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## War And Remembrance

Nationalist Ireland has this year celebrated the 90th anniversary of its victory in the Great War. All the stops were pulled out to glorify it and make us forget what it was. A fashionable theory about nations, advocated by Professor Comerford of Maynooth amongst many, is that they are "invented" by forgetfulness of their actual past and mythical remembrance of a past that never was. Whatever about nations, that is certainly the way that the Great War is having greatness restored to it.

At the end of the Great war the nationalist Irish responded to their experience of it by voting to have done with the Empire that launched it. In the mostly keenly contested election held in Ireland for a generation, in December 1918, the electorate brushed aside the one party system established by John Redmond's movement by Tammany Hall methods, and returned the Sinn Fein party. That was the originating act of Irish democracy.

The decision of the Imperial Parliament to carry on governing Ireland in defiance of the election result was the seminal action which rendered the Great War ideology spurious and inaugurated a generation of authoritarianism and Fascism in European and world affairs.

But the Great War is what our masters have decided that we should remember and celebrate, and that the election is what we should forget.

The election is a "detail"—a word now much used by the academic historians who are paid to alter our memories. We thought that history consisted of details, and that the kind of history that transcended details was the "historicism" attributed to Soviet ideology by two generations of Western historians and condemned. But it seems that we are mistaken. Truth lies beyond the details.

President McAleese during the month opened an Archive and Research Centre attached to Professor Comerford's Modern History Department at Maynooth. It is in a building prepared for it by the Office of Public Works (whose Minister is Martin Mansergh). This is to be a private research facility—that is to say, it will not be generally open to the public as the National Library and the National Archive Centre are, though it is said that *scholarly amateurs* will be admitted.

The President said that the Centre was designed to produce a "new landscape". She deplored the old days of 'them and us', "in which so much energy was wasted along those

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## Budget 2009:

### *End of an Era?*

This was the first budget in more than 20 years that was prepared in the context of recession and rapidly deteriorating public finances. GNP will contract by 1% next year. The budget itself and the manner in which the political reaction was dealt with indicate that the Government is in a state of panic. This caused it to announce one set of measures, which were then amended piecemeal.

For no good reason it has departed from 20 years of coherent tax policy. The key element in that tax policy involved a diminution of the burden of tax on the low paid. This was underpinned by social partnership. Of course there were other elements in those years. The high paid also received relief thanks to the Progressive Democrat influence but that was never an essential element in tax policy.

In almost every budget since 1988 Tax Allowances and then Tax Credits have increased while the standard rate of tax has remained stable or decreased. The only exception I can think of in relation to Tax Credits was the last of McCreevy's budgets in which the credits were increased by less than the rate of inflation. Brian Lenihan, in this budget, did not increase the Tax Credits at all. And since inflation

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## The Great War:

### *Remembrance Or Poppycock?*

US songwriter George M. Cohan, son of Jeremiah Keohane of Clonakilty, West Cork, was the man who provided the jingoistic musical accompaniment for America's entry into the Imperialist War in 1917, with such songs as "You're A Grand Old Flag", "I'm A Yankee Doodle Dandy" and "Over There!" [with its refrain: "The Yanks Are Coming!"]. He was a second cousin of my maternal grandfather,

Laurence Keohane, whose own first cousin on his mother's side, John Sheehy, would be killed on the Somme front in 1918 while serving in the British Army's Royal Engineers.

There was, indeed, hardly a family in Ireland left untouched by the War that Britain had launched on Germany in August 1914. But John Sheehy's sister, Máire Ní Shíthe, a native Irish speaker

and translator into Irish of French and German literature [and a Yiddish speaker to boot!], who proudly described herself as a "Gaelic authoress" in the 1901 Census, had always held a far different view than her brother concerning the wearing of British Army uniforms. A colleague and collaborator of Pádraig Pearse in *An Claidheamh Soluis*, a founder of the Gaelic League in the Clonakilty area and the Irish-language editor of the *Cork Sun*, Máire was responsible for organising the very successful Feiseanna in the early years of the twentieth century that for a time were held in conjunction with the Clonakilty Agricultural Show. That is,

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formidable demarcation lines of Catholic and Protestant, of landlord and tenant, of Irish and Anglo", but said that those wasteful divisions have begun to give way to a shared purpose to shape a shared future (IT 14.11.08).

The Centre is located in Castletown House, Col. Kildare, which—

"was once a Big House, a place of and for privileged elites, its demeanour less than welcoming to the masses. Today it belongs to the people and is at their service. It will hold protect and tell the stories of privileged and poor alike, for, without all sides to our many stories, we remain in danger of not just misrepresenting our past or having it misrepresented to us but we remain in danger of knowing our neighbours only as incomprehensible strangers? (ibid).

In short, Irish history is to be abolished. For centuries it consisted in the conflict of "them and us", which was insisted upon by them—the conflict of Protestant against Catholic, and landlord against tenant, of British against Irish. What else is Irish history under the Cromwellian and Williamite conquests and plantations, from the 17th to the early 20th centuries?

That is how it was. That is how every representative figure of Them and Us knew it during those centuries. In the end they failed. But now we are to be subsumed

into Them, retrospectively, in a project that is to be called 'history' but that is entirely policy. And the scholarly amateurs who are to be allowed to take part in it must submit to this policy directive.

It seems that the Centre will focus on the Big House, the Anglo-Irish oases that were once dotted around the country. But they are no longer to be called *Anglo*. And yet if they had not been Anglo they would not have been laid low by the Irish national development.

The President said that the present is full of "toxic weeds generated by oppression". Those weeds are now to be cleared away. And it seems that the method of clearing them away is to present a schematic history from which they are absent—which is the 1984 method; the method heretofore seen as authoritarian brainwashing.

"Ransacking the past for edited highlights with which to distort history has been commonplace and damaging", the President said. No doubt we are the ransackers of the past who dig up details like the 1918 Election and the Westminster response to it, and the Whitehall manipulation of the Treatyites into 'Civil War'. And the scholarly amateurs admitted to the Centre will not be encouraged to investigate the part played by the Big House in those events.

But are the descendants of those who lived a chosen life of social exclusion, or exclusiveness, in the Big Houses, still people apart, "incomprehensible strangers", who can only enter the body politic if we pretend the history of Ireland for a couple of centuries was other than it actually was?

There is only one Them and Us in Ireland today: the Protestant community in the North, which the President compared to the Nazis a few years ago, and the Catholic community which certain elements in the South have been trying to disown for a generation. What effect will falsification of national history through the medium of the Big Houses have on the Ulster Unionists? It is unlikely to have any effect. The Ulster Protestants have little affection for the Big House Ascendancy in the rest of the country, and the Big House nostalgia cultivated by the Southern revisionists does not embrace the socially connected Big Houses of the North. By far the most influential Big House in the country was Mountstewart, seat of the Stewart/Castlereagh/Londonderry dynasty. It is open to visitors, and is visited, in the way that English Big Houses are, as a place of consequence. But, while Big House nonentities are being dredged up for specious nostalgia around the Republic, the Londonderry phenomenon is abominated.

The Great War is the means by which the Republic tries to make contact with the Ulster Unionists. But when nationalist Ireland confesses that it was wrong about the Great War, and indulges in orgies of celebration, it tells the Unionists nothing they have not always known. And, since the confession is obviously made for an ulterior motive, it is actively counter-productive.

Two noteworthy statements were lost amidst the deluge of re-hashed Great War propaganda. One was by Peter Levy, a Cork-based Jew who said in an *Irish Examiner* supplement that he thought it would have been better for the world if Germany had won. The other was by Myles Dungan in the *Daily Mail*, Irish edition, who wrote:

"The Irish experience of the First World War was, emphatically, not a part of the foundation myth of the Irish state... That, however, does not mean it should be ignored and that we cannot join with other European nations in reminding ourselves of the lies that bind, especially at a time when a brutal war is still being fought in Iraq, itself based on a monumental fabrication.

"Notions of democracy and the freedom of small nations... were concepts later pitched to the wagon. They were grafted on to give genocidal bloodbaths a retrospectively idealistic gloss. The First World War was an exercise in

breath-taking cynicism. It was about making the world safe for oligarchy...

"In some respects, Remembrance Day has become a mere celebration of nationalism, even triumphalism..."

"Now that some memory of nationalist Ireland's involvement in the First World War has been restored, ...it is time to seize Our War back from chauvinism... We must do so "lest we forget" that it is possible for the agenda-setters to frame a cynical conflict in terms of crusade and sacrifice. We need a uniquely Irish form of annual commemoration and we need a uniquely Irish symbol as a poppy substitute..."

