Palestinian people. This is a serious view held by influential and decent people in Abbas' Party. (Mind you, I didn't hear anyone consider Abbas to be fit for that purpose!)

These leaders spend a lot of time abroad or dealing with officials from the International Community. They listen to lectures about terrorism and are embarrassed by them. The International Community, with a little prodding from the Israelis, portrays the Palestinians as a bunch of murderers and wasters. The Palestinian leadership has itself internalised these opinions, is ashamed, and is determined to rid its people of their bad ways.

This is a harsh verdict. But I can come to no other on the basis of my conversations with Ministers and officials and spokesmen.

There seems to be little knowledge of the Indian independence process or of

Ghandi's campaign, or such knowledge is discounted to fit the pacifist ideology. This is partly Ghandi's fault. His writings from that period are full of philosophy and spiritualism. But he was not a fool and presented himself as an alternative to a mass armed movement blooded in the 1939-45 War, on both sides.

He operated in a world of superpowers, both of whom were ardent anti-colonialists. One of them, the Soviet Union, was prepared to pour weapons into any serious anti-colonial movement. While the other, the United States, called for independence for the colonies before they turned for help to the Soviet Union. (That started to change in 1950 with the Korean War, but by then Britain was out of India.) Today, who is there to call to for help against the remaining superpower?

In those days Britain was a bit of a pariah insofar as it tried to reoccupy its colonies. And there were deep misgivings in the new British Labour Government about colonialism—though I wouldn't put it much stronger than that.

It might be noted here that Israel also emerged from the international situation existing in 1947-8. The Zionists portrayed themselves as fighting an anti-colonial war against Britain. This helped them get the Soviet Union to push through the support they needed for the Jewish State in the United Nations.

Next year is the 60th anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel and we will hear no end of guff about its "War of Independence". I looked at many memorials to this "war" of 1948 and saw little other than the Haganah or the Irgun taking something or somewhere without any resistance from the British.

Returning to Ghandi, Indian independence was not achieved peacefully. Some 26 million people died in the chaos left behind, or even fomented, by the British. India became first two states and later three states. It has no lessons for the Palestinians. If the charismatic of Fatah dreams ever emerges, he should bear in mind the fate of almost all post-independence Indian leaders, including Ghandi himself!

My impression of Palestinians, and of most Arabs in the Middle East, is that they are indeed pacific. They have no aptitude for, or inclination towards, war. But sometimes, under extreme pressure, Arabs who have taken the trouble to study and to understand Israel, suppress their inclinations and devote themselves to preparing and organising for war.

Nazrallah in Lebanon is one such person. He has studied the Israelis. He speaks their language, literally, and he knows their minds. He has even developed a certain kind of empathy with them. And

he has gone on to defeat them on the battlefield. I have actually met a few Palestinians like that. They were for the most part refugees and still well down the political food chain. But they are the future. Or if they are not, I believe that there is no future.

Palestinian politicians are of the opinion that all other methods but Ghandi's have been tried and have been defeated. They are the products of the two Intafadas. The Intafadas were long drawn-out uprisings. Uprisings are usually acts of desperation and are seldom successful unless they lead to a more deliberate form of warfare.

The Palestinians have never gone to war with the State of Israel. (There were Palestinians in the Arab Legion which saved East Jerusalem and the Old City in 1948. But the Legion is not remembered as having had anything to do with the Palestinians.)

They have not even conducted any kind of defensive war. They occasionally loose off a few shots or rockets, but the Israeli Defence Force has roamed at will through Palestine. Life could be made impossible for the IDF in towns like Nablus or Hebron, and large casualties caused, but this does not happen.

War is not in the nature of Palestinians and there has not yet arisen an organised force with war as its purpose. The suicide bombings, though they terrified the Israelis, were not military activities.

Their undoubted effectiveness arose from a pacifist and not a military mentality—a kind of duty to die, to be a martyr, in exchange for the taking of life. But nothing was there to build on the success of the suicide bombings. Therefore they were seen as a waste and, in the case of many politicians, yet another thing to be ashamed of.

Conor Lynch

Peter Hart

continued

themselves as civilians. None of these conditions applied. It is of course true that international law favours established states, but if any group can claim belligerent status when using political violence, then so can the INLA or the LVF. The Oklahoma bombers would also conceivably have a right to POW status" (Irish Times, 22 July 1998; How did we fail to notice that the INLA and the LVF had won massive electoral victories in their area of operation, as the Republicans of 1918-21 did?).

With this apologia for State violence, Professor Hart precludes legitimacy of any kind for national liberation armies. Britain held Ireland by conquest, but the legal framework covering its State violence was legitimate and binding.

Roger Casement:

Tim O'Sullivan Replies To Roger Sawyer

I wish to reply to comments in Roger Sawyer's letter (March 2007) regarding "*The Casement 'Black Diaries'—An Overlong Controversy in Outline (Part 3)*".

He referred first to errors of fact.

I had been led to believe that a series of extracts, two or perhaps three, from *Casement the Flawed Hero*, a biography by Roger Sawyer had appeared in *the Sunday Press* in the mid 1980s. In fact, only one extract appeared in the paper. By using the term "serialisation" in place of "series of extracts" an impression was suggested that perhaps the whole book could have been week by week reproduced in the newspaper. "Serialisation", properly so called, is a 19th century practice unknown in contemporary western press publishing where a complete book was reproduced in instalments in a newspaper or periodical.

In the article regarding Colm Tóibín and his article on Casement for his 2001 book "*Love in a Dark Time*", I stated that Roger Sawyer and Angus Mitchell were interviewed for the article. I accept Sawyer was never interviewed by Tóibín. Mitchell was only informally interviewed via having his views sounded out at a social occasion.

In his letter Dr. Sawyer pointed to the preface to his 1997 book on the 1910 diaries where he claims he had "entered the controversy from the opposite position" meaning he had originally been a proponent of forgery. As he has admitted himself to me recently he never wrote a book, pamphlet or even a letter to the editor of a newspaper in support of the forgery position. He says he was convinced the diaries were genuine from about 1960. His career as a supporter of the forgery thesis where he claims he "entered the controversy" was quite an uneventful one.

He referred then to two omissions. Reinhard Doerries had indeed withdrawn permission for the RIA (not the IRA), that is the Royal Irish Academy, to publish an edited version of his address to the Casement symposium of 2000. He regarded it as being unfaithful to his original contribution. His talk centred on "Roger Casement in Imperial Germany as an Emissary of Clan a Gael". It was not focussed on the diaries matter and so not directly relevant to what I was writing about. Sawyer referred to how a number of contributions to the conference were not subsequently published and others substituted contributions they had not made. This matter again, I would feel is not relevant enough to be include in a summary article where so much has to be compressed and so much more has to be disregarded.

The second omission he referred to concerned the 'black diary' entry for 31 August 1910 which included the words "...Took room 'Le Cosmopolite'. Hotel dreadful..." This jars with a letter Casement wrote on 3 September (FO 371/968) where he says "On arrival at Iquitos the members of the Commission took up their quarters in the house of the Peruvian Amazon Company while I became the guest of Mr Cazes." Dr Sawyer believes I should have presented my reference to this in a more even-handed way. My purpose was to present, within a short space, the sort of arguments Angus Mitchell was employing to support his case that forgery had occurred. I was not intent on trying to distil the weight and potency of each point various parties employed as I was engaged in summarising as opposed to acute analysis. In summarising such a long controversy one has to leave an awful lot out. I agree one could explain this discrepancy by theorising that Casement had at first accepted a room at the hotel and then rejected it after closer inspection and then found a room with Mr Cazes. However, it is odd that such a turn of events; ascertaining what was wrong with the hotel, rejecting it and then finding alternative accommodation, is not detailed in the diary in the least. So, I must agree this discrepancy is not absolute proof of forgery. Yet it is quite strange and odd and does prompt one to wonder.

I appreciate Dr. Sawyer's taking an active interest in my series of article and his helpfulness in answering questions I recently put to him

On Hart's view, the Irish War of Independence is reduced to series of a wanton criminal acts. The Professor goes even further than that: looking for all sorts of ulterior motives amongst the Volunteers, who only took on the guise of fighting

for self-determination. All their actions are to be condemned and denigrated. Hart's logic has a perfect internal consistency.

Of course, the Prof. ignores the clear result of the 1918 Election which estab-

lished the new legality, on an electoral basis for an Irish independent state. He also ignores the wholesale promulgation at the time of the right of all nations to self determination. It was the issue of the day. Britain convinced millions that the war it started in August 1914 was for the freedom of small nations and up to 50,000 Irishmen died for it in that War and millions of others elsewhere. The Russian Revolution of 1917 ended Russia's participation in the War and developed an effective programme that encouraged and supported the colonial world to rise up and establish their national rights against all the Imperial powers. Then the USA joined the War and Woodrow Wilson's '14 Points' justified it essentially on the basis of nations' right to self determination. The world was thereby saturated with talk and actions insisting on the rights of nations to self determination. It was the spirit of the age and millions in all continents were set in political motion on the basis of it. Some peoples began to think in nationality terms for the first time in their history.

But for Mr. Hart none of this was meant to apply to Ireland although it had a national movement for generations—it was to be the great exception to what was happening all over the world. How strange.

It means that Hart's case flies in the face of obvious realities and therefore he has to rely on all sorts of spurious arguments, distortions, and lies to make his case. If one has to defy the reality of a situation how else could one operate? What a strange career choice to have made?

There could hardly be a greater contrast in John Borgonovo. About 10 years ago he came across some of Hart's initial work and immediately detected flaws in his arguments. On the basis of what he had then researched he could not accept that the War of Independence was some sort of tit for tat with the IRA picking on certain groups such as Protestants, ex-soldiers, and others, through sheer prejudice of one sort or another.

He made a detailed study of the intelligence war in Cork city during its most intense phase to see if Hart's arguments made sense. They did not. He said so. He took, head on, the toughest, nastiest subject of all—the execution of civilians for spying and informing. If prejudice and ulterior motives were given an opportunity to express themselves it would be obvious and clear-cut in this area.

He came to the conclusion on the basis of all the available evidence that spies were executed because they were spies and for no other reason. And that is usually accepted as a good enough reason in the middle of a war. Borgonovo's methodology is to painstakingly gather and present as much of the unvarnished facts as can now be located. No speculation that the facts don't back up, and no innuendo, and

no wild assertions, and no questions going a begging.

Hart tries to claim that, because there were a majority of ex-soldiers executed, this proves his point that groups such as those were picked on.

In the middle of a war the only intelligence that matters is immediate military intelligence. Who is likely to be a good source of this? Surely, it is people with military experience who have fought for one side and who are likely therefore to have an instinct for what is useful intelligence to that side in these circumstances. In other words, ex-British soldiers. These would also have the means of discovering such information because of their local knowledge—and might have needed the reward. Is this a surprise? If there are thousands of them in the war theatre, is it picking on them to pay attention to them, and is it a surprise that they turn out to be good at spying. Only a fool would think otherwise and Mr. Hart is not a fool.

That said, only a infinitesimally small proportion of ex-soldiers actually did spy for England; far greater numbers used their military experience to fight for Irish independence, or remained generally sympathetic to the Volunteers. If all the thousands of ex-soldiers in Ireland had supported Britain, Ireland would never have won independence.

Another of Hart's lines of defence is to question Borgonovo's faith in the trustworthiness of the head of the IRA's intelligence operations in Cork city, Florrie O'Donoghue—"but the author is inclined to take Florence O'Donoghue at his word". If Florrie could not be trusted, then Borgonovo's thesis could indeed be challenged. But what evidence does Hart have to support his suggestion, or rather his insinuation, about O'Donoghue? None whatever. On the other hand Borgonovo has done a detailed study of O'Donoghue—his character, his ability—and has published a fascinating book on him as a person and as an intelligence operator. It makes a most compelling case for O'Donoghue's trustworthiness. So we have to choose between an insidious unproven assertion by Hart and a hard detailed study made by Borgonovo. Take your choice.

Hart then says that British claims that the majority of those executed as spies were innocent are "presumably... as believable as the IRA claim to the contrary".

Britain had to defend the indefensible in 1919-21 in Ireland. Brian Murphy has established how they sought to do this. The truth was a problem for them and, when lies would not suffice, *verisimilitude* (the appearance of truth) took its place, quite deliberately and consciously. By the same token, the facts and the truth were of

vital importance to the republicans—it was a vital weapon. They had a vested interest in it to prove their case to world opinion. How then could one be considered as truthful or as untruthful as the other? Hart is defying common sense by suggesting that this was the case.

But what is believable and unbelievable is a very arbitrary and optional matter for Hart and facts are easily created or dispensed with to make his case. In his 'classic work' on the War in Cork there is the infamous treatment of what he regards as "the most trustworthy" source, the 'Official report of Army intelligence on the rebellion'. Hart quoted half a sentence from it which appeared to support his case and excised the next sentence that flatly contradicted his thesis; then he uses a document that was a proven forgery and, when all else fails, he interviews the dead. It is rather rich to see this type of person advising on what is and is not believable. In legal jargon he is a discredited witness and his case would be thrown out of court years ago. He would never be called as an expert witness on the truth.

Hart seeks to damn Borgonovo with faint praise, as having produced "good material for class room discussion", saying that his "aim of advancing the debate is admirable".

He criticises Borgonovo for not dealing with periods and conflicts outside the period of his book.

And what is his own assessment of the period in Cork city? Rather than Borgonovo's hard-headed, factually-based analysis, he sees only "mayhem in the streets of Cork at that time" and adds: "What emerges instead is a picture of predators hunting and killing opportunistically right up to the final bell".

Is this really the best our Professor can do? It is a pathetic effort at analysis and an admission that he has lost the plot and cannot make sense of it. He resorts instead to the best tabloid headline tradition. Is this his idea of "advancing the debate"?

Jack Lane

The Origins and the Organisation of British Propaganda in Ireland 1920

by *Brian P. Murphy* *osb.*

Foreword: *Prof. David Miller.*

ISBN 1 903497 24 8. 100pp, Illus. Bibliog. Index. Aubane Historical Society + Spinwatch., Feb. 2006. **E9, £6.**

The two **John Borgonovo** books referred to above are published by the Irish Academic Press. They are: Peter Hart *Spies, informers And The 'Anti-Sinn Fein Society': the intelligence war in Cork City 1920-1921* and *Florence And Josephine O'Donoghue's War Of Independence*

Warding Off The Inevitable?

continued

destroyed the Unionist Party, he aspires to re-establish O'Neillism on a sounder basis.

Apart from Brian Faulkner—who was destroyed by the diplomatic trickery of Doctors O'Brien and FitzGerald at Sunningdale in 1973 and their intransigence in 1974—Paisley is the only Unionist politician who showed signs of having thought about the reality of the Unionist position and who acted on the basis of what he saw.

Both Paisley and Faulkner briefly adopted an 'integrationist' stance in the early 1970s, and both of them discarded integrationism without explanation—as did a long series of British politicians of our acquaintance from the early seventies to the early nineties.