"We must commemorate. But we must know what we are remembering and why..." (11.11.08).

It is a sign of our time that it takes an English newspaper—the *Daily Mail*!!—to say that.

## Editorial Digest

**Irish Fascism** Reflecting on the Era of Fascism in Ireland was the title of Roy Garland's regular Monday Column in the *Irish News* on 16th November. It was apt, though not in the way that Garland intended. This year Irish fascism was celebrating its 75th anniversary—the founding of Fine Gael. But Garland tried in his article to link fascism with the Republican Movement. Whatever fascism involves, and it involves a lot of things, it stands for a pure kind of local nationalism. German, Italian and Spanish fascists in the 1930s couldn't stand the sight of each other. English fascists were different and took on the form of mainstream—that was because of the imperialist factor. Churchill was a supporter of Mussolini and of Hitler in the early days. Unlike Mussolini he added racism and anti-semitism (optional extras) to the mix.

The Republican Movements, in all their guises, were internationalists in their interests, their outlooks and their practices. Wolfe Tone was a French Republican. Young Ireland and the Fenians were part of the European revolutionary movements. James Connolly, Roger Casement and Padraig Pearse were allies of Germany, Connolly being closely allied with German Social Democracy. DeValera stood with the independence movement of India and is feted there as an heroic figure to this day. Much of the core of the post-Treaty Republican movement took themselves off to Spain to fight against Franco. Goulding's IRA, for worse or for better, aligned itself with the Soviet Union on ideological grounds. The Provos decorated their areas with murals celebrating struggles for freedom throughout the world, and were particularly supportive

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## From Australia

The present ALP Federal government appears to be abiding by its promises to abolish the Work Choices legislation, but it is taking a long time to do so, mainly because they are being careful to ensure that the new legislation is idiot-proof and cannot be repealed if and when the Tories regain power.

The government has managed to ensure that the A W As were made illegal. These were the "agreements" that workers were obliged to sign to obtain a job and which permitted the employers to "legally" cut pay and conditions of work regardless of how damaging this activity might be to the workers. The Rudd government says they will have the new legislation in place by January 2009.

The Opposition have agreed that the present Government does have an electoral mandate to implement the changes to Howard's industrial relations legislation. However there is a problem with most new legislation other than Work Choices. This came about as the result of the bigotry and stupidity of the Right Wing of the Victorian branch of the ALP, who in the 2004 general election gave their second preferences to a crazy Christian, in order to block the election of a Green senator. Nobody thought the Christian would be elected, but he surprised everybody by winning the third Senate seat in Victoria by the slimmest of margins. He still has another two years to serve in the Senate. Thus urgent legislation is now being held up, or amended, because of the stupidity of the Right-wing of the Victorian ALP.

Drastic changes have also occurred here in NSW. These changes also have their origin in the faction-ridden nature of the ALP. In the distant past the ALP used to be made up mostly of people of Irish Catholic backgrounds, who were frequently referred to as "the Irish Mafia". Naturally they were bitterly anti-communist and regularly made deals with the employers. As a reward for these dirty deals the employers enacted the industrial legislation which forced all workers to join a union. In return, the bosses deducted the union dues from the workers' pay packets and forwarded the money to the relevant union offices. Ballots for union leadership positions were conducted by the State Electoral Commissions and voting was compulsory. In return for these concessions the unions went easy on the bosses when negotiating pay and conditions. All this was done under the rubric of anti-communism. These laws were also very much appreciated by the union bosses who had a taste for corruption. The Oz do not like to be reminded of these dubious goings on.

Naturally, there was a strong group of trade unionists, mostly connected to the Communist Party, who opposed these corrupt practices. These unions included the coalminers, the metal workers, the waterside workers, the seamen, the transport workers, the crane drivers, and the building workers. Thus there was considerable competition for members and for union leadership jobs brought about by the fact that there were frequently duplicate unions covering the same work. This situation frequently led to a good deal of struggle between the Left and Right in the workplaces and in the law courts. With the collapse of the Soviet Union the workers in the so-called Left unions switched their allegiances to the Socialist Left of the ALP, or to the Greens. Since its foundation the BMUC Inc has always been on the Left.

John Howard abolished all government ties with the right-wing unions and the ALP when he was elected in 1996. The result was that the Left/Right divisions in the labour movement and the unions frequently became blurred and suddenly we saw some raging Right-wingers starting to co-operate with the Left. Thus the result of Howard's blatant aggression towards all things related to workers actually reduced antagonisms between Left and Right wing workers. The net result was that we now have two erstwhile Left-wingers elected as the Premier and the Deputy Premier of what was previously a very Right Wing NSW State government. The Cabinet now consists of a mixed bag of Left and Right members of parliament.

This change of leadership was effected when the NSW Premier, the Right Winger, Morris Iemma, and his Treasurer, the Trotskyist, Michael Costa, were forced to resign by the party organisation and the unions because of their attempts to privatise the system of electricity generation and supply in NSW. Iemma and Costa defied the decision of the NSW ALP State Conference and proclaimed that they were going to sell the electricity system regardless of the opposition of the State Conference. This dispute raged for months, but eventually the privateers were forced to resign from parliament. Electricity generation will not now be privatized any time soon and the Labour movement is apparently united. It will be interesting to see what happens in the future.

**Patrick O Beirne**  
(More next month!)



# Budget

continued

is expected to be at 2.5% next year the real value of the credits has decreased.

## 1% LEVY

To add insult to injury, Lenihan introduced a 1% Income Levy on all income up to €100,000. Income above that will be subject to a 2% levy. Following public outcry—in particular, pressure from the Unions—the levy was dropped for individuals on the minimum wage. But other low income workers will continue to be affected. To compensate for the loss of revenue Lenihan added a further tier to the Levy for those with the highest income, who will pay 3% on income above €250,000. The Levy is intended to be a temporary expedient, rather than a permanent change to the tax system.

The present writer can see the merit of an Income Levy in these straitened times. The tax payer cannot use Tax Credits against it to reduce his liability. But it should never have been imposed on the low paid. Anyone under €35,000 should have been excluded from the levy. There are many such taxpayers in the private sector (particularly in manufacturing employment) who will not receive any pay increase in 2009.

Lenihan had plenty of other options. He could have abolished the ceiling for Employee PRSI which stands at about 50k. This would have eliminated a regressive feature of this tax (I refuse to call it "insurance"). He also could have raised the higher rate of tax by a few percentage points. It is now at 41%. What was so wrong with the 48% rate which applied a few years ago? But perhaps that would not have suited the higher Civil Servants who were advising the Minister.

Interestingly, Lenihan increased the standard rate Tax Bands for individuals and married couples by €1,000 (an increase of 2.8% to €36,400) and €2,000 (an increase of 4.5% to €46,400) respectively. It is the first time since McCreevy introduced individualisation of the Tax Bands that the married Tax Band has increased by double the individual's Tax Band. With unemployment projected to be at 7.3% in 2009 there is obviously no longer any need to encourage married women to enter the workforce!

The increase in the Tax Bands was one of the few significant tax reliefs that Lenihan introduced. This relief only benefits people on above the average industrial wage.

## MEDICAL CARDS OVER 70

The most controversial aspect of the budget was the withdrawal of the automatic

right to Medical Cards for the over 70s.

The level of national outcry was surprising (I don't remember Charlie McCreevy being hailed as a national hero when the measure was originally introduced in the budget before the 2002 General election). The problem was that the measure was originally introduced in haste for electoral reasons without considering how it would be implemented. As a result the Irish Medical Organisation, which was then led by the current Fine Gael spokesman, Dr. James O'Reilly, had the Government over a barrel. O'Reilly can hardly be blamed for hypocrisy for representing his members' interests in 2001 while denouncing the Government in 2008. But the Government can be blamed for caving in to this interest group.

The IMO succeeded in extracting a €640 payment per year per patient from the Government. This compared to €170 for other adults on the Medical Card scheme and €80 per child eligible for a Medical Card. The social effect was that many GPs were moving out of working class areas to concentrate on servicing the more lucrative new entrants to the Medical Card scheme.

Lenihan's original 'solution' was an attempt to bypass the Doctor and give the benefit directly to the patient. The Government was going to give a €400 cash allowance to pensioners who didn't qualify for a Medical Card but were below an unspecified income. You can see what the civil servants were thinking. Pensioners were "on average" compensated for the reform. Perhaps the average visit to a GP (at €40 a visit) was 10 times a year. But the over 70s, even more than the general population, are risk adverse. Understandably, they don't want to be worried about visiting the doctor more than 10 times.