"Integrationism" meant the governing of Northern Ireland as part of the state to which it belongs, recognising that it is not itself a state and is unlikely ever to become one. (Elements in the Unionist Party, led by William Craig, flirted with demanding statehood in the late sixties and early seventies. Craig asserted that Northern Ireland was a *de facto* Dominion and should be recognised as one *de jure*. But it came to nothing.)

The Six Counties might have been democratically governed as part of the British state, within the politics of the British state. It could not be governed democratically within the British state but outside its political life. The 'Northern Ireland state' could never fall into a political routine resembling that of a democratic state.

The function of the 'Northern Ireland state' was to keep the Six Counties attached to Britain in a way that gave Britain continuing leverage in the affairs of the Irish state. Governing the Six Counties as an integral part of the British state would have deprived the British state of its leverage in the 26 Counties.

The 'minority' in the North was never a mere policy minority. Policy in the ordinary sense did not enter Northern Ireland politics. The only issue was whether the region should remain attached to the British state or transfer to the Irish state. The way Northern Ireland was governed made its political parties expressions of the two religious-national communities which were in active conflict with one another when the pseudo-state was imposed on them.

Scotland and Wales were not required to vote Unionist in order to remain part of the Union. They just participated in the party-political life of the state. But the Ulster Protestant community could only

remain attached to the Union by voting Unionist from outside its politics, while governing the Catholic community outside the democracy of the state.

Catholics would undoubtedly have participated in the democratic politics of the state during the two generations after Partition if it had been open to them to do so. (In the 1940s they tried to force their way in by electing an MP on a mandate of taking the Labour Whip, but they were rebuffed.) In the 'Northern Ireland state' there was no politics for them to participate in but the politics of community.

In the politics of community there was only one way that the minority could become the majority—the way that is called demographic.

Everybody knows—or should know—that there was funny business about the last British census in the North. There was a long delay in publishing the figures. The reasonable suspicion was that the figures were being rigged for the purpose of minimising the increase in the Catholic community as a percentage. It was, of course, denied that this was the case.

Garret FitzGerald was amongst the deniers. But now he writes about the

"outflows of Protestant third level students to British... universities. The great majority of these do not return after graduation—nor, in many cases, are they encouraged by their parents to come back to a divided society which is seen by them as being an increasingly cold place for Protestants. By contrast Catholics now outnumber Protestants in both Northern Ireland universities, and they are much less inclined to go to Britain for third-level education. Moreover those who do go are more likely to return to the North.. In the short run, this process has been accelerating the growth of the Catholic sphere of the Northern population—a trend upon which Sinn Fein has seemed to place hopes of Irish reunification within a foreseeable future. In fact this is a quite illusory hope, for polls have consistently shown that at least a quarter of the Catholic population wish to remain in the United Kingdom" (Irish Times).

He then engages in some criticism of the IRA for having fought the war that brought about the present willingness to make a rapprochement, and concludes:

"The trouble is that Sinn Fein's preoccupation with securing a Catholic majority in the North will tend to make it resistant to any measures that the DUP might wish to take to slow the Protestant brain drain. That could provide a future source of tension."

This presents the demographic issue as a Sinn Fein issue. But Sinn Fein is very much a component part of the Catholic community, and to our knowledge the aspiration for a Catholic majority is a

Catholic aspiration long pre-dating the formation of Provisional Sinn Fein.

It was our reckoning thirty years ago that a quarter of the Catholic community was predisposed to take an active part in the politics of the British state, given the opportunity of doing so. Some Unionists took that as meaning that a quarter of the Catholics were Unionists. They would not see that taking part in the democratic politics of the state was a very different thing from being Unionist in 'the Northern Ireland state'.

Since then communal voting has hardened and the segregation of the communities has increased. And Dr. FitzGerald's initiatives during his two periods in Office contributed substantially to that development, particularly his 1985 one.

The general outlook of the SDLP in this matter is much the same as Sinn Fein's, and twice it refused to make a political deal with the Unionist Party independently of Sinn Fein. And the Unionist Party would not strike a deal with Sinn Fein with Paisley breathing down its neck. So Paisley had to do it himself.

With the demographic watershed in sight, he is attempting to make provision for the situation in which keeping Northern Ireland in external association with Britain will depend on implicating the Catholic community in 'the Northern Ireland state'.

He did not explain, thirty-five years ago, why he abandoned integration. We assume it was because it was convincingly put to him, by an authoritative Whitehall source, that Britain had a use for Northern Ireland which did not include having it settle down as part of the democracy of the British state. He was made to understand that there were sufficient reasons of state which required that the Six Counties should not be governed as an integral part of the state.

In the mid-1970s we were approached by somebody who had been much influenced by Paisley, and had been close to him, and had also been influenced by Athol St. Such people were not rare. This particular person was both a trade union shop-steward and a lay preacher—a combination that was not rare. He told us that in the early seventies he had belonged to a group which had taken seriously Paisley's talk about resistance. They had taken it too seriously for Paisley's liking. He had called the leaders of this group to a confidential meeting at which he told them that the unification of Ireland was inevitable, and admonished them that they must not attempt to resist it by force. Our informant, who could not be disbelieved, had been made bitterly anti-Paisleyite by the experience. He saw it as mere duplicity that Paisley should make stirring speeches which roused the spirit of resistance and should then go on to subvert that spirit. But it was not mere duplicity. It was

expressive of the dilemma which the Ulster Protestant community allowed itself to be put into when, following its terrorist resistance to the Third Home Rule Bill, it accepted Home Rule for itself outside the politics of the state.

"*Sitting down with terrorists*" is a mere debating point when put by Unionists. Without terrorism Northern Ireland would not have existed.

Unionists in recent times asserted that the existence within the state of an army which was not authorised by the state was an act of terrorism regardless of whether it was actually shooting people. We did not dispute the point. But it does not only apply in one direction. If the IRA on Ceasefire was engaged in terrorist action by virtue of existing, then so was the Ulster Volunteer Force that was raised in 1912 to prevent the implementation of the Home Rule Bill. And the 'Northern Ireland state' concocted in 1921 was in substance nothing but the terrorist UVF made legal by Westminster.

Unionism in official authority never succeeded in establishing political legitimacy for itself *vis a vis* the minority of a third (which has now risen to well over 40%). The purposefulness with which that minority supported the terrorist action waged on its behalf against the arrangements won by the terrorism of the majority in an earlier generation is what brought about the present *rapprochement*. Democracy has nothing to do with it. The new arrangements are more blatantly undemocratic than the old. It is now officially laid down that the majority shall not govern.

There is no normal, "bread and butter", politics in the situation, which might be the source of a real party-political division that might supersede the communal division. Both sides represent the workers more or less. Both sides are socialists more or less—as it goes these days. Both want lots of money to spend—which is to say, they want the state to give them lots of money. The points of disagreement will be the old points of communal disagreement in internal matters—with the Protestants in control of planning trying to constrict Catholic expansion.

Sinn Fein has a purpose beyond the 'Northern Ireland state'. The DUP has the purpose of curbing that purpose by implicating Sinn Fein as far as possible in 'the Northern Ireland state'.

Editorial Commentary

SDLP Hibernianism Mark Durkan has been increasingly returning the SDLP to its Hibernian roots—as opposed to the Civil Rights input of John Hume—in an effort to retain an electoral base. In January ex-Minister for Agriculture Brid Rodgers mischievously appealed to Sinn Fein "to reconsider their support for the entrenchment of MI5 in Ireland—a reincarnation of an unreformed Special Branch, a law unto themselves and answerable to no-one" (IN 17.1.07), while in April, Upper Bann MLA Dolores Kelly objected to a NIO incentive scheme to diminish Loyalist paramilitarism, and demanded an "end to grants solely for loyalist areas" (IT 13.4.07). Worst of all has been Kelly's further opportunist intervention over an impending SF/DUP deal over marches. The grapevine says that SF is negotiating concessions on marching—including allowing the Garvaghy Road Orange march in Portadown—in return for the DUP permitting implementation of the *Irish Language Act*, which SF negotiated at St. Andrews. SF denies it is negotiating with the DUP, but indications that such a deal is in prospect are the resignation from SF of Brendan Mac Cionnaith, spokesman of the Garvaghy Road Residents' Coalition in Portadown (IN 10.4.07) and Hain's appointment of Paddy Ashdown (a former soldier in NI, ex-MP and servant of NATO) to conduct a general review of parading. Dolores Kelly's strident objection to such a trade-off was reported on the front page of the *Irish News* with the headline, *SF Warned Not To Barter Away Residents' Rights*. The right concerned is that the Orange Order should be forced to negotiate with residents: "Dialogue is a requirement of principle and it cannot just be traded away in some sort of secret, backroom deal" (16.4.07). But local dialogue has been superseded by dialogue in the Executive of the Assembly. Moreover, the most serious community commitment to Irish as a living language is in NI, and particularly W. Belfast—and the *Irish Language Act* would ensure significant State support to a unique Irish development, so confirming the new status of the Catholic community in the governance of NI. After calling its Ceasefire, SF pulled the Catholic Hibernian constituency in behind itself, with a strategy of forcing negotiations over marches through Catholic areas—which was also a tactic in the power struggle of the communities. Now, having forced the Protestant community to recognise it as a legitimate political

expression of the Catholic community, it may be prepared to set Hibernianism aside, but the SDLP is mounting a rearguard action to maintain anti-Protestant attitudes as a tactic for electoral survival.

UUP Reincarnation: Funnily enough, the SDLP's counterpart, the Ulster Unionist Party, which now has only one MP at Westminster and did not have a single MLA elected on the first count in the recent election, is moving in the opposite direction. **Sir Reg Empey** is embarking on a "crusade" to reinvigorate the party, and says: "We must reach out to that growing number of people who do not classify themselves as either unionist or nationalist... by persuading them of our vision for Northern Ireland". And **Lord Trimble** has gone a step further by jumping ship and joining the Conservative Party (IT 23.4.07, IN 17.4.07). However, as noted last month's *Commentary*, the Conservatives in NI will designate themselves as "Unionist" in the Assembly, as Empey's UUP will continue to do. Roy Garland has pointed out the difficulties Empey faces if it is to be "more welcoming... to Catholics", saying "There are still too many tiny branch meetings insisting on singing God Save the Queen out of tune and in some cases starting meetings with Christian prayers..." (IN 16.4.07).

Speaking at a lecture commemorating the late Professor Antony Alcock at the University of Ulster, **David Trimble** revealed that, as a side-deal in 1998, Prime Minister Blair promised him that the British Labour Party "would organise in Northern Ireland" (IT 26.4.07), adding that the promise had been broken as the Party still did not organise in NI. (The current position is that the LP now accepts members in NI, but they are not allowed to do anything.)

Sir Kenneth Bloomfield, head of the NI Civil Service under Brian Faulkner, has suggested in a new book, *A Tragedy Of Errors—The Government And Misgovernment Of NI* (Liverpool University Press), that the Protestant community might be better off in a united Ireland if the new governing arrangements in NI prove too fractious. In any subsequent restoration of Direct Rule, the UK would be "increasingly cool", and reduce the NI subvention. Moreover:

"Nor can one ignore the fact that, amongst all the citizens of this supposedly United Kingdom, we alone have been afforded no opportunity to vote for a party now deeply entrenched in the government of our country.

"There are moments, I confess, when even I—the son of English parents, although born in Ulster, a graduate of Oxford University and a Knight

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www.atholbooks.org

Commander of the Most Noble Order of the Bath—wonder if we would not enjoy a more dignified position as a community within a united Ireland" (IN, 6.4.07).

Electoral Weight: John Robb has suggested that NI would have better representation in an Irish Parliament than it has in Westminster, with 33 seats out of 200, as opposed to 18 out of 646 (letter, IN 9.4.07). Certainly that would give approximately 1 in 6 representation, as opposed to 1 in 36. And, no doubt, Irish political parties would organise in NI and so offer the prospect of Cabinet representation. But Robb misses the point: it is not union with Britain, or good government, that political Protestantism wants, but simply to stay out of Ireland by whatever means come to hand.

PUP Reassured: After the DUP/SF deal, the PUP met Taoiseach Ahern: "*We sought assurances that there would be no joint authority and the Taoiseach told us, as far as he was concerned, the constitutional question had been settled and is off the table. There is no Plan B and they'll not be working towards any Plan B. They're quite happy to work the Good Friday Agreement and the St Andrews Agreement and I am reassured by that*", said PUP leader, Dawn Purvis (IT 26.4.07).

The UVF is reported to be now ready to 'stand down' its members, but not to decommission (IN 10.4.07).

"...without the Provos, Paisley would have remained just a two-bit provincial demagogue", says Ruth Dudley Edwards (S. Independent 25.2.07). She adds "*Those who turned the North into a hellhole are to be rewarded*". This historian seems to be unaware that Paisley had stature well before the Provos came into existence, helping to bring about the downfall of Premier Terence O'Neill for the crime of meeting Taoiseach Sean Lemass and starting minimal inter-governmental cooperation.

Bertie Ahern will be the first Taoiseach to address the two Houses of the British Parliament on 15th May: this fact was omitted by the *Irish Times* in its single-column front-page report of 28th April. What was not left out was a reference to the *Quarryvale Two* module of the Mahon Tribunal, which it pointed out was scheduled to start on 30th April, with the failure of Mrs. Hazel Lawlor to win a delay. (However, the High Court has allowed her to proceed with parts of her legal challenge to the way the Mahon Tribunal operates, including the practice of finding people guilty on the balance of probabilities, instead of on the basis of conclusive proof.) The *Irish Times* interest in the Tribunal lies in the evidence of Tom Gilmartin, an eccentric

developer who has been given a generous legal immunity and who is expected to allege that developer Owen O'Callaghan gave Mr. Ahern IR£100,000 when he starts giving evidence on 1st May. Putting the two stories in the same report indicates that the paper hopes there will be a week of sensationalist allegations by Gilmartin to counteract the kudos for Ahern and Ireland in this unique address to both Houses of the British Parliament, which no other Taoiseach has ever won.

Irish Buses For UVF? In a deal brokered by a shop steward at Wrightbus and Peter Bunting of the ICTU, Dublin Bus has given a contract worth £7.8m for 48 buses to the Ballymena company, which was facing closure. Now something like 80% of its output will be for the South. The company has been a Loyalist stronghold down the years, yet now, after an anonymous tip-off, one of its employees has been charged with paramilitary-type offences, possession of documents likely to be of use to terrorists and 9mm ammunition "*at the plant at Galgorm outside Ballymena, Co Antrim, between a date unknown and April 11.*" Darren Leslie Richardson pleaded "*Definitely not guilty*". Management has emphasised that it has "*an active policy of promoting a neutral working environment for all its employees*" (IN 14.4.07).