Lenihan's solution was not a good one, but it was better than the *status quo*. If he had held out on this issue he would have shown that he had the courage of his convictions. Doubtless he would have been accused of playing politics with the lives of pensioners. But once the existing system had lapsed, he would have been in a strong position to renegotiate a new deal with the doctors to re-introduce Medical Cards for the over 70s.

The French Socialist Francois Mitterrand once said that it was sometimes necessary to provoke a political crisis in order to find an equitable solution. In this case the Government has provoked a crisis without finding an equitable solution. There has been a return to the *status quo ante* with the exception that all but 5% of those previously eligible will now be entitled to the Medical Card. Most of these wouldn't bother claiming a Medical Card anyway.

But the problem was not universal entitlement to the Medical Cards for the over 70s, it was the deal that was given to

the doctors. At the time of writing a new deal is being negotiated whereby a standard rate of €290 per person will be paid to doctors for all Medical Card holders. This will at least eliminate the incentive for Doctors to move out of working class areas, but it looks like the medical profession has been bought off in order to avert a political crisis.

The Government has suffered badly in the opinion polls as a result of its climb down, but it can at least console itself that the Opposition has shown yet again that it is unfit to govern. The Fine Gael Front-Bench spokesman, Leo Varadkar, thinks that there was nothing wrong with the former arrangement for the over 70s. If it was generous, it was to compensate the doctors for the other Medical Card rates, which he thinks were too low. In his letter to *The Irish Times* (21.10.08) it is clear that he does not wish to tackle the doctors because they are:

"...an easy target. They are relatively wealthy and are not numerous".

Those poor wealthy doctors!

Varadkar concludes his letter by taunting the Government on the issue of teachers' pay without indicating if Fine Gael would reduce teachers' salaries.

There has been much talk in the media about our "bloated" and overpaid public sector. But it appears that the medical profession is exempt from the charge of being overpaid, even though Irish Medical Consultants are the best paid in the world and are the envy of their counterparts in other countries.

## TARGETING RESOURCES

One of the themes of Lenihan's budget speech was the idea that State benefits should be targeted towards those in greatest need. There is merit in this approach, but I believe that education and health should be free at the point of use. The abolition of third level fees was a good development and was not much more costly than the old system whereby the middle classes were able to obtain tax benefits through "covenants". The savings in administrative costs were quite considerable. Certainly there may be greater inequities in the primary and secondary sectors of our system, but the abolition of third level fees does not prevent these inequities from being tackled. In recent years third level fees have been introduced by increasing "*registration fees*". This is not a positive development.

There are perfectly valid social objectives besides equality. Most societies consider it desirable that the population reproduces itself. This is the justification for Child Benefit even though millionaires benefit by the same amount as the parents of low income families. A possible solution on the grounds of equity would be to tax Child Benefit.

Lenihan sent a signal that he would

look at this issue. Nevertheless, he increased Child Benefit by an amount marginally above the rate of inflation. However the Child Benefit for 18 year olds will be phased out by 2010.

Social welfare rates and State pensions were also increased by amounts marginally above the rate of inflation.

#### PROPERTY TAXATION

There were no significant changes to property taxation despite the fact that the narrow basis for property taxation is what has caused the rapid deterioration in the public finances. Our taxes on property were over-dependent on transactions. Liability to Stamp Duty only applies when a house is sold. The collapse in the property market has dried up this source of revenue.

Lenihan did, however, introduce a €200 per annum per dwelling tax on all residences that are not the principal private residence of the taxpayer. This will be collectable by local authorities who are badly in need of new sources of revenue now that the revenue from service charges on development land has dried up. €200 per year is a very small amount of tax to pay. One can only hope that this tax represents the thin end of the wedge and will lead to more comprehensive property taxes.

Lenihan made some small efforts towards resuscitating the building industry. He is extending the existing Local Authority mortgage scheme by increasing the maximum loan available to borrowers from €185,000 to €285,000. As Roisin Shortall of Labour has said, the Government has become a *sub prime* lender (see *Irish Political Review*, November 2008). Now that some realism has entered the mortgage market, the Government has stepped into the breach to finance loan applications that have been rejected by the banks. The only possible reason for this is to prevent house prices at the lower end of the market from falling. This is in the interests of building developers.

Lenihan also increased the relief for first time buyers from 20% to 25% for the first two years and to 22.5% for the next 3 years. This measure will be financed by reducing the relief from 20% to 15% for non-first time buyers. The thinking appears to be that first time buyers will not have benefited from the recent property boom while other buyers will at least have sold their houses at inflated prices at some stage. But again it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that this is an attempt to prevent house prices from falling.

The top rate of Stamp Duty on commercial property will be reduced from 9% to 6%. The commercial property market has decreased by even more than the domestic property market. There are a lot of vacant commercial properties around the country. Lenihan's measure looks like

an attempt to prevent commercial property prices from falling even further. This is not in the social interest. The productive economy needs a fall in commercial property prices and rents.

I would not advocate any change in the property Rates which businesses pay. They seem to be going down with the value of commercial property. But it is an interesting reflection on the political priorities of successive Irish Governments that, while commercial property Rates are quite high, Rates (as distinct from the inequitable service charges) on domestic property are non-existent.

#### OTHER TAXES

The increase in the Capital Gains Tax by 2% to 22% (to mirror the Income Levy) is welcome, but in my opinion this tax is still too low. It should be closer to the higher rate of income tax (41%).

The standard VAT rate will increase from 21% to 21.5%. This rate does not apply to food, children's clothing and footwear. Nevertheless such an increase is regressive since low income families spend a greater proportion of their income on consumption than higher income families. It will not help retailers on the Border. Our nearest neighbour has a standard VAT rate of 17.5%.

The Government will increase the Research & Development Credit for businesses from 20% to 25%. The problem with this is that since the corporation tax rate is so low (12.5%) the value of the benefit is not that significant.

Some of his other measures in the area

of business taxation look like tokenism. There will be a remission in Corporation Tax and Capital Gains Tax for business in their first three years of operation. But if a business can make profits in the first three years of trading it probably doesn't need tax relief.

There was an increase in DIRT (deposit interest retention tax) to 23% for ordinary deposits and to 26% on certain other savings products.

There was no change in the Corporation Tax rates. It appears that the Government still thinks that the rate is important for attracting foreign investment. The present writer had thought that the low rate had outlived its usefulness but is now willing to give the Government the benefit of the doubt on this issue.

#### CONCLUSION

The budget will result in a General Government Deficit of 6.5%. This is very high but the overall Government debt as a percentage of GDP will be at only 43%. This is very low compared to most EU countries, which have a debt ratio of over 80%.

There is still an infrastructural deficit in this country. And in a recessionary environment there is never more of a need for the Government to spend money in order to give confidence to the rest of the economy. This is most definitely not the time to reduce Capital spending.

But for all the shortcomings of this budget no alternative vision has emerged from the Opposition benches.

John Martin

## Junk Economics:

### Madam's Own PD Record Not To Be Questioned

#### POLITICAL BIAS

More often than not my letters to the *Irish Times* are not published, something which I have come to expect, recognising that Madam has a political *animus* which must be indulged. So be it. Nevertheless, it did initially come to me as a surprise that the feature article reproduced below was denied publication by the self-styled "*paper of record*". For this was not me expressing a personal view on the Budget. This was an institutional response from the largest union in the country. In the end, after continuing SIPTU representations, a very much truncated version was only accepted in the form of a letter a fortnight later.

The Budget took place on October 14th and that article was written on October 16th. Submitted formally by SIPTU to the *Irish Times* on Friday morning October

17th, great interest was expressed by a Features Editor who indicated that it should be published early the following week. It was emphasised to the *Irish Times* that this should be before Wednesday, October 22nd, when SIPTU's NEC would meet to decide on its recommendation regarding the national pay proposals on which it would be balloting its members. On Sunday it was further emphasised that it should now be published on Tuesday, October 21st, at the very latest, as the Government would be making some modifications to the Budget that same afternoon.

As it happened, the modifications were minimal. Those on the minimum wage of €17,542 a year would not now be liable for the Income Levy, but those low paid workers on €17,543 upwards would still be liable for the full 1 percent on all of

their income. Only on Wednesday did the *Irish Times* finally confirm that it would not be publishing this feature article. On Friday SIPTU still persisted in pressuring the *Irish Times* to publish a truncated version as a letter, but this was in fact only published on October 30th.