MI5 No Role-Model For FBI: says former Director of the FBI Louis Freeh [sic], who worked closely with MI5 during his tenure. In a *Wall Street Journal* editorial, Mr. Freeh has rejected Federal Circuit Court Judge Richard Posner's suggestion that MI5's methods should be adopted in the USA: "Establishing in effect a secret police to monitor, collect and keep under observation those whom a nontransparent agency believes to be a threat to the republic is a dangerous and dumb idea. Judge Posner's citation to England's MI5 is romantic enough but needs to be qualified by the long and painful history of its operations in Northern Ireland, which are still unfolding after decades of secrecy and nontransparency" (http://216.239.59.104/search?q=cache:SbI_SOC_tPsJ:www.fbi.gov/pressrel/_pressrel07freeh033107.htm+%22Freeh%22+%2B+FBI+Website+%2B+MI5&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=2&gl=uk&ie=UTF-8).

Finian McGrath v. Michael McDowell: the Minister for Justice has rejected the plea of the Independent TD for Dublin North that Stephen Birney, a convicted IRA man, be paroled to sit for an entrance examination for a music degree. Birney is serving four years for a 2002 offence of membership of an illegal organisation. (IN 16.4.07).

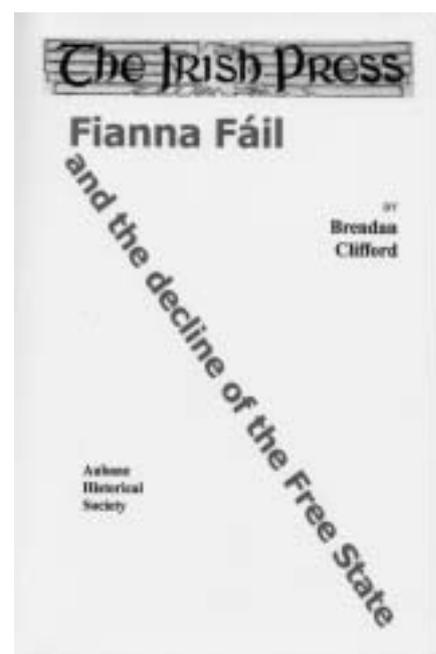
Mattie McGrath, Tipp North: FF HQ has finally ratified the candidature of the popular Clonmel Co. Councillor, after a

dirty tricks campaign saw him charged for trying to quell some youth disorder in his home village of Newcastle. McGrath had been threatening a High Court action if he was kept off the ballot. The Councillor was FF's only poll-topper in the 2004 Local Elections, and joins FF's other two candidates—**Martin Mansergh** and Siobhán Ambrose—in the three-seat constituency. The sitting FF TD, Noel Davern, is retiring, and the other two seats are currently held by Tom Hayes of FG and Séamus Healy, a socialist Independent (IT 24.4.07).

Daniel Cohn-Bendit, the former extreme communist, is now on globalist message. He defined the issues in the French Presidential election as being:

"How to accept the market economy, but to make it social and ecological, not leave it in the hands of ultra-liberals..."

"We must accept the market economy rather than central planning, the capacity of the market to create a dynamic, but at the same time the market must be controlled by laws so that the strong do not gobble up the weak" (Lara Marlowe, IT 26.4.07).



Fianna Fáil, The Irish Press And The Decline Of The Free State,

by
Brendan Clifford.

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Report: *Das Kapital* Book launch

***Das Kapital*: A Critical Appreciation**

On Friday 20th there was a book launch of *Das Kapital Reviewed* by John Martin. The launch began with a 40 minute talk by the author. He argued that *Das Kapital* remained relevant because capitalism still exists and that Marx's classic work was a description of the laws of motion of the capitalist system rather than an analysis of communism.

He proceeded to summarise the main ideas of *Das Kapital*, such as the labour theory of value and surplus value. Marx's theory on the primitive accumulation of capital and how capitalism developed in the USA by means of the state bankrupting small capitalists was most interesting. Martin's conclusion was that Marx believed that politics determined economics and that, while the economic system might produce a political culture which reinforced the system, a new economic system had to be preceded by the appropriate politics. Marx was not an economic determinist in the crude sense described by some commentators.

He also subjected Marx's classic work to criticism. He expressed the view that Marx's understanding of money was wrong in key parts. There are other errors such as his analysis of the turnover of capital in Volume 2 and the rate of profit in Volume 3. In both cases Engels's analysis was superior. The author did not apologise for such criticism and made the point that Marx's deification by sections of the left had disabled people from engaging with his ideas with the effect that his legacy had been interred.

The weaknesses of Marx's analysis notwithstanding, Martin felt that there were at least two themes in *Das Kapital*, which are more relevant in the twenty-first century than in the nineteenth century. The first is the idea that capitalism had the tendency to make itself into an international system and destroy other modes of production. This is known today as globalisation.

The second idea was that one of the historic tasks of capitalism was to "*socialise production*". Before capitalism a high proportion of the production of the individual producer was consumed by the producer himself and his family. Specialisation meant that less of his production was produced for himself and a greater proportion was produced for society through the market place.

Capitalism brought this tendency towards socialisation to a new level. Under this system the mass of people did not have access to the means of production and therefore had no option but to sell their labour power. This put them completely at the mercy of society.

Marx described how even the individual character of labour was lost under capitalism. In the early stages of capitalism the worker became alienated from the product of his labour by performing a specialised task within the production process. This had the tendency of de-skilling labour and making it easier for it to be transferred across industries. In a later stage of capitalism Marx noticed that labour had to adapt to the production process. Martin described his own experience of business and suggested that this tendency had continued. All the elements of the system have become more integrated. Customers audited their suppliers' production processes. Information was shared across industries and between industries. The system has the appearance of a unified social mechanism.

Martin concluded by suggesting that, now that communism was no longer tied to the interests of powerful totalitarian states, it was time to look again at what Marx wrote. He hoped that his book would contribute to a revival of interest in Marx's economic theories.

The meeting was then opened to the floor. One speaker asked what Marx had to do with communism or socialism. He had very little to say about the state or trade unions. It was also said that much of *Das Kapital*, particularly Volume 2 and Volume 3, reads like a manual for the development of capitalism. It was thought that this might have reflected the influence of Engels who came from a capitalist background.

Martin conceded that in some ways Marx was an enthusiastic exponent of capitalism in the sense that he despised socialists who wished to halt its development and described those people as petit bourgeois reactionaries. Nevertheless Marx believed that there was a contradiction in the system in that capitalism had socialised production but it had remained in private hands. Marx was vague as to how the capitalist system would be transformed into communism

but at least his description of capitalism had given an orientation to communist politics.

Another speaker suggested that the most political part of *Das Kapital* was Volume 1 and that maybe Volumes 2 and 3 should be dispensed with. It was also suggested that Marx had a damaging effect on German Social Democracy and that German socialism was developing at the beginning of the nineteenth century from feudal forms without going through the capitalist phase as described by Marx. This had disabled the orthodox German Marxists from developing socialism in Germany.

Another speaker remarked that capitalism had been most successful in Germany and Japan where the de-skilling process of labour as described by Marx had not taken place.

There also followed a discussion of what a capitalist was. Martin suggested that an entrepreneur was not a capitalist *per se*. A capitalist was a capitalist by virtue of his ownership of capital. This was what entitled him to profits. An entrepreneur might also be a capitalist but only because he owned capital and not by virtue of his entrepreneurial activities. Capitalists appoint a managerial class to look after their interests. In many cases they have no intellectual interest in the industries in which their managers were working. They were only interested in the dividends or capital gains. If a manager failed to produce the required return he was sacked.

A speaker suggested that under proposals for industrial democracy in Britain in the early 1970s there was a possibility of that country moving away from a system of capitalist control. A report by Lord Bullock had advocated worker participation on the Board of Directors. This proposal collapsed because of opposition from the left. Martin commented that in the 1970s the system was moving away from capitalist control in any case and that managers were running industry independently of the shareholders. This was described as "*The Managerial Revolution*" in a book by James Burnham. In the 1980s Thatcher in Britain and the neo-cons in the USA reasserted the rights of shareholders and were supported by people like James Goldsmith.

At an informal discussion after the public meeting the question arose as to how the working class interest could be advanced under current circumstances. Martin suggested that, just as labour had been de-skilled under capitalism, the running of the capitalist system had been

also de-skilled. Managers, like workers could move from different branches of industry without difficulty. The weakness of the Bullock proposals was that the increased power of the working class was not underpinned by ownership of property.

The social ownership of the means of production might pass through an intervening period of collective ownership of property by workers in individual enterprises, which would be partly financed by the state. Such a transfer might occur in a similar fashion to the way land was transferred from British absentee landlords to Irish tenant farmers in the early part of the twentieth century. It was noted that the Irish Land League leader Michael Davitt wrote quite extensively on the subject of the British working class and that his writings should be re-visited.



Das Kapital Reviewed, A Modern Business Approach To Marxism by John Martin.

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Shorts

from
the Long Fellow

THE IRISH TIMES'S IDEOLOGICAL STRUGGLE

Rebranding Ourselves was the title of an editorial in *The Irish Times*, on 17th March, our national day. This was not in the context of a campaign to sell our goods abroad but was something *The Irish Times* thinks we should do for ourselves.

There is no doubt that the State and our identity has been a problem for *The Irish Times* for most of the period since independence (the exception was during the two periods of Douglas Gageby's editorship). The arrival of immigrants to our shores has given *The Irish Times* an opportunity to escape from the shameful and "narrow" "old Irish" *persona*. This is what the editorial says:

"The process in which we have been engaged in recent years, the gradual internalisation in all of us of a new sense of inclusive Irishness, is not just about accepting that one can be black and Irish, or Polish and Irish; it is also about national reconciliation and a new relationship with the "old enemy" so magnificently expressed at the Ireland-England game in Croke Park."

We have to be different to accommodate the "new Irish" and not just in an outward superficial way. The difference must be internalised. And a pleasant side effect *per The Irish Times* will be a new relationship with England. The incorporation of the immigrants amounts to nothing less than a "redefinition of Irish society".

On a similar theme—and all themes in *The Irish Times* tend to be similar—Fintan O'Toole has discovered a new reason for us to be ashamed of ourselves. We were slave owners.

"Consider, for example, this year's St Patrick's Day celebrations. There is an obvious connection between St Patrick and the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade in the British Empire, of which we were then a part. Patrick came here first as a slave, reminding us that the institution was an Irish one as well. And he wrote the oldest extant protest against enslavement, the Letter to Coroticus. Dublin, which hosts the main parade, was at one time the major centre of the Viking slave trade. It would seem obvious that slavery should have been the theme of this year's parade. But it doesn't seem to have occurred to anyone" (*The Irish Times*, 31.3.07).

A great opportunity for national self-flagellation was missed! Of course, in *The Irish Times* view of the world it is irrelevant that the Irish State did not exist when all of

this was happening. We should still wallow in our shame.

But *The Irish Times* and Fintan O'Toole have unwittingly highlighted a genuine problem. The 17th of March has no meaning other than as an opportunity to express national pride. There is absolutely no connection between St. Patrick and modern Ireland. Modern Irish Catholicism has its origins in the nineteenth century. It is time that we followed the example of other countries and celebrate the seminal event in the foundation of the state: in our case, the 1916 Rising. And, in keeping with our new "inclusive Ireland", it should be detached from its movable Christian feast and celebrated on the date it happened: April 24th.

THE IRISH TIMES'S POLITICAL STRUGGLE

So much for the ideological struggle! *The Irish Times* has not neglected the political struggle. In its editorial of 2nd April it gave vent to its customary anti-Fianna Fail bias.

"Fine Gael has offered the electorate something new and resisted a further bout of auction politics by concentrating on "the vision thing" and on commitments already made. As a tactic, it contrasted favourably with Fianna Fail's unambiguous vote-buying exercise of last week, while offering a safe pair of hands in government."

In the next paragraph it gave examples of "the vision thing" which, of course, could not be examples of "auction politics" because they were Fine Gael policies.

"The centrepiece of the ardheis involved party leader Enda Kenny offering a political contract to provide an additional 2,300 acute hospital beds, 2,000 gardai, lower income taxes and reductions in stamp duty."

But, at least, Fianna Fail has not yet caved in to the media campaign on Stamp Duty.

THE IRISH TIMES'S STRUGGLE AGAINST REALITY

Readers might be under the impression that an opinion poll is a snapshot of voters preferences at a given point in time. But *The Irish Times* polls have gone beyond such pedestrian thinking.

In the *Irish Times*/TNS MRBI poll published in 27th April the core vote percentages are as follows: Fianna Fail 32, Fine Gael 23, Labour 7, Sinn Fein 8, Greens 4, Progressive Democrats 2, Independents 5, Undecided 19. On this basis most readers would assume that the Fine Gael/Labour coalition is behind Fianna Fail by 2 percentage points and 4 points behind the Fianna Fail/PD coalition.

But that's not what the headlines said. The headlines focussed on the "adjusted" figures after the 19 percent undecided was taken out of the figures. The adjusted figures show that the Fine Gael/Labour coalition had passed out the Government parties.

How did the *Irish Times* poll manage this? The trick is in distributing the 19 percent undecided among the parties. The pollsters give Fianna Fail just an extra 2 points out of the 19, but give Fine Gael 8 points, Labour 3, Sinn Fein 2, Greens 2, the PDs 1 and Independents 1. So the adjusted figures give Fianna Fail 34, Fine Gael 31, Labour 10, Sinn Fein 10, Greens 6, PDs 3 and Independents 6. And *Voila*, a Fine Gael/Labour coalition is considered the most likely result of the election.

How does the TNS MRBI polling organisation justify this? In an interview on Newstalk 106 a spokesman said that the opinion poll assumes that Fianna Fail's support will drop during the election campaign. This is what happened in previous election campaigns. So the opinion poll is not a snapshot of opinion, it is adjusted for what *The Irish Times*/TNS MRBI think (hope?) will happen during the campaign.

THE INDEPENDENT GROUP'S CAMPAIGN

The *Sunday Independent* has also displayed an anti-Fianna Fail bias in recent months. But the Independent group—unlike *The Irish Times*—is not subject to an oath-bound Directory, which controls the newspaper and maintains ideological purity. The Independent group is therefore not impervious to changing political circumstances.

On the 15th April its campaign against Stamp Duty was supplemented with a front page story on Bertie Ahern. Apparently in the early 1990s Ahern's then partner Celia Larkin went to the bank and returned with a briefcase. She asked Ahern's Garda chauffeur to mind the case overnight. The latter couldn't resist taking a peek and saw that there was an unspecified amount of money in the case. The following day Ahern went to Manchester with the briefcase. And that's the story, which Ahern denies and which the Garda chauffeur does not want to comment on and hasn't commented on since 2000. The only interesting part was that the person who brought it to the attention of the *Sunday Independent* journalist was Jim Higgins MEP, of Fine Gael, who telephoned the Garda in question and then put his phone on speaker mode, allowing the journalist to hear the conversation unknown to the Garda.

The *Sunday Independent* was disgusted by Fine Gael's attempts to deny that it was behind the story even though it appeared in the *Irish Mail on Sunday* the same day. Apparently, the *Sunday Independent* has no problem with dirty tricks, it just feels that the purveyors should show a bit more 'bottle' when the going gets tough. So from being anti-Fianna Fail on 15th April it became anti-Fine Gael the following Sunday.

(Incidentally, there is another twist to this story, in that the Garda who breached

the confidence reposed in him was called Fallon, a relation of the Garda shot by bank robbers in 1970. The *Sunday Tribune* attempted an additional smear on Ahern in its front-page lead on the incident, with an article entitled *Bertie Briefcase Claims: Row Dates Back To Arms Trial Gun-Running* by Justin McCarthy and Kevin Rafter.)

THE FRENCH PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

The first round of the French Presidential Election had a very large turnout of 84%. There is no doubt that the impetus for the high turnout was the personality of Nicholas Sarkozy, who engenders both adulation and hatred. *The Long Fellow* knows of French communists who voted for Bayrou on the basis that this centrist candidate was more likely to defeat Sarkozy than the Socialist candidate Segolene Royal in the second round.

The campaign was a disaster for the Communist Party, which achieved less than 2% of the vote. With memories still fresh of the debacle of the 2002 election when Jean Marie Le Pen beat the socialist candidate Lionel Jospin for the second round run off against Jacques Chirac, left wing voters were not likely to vote for the smaller left wing parties.

Nevertheless, the Communist Party made itself completely irrelevant. Its squandered the enormous credit it obtained after its leadership role in the defeat of the European Constitutional referendum. The weakness of the anti-Sarkozy campaign is that it is just that: a negative campaign. The opposition to Sarkozy has nothing to offer as an alternative to the latter's Anglo-Saxon project.

Towards the end of the Constitutional Referendum campaign there were signs of a *rapprochement* between the Communist Party and Laurent Fabius, the Socialist Party Deputy Leader. A long interview with Fabius appeared in the communist newspaper, *l'Humanite* and he was invited to the *Fete de l'Humanite*, one of the largest festivals in Europe, which is organised by the newspaper. However, he was spat on by communist rank-and-file who remembered his arrogance as a young Prime Minister in the Mitterrand era. Fabius, for all his faults, was the only viable left wing alternative to Sarkozy, but the Communist Party did not have the courage to persist with him as it did with Mitterrand.

The Long Fellow likes the Communist Party leader Marie George Buffet, but regrettably she does not have the leadership qualities to breath new life into what was once the largest political party in France. A translation of her election manifesto appears below.

"All must be done to beat Nicholas Sarkozy

By beating all records in voter participation under the Fifth Republic,

our people have just shown the importance of this ballot, clearly dominated by a central question: for or against Nicholas Sarkozy. Exacerbated by the "President-ialism" and "mediatisation", this issue dominated all others. For the left the terrible danger of a coalition of the right and extreme right gave an impetus to tactical voting which benefited enormously Segolene Royal and even partly Francois Bayrou. This was particularly a factor for those on the left, in particular communists determined to ensure a victory for the left. These results do not reflect the true strength of the Communist Party in our country. Nicholas Sarkozy is a dangerous man who has deliberately taken the unsupportable themes of the National Front so as to become the candidate of the right and the extreme right. He must absolutely be beaten. Conscious of the inadequacies and ambiguities of the programme of the socialist candidate, I am calling without hesitation on every man and woman of the left to vote and encourage a vote for Segolene Royal on the 6th of May.

I am launching this appeal with all the more force because the situation is difficult. With less than 40% of the vote the left obtained one of its lowest results under the Fifth Republic. I am calling on communists and all those who have supported me in a magnificent campaign of mobilisation and determination not to relinquish your effort. Up until the 6th of May it is necessary to do everything to defeat Nicholas Sarkozy. It is vital for our people who will suffer if for the next five years the ultra liberal policy of the right decides to finish once and for all our social system.

What I wish to say is that despite this result, clearly far from our hopes, we led a fine campaign. We have never conceded that it is not possible to bring fundamental change in France. Throughout this campaign I could gauge the expectations which were powerfully shown in the struggles against the Raffarin reforms, in the campaign against the liberal European Constitution or resisting the withdrawal of the CPE. These tendencies are always present and expect a response from the left.

During all these weeks communist activists, the numerous elected officials who supported me, the actors of the social movement, the men and women who were at my side during this campaign showed great determination to win for France the ideas of social progress and humanity. These ideas, whatever is said to us in the next few weeks, are and will always be alive. And the Communist Party will always be there to articulate them, to reinforce them in the struggles, to bring them to the side of the men and women of France who today dream of a better life. I wish to repeat here. There will never be in France any submission to unemployment, to poverty, to the life, which is imposed on us. So, from tomorrow let us continue the fight to defeat the right and to impose on the legislative elections in a few weeks the change, which our country is in need of."

"Harry Boland was murdered by the IRB"

Part 5 of this series (*Irish Political Review*, January 2007) was entitled *The Title Deeds Of Assassination*. This referred to Michael Collins's IRB assassination of Sir Henry Wilson; the British Government's false accusation that it had been Collins's anti-Treaty IRA opponents in the Four Courts who were responsible; Collins's compliance with the British Government's demand that his Free State Army should therefore launch a Civil War by attacking the Four Courts; and Churchill's resulting message to Collins:

"If I refrain from congratulation it is only because I do not wish to embarrass you. The Archives of the Four Courts may be scattered but the title-deeds of Ireland are safe".

But there was to be another IRB assassination that was particularly vital to the consolidation of the Free State, that of Harry Boland. There are three vital elements that determine that this was indeed a political assassination, rather than just some tragic—but nonetheless accidental—outcome of a scuffle, as Boland attempted to escape from a Free State army raid.

- (1) The failure to provide the badly-wounded Boland with any hospital attention whatsoever for over eight hours, by which time his resulting death had been assured;
- (2) The specialist IRB/Intelligence status of the assassin himself;
- (3) The political purpose served by that assassination.

The most straightforward account in respect of the first point is to be found in a work that exhibits the utmost integrity from page to page, *Harry Boland—A Biography*, by Jim Maher (1998). He recounts:

"Those who had carried out the raid were all from the Fingal Brigade of the Free State army and were stationed in Balbriggan Coastguard Station—all except one who was sent to identify Harry Boland when arrested. Harry was wounded between 1am and 2am on 31 July (1922). A priest and doctor were summoned. The doctor dressed the wound and requested an ambulance. The raiding party phoned for an ambulance but Harry was not moved from the Grand Hotel (Skerries, Co. Dublin) until 6.30 am—over four hours later. Though carrying a seriously injured man, the ambulance crew passed the Mater Hospital and did not stop to have him urgently admitted. Instead

they brought him to Portobello Barracks where they kept him for at least two more hours, although he was badly in need of surgical treatment. He was not transferred to St. Vincent's Hospital until 10.00am that morning."

"This delay was indefensible. Harry Boland had three life-threatening injuries. His diaphragm was pierced and his spleen and liver were lacerated. There was extensive internal bleeding which caused severe pain. Even with today's improved methods of surgery and anaesthesia, it would be touch and go whether he would survive. But to hold him eight hours before bringing him to a hospital where surgical treatment was available, was bordering on criminal negligence by the Free State authorities. This long delay merited a thorough public investigation that was never carried out . . ."

"Harry was conscious when (his sister Kathleen) arrived... Kathleen asked him who shot him. 'The only thing I'll say is that it was a friend of my own who was in Lewes Prison with me. I'll never tell his name and don't try to find out. I forgive him and want no reprisals. I want to be buried in the grave in Glasnevin with Cathal Brugha'... Mary McWhorter described Harry's last hour before he died: 'Harry went peacefully to his Maker just at ten minutes after nine in the evening of 1 August'..." (pp242-4).

Such clarity of narrative in respect of Harry Boland's death disappears in favour of obfuscation in what has now been presented as the 'definitive' biography, *Harry Boland's Irish Revolution* by David Fitzpatrick (2004). I reviewed this book in the Summer 2004 issue of *History Ireland* and I restate some of its arguments hereunder:

The author seems to adopt the maxim of "hating the sin but loving the sinner". Fitzpatrick has long argued that such a revolution was aberrant, that it was "the violence caused by the rebels which led to the shelling of the GPO in the first place", and that "it is no wonder that 1916 led to an escalation of British violence in Ireland" (*Irish Times*, 9 November 1996).

And so we have the gratuitous sneer at 1916 as "the orgasmic moment of insurrection" (p34); Harry described as joining "Traynor's wreckers" (p43); "alcoholic memories" stated to be "the very essence of Gaelic culture" (p72); Boland's mother snidely referred to as a "self-styled 'bean an tigh' (woman of the house)" (p30); and the acclaimed poet Monsignor Pádraig de Brún derided

because he "added his voice to the chorus" of "doggerelists" on Harry's death in 1922 and did not rest "content with celebrating Harry's requiem Mass" (p12).

When writing of the War of Independence, "murder" and "extermination" are terms freely used by Fitzpatrick himself to describe actions by "notorious" Republicans (pp170 and 176). As for British actions, one can only find the word "murder" deeply embedded in a quotation from Harry himself (p181). "Self-determination" is another term Fitzpatrick insists on placing in quotation marks (p104), while any such qualifying punctuation goes out the window when celebrating as Irish patriots those who, as opposed to Harry, adopted "the struggle against German tyranny as Ireland's war" and "hoped for Anglo-Irish reconciliation through shared sacrifice in a common battle against despotism and oppression" (pp134-135 and 106). Fitzpatrick proceeds to go completely over the top when he also writes of "John Redmond's appeal to fight the Axis powers"! (p35). "Axis" was in fact a fascist term first coined by the Italian dictator Mussolini in 1936 to describe his alliance with Nazi Germany, although, like the Redmondites, Mussolini himself had previously fought in support of Britain's war against the Kaiser's Germany.

When the Axis powers did go on to fight a very different war, the one Irish politician who indirectly became a victim of their fascist tyranny was Bob Briscoe, whose family could individually name 156 of his aunts, uncles and cousins consumed by the Holocaust. But Briscoe's own 1958 autobiography stands out as a direct refutation of Fitzpatrick's anti-historical conflation of the First and Second World Wars. The thoroughly anti-Nazi Briscoe still recalled with affection the "kindly, hospitable German folk" he had known in Berlin while happily working for two years in "the Kaiser's paternalist state", up to "the minute that everything changed on August 4, 1914, when England declared war on Germany". Further recalling how in December 1914 he had couriered dispatches from Connolly to Larkin in New York that were destined for the German ambassador, Briscoe remained proud of his part in "the attempt of Irish patriots to enlist German aid and German arms in Ireland's fight for liberation". (Robert Briscoe, *For The Life Of Me*, pp28-29 and 35-36).

Although Briscoe is indeed quoted as evidence of Boland's peace-making efforts at the outset of the Civil War, Fitzpatrick dismisses the man himself as "the Jewish gunrunner from Ranelagh" (p316). He disdains to enlist Briscoe's support for another argument of his, that "in retrospect Harry's closest comrades rejected the propagandist accusation that Collins and

his colleagues had conspired to murder Harry" (p322). While Fitzpatrick has unearthed a 1962 note to this effect from de Valera, that view had already been publicly proclaimed by Briscoe four years previously. Fitzpatrick's own inverted commas accordingly dispute Boland's inclusion among the "martyrs" of the Republic, and he writes in disapproving tones of how "authentic grief was a powerful engine of propaganda" that the Boland family "did not hesitate to deploy" (p7).

But what if he had been murdered? The unarmed Boland had been shot "while attempting to escape" on 31st July 1922, but it took another agonising 44 hours before he finally expired. Fitzpatrick does not seem to agree that the eight hours that elapsed between Harry being shot and finally brought to hospital would itself be sufficient reason to consider a verdict of culpable homicide. And yet Fitzpatrick's own further research suggests that, far from being some peculiar neurosis of the Boland family, the graver suspicion of murder might now turn out to be even more firmly grounded.

As he lay dying, Harry told his family that he had been shot by a former comrade with whom he had shared imprisonment in Lewes Jail, but he refused to name him. As there had been as many as 123 Republican prisoners in Lewes, this fact alone was not necessarily incompatible with the belief of both Briscoe and de Valera that the killer might just have been a nervous and relatively untrained soldier. Fitzpatrick, however, identifies a quite unique Lewes prisoner as having been responsible, one who like Harry himself had initially been sentenced to death in 1916. Apparently conforming to Boland's dying wish that he should not be named, Fitzpatrick does not do so in either the narrative or chapter notes. Nonetheless, Fitzpatrick then proceeds to name the killer in the index for the page on which he had been left anonymous! Far more significant, however, is his revelation that this killer was not only a highly experienced and accomplished intelligence officer, but a district centre of the IRB as well (p323-4).

It was, therefore, remiss of Fitzpatrick to relegate to a mere footnote the dying Boland's temporary sojourn in Portobello Barracks. This completely overlooks the fact that these last two hours of pre-hospitalisation were spent in what, since 12th July, had actually become the living quarters of Michael Collins himself, newly appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Free State Army, who also remained President of the Supreme Council of the IRB.

Dick Mulcahy, Chief-of-Staff and IRB Supreme Council member {not so; see correction below}, had already moved into Portobello on 1st July, together with

Joe McGrath as Director of Intelligence. Which of the killer's multi-faceted IRB/Army superiors was roused from bed that dawn to survey the results of his handiwork, express surprise that after so many hours Boland had not yet bled to death, and adjudicate that he might, after all, spend the remaining day and a half of his life dying in a hospital bed? Far from dispelling the "murder mystery" as a figment of the imagination of Harry's nephew and namesake Annraoi Ó Beoláin, Fitzpatrick's own detective work in profiling the killer has now given the conspiracy theory far greater substance than ever before.

In the Autumn 2004 issue of *History Ireland* Fitzpatrick took issue with my review, presented his use of the term "Axis" as a mere slip of the pen, and hotly contested my conclusion that Boland had been the victim of purposeful assassination. He also complained that I had not given page references for my quotations from his biography. I accept that this last criticism has some merit, but my reason for their omission was that an earlier draft of my review had been judged far too long and yet I still want to retain the maximum amount of commentary in the more limited space subsequently provided. In fairness to Fitzpatrick's concerns I have, however, now inserted those page references in the version reproduced above. My reply to Fitzpatrick's other criticisms was published in the Winter 2004 issue of *History Ireland* and included the following argument:

One problem with Fitzpatrick's partisanship is that it can devalue the results of his own superb capacity for research, even to the point of setting it at nought in at least one instance. This is where my call for a more serious consideration of the strong possibility, if not probability, that Harry Boland had indeed been murdered was dismissed by him as "O'Riordan's airy conjecture, not shared by Eamon de Valera or myself". But it is Fitzpatrick's own research that has demonstrated how Dev's conclusions were based on the ill-informed assumption "that the raiders were men who had not been accustomed to having guns in their hands and that they got excited and fired". And it is Fitzpatrick's own research that also leads him to the contrary conclusion that, far from being an inexperienced raiding party, "their revolutionary and military credentials were impeccable" and that "Harry had been struck down by his own kind".