Had Madam, or somebody reading her mind, decided that too much prominence should not be given to the fact that the rot of drastically slashing the top rate of Income Tax down to 40 per cent had begun with the political agenda driven by the Progressive Democrats; with herself emerging as a Front-Bench spokesperson for the first group of that new party's TDs who were elected in 1987? From within Fianna Fáil it had been those same forces, spearheaded by Professor Martin O'Donoghue, who had been responsible for drafting the auction politics of Jack Lynch's *Election Manifesto 1977*, which they would hone to perfection when forming the breakaway PDs in 1986. In his final year as Editor of the *Irish Times*, the late Douglas Gageby had warned against the danger that all other parties would now become infected with the rot initiated by the PD leadership from as far back as when they had still operated within Fianna Fáil a decade previously.

#### DOUGLAS GAGEBY

In an editorial, aptly titled **Junk Economics**, which he published in the *Irish Times* on 21st April 1986, Gageby commented on the first Fianna Fáil Ard-Fheis to take place subsequent to the formal exit of the PDs, as Haughey was at that point leader of the Opposition, while a shaky Fine Gael-Labour Coalition still clung to Government office:

"Fianna Fáil had a lovely weekend, a great family party made more enjoyable, and much more united, by the absence of those cousins that they never much liked anyway. And the *paterfamilias* was at the very top of his form: totally in control, strong but benign, 'mature and responsible' to use his own two favourite adjectives, basking in, and responding to, the love and admiration of the Ard-Fheis delegates. That Fianna Fáil and their leader can react with so much spirit, so much flair, such a display of unity and confidence, to the many blows struck at them in recent years and months, is impressive and admirable. They are a formidable political force at all times, but never more so than when the smell of battle—the smell of victory, the smell of office—is in their nostrils. They have convinced themselves that they can not only defeat the 'fractured Coalition' but that they can fend off—that they may already have fended off—the challenge of the Progressive Democrats. They may be right. In 1987 they may be back in office, with Mr. Haughey in command of an overall Dail majority."

"But what will they do with it if they get it? And what will Fine Gael—and the Progressive Democrats—do to try to prevent them from getting it? In 1977 Fianna Fáil, notoriously, set out to ensure their success in a general election with a dazzling package of bribes to the voters. Could 1987 be a repeat of 1977? Or could it be something even worse? The message from the ard-fheis (partly open, partly subliminal) was that Fianna Fáil will cut personal taxation. **The message from the Progressive Democrats is that they will cut taxes massively, benefiting particularly those on higher incomes** [my emphasis—MO'R]. Who believes that Fine Gael are so high-minded as not to respond? Small tax cuts are already in the pipeline; unless they see clear evidence of electoral advantage from the current modest economic upturn, the temptation to engage in an income tax 'auction' could be almost irresistible."

"Present income tax levels are both crushing and economically counter-productive; that is more or less common ground. But a competition on tax cuts (to say nothing of whatever other 'goodies' may go on offer) is nothing more than junk economics... But which of our political parties has a coherent plan to encourage enterprise to promote viable industry, to create wealth and jobs? Mr. Haughey, in the various Ministries he held, had an enviable record of competence and imagination; and his friends argue that his misfortunes during his two brief spells as Taoiseach were not of his own making. In his speech on Saturday he had appealing things to say about the development of such areas as tourism, forestry and mariculture. But he did not explain how Fianna Fáil can both cut taxes and eliminate or even reduce the Budget deficit; and like the Coalition parties, Fianna Fáil enjoys little credibility on the question of public expenditure."

"Junk economics and auction politics have helped to give this State a national debt of £20 billion and an unemployment rate of over 17 percent. Regardless of which party or combination of parties is in office, economic policy should be directed at laying firm foundations for the future, not at creating a false impression of prosperity in the present. Mr. Haughey promises a comprehensive strategy for recovery. That certainly is needed: but tax cuts can form at best only a small part of any 'mature and responsible' strategy. And if the politicians reject strategic thinking in favour of junk economics, the outlook will be bleak."

The present Editor of the *Irish Times*, Geraldine Kennedy, took leave from her employment in that paper from 1987 to 1989 in order to pioneer, as a PD TD, the "*junk economics*" so effectively denounced by outgoing Editor Douglas Gageby in 1986. She evidently does not wish to be

reminded of this. It is indeed no longer a mystery to me why my SIPTU feature article, well within the 800 words upper limit stipulated for such opinion pieces, was so unwelcome that in fact the *Irish Times* actually sat on it, with the result that it could not be offered in good time to any other paper. And yet any other paper would have grabbed it, if only to provide a news headline to the effect that the largest Trade Union in the country was calling for an increase in the top rate of tax. Indeed, Gageby had rightly seen how infected the whole party political system would become as a result of PD junk economics, that none of the parties currently in opposition are themselves prepared to grasp the nettle of the top rate of tax.

It is indeed remarkable that on the occasion of a PD Conference now voting for its own dissolution, not one sentence in the "*wealth*" of *Irish Times* news coverage saw fit to mention the fact that Geraldine Kennedy, its current Editor, had been one of its pioneering Front Bench TDs. But Madam did have her own say. Under the heading of *Demise Of The PDs*, her editorial proclaimed on November 10th:

"Party founder Des O'Malley did not attend. {And why didn't he? Only three days previously I had seen him bounding up the stairs to a meeting he felt couldn't do without him—MO'R.} But a message counselling disbandment was read out on his behalf ... The Progressive Democrats made an important contribution. They shattered many core values, as Mr. O'Malley said ... It is difficult to comprehend now the circumstances in which the PDs were formed almost 23 years ago. The state of the economy and crippling taxation ... The PDs broke many moulds. They left an indelible mark on the history of the state."

Indeed they did. And the core value they shattered most successfully was that of social solidarity and the belief that the better off should pay a fair share of taxation. Even when Haughey had to accept the PDs as Coalition partners, he was to keep their influence well out of the Department of Finance. It was a pity that Ahern was not Haughey's best pupil in that regard, for he handed over the reins of Finance to the PD's fifth columnist within Fianna Fáil itself, Charlie McCreevy, whose own personal drive to slash the top rate of tax was every bit as obsessive as that of O'Malley, Harney and Kennedy.

Notwithstanding Gageby's understandable apprehensions in 1986, the late Charlie Haughey did in fact reject "*junk economics*" in 1987 and went on to lay the foundations for successful economic and social progress. It is a pity that Garret FitzGerald's continuing *animus* towards Haughey has rendered him incapable of giving full credit where credit was more than due. In the *Irish Times* on November

1st FitzGerald has observed:

"The scale and suddenness of both the global credit crunch and our own domestic housing bubble collapse has obscured the fact that long before these two crises hit us, our economy was already in serious trouble because of a most damaging loss of competitiveness, the origins of which go back to the end of the 1990s... There was a radical shift of government economic and financial policy about 1998, which reversed the wise and prudent policies pursued consistently by three successive governments in the eight years that followed the resolution of our last major financial crisis between 1981 and 1989. Those three governments were led successively by Charles Haughey (after Ray Mac Sharry had persuaded him to emerge from his 1980-1987 mood of denial about that earlier financial crisis), Albert Reynolds and John Bruton..."

"Throughout 2005 to 2007 credit expansion artificially boosted the growth of Irish personal consumption to an unsustainable 6.25 per cent a year—a process that this year has gone drastically into reverse. So, well before the start of the economic crisis—brought about by an oil price spike combined with a global credit crunch, which in our case were aggravated by the bursting of a domestic housing bubble—our economy had already been made extremely vulnerable by domestic fiscal mismanagement of the grossest kind. You may well ask how, over such a long period of nine years, was it possible for policies to have been pursued that so undermined our economic viability? Clearly our two post-1997 governments were primarily to blame—especially the first. We were singularly unfortunate in having in the years after 1997 as minister for finance an ideologically driven politician, pre-occupied with taxation issues, and apparently totally resistant to the advice he must have been receiving from his civil servants on the dangers of his spending policies—which, it seems, were based on the absurdist principle: 'If we have it, we should spend it!' ..."

#### PARTNERSHIP

There is one glaring omission in FitzGerald's article that is part and parcel of his failure to give full credit to Haughey's leadership from 1987 onwards. A rather different reading of Irish party politics can be gleaned from the book published last year by Tim Hastings, Brian Sheehan and Pdraig Yeates, entitled *Saving The Future: How Social Partnership Shaped Ireland's Economic Success*. Part of the authors' scene-setting includes the following observations from SIPTU General President Jack O'Connor:

"Perhaps the {FitzGerald-led} Fine Gael-Labour Government (1983-87) also lacked the sort of personalities that the trade unions felt at ease with. SIPTU's

Jack O'Connor certainly takes this view. The 1987 Programme for National Recovery 'would not have happened without Haughey. Full stop. He and Bertie Ahern understood the subtlety of Irish politics'... Jack O'Connor, looking back, believes that Haughey and Bertie Ahern understood 'the need to bring people together'."