Fitzpatrick was offered a further right of reply, but he declined that offer. Yet there was one error of fact in my original review that he had failed to correct—my mistaken belief that Free State army Chief-of-Staff Dick Mulcahy, who indeed had originally been an IRB member, had also gone on to become a member of its

Supreme Council in 1922.

An excellent portrayal of the views of Mulcahy—in support of both the Republic of 1919 and the Free State of 1922—was published in 1999 by his son Dr. Risteárd Mulcahy and entitled *Richard Mulcahy (1886-1971)—A Family Memoir*. In 2005 Risteárd kindly provided me with a copy of that memoir, which has the following to say in respect of the IRB:

"Several references are contained in the (Mulcahy) tape recordings to the influence Michael Collins may have had in provoking resistance to the acceptance of the Treaty and thus to the subsequent split in the army. These references are quoted from conversations Dad had with Páidín O'Keefe... secretary of Sinn Féin from October 1917... until the ratification of the Treaty {which O'Keefe supported—MO'R}... He was pursued relentlessly by my father in the early 1960s to record his experiences during his tenure of office with Sinn Féin... O'Keefe had a prodigious memory and he was an observant and uninhibited critic of those whom he served... He maintained that part of the vote against the Treaty was an anti-Collins vote, and that Collins first caused a degree of antagonism because he, with Harry Boland and Diarmuid O'Hegarty, three Volunteers and prominent IRB men, had the choice of candidates for the 1918 election... O'Keefe implies that the IRB, the 'secret organisation', operated effectively throughout the country to select the candidates. Hence his statement in answer to Dad's query that there was an anti-Collins vote on the Treaty which had its origin in the choices of candidates... O'Keefe's objective analysis of Collins might imply some criticism but Dad was certainly blind to any weaknesses in the Collins character or actions... By 1921 there was a degree of antipathy towards the IRB among other politicians, as well as Dev, Brugha and Stack..." (pp112-4).

"Dad was conscious and appreciative of the part the IRB members played in Collins's intelligence work before and during the War of Independence, and in establishing communication channels with the country forces and with contacts in Great Britain. As far as I can ascertain from his papers and recordings, Dad had no formal contact whatever with the IRB during the entire period from 1913 to 1924, although he was always thought of as an IRB man, even as late as 1924. His remoteness from the Brotherhood is apparent from the conversation he had with Seán MacEoin about the IRB on the telephone which is recorded on tape... However, it is clear from Dad's responses to MacEoin's comments, that the IRB was alive and well up to the time of the (Free State Army) mutiny in 1924, and that Dad was unaware that both Seán McMahan (active in IRB and IRA during the War of Independence, Chief-of-Staff during the Civil War after Collins's death and sacked by cabinet at

time of army mutiny—RM) and Seán Ó Muirthile, who were on the (Free State) Army Council during the Civil War and until they were sacked at the time of the mutiny, were also leaders of the IRB... It's likely that, because of his unique position as political and military head of the army {Minister for Defence and Commander-in-Chief—MO'R}, those members of the IRB who were closest to him were reluctant to inform him about their connection with the secret organisation, nor was such a revival by the senior officers of the Free State army in any way a sinister development in relation to the new state or the role of the army in defending the state" (pp74-75).

This can only be interpreted as a view that the role of the IRB had been limited to the objectives of defeating the IRA and consolidating the Free State.

"Dad was probably a little naïve in thinking the IRB was moribund at this juncture in the history of the State (1924), although he was certainly correct in thinking that IRB influence in the army was of no significance and that it had no further military aspirations. Nevertheless, he seemed a little embarrassed when he heard from MacEoin that Seán McMahon, the Chief-of-Staff of the Free State Army, was the head of the IRB in 1923, and that Seán Ó Muirthile, the Quartermaster General, was its Treasurer" (p202).

Again, this certainly can only be interpreted as a view that the IRB had no further military aspirations beyond winning the Civil War. But having launched that War, it required ruthless resolve to ensure that the IRB's Supreme Council was not undermined from within. And the greatest threat to the IRB's Free State strategy was the anti-Treaty stand taken by Harry Boland, a predecessor of Collins as IRB President {having succeeded its first post-Rising President Thomas Ashe, upon the latter's death in prison from forcible feeding} and his closest friend and right-hand man on its Supreme Council throughout the whole course of the War of Independence. For Fitzpatrick does indeed record, before pooh-poohing such conclusions, that an emissary of the IRB's counterpart in the USA, Clan-na-Gael, reported that—

"almost every wall in Cork was covered with such inscriptions as 'Harry Boland was murdered by the IRB'" (p2).

In his April 1929 speech on "The Right Deviation in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union" Joseph Stalin had summed up his political victory over Nikolai Bukharin with the following proclamation:

"In olden times it was said of the philosopher Plato: We love Plato, but we love truth more. The same might he said of Comrade Bukharin: We love Bukharin, but we love truth, the Party, the Comintern still more".

Strange as it may seem, the only element in the above statement whose genuineness I might question would be the concept of "truth" that Stalin loved. I do not at all doubt that Bukharin had been the one former colleague whom Stalin had come closest to loving, which, however, in no way constrained Stalin in his resolve to have Bukharin "judicially" executed in March 1938.

I am not at all suggesting that Stalin and Collins had similar personalities. But I do believe that Collins also possessed that revolutionary's single-minded sense of purpose to ruthlessly fulfil Oscar Wilde's maxim that "all men kill the thing they love", when circumstances had led him to finally conclude that he was left with no alternative. I nonetheless also accept as perfectly genuine the heartfelt character of what Collins wrote to his fiancée and Boland's own former girlfriend Kitty Kiernan on the day after Boland had finally succumbed to his deadly wounds:

"My mind went to him lying dead and I thought of the times together, and whatever good there is in any wish of mine he certainly had it. Although the gap of 8 or 9 months was not forgotten—of course no one can forget it—I only thought of him with the friendship of the days of 1918 and 1919" (Maher, p244).

Yet neither is it possible to be blind to the deadly seriousness of the effective death threat that Collins had penned to Boland only three days before he was to be finally and fatally hunted down:

"Harry—it has come to this! Of all things it has come to this. It is in my power to arrest and destroy you... If no words of mine will change your attitude then you are beyond all hope—my hope" (Maher, p240).

That very day the Free State army arrest of Seán T. O'Kelly, on the eve of his planned departure for the USA, proved to Collins that Boland was indeed now well beyond his hope. O'Kelly was being sent over to a convention of the IRB's American counterpart, Joe McGarrity's re-organised Clan-na-Gael, and his Free State captors found in O'Kelly's possession the following instructions from Boland:

"As the fight is likely to be long drawn out, we shall require money and material. Joe promises the full support of Clan. You could bring back with you all available money and arrange with the Clan to supply Thompsons, revolvers, .303, .405 etc. You could also organise a campaign in the USA" (Maher, p240).

The dynamics of IRB logic ensured that its murder of Boland now followed as assuredly as night follows day. It would be extremely naïve to regard the death of Boland—and of Collins himself, killed in action only three weeks later—as little else but terrible tragedies, although they

were all that too. It would have been strange if love was a passion immune from metamorphosing into hatred in the circumstances of what in Irish was named *Cogadh na gCarad*—the War of Friends. And who on the anti-Treaty side of the Civil War would have felt Boland's death most deeply and would have held Collins most responsible for it than those others who had also been previously so close to him on the IRB Supreme Council? In the 2005 edition of her biography of Liam Lynch, Meda Ryan brings two of them into the picture as follows:

"The Supreme Council requested Lynch to act as divisional officer (of the south Munster division of the IRB) in March 1921 to replace Tom Hales who had been arrested. Lynch agreed, thus he automatically gained a seat on the Supreme Council—a body which regarded itself as the guardian of Republican policy" (*The Real Chief—Liam Lynch*, p101).

As has been mentioned before in this series, in the case of the Hales family the Civil War can be even more precisely defined as the War of Brothers, with Tom taking the anti-Treaty and Seán the pro-Treaty side. Tom it was who had been subjected to horrific torture during the War of Independence on the order of Major Percival, best known during World War Two for his humiliating surrender of Singapore to the Japanese. In Peter Hart's *The IRA And Its Enemies* (1998) one of his more impressive examples of research concerns his study of the Hales family, a chapter entitled "*The Rise and Fall of a Revolutionary Family*". Hart's later book, *The IRA At War 1916-1923* (2003), is quite a different matter. Although its text contains not one single word concerning Hales, its in-your-face dust jacket consists of a grotesque Imperial War Museum photograph of Tom Hales and a demented Pat Harte being further humiliated in the immediate wake of their torture. For Hart to have endeavoured to boost the commercial sales of his book by exploiting the pornography of torture was as morally bankrupt as any photographs that came out of Abu Ghraib.

It was in fact Tim Pat Coogan, in his 1990 biography *Michael Collins*, who provided the most perceptive character assessment of the IRB/IRA leader Tom Hales:

"Torture was systematically employed to extract information from prisoners... as Tom Hales and Pat Harte found out to their cost when they were surprised by Major Percival of the Essex Regiment on 26 July 1920 near Bandon... Officers were instructed to beat him (Hales) with canes... on each side, until they 'drove blood out through him'. Then pliers were used on his lower body and to extract his finger nails, so that Hales says, 'My fingers were so bruised that I got unconscious'. On regaining consciousness he was

questioned about prominent figures including Michael Collins. He gave no information and two officers... punched him until he fell on the floor with several teeth either knocked out or loosened. Finally he was pulled by the hair to the top of the stairs and thrown to the bottom, where he was again beaten before being dragged to a cell. Hales recovered. Harte, however, suffered brain damage and died in hospital insane. There are two points worth noting about the Hales incident. One, the supreme irony of the fact that having endured such punishment to protect Collins he later played a prominent role in encompassing his death. Secondly, that he held out" (pp146-7).

"(Two months into the Civil War) Collins continued on that morning (of 22 August 1922) through Béal na mBláth... Meanwhile back at Béal na mBláth an ambush party under Tom Hales lay in wait... In Bandon Collins said goodbye to Seán Hales, laughingly shrugging off his warnings to be careful, and set off for Béal na mBláth where Seán's brother, his close friend Tom, was waiting to kill him... (His brother) Johnny Collins ... was well aware of the details of how Michael died from within a year of the death. The ambush had been the work of men who were neighbours and friends before the Civil War and they continued to be friends and neighbours after it. Tom Hales who 'cried his eyes out over the killing', took the initiative in making his peace with Johnny... and then, through him, other members of the party did likewise" (pp406-409).

And that, of course, is yet another illustration of the fact that the term Irish "Civil War" is a misnomer when compared with the conflicts of that same designation in other countries. This, however, did not make it any the less ruthless while it was actually being fought out. And the conflict in Ireland escalated still further with the State's murder of Erskine Childers and other Republican prisoners. IRA Chief-of-Staff Liam Lynch had previously done his level best to prevent any outbreak of Civil War, even distancing himself from Rory O'Connor's Four Courts garrison, until he felt he no longer had any alternative but to lead his army in the war that Collins had taken the initiative in launching against them. Rejecting the Treaty endorsed by his fellow members of the IRB Supreme Council, he himself now resorted to the IRB's own tradition of assassination, by sentencing to death all Treatyite TDs who had voted for the murderous legislation that had liquidated Childers. And yet all that too went wrong. The first target of such an assassination attempt on 7th December 1922, Pádraig Ó Máille TD, escaped with non-fatal wounds, but his companion, Seán Hales TD, was killed instead, even though he himself had actually been absent from the Dáil when that legislation had been enacted. The

Faulty Official Irish

The Irish Times did not see fit to publish the letter below, pointing out a poor translation into Irish of an official poster which the paper was paid to issue with its editions of 17th April.

I must express my gratitude to your paper for your supplement "How we are Governed" (17 April) sponsored by the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission. It is true, as is typical with such semi-official productions, the commentary tended somewhat towards the more unadventurous side of bland. It was then all the more stimulating and exciting when on turning to the Irish language version of the accompanying wall poster the reader encountered some gritty realism and bold self revelation.

For the translation to Irish from English of the poster a note explained we owe thanks to *An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta*; the state body charged with the development of Irish language learning in our schools. The main heading: "How we are Ruled" was translated into "*An Chaoi ina bhFulimid á Rialú*". That is, the phrase was represented by a series of Irish words which taken together are incoherent and ungrammatical. If you were bothered to represent "How we are Ruled" in grammatical Irish you might say "*An Chaoi ina Rialtar Sinn*".

Yet, might not a piece of ungrammatical drivel go further in representing the true reality of "How we are Ruled"? **Ted O'Sullivan** (19.4.2007)

vengeance exacted by the Free State Government on the following day, 8th December, was both fast and furious. Four prisoners from the Four Courts garrison were summarily executed, notwithstanding the protests of the Hales family at the "*criminal folly*" of such a "*reprisal for the death of our dearly beloved brother*". To the best of my knowledge, however, only one historian, C. Desmond Greaves, made any political sense of the choice of victims, when in 1971 he wrote:

"The men chosen were (Rory) 'Connor, (Joe) McKelvey, (Dick) Barrett and (Liam) Mellows. On what basis was the choice made? One man was taken from each province, it had been said. But who represented Connacht? Mellows was so unmistakably a Leinster man that nobody would seriously consider him in this connection, unless he was paying a belated penalty for his part in 1916 (in Galway). Again, if the choice was made on grounds of prominence, Barrett was virtually unknown. The intellect of a 'dangerous man' belonged only to Mellows and Barrett, the others were able but not outstanding. But all were IRB men who had left the fold, and above all, they knew too much. Mellows knew the revolutionary movement from its inception and was in the midst of all the unity negotiations. O'Connor knew the intrigues that surrounded the Plunkett Convention and the unification of Sinn Féin, and more embarrassing still, the campaign in England. McKelvey knew of the relations with the North. And finally, Barrett had been close to Collins and was familiar with the affairs of (Collins's War of Independence assassination body) 'the Squad'. Already Childers had carried to the grave his unrivalled knowledge of the 'Treaty' negotiations. Who can deny that when those four tongues were silenced the world became much safer

for 'official history'?" (*Liam Mellows And The Irish Revolution*, p385).

What, then, of Liam Lynch? Meda Ryan has written:

"Though the Free State government was bent on crushing the 'armed revolt' and forcing the opposition into an unconditional surrender, Liam Lynch had pledged that he would not surrender: 'We have declared for an Irish Republic and will not live under any other law'" (p13).

Lynch has abjured his oath of allegiance to the 'virtual Republic' of the IRB Supreme Council in order to defend the actual Republic of the 1918 Election. But a combination of military and political defeat at the hands of the Free State meant that this second Republic itself was now no longer sustainable. Only a few weeks after IRA Chief-of-Staff Liam Lynch's death in action on 10th April 1923, "*at a meeting of the Executive and Army Council held on 26 April and 27 April, over which de Valera presided, it was decided that armed resistance to the Free State forces should be terminated*" (Ryan p15).