As already stated, Ahern's weakness, once he became Taoiseach himself, was to allow the indistinguishable McCreevy/Harney PD taxation policy line a free hand in Finance. And it was a failure on the part of the Labour Party that it did not effectively challenge that line in Opposition, knowing that the Fine Gael leader whom Pat Rabbitte wished to anoint as Taoiseach shared the same PD philosophy on letting off the better-off on such tax matters.

Pdraig Yeates has also made the following points in a letter published by the *Irish Times* on November 1st:

"There is a simple, fair and time-tested way to correct the public finances. It is to increase the top rate of income tax by 1 per cent, or even 2 per cent, with adjustments to tax credits and bands to protect lower earners. Many people expected such a measure in the Budget. Instead we were treated to a shoddy confidence trick called the employment levy, wrapped in a call to patriotic action. I know some people will say even a 1 per cent increase in the top rate of income tax would discourage enterprise and drive people into the black economy. But what do they think the employment levy will do? Is the dead hand of the PDs' 'low tax' legacy so heavy that there is not one political party in the Dáil with the courage to try to escape it, rather than submit to yet another stealth tax and the further erosion of public services?"

In the meantime, here is the feature article that the *Irish Times* refused to publish.

**Manus O'Riordan**

#### The Censored Article

### How To Offset An Unconscionable Levy

The one per cent levy, applied on incomes as low as the minimum wage, is a Budget measure that can only be described as unconscionable. True, the public finances are in difficulty. The Minister for Finance has stated that it was necessary to pare back his Budget's opening borrowing requirement from 7 per cent to 6.5 per cent. Otherwise the debt/GDP ratio would have been above 43 per cent next year.

Yet that figure alone illustrates how relatively healthy Irish public finances remain, with the average Eurozone debt/GDP ratio standing at 65 per cent. When

further account is taken of the National Pensions Reserve Fund, Ireland's net debt/GDP ratio turns out to be considerably lower still at 31 per cent, or less than half the average ratio in the Eurozone. Nonetheless, it would have been quite possible to restructure the levy to insulate most low to above average paid workers from its effects, while still having a borrowing requirement of no more than 6.6 per cent.

Such restructuring would, of course, challenge the sacred cow of taxation policies favouring the greedy over the needy, pursued by successive Ministers for Finance who have continued to allow the destructive and self-destructing PD tail to wag the Fianna Fáil dog. At odds with such policies, I myself have sat on the National Economic and Social Council whose Strategy Reports, most notably those of 1996 and 1999, unanimously concluded that the priority in income tax reform should be to reduce the burden on lower to middle income earners rather than the top third of income achievers. I stress the word "unanimously", because all such recommendations had been signed off by the Department of Finance, only to be torn to shreds by that Department's own Minister Charlie McCreevy, when, from 1998 to 2001, he slashed the top rate of tax from 48 to 42 per cent.

Meanwhile, those on lower incomes were condemned to remain the poor relations of the PAYE regime. True, in 2001 the then Tánaiste Mary Harney promised that tax credits would be sufficiently increased to take the minimum wage out of the tax net by 2002. This, however, was to remain a shamefully broken promise. It would be another four years before Budget 2006 completely freed the minimum wage from tax.

By contrast, the policy of giving preference to those with the highest incomes again raised its ugly head in Budget 2007, when the present Taoiseach and then Minister for Finance reduced the top rate of tax still further from 42 to 41 per cent, instead of extending the standard rate band to keep the average earner completely out of the top rate.

But the worst was yet to come. Budget 2009 is now proposing to hit the lowest of low paid workers in a most vicious manner. Apart from the 1 per cent levy, this Budget also leaves tax credits completely frozen, while it has only marginally increased the standard rate tax band to €36,400. CSO data shows that average industrial earnings were €19.20 per hour in the first quarter of this year, equivalent to annual earnings of €38,450. With the full application of the proposed cumulative national pay agreement increases of 6.1 per cent, such earnings should rise to €40,800 next year, but with as much as €4,400 being taxed at the top rate.

It is, however, quite possible to progres-



sively amend Budget 2009 in the following manner, while keeping to a borrowing requirement of just 6.6 per cent, and produce far more equitable outcomes:

- \* Exempt all those on the minimum wage from the income levy;
- \* Offset the consequences of the levy for most other lower to moderately paid earners [and reduce its effect on those earning up to almost twice the industrial average] by two key measures;
- \* Increase both personal and PAYE tax credits by €100, to €1,930 each;
- \* Increase the standard rate band to €37,200;
- \* Recoup most of the cost of these measures by restoring the top rate of tax to 42 per cent.

BUDGET EFFECT ON NET INCOME		
Gross Income (€)	Proposed (%)	Alternative (%)
17,540	20,000	30,000
40,000	50,000	75,000
100,000	125,000	150,000
-1.0	-1.0	-1.1
-0.6	-0.8	-1.1
-1.3	-1.7	-1.9
0	0	-0.4
+0.5	-0.1	-1.0
-1.6	-2.3	-2.7

It can be seen from this table that for most workers earning up to €50,000 a year the income levy would be offset by PAYE restructuring. Indeed, those on average industrial earnings of €40,000 would secure a slight net gain! As a counter-balance, a greater contribution would, of course, have to be come from those with incomes over €100,000—in other words, those who benefited most from the skewed taxation policies of the past decade.

**Manus O'Riordan**  
*Head of Research*  
 SIPTU  
 16 October 2008

## Digest continued

of the oppressed peoples of Palestine and Latin America.

Sean Russell's IRA has been particularly singled out as fascist and his statue in Fairview Park in Dublin was decapitated by British-orientated Trotskyites. Russell's good name was very effectively defended by Manus O'Riordan in the national press and we have heard no more about that. Garland brings up an instance from 1934 when a group of marchers from the Shankill was attacked by some Tipperary IRA-men at the annual Bodenstown Commemoration. This may be true, it needs to be investigated. But if true it was very much the exception that proves the rule.

Garland confuses matters by bringing in a lot of extraneous matters, such as the "undemocratic" claim by the IRA to be the *de jure* Government of a 32-County Republic (no one else does anymore!), and the present Pope's proposed beatification of priests killed in the Spanish Civil War (presumably a dig at the Pope still comes naturally to him). What Garland most definitely does not do, in spite of the title of his Column, is to give any account of fascism in Ireland or of what became of it.

Fascism in Ireland was organised by those on the Treatyite side of the war of 1922-3 who would not accept the election success of Fianna Fail in 1932—people from Cumman na nGaedheal and the Free State Army. It was defeated on the streets by the IRA and elsewhere by Fianna Fail and DeValera's political police. By 1934 it was beaten. By 1936 its core was off to Spain to fight for Franco where it hardly distinguished itself. "*The first army to go to war with fewer men than it came back with*" was the apt jibe of the time. With all the talk about European fascism of the 1930s, it is conveniently forgotten that it was in Ireland that it was most comprehensively defeated, ideologically and politically. The defeating was done

by the various sections of the Republican Movement. There is no hankering after it whatsoever.

Fine Gael has had to celebrate its founding 75 years ago, but it has done so with its blankets drawn firmly over its head. Many party members will not have wanted to hear what Prof. Michael Cronin told a symposium held in Dublin on 2nd November to mark its foundation. He told the audience that there would have been no Fine Gael without the Blueshirts, adding:

"They were the midwife which brought a new party into being. The members of the Blueshirts went legal having re-energised the political landscape... What was so bad about 50,000 men and women becoming active in politics at local level?" (It 3.11.08).

While making a distinction between the "*Ireland of 1933 from Nazi Germany during the war*", Prof. Cronin said that General Eoin O'Duffy made the Army Comrades Association into a political group and chided modern Fine Gaelers for thinking of the General as something like "*the drunken uncle at a family wedding*". These people "*wanted to forget where Fine Gael came from*". In fact, having been retired from head of the Garda by De Valera—

"O'Duffy cycled around various parts of Europe, taking a brief sojourn in Italy where he witnessed Mussolini's country at work. He came back wanting to get involved again" (ibid; Prof. Cronin is academic director of the centre of Irish programmes in Boston College, Dublin, and is the author of *The Blueshirts In Irish Politics*).