Thereafter, the Free State could now only be—and a decade later was in fact—defeated by the construction of a new, third Republic. At the previous Executive Meeting of the IRA, in March 1923, Tom Barry's earlier attempt to end the Civil War at that particular juncture had been defeated by only one vote, five against six (including Lynch). At this meeting de Valera had been allowed to speak in favour of Barry's motion, but not vote on it. Long caricatured as a politician out of touch with reality, Meda Ryan here presents a very different picture of Dev:

"After the meeting, Lynch walked down the road with de Valera. He reflected aloud: 'I wonder what Tom Clarke would

think of this decision?' De Valera stopped. 'Tom Clarke is dead', he said. 'He has not our responsibilities. Nobody will ever know what he would do, for this situation did not arise for him. But it has risen for us and we must face it with our intelligence and conscious of our responsibility'" (p185).

But what of Harry Boland? Jim Maher recounts that as he lay dying—

"Harry reminded (his sister) Kathleen that the Russian jewels (held as a security for a \$20,000 loan from the Irish Republic to Bolshevik Russia) were still hidden in the family home... and he told her to hold them until de Valera got back into power. If ever the Republic were declared by de Valera she was to hand the jewels to him. The Boland family respected his wishes and when de Valera had succeeded in getting his 1937 Constitution passed into law and had recovered the ports, they considered that Harry's wishes were fulfilled. They handed the Russian jewels into the safe keeping of the Irish government who eventually handed them back to the Russian government and redeemed the loan" (p243).

And what of the assassin who had shot Boland? Fitzpatrick described him as follows:

"An Intelligence Officer in the 5th Battalion, 2nd Eastern Division (with the temporary rank of Captain) from Lusk, aged 28... and a District Centre in the IRB... The Intelligence Officer had shared his (Harry's) experience of being sentenced to death in 1916 (after fighting in the Mendacity Institute), before undergoing penal servitude in Portland and Lewes. He had joined the IRB in 1915 and became Adjutant of the 8th (Fingal) Brigade before switching to Intelligence. His experience and local knowledge had enabled him to turn in an entire 'Irregular' column at the outset of the Civil War, and he was amply qualified to identify Harry in his bedroom at the Grand Hotel. If such officers as these were indeed members of the raiding party, their revolutionary credentials were impeccable. They were no 'murder gang' of inexperienced 'Truciliers' or unprincipled mercenaries. Harry had been struck down by his own kind" (pp323-4).

Jim Maher had also been aware of the assassin's identity, but in deference to the Boland family's wishes, he had not named him in his biography. However, in the index for pages 323-4 of his own subsequent biography, David Fitzpatrick does in fact identify him as Captain Thomas Peppard. So let us therefore pay tribute to Peppard by name for his record in both the 1916 Rising and the War of Independence, as Harry Boland himself would have wished him to be so honoured.

And what of the IRB President Michael Collins himself, who ultimately bore full responsibility for Boland's death? In the post-Civil War period his former IRB/IRA comrade-in-arms Tom Hales who had, in turn, been responsible for Collins's

own death, not only made his peace with the Collins family but joined with Tom Barry, his fellow West Cork anti-Treaty IRA leader, on a committee to erect the Michael Collins memorial at Sam's Cross in 1965, near the latter's birthplace, in recognition of the outstanding leadership given by that flawed genius during the War of Independence. By way of contrast, who could ever conceive of the Spanish Republican executioners of the Falangist leader, José Antonio Primo de Rivera, ever gathering to honour him? Still less could one conceive of the impossibly bizarre phenomenon of a Republican prisoner of the Fascists ever being moved to lovingly compose a song in memory of that handsome Fascist icon of the Spanish Civil War. That is how the Irish 'Civil War' stands apart from all others, since both sides had shared the same aspirations, vision of society and ultimate goals.

Brendan Behan first met his father Stephen through Free State prison bars during that same Civil War, as Stephen had been a Republican prisoner at the time of Brendan's birth. And Brendan, of course, would himself also become a Republican prisoner in both Britain and Ireland during the 1940s. Yet it was their shared experience of the War of Independence that had led the Behan-Kearney family to continue to remember Collins with such affection and that, in turn, was to prompt Brendan himself to write his song *The Laughing Boy*, in memory of Collins, for his 1958 play *The Hostage*. But this, despite superficial appearances, was an extremely complex song; for Behan never allowed its heart-breaking sentiments to degenerate into a sentimentality that refused to come to terms with how all the might-have-beens differed so markedly from the stark reality of what had actually happened.

That song's lyrics, therefore, became quite incomprehensible when translated against the background of any other country's history or political culture. The composer Mikis Theodorakis, best known internationally for his musical score for the film *Zorba the Greek*, had been a 'rebel'—or Communist partisan—during the Greek Civil War of the 1940s. When his mortal enemies came back with a vengeance to impose a military dictatorship on Greece in 1967-1974, Theodorakis was inspired to write musically-powerful new versions of Behan's songs for a Greek-language production of *The Hostage*. But it is only the first verse of Theodorakis's "*Jovial Boy*" that can be said to be identical to Behan's own first verse. For in the second verse Behan had gone on to say of his hero/anti-hero:

*Ah, curse the time, and sad the loss my heart to crucify,
That an Irish son, with a rebel gun, shot down my Laughing Boy.*

Theodorakis, however, implied that it had been in his fight against the English that the song's hero had met his death—and on hunger strike:

Our enemies had killed our jovial smiling boy.

Thereafter the Theodorakis version bears little or no resemblance to the remaining third and fourth verses of Behan's original. In the final verse Behan did indeed allow Collins both his outstanding War of Independence record and the genuineness of his Republican aspirations beyond it:

*Go raibh míle maith agat, for all you tried to do,
For all you did, and would have done, my enemies to destroy.*

But in the third verse Behan could not avoid dealing with how the actual character and circumstances of Collins's own death had differed so markedly from all the might-have-beens:

*Oh, had he died by Pearse's side, or in the GPO,
Killed by an English bullet from the rifle of the foe,
Or forcibly fed while Ashe lay dead in the dungeons of Mountjoy,
I'd have cried with pride at the way he died, my own dear Laughing Boy.*

To cap it all, the very dialogue between *The Hostage* characters, before the veteran Republican Pat sings "The Laughing Boy", also sums up the complexities of Behan's own judgement on Collins:

PAT. *It was Lloyd George and Birkenhead made a fool of Michael Collins and he signed an agreement to have no more fighting with England.*

MEG. *Then he should have been shot.*

PAT. *He was.*

MEG. *Ah, the poor man.*

PAT. *Still, he was a great fighter and he fought well for the ould cause.*

Collins's IRB had been essential for the creation of the actual Irish Republic that was proclaimed in Easter 1916, endorsed by the Irish electorate in December 1918 and ratified by Dáil Éireann in January 1919. But, having opted for the Treaty, the IRB Supreme Council decreed, in the name of its own 'virtual Republic', that this actual, established Republic was now no longer to be, and the Brotherhood leadership then proceeded to systematically destroy it. Subsequently, however, both the IRB and the Free State's Cumann na nGaedheal Government would each slip off their own idealised versions of Michael Collins's Treaty 'Stepping Stone'. It would be left to the anti-Treatyite leader Éamon de Valera to construct another Republic via the 1937 Constitution, which the Treatyites finally came to terms with when they themselves formally declared the Republic in 1948.

Manus O'Riordan
(series concluded).

Kevin Myers— *a study of 'exceptionalism' in free-fall*

Kevin Myers had hoped to spare us his usual vitriol on 1916. Instead, unable to contain himself, he managed to write about it—not once but twice in the space of two weeks even when discussing an apparently unrelated topic. He also manages to confirm yet again his anti-Irish racism. Never a one to make generalisations, he speaks of "*the greatest Irish vice of all....exceptionalism*", as though making exceptions were both a characteristic of and perhaps unique to the Irish (implied by the use of *Irish* as an adjective). Of course, this isn't the only 'Irish' vice according to Myers: we are also a nation of tardy liars. But perhaps above all, Myers—in himself—provides us with a fascinating case study of his own invented vice of *exceptionalism*.

"THOU SHALT NOT INVOKE CHRISTIAN MORALITY IN VAIN"

According to Kevin Myers the vice of making exceptions is the root of all Irish evil but "*most of all {it} is the author of the psychopathology of the IRA*", as exemplified by 1916 and all that followed from it. Not once, but thrice he invokes Christian morality to castigate the rebels. "*How else could the commandment Thou Shalt Not Kill, come to have the caveat inserted 'unless thou dost so in the name of the Irish Republic'?*" Again, "*the law of neither God nor state applied to IRA members: their deeds existed in the morally autonomous world... of exceptionalism*", and when he fulminates against Dr. Michael Smith, Bishop of Meath, on his Easter address: "*just where does it say in Canon Law that human life is sacrosanct, unless Irish republicans want to have a hearing...?*"

But where does that leave Kevin himself? It is hardly a secret that he has consistently trumpeted the 'cause' of the Irish men who fought for Britain during World War One and especially at the Somme, or of the British Army in general in its fight against Germany during the same war. Now Canon Law may not apply to the many British soldiers who were Protestants, but surely it at least applies to the Catholic Irish who marched off into the German machine guns? And the Fifth Commandment applies equally to Protestant and Catholic alike. So perhaps Kevin could point to the chapter in the Bible where it says "*Thou Shalt Not Kill unless thou dost so in the name of the British Empire and its government*"? And where in Canon Law does it wave aside the fifth commandment so Irish men could kill Germans in their thousands on behalf of Britain?

So it is quite useless if not downright dishonest to invoke *Christian* morality and the commandments to castigate one side for killing while making an exception for the other. For Kevin knows very well that, once war is engaged in and acts of violence are being committed, the Fifth Commandment has already been set to one side by mutual unspoken consent. Though the belligerents may (or may not) agree certain rules about how they conduct their killing, the "Law of God" quite clearly no longer applies to facts on the ground, and all killers will have to answer to God for their actions whatever side they took in this life.

ON WHAT AUTHORITY DO YOU...?

We are therefore left only with other, mundane (in its literal sense) considerations when justifying or castigating killing. These may be political or perhaps social or economic and so on. Kevin demands an answer to the question "*who gave the insurgents the right to kill...?*" and claims it has never been answered. It is clear from his question that he believes some authority exists to confer this 'right'. Since God's authority cannot be invoked, as we have seen, we are left with civil authority as the only possible source of 'right' in this instance. So what civil authority could he have in mind? We can eliminate the insurgents from Kevin's *sources of authority*, as his very question makes it clear he believes they had no authority. If it were not so, the question would be redundant and indeed it is one he has never posed in relation to the British killing either Germans at the Somme or Irishmen in Dublin.

AUTHORITY OF THE PEOPLE

In our current, democratic, model of society, the first obvious point in which to look for authority is in the *populus*—sovereignty of the people being the essence of democracy. So, did the rebels have the 'authority of the people'? Kevin points to the fact they never stood in elections. But had they, by 1916, managed to get themselves elected, whom would they have represented? We have become so used to the idea of universal suffrage that it is easy to overlook what *democracy* meant back in 1916. First off, no women could vote. British MPs and Irish Home Rule MPs alike found this at least one subject on which they could all agree. Women had resorted to desperate measures such as civil disobedience, vandalism, and committing suicide at Derby Day, in order to 'invoke a hearing'. Who gave them the right—unelected as

they were—to pursue such a course of action?

So any government elected around that time would have represented perhaps only fifty percent of the adult population on this basis alone. Secondly not even universal *male* suffrage existed: only men above a certain age could vote. So we see that what Kevin accepts as a perfectly functioning democratic system was in fact based on some twenty or thirty percent of the adult population deciding policy for the other eighty percent. If twenty or thirty percent can wield such power, the rebels may indeed have a case to claim authority. Although Kevin has repeatedly tried to paint a picture of a handful of lunatics in Dublin as being the sum total of the 1916 rebellion, the truth is far different. Even if the Irish population was mainly supportive of the British war effort at that time (mainly thanks to the money all this killing of Germans was bringing to the country), the thousand rebels who took up positions around Dublin at Easter 1916 represented just a small number of a much greater body of rebels and supporters. We know that thanks to Eoin McNeill's countermanding order most rebel groups around the country never joined the fight at all, but they and their organisation existed nonetheless. Alongside the Irish Volunteers and Cumann na mBan were many ordinary people who, though not enrolled members, nonetheless gave their support to the movement.

Even if these added up came to only ten or twenty percent of the Irish population of the time, they represent an authority which the rebels could invoke according to Kevin's accepted model of democracy. Nor would I be the first to point out how the rebels' action was subsequently endorsed—both by the public outcry at the post-1916 executions and the overwhelming support given to Sinn Fein in the 1918 elections. Critics have tried to dismiss this sea change in support for the rebels as mere revulsion at the executions or as a reaction to Britain's attempt to introduce conscription here. But neither of these explanations is adequate. Few people shed tears over the execution of common criminals, which according to Kevin is how the 1916 rebels were perceived at the time. After all, it was supposedly a rebellion the pro-British Irish hadn't wanted in the first place. It could only have caused such a change in Irish sentiment if it touched on a hitherto unexposed nerve in the Irish psyche.

The 1918 elections occurred *after* the conscription crisis had already passed. And weren't the Irish supposed to be loyal British subjects anyway? What Sinn Fein did stand on was a platform of total separation from Britain. And it was on that platform that it had its landslide victory. And it is interesting to note that

Sinn Fein actually had no part in the Rising but hugely benefited from the popular concept that it somehow had.

So, based on the tiny portion of the population that represented the so-called democracy of the time, and on the subsequent support shown to the rebels by the Irish population, Patrick Pearse and the others have a considerable claim to having authority from the people.

BUT WASN'T THE BRITISH CABINET THE ONLY 'LAWFULLY' CONSTITUTED AUTHORITY OF THE TIME?

I have no doubt that Kevin's first line of defence would be to make the argument that the British Cabinet constituted the lawful authority of the state. I have already outlined the first problem with such an assumption—the exclusivity of any British Cabinet of that period. The British Government that decided to take the whole millions of the populations of these two islands into a war against a people with whom many—at least in Ireland—had no quarrel, did so on the basis of the twenty or thirty percent of the adult population that could vote for them. A particular stratum of society decided on the game rules to suit themselves, disenfranchising most of the population but making all the decisions nonetheless. The signatories of the 1916 Rising were at least as entitled to do what they did as such a Cabinet on that basis alone.

It might be argued that popular support for Britain's war against Germany was evidenced by the rush to 'sign up' once war had been declared. This needs closer examination. Men signed up for many reasons—because they believed the propaganda about 'the freedom of small nations' or, at the other end, as Tom Barry said, because they wanted to get a gun, travel the world, and feel a man. My grandfather, aged only 16, signed up along with his best friend after school one day because they thought it would be a jolly adventure and they'd be home in time for Christmas Dinner. How wrong they were. And once in, there was no way out except as a corpse or an invalid until it was all over. So, if any of these men changed their minds after signing up, it was too late. We shall probably never know how many of them, had they had the chance, might have had a change of heart and quit. We know *some* of them did for at least twenty-six Irish alone were shot for 'cowardice' or desertion—trying to quit the war once its reality had become apparent to them.

We have already seen that in terms of popular support the 1916 Rising was also subsequently endorsed by the Irish population.

APPROVAL IF NOT AUTHORITY...

There is a second problem with the assumption that the British Cabinet—even if elected by a tiny portion of the

population—was nonetheless the lawful government. By 1915 the British Cabinet was already undergoing a change. Not all of its members had been elected by anybody. What right did this unelected Cabinet have to continue the war or pursue any policy? If a cabal of unelected British politicians can decide policy, then I think Kevin may have answered his own question in relation to the Irish Rising.

Despite these facts, Kevin will probably continue to claim that 1916 was 'undemocratic' and the rebels had no 'right' to act as they did (as if it were somehow aberrant rather than the contemporary norm). However, even if he insists that the only valid authority of the time was the unelected wartime British Cabinet, it still leaves him with one small problem. The British were aware of all the plans for the Rising in advance. This was because they had captured no less than four German code machines early in the war and were well able to intercept all German communications with the rebels (and anyone else with whom the Germans were in contact—e.g the Zimmerman telegram). They could have stepped in at any time and arrested the leaders and thus prevented the rebellion, yet they chose to let it go ahead in order to bring the main protagonists out in the open and make an example of them. Thus Kevin might like to consider how "*the cold blooded slaughter of innocent people in the streets of Dublin*" happened with the approval if not perhaps even the authority of the British Cabinet.

1916 COMMEMORATIONS AS A "CELEBRATION OF MURDER AND FAILURE"

But perhaps the strangest manifestation of Kevin Myers' free fall into 'exceptionalism' is his condemnation of the 1916 commemoration as being a celebration of murder and failure. Perhaps it's stating the obvious to say that, for most Irish people who commemorate it, 1916 and what followed is about freedom, independence, and the foundation of the modern Irish state. The Rising may have been an immediate military failure but it acted as a spur that produced subsequent successes. It roused a sufficient proportion of the Irish people to lend their collective support to the struggle to get Britain to grant some measure of independence. It is fruitless to argue that this was already on the cards by legal avenues as, by 1915, the British Cabinet was a unionist-dominated one and intent on scuttling Home Rule by any means possible. This is the background against which the 1916 Rising occurred.

Irish separatists were also actively pursuing 'approved and civil' channels at the same time—the 1918 elections and the 1919 Peace Conference—and widespread bloodshed could have been avoided even at these late stages had Britain

honoured its slogans regarding the freedom of small nations.

Contrast this with Kevin's celebration of Ireland's involvement in World War One—especially at the Somme. The latter represented one of the worst days of murder in recorded history. Sixty thousand men were casualties the *first day* alone. Once we get past all the wistful nostalgia evoked by Kevin in his recalling of this or that Irish regiment that gave of its heart's blood at the Somme, we are left with a frightful vista of death on a massive scale, using of some of the most barbarous weapons in modern history—poison gas, chemical weapons, machine guns and so on. The slaughter of even that one battle alone far exceeds the whole casualty list for the Irish War of Independence from 1916 to 1921, so why would Kevin think Ireland's involvement in it a suitable cause for celebration unless he is a prime example of 'exceptionalism'? We have already seen Christian morality is not really the issue for Kevin. Is it then because the First World War was a 'success' in contrast to the 'failure' of the 1916 Rising?

SUCCESS AND FAILURE

First we need to define what is meant by success. An obvious definition would be that something achieved its stated objectives. Pearse had primarily hoped the 1916 Rising would 'awaken' the Irish people and indeed it did. The First World War was a military success from the British point of view in that Germany—their enemy—was defeated. But this only came about as the result of American entry into the war at a point when Britain was nearly exhausted.

What were the stated aims for going to war in 1914? We are all familiar with the slogans—it was to be the war for freedom of small nations, for democracy, for poor little Catholic Belgium (the emphasis on 'Catholic' probably to appeal to Irish Catholic sentiment), and 'the war to end all wars'.

From the outset, the First World War was being touted as *a war to defend the rights of small nations*. Needless to say, Ireland—which had clearly expressed a desire to exercise its rights—was not to be included. Britain specifically blocked the Irish delegation from getting even a hearing at the 1919 Peace Treaty. Montenegro was wiped away in the post-war redrawing of the map and most of the former colonies of Germany and its allies, rather than expecting to look forward at last to liberation and independence, found themselves passed to new hands. Britain and France carved up new territories for themselves in the Middle East, Panama and Nicaragua fell under the domination of the USA. So on the first count World War One was a failure.

The war was also supposed to make the world *safe for democracy*. I would like to quote Lord (Arthur) Ponsonby here: "*the absurdity of this meaningless cry on the part of the Allies, amongst whom was Czarist Russia, is obvious. Insincerity is proved by the results*". One need look no further than the Weimar Republic: a ineffectual democracy set up by the victorious Allies in order to keep Germany broken, strangled at birth by crippling compensatory payments insisted on by Britain and France, and abandoned to its fate as fascism took over. Indeed if World War One was supposed to bring democracy it was a spectacular failure even in Europe as fascism took hold in Italy, Germany, Spain alone, and the Soviet Union drifted into dictatorship.

Was it then, at least *a war to end all wars*, as proclaimed? Again, quoting Lord Ponsonby: "*this was hardly an original cry. It has been uttered in previous wars, although every schoolboy knows that war breeds war*". Again we find World War One to be a spectacular failure on this count too. The unjust and punitive terms of the Versailles Treaty helped lead directly to an even worse war. And, even in the immediate aftermath of the First World War, as Lord Ponsonby again informs us—

"since 1918 fighting has never ceased in the world. There has been war on the part of the Allies against Russia, war between Turkey and Greece, the Black and Tan exploits in Ireland, the armed occupation of the Ruhr, war of France and Spain against the Riffs, war of France against the Syrians, military action on the part of the USA in Nicaragua, fighting in Mexico and incessant war in China".

And that was writing in 1928!

So, on the whole, World War One was a spectacular failure in its aims as stated by Britain, and in the justifications given to encourage many to sign up and fight on her behalf. It also brought death to some *ten million* people. Not much to celebrate there, you might think. Yet although he has acknowledged the *carnage* of the war he has constantly championed the cause of those who fought in it while wearing British uniform, urging us 'not to forget'—quite the opposite of his treatment of 1916—which he describes as "*an unmitigated evil for Ireland*".

AN 'EXCEPTIONAL' MYERS

So in the final analysis Kevin demonstrates his own free-fall into 'exceptionalism'. Christian morality is spuriously invoked to castigate Irish rebels but never seriously applied when Britain is doing the killing.

And murder and failure are nothing to celebrate—unless they wear the uniform of the British armed forces.

Nick Folley, April 2007

Kevin Myers' writing on 1916 elicited a further response, in the shape of two letters by **David Alvey**, which appeared in the *Irish Independent*, 3rd and 16th April 2007

Arrogance, Hypocrisy And Blind Partiality

If our understanding of Ireland's national tradition were in a healthy state, Kevin Myers's attacks on it could be easily dismissed as self-evidently ridiculous. Unfortunately historical understanding is thin on the ground these days, so ridiculous arguments must be taken seriously.

In his column of Thursday March 29th, Kevin purports to discover the "*greatest Irish vice of all: exceptionalism*". By this he means our tendency to break the law in exceptional circumstances convenient to ourselves. All very entertaining but actually the underlying story of modern Irish history tells of how a people prone to various vices and weaknesses overcame them under the inspiration of a political objective: achieving national independence.

What is ridiculous about his analysis of Irish vice is that it is not independent; it contains a pronounced English bias. According to Kevin we are a vice ridden people because we display un-English behaviour patterns and we persist in viewing the founding of our State in a positive light. Out of perversity we have failed to accept the proper English account of history.

Thus he rails against the reference to Germany as "*our gallant allies*" in the 1916 Proclamation as a "*ludicrous and abominable acclaim for the Kaiser*". It is as though the history of the First World War is for him a morality tale centred around a villainous Kaiser. The truth is that Britain caused a minor war between Austria-Hungary and Russia over Serbia to be escalated into a cataclysmic world war and for four long years blocked all attempts at peace negotiations until its main trading rival, Germany, was defeated.

Guided by Roger Casement's writings, the authors of the Proclamation would have been aware that British diplomacy in the years before 1914 was aimed at entrapping Germany into a war it could not win. They would also have known from James Connolly of the pioneering social legislation introduced under Kaiser Wilhelm that transformed German working class living standards. In short they were well disposed towards the Kaiser's Germany for sound reasons.

One of the aims of the 1916 leaders, described by Myers as "authors of mayhem and butchery", was to stem the flow of Irish canon fodder to the mass butchery then proceeding in Europe. In this aim they were successful; Irish enlistment fell off dramatically after the Rising. The

insurrection therefore had the effect of saving lives, and by all contemporary accounts, it was conducted in line with the high standards set for Irish nationalism by Thomas Davis in the 1840s.

Unfortunately, Kevin Myers cannot teach us very much about our vices. He merely demonstrates some of those of our nearest neighbour: arrogance, hypocrisy and blind partiality.

Celebrating 1916 is celebrating murder and failure according to Kevin Myers (12 April). I beg to differ.

The Rising should be celebrated because it was the first action in a protracted and tortuous struggle that led eventually in the 1930s to the achievement of national independence. Independence in turn made it possible to pursue, for the first time in modern Irish history, economic prosperity as an objective without reference to British interests.

The Rising was a military insurrection against British rule that involved armed conflict taking place at different sites in Dublin over seven days. It was not a wanton or undisciplined affair. Nor was it undertaken in contravention of the known will of the people as the 1918 general election result later confirmed. The fatalities that resulted from it cannot, generally speaking, be described as murders.

I also dispute the argument made by Mr Myers that the Celtic Tiger represents the antithesis of what Pearse and Connolly wanted, that 1916 can consequently be adjudged a failure.

The overriding aim of the 1916 leaders was to win democratic self-government for the Irish people, an aim in which they were obviously successful. In the course of time and as a self governing entity Ireland switched its economic policy from protection to free trade. The free trade policy has been adroitly administered by the Irish State in a manner that has become a model for developing economies. In that respect and in any others that can be applied, the Irish experiment in self-government instigated in 1916, has been a success.

It is true that many aspects of today's consumerist society would be anathema to Davis, Pearse, Connolly, or de Valera. For me that is an incontestable reason for actively and thoughtfully celebrating their legacy.

Ireland: Now And Then

What is one to do with an academic—and therefore scientific—description of a situation which stands in utter contradiction with one's actual experience of it?

Professor Tom Garvin put a lot of work into describing the Ireland I grew up in, but what he succeeds in describing is a country I did not grow up in, and in which I would not be what I am if I had grown up in it. He describes what appears to me as a science fiction variant of the social reality of Ireland around 1950.

The book is *Preventing The Future: Why Was Ireland Poor For So Long?* (Gill & Macmillan 2004). It begins by acknowledging a debt to "*Two standard pioneering works on the Irish New Departure of the 1950*". These are *Sean Lemass* by Lord Bew and his associated commoner Professor Patterson, and *Between Two Worlds* by Professor Girvin. I knew all three of them pretty well over thirty years ago, and so I know that all three of them rejected experience as a source of knowledge, being of the opinion that it led to the morass of subjectivism. They were caught by the 'ahuman' vision of the ruling French intellectual of the 1970s, Louis Althusser, and his scheme for devising a purely objective and scientific knowledge of human affairs from a viewpoint beyond humanity. And it seemed to me that they were unaware that Althusser's vision was no less a vision than the visions which he set about demolishing as mere "*ideology*".

Human existence is not something fixed and definite in its social dimension, and it is therefore not a subject capable of being grasped scientifically. Human life is lived through the imagination. Without imagination it is not possible. It is entered into by way of experience, which is an infinitely complex and subtle process. The best attempt to describe it is found in Kant's *Critiques*, which I read in the backwardness of rural Ireland in the mid-1950s. Subsequently I had occasion to write in Marxism, but when Lord Bew, as an Althusserian apostle, revealed to me that one had to discard Kant in order to be a Marxist—not that he put it as intelligibly as that—I discarded Marxism instead.

(The academic world was predominantly Marxist then, and in its Marxist form it became Althusserian.)

Experience was discounted as the source of knowledge and a new kind of knowledge was put in place by the Althusserians. Truth was then described as a correspondence between a statement and its "*protocols*". A set of 'protocols' was asserted and a statement made in accordance with them was true. Knowledge then became a closed system and the realm of experience was by-passed.

What was the use of knowledge disconnected from experience? As far as I could see, it was that it enabled humanity to be treated as a scientific subject—to be fixed and pinned down, if only in fantasy. And there was a lucrative academic career to be made of it.

Lord Bew ceased to be a Marxist around 1990—and who didn't! I recently looked through successive editions of his book on "*the Northern Ireland state*"—a thing which did not exist: but what did that matter to an Althusserian?—in order to see by what process of thought he made his way from stringent Marxism to something else, and to find out what that something else was. But I found in the book no indication of a process of thought leading from Marxism to non-Marxism. The book became non-Marxist by having the Marxist references physically extracted from it but otherwise remaining the same.

The change came about because of a crude external event—the collapse of the Soviet Union—rather than by a process of thought in the medium of experience. (And I am almost tempted, in the presence of it, to go back to the Kantian flirtation with Marxism that I engaged in from the mid-sixties to the mid-seventies.)

Professor Garvin's mind does not appear to have been shaped by the stereotyping process of academic Marxism. As compared with Althusserianism, it is all over the place—and is the more interesting for it. But neither is it a development within the culture of the state and society which it analyses. It is obviously familiar with that culture as a conglomeration of

items, but its means of understanding has an external source.

The blurb on this book only tells us that he is Politics Professor at UCD, but the blurb on another book published 10 years ago (1922) says that he is—

"an alumnus of the Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars, Smithsonian Institute, Washington D.C. He is also a Fulbright Scholar and has taught at the University of Georgia; Colgate University, New York; and Mount Holyoke College, Massachusetts".

It would be interesting to know what he was before America.

Preventing The Future is not a notion that would have sprung to the mind of anybody, who had experienced the development through which the future—meaning the present—came about, as the title of an account of how the present came about. It is an alienated notion: the idea of somebody whose conception of normality comes from somewhere else.

It is not made clear when prevention of the future became the main preoccupation of Irish politics and culture—whether it was in the 1920s, or the 1930s, or neutrality in Britain's 2nd World War. All that comes through is that for a number of generations the chief preoccupation of the "*elites*" of Irish society—the politicians, the trade unions and the Church—was to prevent the arrival of the future which we know as the present.