Spanish Civil War commemorations have been attracting Roy Garland as he increasingly portrays himself as a born-again liberal. It is noticeable that they also attract elements of the British establishment and English bigots. 69 years on and it must be safe enough! But the last surviving Irish member of the International Brigades, Bob Doyle, felt obliged to tell a

gathering in Belfast last year that those present would be better employed doing something about the imperialist ventures of today rather than coming to gawp at an old fellow like him!

Tara was the nearest thing to a fascist organisation in Ireland in recent times. Tara was a Protestant extremist group in the North which advocated the expulsion (ethnic cleansing?) of Catholics. It did not collapse politically. It collapsed because of the involvement of its leader in the Kincora boy's home scandal—a scandal which certain dirty tricks people tried unsuccessfully to use against Ian Paisley. Tara's deputy chief was Roy Garland. He has since renounced what he calls Protestant extremism. He is now an advocate of defeating Republicanism and Fenianism by bringing the whole of Ireland back into the English fold.

The **British Military Parade** in Belfast on 2nd November was not an edifying sight. Belfast City Council, through the support of the Alliance Party, voted for ceremonies at the City Hall and St. Ann's Cathedral to welcome back members of the Royal Irish Regiment from Iraq and Afghanistan. As it happened, soldiers from other regiments also took part. But it was the British Ministry of Defence that applied to the Parades Commission for a major military demonstration. This began beyond the Black Man statue near the top of Castle Street—still the main Catholic shopping and strolling street. It also passed down May Street which borders the Republican Markets area. It is difficult to see it as anything other than a provocation.

The Belfast newspapers, including the *Irish News*, gave the impression that the occasion was one of two demonstrations, Protestant and Catholic, for and against the military procession; rather than a march organised by the British Government to which Sinn Fein felt obliged to respond. This writer mingled with the unionist heavies on Great Victoria Street (most of the families and people in suits went to the



City Hall) until a policeman who saw that I had come from Grosvenor Road (Fenian) began videoing and drawing attention to me. Time to skiddadle! This unionist crowd included Englishmen in masks on scaffolding who I was told were members of Combat 18. This is numerical code for AH—Adolf Hitler.

The Sinn Fein march was very disciplined and was halted at barriers at the Great Victoria Street End of the Grosvenor Road. There were no barriers on the unionist side and there was free access for unionists arriving at the train and bus stations and from Protestant Sandy Road to the Sinn Fein demonstration. So the Sinn Feiners were subjected to a barrage of fireworks and bottles. The riot police faced the Sinn Feiners but the unionists were "restrained" only by appeals from policeman in regular uniforms.

The Short Strand, an isolated Catholic enclave in East Belfast, was subjected to several attacks by unionists from the Newtownards Road on the night of the military parade and the local Catholic Church was also attacked. There is almost a media conspiracy of silence about continuing inter-communal strife in the North—though "dissident" republican activity is given great publicity. But there is nightly violence at interfaces, especially between the nationalist New Lodge and the unionist Tigers Bay, but also on the Crumlin Road and Broadway. Some idiot thought it a good idea to build a footbridge over the Westlink semi-motorway from the Village to the Lower Falls. Now a very high fence has had to be erected to prevent nightly bottle attacks on sheltered accommodation on the Catholic side.

**Great War** Sinn Fein columnist on the *Irish News*, Jim Gibney, called on 20th November, for a proper analysis of the causes of World War 1, in the light of the outbreak of commemorations here, there and everywhere. His own analysis was that it was a war between two imperialist nations, Britain and Germany "trying to carve up the African Continent for economic exploitation and for military superiority worldwide". It seems beyond his understanding that Germany had no military imperial ambitions and that a war, necessary or otherwise, on the Continent of Europe, was joined by Britain out of choice and thereby turned into a World War. He ignores the social natures of Britain (free market capitalism) and Germany (largely Social Democratic)—Something pointed out week after week at the time for two years by James Connolly. And he ignores that the soldiers who fought in the war against Britain in 1916 did so in conscious alliance with Germany.

Jim Gibney at least recognises that that War was important. The Deputy Editor of the *Irish Examiner*, in its Cork County

Edition, was scathing of the commemoration mania and even went so far as to say that it would have been better if Germany had won. When he was writing his piece he contacted Sinn Fein for a view and the Party said that the First World War was not important. This was borne out by the fact that not a single Sinn Feiner came to protest at Cork City Hall when Lord Mayor Bermingham, wearing his poppy, organised a night of entertainment, fancy dress wearing, and British Regimental flag waving. Gibney wants the War to be examined by historians. He goes on to say "it was a huge mistake for the Irish government, which emerged after partition, to ignore those who died and survived the First World War. It was equally wrong, and still is, for unionists to ignore those nationalists who fought and died".

The First World War is less a matter of history and more a matter of current politics. The rise of Hitler was far from its only result. It turned all of Britain's subsequent wars, however repulsive, into moral crusades. It completed the militarization of British society. It destroyed the harmonious relations in the world of the Ottoman Empire. It causes civil wars in Lebanon. It imprisons millions of Palestinians in vast concentration camps. And it is the First World War and its glorification, rather than the Boyne or Rome Rule that mainly divides Protestants from Catholics on the island of Ireland. Historians who write about that War inevitably are writing politics. The unfortunate thing is that in Ireland most of the are writing from the British political viewpoint and even regurgitating the wartime propaganda of 1914.

**Durkan Gurning** The SDLP has been pursuing party-political advantage against Sinn Fein while that Party was attempting to persuade the DUP that St. Andrew's commitments had to be met. First the Party criticised Sinn Fein for threatening the continued existence of the Good Friday institutions by preventing meetings of the NI Executive from being held. Then it alleged that SF had agreed to cede Policing and Justice powers to other parties for infinity, in the event that they were devolved to the Executive. All the way through the stand-off, the SDLP played footsie with Unionism, and undermined Sinn Fein in its efforts to promote a spirit of partnership and equality within the Executive. Even when Prime Minister Gordon Brown came to Stormont and criticised only the DUP over the issue—and shocking Unionism by not also criticising Sinn Fein—the Party continued its negative policy. When the DUP and Sinn Fein announced agreement on an agenda for a meeting of the Northern Ireland Executive to be held on 27th November, Mark Durkan seemed anything

but pleased. The SDLP leader said: "It is clear Sinn Fein and the DUP may not have their act together in public but they certainly have their pact together as they connive together in cahoots and collusion" (IT 18.11.08). Having floated the idea of the end of compulsory power-sharing a couple of months ago and been shot down by his own supporters, Durkan seems to be going erratic. And it is this party that Eamon Gilmore wants Northern Ireland Labour supporters to join!

## Poppycock

continued

until the year the Show organisers also invited a British Army band to provide additional entertainment. In the *Cork Evening Echo* of 1st August 1971 my maternal aunt and godmother, Máire Keohane Bean Uí Shíocháin, completed the story of our cousin's stand: "When the Feis committee arrived at the venue they found the then army of occupation, the Redcoats, had taken up positions in the fair field. Máire Ní Shíthe refused to go in until the Redcoats came out. They refused to do so and the result was that no Feis was held."

But now we move from Máire's sublime act of protest to the ridiculous "act of remembrance" for her fallen brother John that took the form of the "Good Old Days" "Remembrance" concert in Cork City Hall this November 8th. Under the heading of "Concert an insult to Irish victims of world war", the *Irish Examiner* published the following letter from me on November 13th:

"Two years after the murderous Battle of the Somme, it was still a front being fought over. It was there that John Sheehy of Clonakilty, Co Cork, a first cousin of my maternal grandfather, perished on February 15, 1918. I wish therefore to protest most strongly at the grotesque insult to his memory, and that of 2,600 other Corkmen who also perished as a result of that war, perpetrated by the fancy dress concert organised in Cork City Hall by Fine Gael Lord Mayor Brian Bermingham last Saturday.

My late mother recalled for me the heartbreak and sorrow that had been experienced by John Sheehy's family, not least because he had died as British cannon fodder. Others felt the same way, including one of the icons of Fine Gael and a founding father of this State, Kevin O'Higgins, who had lost his own brother in that same war.

Notwithstanding such personal loss, the soon-to-be-assassinated Home Affairs Minister unequivocally declared himself opposed to a proposed Merrion Square memorial to the Irish world war dead. As he told the Dáil in March 1927:

"You have a square here, confronting the seat of the Government of the

country... I say that any intelligent visitor not particularly versed in the history of this country would be entitled to conclude that the origins of this State were connected... with the lives that were lost in the Great War in France, Belgium, Gallipoli, and so on. This is not the position. The State had other origins, and because it had other origins I do not wish it suggested, in stone or otherwise, that it has that origin."

Lord Mayor Bermingham has further succeeded in insulting the memory of Fine Gael's own dead heroes, especially that of Kevin O'Higgins, whose name is inscribed alongside Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins on the Leinster House Cenotaph."

Two years ago, on 17th November 2006, the *Irish Times* had felt obliged to publish the following letter on that year's "Wear a poppy!" campaign from its own former Industry and Employment correspondent, Pdraig Yeates:

"Madam,—My late father served in the British army in the Second World War. He never wore a poppy and anyone I knew who served with him never wore a poppy. They regarded it, and the British Legion, as symbolising all that was worst, most jingoistic and reactionary in the British establishment. I suspect that this was the attitude of most Second World War veterans, because it was the votes of three million servicemen that put Churchill out of office in 1945 and Clement Attlee's Labour government in. I appreciate that times change and the poppy means different things to different people. But I think it is important not to impose contemporary views of the significance of wearing, or not wearing a poppy, on past generations. It would certainly be wrong to assume the poppy had, or has, the same significance for all British veterans and their families.—Yours, etc, Pdraig Yeates."

With an even more incessant poppy campaign being mounted this year, Pdraig also wrote the following to myself on October 30th:

"As you know my father and grandfather both fought in Britain's wars, the Boer War and WWII. I never knew my grandfather, but my father was a committed socialist and never wore a Poppy. It is simply hijacking the historic memory for a very questionable establishment agenda in the UK and here. Pass this on for what it is worth. It is hard to see what can be done to counter this development but maybe someone will have a brainwave."

Comments very much to the point!

**Manus O'Riordan**

## Report

# Thoughts At Cork City Hall

The ironies of the Cork City Hall fancy dress event are endless. One was the case of the well known Cork dog that did not bark. There was a total absence of all brands of Republicanism at the protest on the night. Republican representation was confined solely to the statues of Mac Curtain and MacSwiney. Their speechlessness was appropriate. The protest was left to two-nationists and doughty anti-war campaigners. How could this have happened at the very heart of Rebel Cork?

In the course of one of the most thoughtful and trenchant press comments on the event, Peter Levy, gave us a clue:

"If it's going to be in fancy dress why not have a special guest appearance by an impersonator of the late Field Marshall Montgomery of World War II fame who was Officer Commanding at the then Victoria Barracks (now Collins Barracks) in Cork during the War of Independence? I wonder what the patriots Tomás MacCurtain and Terence McSwiney, whose statues grace the exterior of City Hall, would think of that?"

"Now, I don't subscribe to the Sinn Féin view that World War I has nothing to do with the Irish people. But I do feel that if Cork people's grandparents and great-grandparents died in this conflict they deserve something more respectful to honour their memories. (Irish Examiner 28.10.2008).

Levy appears to have sought the Sinn Féin view on all these shenanigans and their view is that WWI is not that important to people! Why then is everyone from the President down thinking and acting otherwise? Is Sinn Féin blind to the significance of what is happening?

John Redmond, Tom Kettle, *et al.* thought the War itself was a great way to reconcile Unionists and Nationalists. Apparently the thinking (if thought was involved) was that those who kill Germans together stay together, in fond mutual regard for their joint blood letting. No horror story writer ever bettered the notion. A World War was a price well worth paying for Home Rule, in their view.

Now it appears we must honour the same charnel in the name of reconciliation so that the ridiculous farce of the new Stormont can continue. Some can't buy this—the price is simply too high and as we all know if things get too costly and expectations get out of hand there can be a terrible crash.

At least in economic crashes nobody need get killed but we are dealing here with something a lot more serious than buying and selling goods.

**Jack Lane**

The following leaflet was distributed to the capacity crowd at Cork City Hall on 8th November

## "LEST WE FORGET"

The dead of WWI, or of any war, should not be commemorated with a fancy dress concert in the spirit of the 'Good Old Days' as this event has been promoted. This is dancing on the graves of the dead.

The Cork and Irish dead of WWI were already sufficiently abused and humiliated in their lives and in their deaths. They were killed in horrible circumstances and their ideals were then betrayed by the government they fought for. They died for a propaganda lie—"the freedom of small nations".

When Ireland expressed its clear desire for freedom in the 1918 General Election what it got was the Black and Tans and the Auxiliaries. All the latter being veterans of WWI and they burned down this City Hall along with countless other atrocities to show how much they cared for the freedom of this nation. How ironic that these same forces also killed two former Lord Mayors of the City whose busts patrons will pass on their way into this concert.

That First World War was fought to further the expansion and power of the British Empire—and for nothing else.

That war and the way it was 'settled' at Versailles ensured a century of warfare and we are still living with the consequences. All the tensions in the Middle East today arise directly from that war. The 'war to end all wars' and 'the peace that ended all peace' at Versailles ensured the 20th century was the bloodiest in human history. It is not a suitable subject for entertainment.

This concert is part of a series of celebrations, opening of so-called Peace Parks, etc., that claim to honour the Irish who died in WWI on the basis that they were ignored. Ireland never forgot the dead of WWI—that would have been a physical impossibility. It just did not celebrate Irish slaughter in Britain's interest and it never should.

These commemorations seek to honour Irishmen no matter what uniform or what cause they died for. They seek to inculcate an attitude of indifference and amorality to war.

There is no thought conveyed by these celebrations. Their purpose is to cultivate the feelings that respond to the beat of the drum, and to stifle thought about the past, present and future involvement of Irishmen

in wars.

In reality, their real purpose is to sanctify British militarist activity in the world, regardless of its particular object at a particular time.

Celebrate British militarism if you wish. Restore its hegemony over Irish public life if you can. But spare us the humbug.

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## POPPY DAY

Its roots do not grow in soil but in blood  
Petals of acrylic without perfume  
It records generations who met their doom  
All part now of Whitehall's granite death club  
Where Earl Haig's ghostly voice still calls to arms  
But in the street few fill their button-hole  
Sick of the dead flower's murderous role  
Too many crosses on land that should be farms  
If you can tell the truth about the past  
You might tell the truth about the present  
But having nailed your colours to the mast  
Beware, the moon's phase is now a crescent  
More dead, more poppies, more laws, more prison  
More Birmingham Six, more world-wide derision.

Wilson John Haire

14th November, 2008

NB: The whole poppy thing used to be called The Earl Haig Fund. Then Haig became known as Butcher Haig because of the heavy loss of life on the Somme and the name changed.



Picture shows some of the placards held by the protesters outside Cork City Hall, alongside the statue of the Tomas MacCurtain, the Mayor of Cork murdered by the British Forces being remembered inside the City Hall. There was also a banner, reading: "*Lest we forget—war crimes, genocide, racism, colonialism, Black and Tans*".

## Blair says Muslim "extremists" are all "the same forces"

American satirist, Jon Stewart, interviewed Tony Blair on *The Daily Show* broadcast on the *More4* channel on 19th September 2008. A striking feature revealed by the interview was that Stewart (who happens to be a Jew) is obviously much better informed about the Muslim world than Blair, under whose leadership Britain invaded two Muslim countries and who is now employed as a representative of the "international community" in Palestine, as he modestly put it.

According to Blair, the problem is that there are Muslim "extremists", and that's that. Al-Qaeda, Hamas, Hezbollah, Shiite militias in Iraq and the Taliban in Afghanistan, "it is actually the same forces that you're fighting", he says. Yes, even though in Iraq, for example, al-Qaeda has been killing Shiite civilians in large numbers, al-Qaeda and Shiite militias in Iraq are actually "the same forces", that is, not just allies but "the same forces".

Did he believe this nonsense when he was Prime Minister? Or has the man gone mad since?

Is JP Morgan still paying him? On his appointment, they said he "will bring our leaders and clients a unique and invaluable global perspective" [1]. This was hardly what they meant, is it?

Extracts from the programme about Blair's wars are reproduced below. Read on and

judge for yourself:

JS: Looking back now, you obviously wouldn't have done it {invaded Iraq}?

TB: No, I think that if when you go back and you look at the situation at the time, and the bloodshed that you've seen and the difficulty there has been, I would have been shocked, but I would have asked the question: why has this come about, why has it been so hard? Because, after all, Saddam was removed more than five years ago, but since then we've been fighting the same type of battle against the same type of people that you're fighting all over that region. I spend a lot of time in the Middle East now as a representative of the Middle East peace process for the international community, and I can tell you there's a fundamental struggle going on, I'm afraid, and there are two sides—

JS:—Iraq is not, you wouldn't say that's Islamic terrorism, that's a very small portion of it. Isn't there an old British expression, and you probably know this from 1919 and David Lloyd George? It's an old expression and it is: *Don't invade Iraq, it's a nightmare*.