"*John Whyte introduced me many years ago to the knotty problem of the relationship between Catholicism and democratic politics*" (p v). It so happens that Whyte was the only senior Irish academic of the 1970s that I ever exchanged a word with. It happened after a political meeting held at Queen's University Students' Union around the time of the 1974 General Strike. Whyte stayed behind after the meeting to take issue with some things I had said and we argued things out for a couple of hours. He was strongly in denial about basic social and political facts about Northern Ireland. I did not know who he was at the time. When I found out, I looked up what he had written because his mode of denial was not the orthodox nationalist one. That was when I began to realise that history in Irish academia was something different from what I understood history to be. Its purpose was indoctrination rather than elucidation. Whyte, I discovered, was a kind of Ascendancy Catholic, and his purpose in writing history was not to bring out what happened in some particular

period, without concern for present susceptibilities, but to bend the past with a view to affecting the present in matters which were still at issue in the present. Since his purpose was to liberalise Catholic thinking by this means, I could agree that it was ideologically laudable, at least for the moment, but I could not agree that it was history. It was propaganda.

The "*knotty problem of the relationship between Catholicism and democratic politics*" (meaning the problem of the anti-democratic stance of the Church in the democratic era) is a new English idea, and perhaps an older American idea—though I cannot see why it should be, seeing that the Presentation nuns were the first institution of European civilisation established in California, and the Church flourished in American democracy. It is not a sustainable general idea.

I went into the history of the English state for the purpose of understanding Irish—particularly Northern Irish—affairs, and I kept coming across the English idea that the Catholic Church was a dangerous democratic, even revolutionary, institution. English democracy is of very recent growth, but when the English state became democratic (less than a hundred years ago), it backdated its democracy to 1688.

England's third Great War with France (1793-1815) had the purpose of warding off the influence of French democracy. When the Parliamentary franchise was extended to the middle class in 1832 its purpose was to withdraw the middle class from the popular reform agitation and break it into the political routine established by the gentry/aristocracy. And so it continued until the 1918 Reform, enacted amidst a deluge of jingoistic militarism.

Ireland was governed by the English state until 1919. It was not governed democratically. It was not the Catholic Church that prevented it from being governed democratically. And, until the English state adopted democracy as an ideology—not as a policy—its propaganda against Catholicism tended to be that Catholic doctrine regarding politics was dangerously democratic in tendency.

It has often been said that, as the Presbyterian Church is governed by its members and the Catholic Church is not, the former is a source of political democracy and the latter is an obstacle to it. By their fruits ye shall know them. Over a quarter of a century of close dealings

with Presbyterians and other Protestants in the North I failed to discover any of the democratic political fruit of Protestantism.

A democracy is a state, not a religious sect. The English state is not a product of English Protestantism. English Protestantism failed to establish a viable state. The history of its attempts to do so in the 17th century is a history of abortive revolutions and civil war. The viable state was established by a ruling class of sceptical gentry and Bishops which kept the Protestant populace in order by manipulating their anti-Catholic prejudices and excluding them from political power.

The English Constitution is not easily pinned down, but it exists. It is in that respect very like Rome, which has an ineffable source of authority, and I have seen it argued that it is in substance a pre-Reformation survival that was still in place after a century and a half of Protestant efforts to devise a replacement. It is at any rate not the Constitution of Henry VIII, or Edward, or Mary, or Elizabeth, or Charles, or the Presbyterian Parliament of the 1640s, or Cromwell, or Charles 2. And the Parliament of Walpole's time, when things were settled down, might be reasonably compared with the College of Cardinals.

Macaulay, the great Liberal ideologue of the Victorian era, might be profitably remembered in Ireland, even though England seems to have no more use for him. There was something of the authentic historian about him, and he had a sense that the complexities of human affairs cannot be straitjacketed in liberal formulas. At the height of the liberal hubris he threw off the remark that Rome would probably survive Liberal England. He saw Catholicism as a religion with politics built in—as Hobbes had done two centuries earlier when he described it as the ghost of the Roman Empire risen from its grave.

It was certainly not through being anti-democratic in the sphere of politics that the Catholic Church prevented the Irish future—unless one gives some fancy meaning to democracy. But Garvin also suggests that the Church was anti-economic.

I went into that idea over thirty years ago, when we were launching the Campaign To Separate Church And State—and having to work up discontent with the predominance of the Church, because there was very little of it about in spontaneous form. I took it up in the form

presented by M.J.F. McCarthy of Midleton, the vigorous anti-Parnellite anti-clerical. I could find no substance in McCarthy's argument that the building of Churches detracted from economic development. Perhaps that was because I found no substance in the 'Guns or Butter' argument. As far as I could see it was not the case that, if no guns were produced, there would be more butter. The social dimension of the economic process tends to bring it about that an economy that can produce guns can also produce butter. And the building of Churches was more likely to lead on to other things than to occur at the expense of other things—at least in the circumstances of late 19th century Ireland.

I reasoned that, if capitalist economic development was postulated as a kind of norm flowing from human nature—which it was—and if a retarding influence must be found to explain its absence, the retarding influence in Ireland was not the Catholic Church, but the Gaelic society from which bourgeois nationalist Ireland was emerging. And, in that case, the influence of the Church was positively economic, since it was contributing to the destruction of Gaelic social culture.

(It is a sign of the external source of the understanding that Garvin brings to bear on Irish affairs that he makes no mention of McCarthy.)

In the mid-1970s I had never seen Bavaria. When I did see it, it bore out my reasoning on the issue of Rome and economics. Bavaria, lodged in Catholic/Pagan superstition in a way that I had never seen in Ireland but had seen attributed to the Irish by the propaganda of the Protestant Crusade of the early 19th century) was at the same time the economic miracle of postwar Europe.

Around the same time that I saw Bavaria, I came across a talk given by Hugh Trevor Roper to priests and nuns at Galway University, in which he demolished the notion that the Protestant Reformation was the source of capitalism, and pointed to its origins in the Catholic Rhineland and Northern Italy.

I left rural Ireland in the late 1950s because of the Church. I did not go to urban Ireland because the source of what I could not tolerate was urban Ireland.

Garvin has the notion that rural Ireland was the base area of the zealous Catholic backwardness that prevented the present from happening a long time ago. My experience is the contrary.

I first encountered religion at the age of 12 or 13, and I couldn't stand it. Up to the age of 12 I was in the business of religion. I became an altar boy at the age of 7 or 8 and took part in hundreds, perhaps thousands, of events. I lived close to the priest's house and did Masses in the private chapel there (which was in the country) as well as in the Church (then invariably called the Chapel). I was popular with priests on holiday because I enabled them to get through the business quick and get away to golf. And I did the Stations one year in the Parish of Kiskeam, in place of the Parish Clerk who had fallen ill and needed a replacement.

The Stations no longer exist. Cardinal Cullen tried to abolish them but failed, at least in Slieve Luacra. It seems to be Vatican 2 that gave them the *coup de grace*.

They were a survival from the Penal Laws. The priest went to a house in every townland each Spring and Fall and set up an altar there, and did Mass etc, and it was a townland holiday. And for one season I did it around the Parish of Kiskeam, carrying around the paraphernalia, setting up the altar, seeing to the stage management, packing things away, and sitting at breakfast with the priest and the elders.

There was no praying involved. Everything I said was in Latin, and I didn't know or care what it meant. And there were two perks. I missed a lot of school, which I regarded as prison. And I got tips.

Then, when I was 11 or 12, I was asked if I would like to go to College. What College meant to me was three months' holiday in Summer instead of six weeks. So I said OK.

Long afterwards I wondered how I had been paid for to go to College. My sister had also been wondering. (My father worked for wages.) We concluded it was because I had been born in a rented room of a house owned by a woman who drew a horse in the Sweepstake, held onto it, and got first prize with it. She was a religious woman, and I think a distant relative, and it seems that I was one of her good works.

So I went to College, happy to miss the last two years of compulsory school attendance—only to find that I had gone from the frying pan into the fire. At school I was free at three o'clock every day. (I did no homework. The schoolmaster gave me three slaps with the cane for everything I hadn't done, and I thought it was fair exchange.) But College was imprisonment for the whole day, and I decided early on

that the three months' holiday weren't worth it. And I also encountered religion for the first time as a lay person, and found it intolerable. So I decided to escape. Or the feeling came over me that I would escape, and that feeling determined what I did.

All I learned during my few months in College was the declension of the Greek article. I had to memorise it to prevent my ears from being squeezed between the teacher's fingernails, which was much more painful than the slaps of the cane. What I got from College was a lasting aversion to Greek and Latin as languages. On the positive side there was only the Biggles adventure stories which I found in the library.

I escaped by running away.

I understand that statements about me have been appearing on the internet. I am computer illiterate, but so I have been informed. I am being exposed. I don't know why this should be as I have no media presence. In forty years of political writing I don't think I have had one review in a national publication. That's fine by me. But if, despite my obscurity, biographies of me are to be put around the world, they might as well have some traces of accuracy in them.

About twenty years after I ran away I watched a July 12th parade pass along the Lisburn Road in Belfast. With me was Jim Lane of Cork city. Shortly after that he seemed to suggest that I had misled him into thinking that, if nationalist Ireland recognised that the Ulster Protestants had the quality of a nationality, they would quickly come to terms with nationalist Ireland. He had recognised them as a nationality, but the process of *rapprochement* had not begun, and so he went back to being a socialist Republican.

He was a commercial traveller, and he rooted around in the obscure part of rural Ireland where my world outlook was formed, asking about me. He found that I was remembered as a footballer. The good shopkeepers in the village didn't tell him that I was a religious embarrassment to them for almost half of my time there, and was given to consorting in the blacksmith's shop with an old man who had been excommunicated in the Civil War and would not let the Church forget it. They would not reveal scandal to a stranger.

I was not from the village, but I worked as a labourer in the Creamery at the edge

of it. The village, small though it was then, nevertheless had an urban character, and therefore religion was its concern. It was slightly alien to my eyes and I never got to know it well. It was not where the interesting life was.

I actually was a footballer, either goalkeeper or centre forward. Unfortunately I was in my prime as a goalkeeper around the age of 12, when the ball could not be put past me in Gaelic goals. The management decided that I could not play in the senior team because I was so young. By the time they wanted me to play I became interested in other things, and therefore had lost my edge. But I did play for a couple of seasons to be sociable, and I was never scored against.

When I escaped from my dilemma by running away, it was with the intention of becoming a professional soccer goalkeeper with really big goals to defend. I hadn't given any realistic thought to the details of the matter—I was barely a teenager—and I had not allowed for the communal character of North Cork. I was caught when I had got forty miles towards my object, and was returned to my townland, where I spent the next eight years. I might have left a couple of years later if I had been yearning for wider horizons, greater opportunities, or more interesting conversation and believed they were available in the cities. But I found life interesting where I was, and I was certain it was less interesting in the cities. So I stayed where I was for eight years, until the late fifties, content with everything but the middle class religion of the cities which was relentlessly penetrating the countryside through the medium of the village.

I explain this for epistemological reasons. My revulsion against religion when I experienced it from the other side of the altar, my brief acquaintance with College life which I experienced as prison, and the failure of my bid to become a professional footballer, established the viewpoint from which I observed Irish life in the 1940s, particularly its religious dimension, not many years before it began to be subverted by Rome. I was out of joint with the society in which I lived on the single point of religion. On that point I was not a participant but an inside observer. And Professor Garvin's academic description of what Ireland was then does not tally with what I saw.

Brendan Clifford

To Be Continued



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Supreme Court Judgement In Breach Of ILO Conventions

(The following article is taken from *Socialist Voice*, paper of the Communist Party of Ireland.)

As the British Marxist Gerald Cohen explains, modern state institutions are driven towards the defence of private property; and it is this rationale that provides the state elites with both their main policy direction and their determinant ideological disposition.

Undoubtedly, the judiciary and the courts have long performed an explicit role in realising these efforts. Since the inception of trade unionism the judiciary has played a malign role in the active repression and emasculation of such bodies.

The recent Supreme Court judgement in *Ryanair v. Labour Court* has once again illustrated the inherent class prejudice of the Irish judiciary and its antipathy towards independent trade unionism. Attention in particular needs to be paid to its interpretation of what is an "excepted body" under the Trade Union Act (1941), which has significantly negative consequences for the recognition of trade unions.

THE RYANAIR DISPUTE

In the *Ryanair* case the Labour Court decided that the company's employee representation committee (ERC) for pilots was not an excepted body as defined in the 1941 act. It found that, as the employees apparently didn't want to be represented by the ERC but by the trade union Impact, the ERC could not have the status of an independent excepted body or collective bargaining unit.

The Supreme Court, however, found that not enough evidence was presented to support the union's case. It argued that if these internal councils were formed under the same rules that guide the establishment of works councils, under the EU information and consultation directive, they would pass the test of being "fair and reasonable".

Where such a staff council does exist, the Supreme Court is clear: it is not enough for the employees who may have already operated the machinery of that council to simply walk away and say they don't want to operate it any more.

EXCEPTED BODIES: NO AUTONOMY, NO POWER

Under the Trade Union Act (1941) an excepted body is defined as "a body all members of which are employed by the same employer and which carries on negotiations for the fixing of wages or other conditions of employment of its own members (but no other employees)." Under the Supreme Court judgement, an excepted body has been interpreted to include the following criteria:

- (1) it was established at the behest of the employer;
- (2) it does not (unlike trade unions) require a negotiation licence;
- (3) it does not require the consent or participation of the company's employees;
- (4) the withdrawal of employees has no impact on the continuing existence of the entity;
- (5) it can carry on collective bargaining negotiations with its progenitor employer.

An excepted body, therefore, is one that is entirely a product of the employer, usually used as a union substitution device.

As an instrument for maintaining and improving the conditions of employees' working lives, its weaknesses are manifest. Workers' representatives—regardless of whether they are elected by their fellow-workers or are appointed by the management—are employees of the undertaking. They cannot act with the same level of independence or freedom as union officials, because they are dependent on the company for their job and pay. Such company unions are notoriously a poor substitute as an effective check on employers' power.

Workers' interests at work can be effectively guaranteed only through the right to exercise collective power through independent organisation. Without the ability to put concerted activity and muscle behind its collective voice, excepted bodies remain hollow shells.

IN BREACH OF ILO AND FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

Of particular interest is the fact that the International Labour Organisation, under Convention 98, considers any workers' organisation established under the control and domination of the employer as an interference with the right of freedom of association.

The ILO declares that the independence of trade unions is a prerequisite of effective collective bargaining. As a result, whatever individual or collective negotiations go on within an excepted body, these cannot constitute collective bargaining.

The Supreme Court's interpretation is therefore very much at variance with ILO standards, standards that the Irish government formally accepted in 1955. There is therefore a strong case for the Irish labour movement taking a complaint to the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association on the grounds that the Irish government and judiciary are acting in breach of Convention 98.

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