TB: Well, that's one way of looking at it. But another way is to say that, in the end, if the actual forces we're fighting at the moment, al-Qaeda on the one hand, are precisely those forces of terrorism, based on a perversion of Islam, and Iranian-backed militia and they're the people we're fighting in Afghanistan and, you know, whether it's in the Yemen or Algeria or Palestine or Pakistan, there's a struggle going on.

JS: You say, all them. What was that list?

TB: No, I don't say you have to take military action on all of them

JS: So it's one country at a time. In Iraq—

TB:—No, no, I don't say that. But I do say, whether you look at Hezbollah in Lebanon, or Hamas in Palestine, or the militia and the al-

Qaeda in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is actually the same forces that you're fighting.

JS: Don't they all want different things? Hamas and Hezbollah, you could say, are absolutely localised, they have certain issues and al-Qaeda is really the only one that seems to have worldwide

TB: You might have said that some years back—

JS:—before we invaded—

TB: No, I don't say that. You know, there was September 11th and that in my view changed everything, and I agree there are elements within Hamas or Hezbollah that are just nationalist forces, but there are others that are very, very closely linked to the Iranian backed militia and to al-Qaeda. Therefore, you know, look, none of this is easy

...

TB: I think what happened once you removed Saddam and these people moved into Iraq

JS: Aren't we the ones who created that vacuum?

TB: I don't think you can say, that if you remove Saddam and then say well now the United Nations process for democratic elections, and the Iraqi people vote, and you put up the funds for development. I don't think it's inevitable that people come in and create terrorism. There's nothing inevitable about these people that go with their suicide bombs, and their terrorist attacks and kill totally innocent people.

David Morrison

[www.david-morrison.co.uk](http://www.david-morrison.co.uk)

25 October 2008

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[1] [www.jpmorgan.com/cm/cs?pagename=JPM\\_redesign/JPM\\_Content\\_C/Generic\\_Detail\\_Page\\_Template&cid=11593300\\_45118&c=JPM\\_Content\\_C](http://www.jpmorgan.com/cm/cs?pagename=JPM_redesign/JPM_Content_C/Generic_Detail_Page_Template&cid=11593300_45118&c=JPM_Content_C)



# Shorts

from  
the *Long Fellow*

## KARL MARX

Marx said: "*Philosophers interpret the world; the point is to change it*". In recent months there has been talk of the end of capitalism and the increasing relevance of Marx. The three volumes of *Das Kapital* are an intellectual wonder of the world. Despite some mathematical shortcomings, Marx's description of the laws of motion of the capitalist system is unrivalled.

In the nineteenth century he saw some undeveloped characteristics of capitalism which have reached maturity in the twenty-first century. One of his most brilliant insights was that the capitalist system had a tendency to socialise the means of production even though control of the means of production remained in private hands. The individual was no longer able to produce for himself and must sell his labour power to live. And the system makes itself into a world system displacing other modes of production. Although control of production is in private hands in Volume 3 Marx hinted that the system had an inexorable logic of its own.

Labour becomes de-skilled and therefore is transferable across different branches of production and different countries. Production has become standardised and consumption, facilitated by advertising and marketing, has adapted to production. In the twenty-first century the standardisation of consumption is not confined to the consumption of material things but extends to the cultural level, even at the level of children's games.

The Marxist Prophecy has come to pass. But interpreting the system has not led to a change in it.

## THE INTERNET

About 10 years ago the Long Fellow read an article by an American pop star from the 1960s. He thought that the Internet would become like a hive with the individual worker bees contributing to one great centralised collective intelligence. And the individual bees would cease to have an independent existence and become absorbed by the collective will.

This vision is a Marxist dystopia. Under communism class conflict would be eliminated and there would be no need for the State, which in Lenin's words would wither away. All conflict would be subordinated to a collective will.

## JOHN PRESCOTT

There was a documentary on British television about the meaning of class. It featured former Deputy Leader of New

Labour John Prescott, who claimed that classes still existed in British society. The programme-makers, on the other hand, seemed intent on proving the opposite. We were given plenty of examples of people from working class backgrounds who had succeeded. But as Prescott pointed out, if such people moved from one class to the other, it proves that classes still exist.

The assumption in the programme seemed to be that the existence of classes was a bad thing and that social mobility was good.

In the early 1980s the Labour/Fine Gael coalition introduced a £5,000 grant to encourage people living in Council Houses to buy a house in the private sector. The idea was to encourage social mobility while maintaining the stock of public housing. But the effect was that the people who availed of the grant were the community leaders. Once they had left their working class roots the community declined.

One of the strengths of Marxism was that it developed a working class consciousness. The aim of socialism used to be to advance the interests of the working class as a class, not the interests of individuals within it. But now it is considered desirable—even for socialists—that individuals within the working class should escape from their roots.

## FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

Friedrich Nietzsche did not say much about the working class, but what he did say was interesting. He thought that it was the first class in history whose very existence was a problem to itself.

And Nietzsche featured last month in a talk given by Brendan Clifford at the launch of the pamphlet *The Fighting Irish And The Great War*.

In the middle of the nineteenth century a significant element within the British Liberal Party felt that imperialism was no longer needed by Britain and that all that was required was Free Trade. But by the early twentieth century the leadership of the Liberal Party (Asquith, Haldane, Gray) had adopted an ultra-imperialist position. The free market and the Empire should extend throughout the Globe. This contrasted with the position of Joseph Chamberlain who thought that it was in Britain's interest to consolidate what she already had.

From Britain's perspective the First World War was different from previous wars. The British Liberal Party had to enlist the support of the middle class Protestant Non-Conformists. As a result the War did not have well-defined and limited objectives, but it became a moral crusade against Evil with the object of annihilating the enemy. Clifford made the point that Thomas Kettle (Conor Cruise O'Brien's uncle) played a crucial role in British propaganda. Kettle characterised the conflict as a defence of Christian Civilisation against German Nietzscheanism.

This was bizarre since Nietzsche was not that well-known in Germany. He was much more popular in France and England. Also, he was alienated from the German State. Nietzsche was much happier when Germany was a collection of kingdoms. In Clifford's opinion when Nietzsche—through *Zarathustra*—announced that God was dead it was spoken with regret for the old loose German Federation.

So the propaganda of Kettle was nonsensical even if it was effective. The scales fell from his eyes when he heard that his peers were executed following the 1916 Rising.

The apologists for British Imperialism in this country ask us to remember Thomas Kettle and Francis Ledwidge. But they want to forget the profound regret that these poets had about participating in Britain's imperialist adventure.

## COOLACREASE

The role of British Imperialism in Ireland was a theme of two more launches last month. The book *Coolcrease*, published by the Aubane Historical Society (472 pages), is about much more than an incident in the War of Independence. It is a detailed, forensic riposte to a campaign to de-legitimise the War of Independence and by implication the State itself.

The *Long Fellow* was delighted to see J.J. Dillon at the launch of the book in Tullamore. J.J. Dillon was made to appear in the RTE documentary as sympathetic to the anti-national themes of the documentary. But a close examination of the documentary indicates that the only opinion he expressed was very understandable regret that the incident had happened in the first place. The presence of Dillon at a book launch critical of the RTE documentary is a clear indication of where he stands on the issue.

## PETER HART

Brian Murphy and Niall Meehan's pamphlet *Troubled History* was launched by Tim Pat Coogan. The pamphlet is a tenth anniversary critique of Peter Hart's notorious book *The IRA And Its Enemies*. One of the points that Niall Meehan made at the launch was that the book was promoted even before it was written by the likes of Kevin Myers. Hart's "extraordinary" revelations on the Kilmichael Ambush were described in detail in *The Irish Times*. But much less was said (apart from the *Irish Political Review*) about Hart's even more extraordinary ability to communicate with the dead.

Meehan and Tim Pat gave Hart's book a decent burial. And the launch of the pamphlet had some of the characteristics of an Irish wake: some humour, a lot of drink and ... a good row at the end! ●

## Little Boy Soldiers

The Remembrance of the last weeks got me remembering about Remembrance in the past, in another country. And in this case the past was another country in more ways than one.

When I was young and growing up in Brixton, South London, one of my favourite places was a bus ride down the road in Kennington. It was the Imperial War Museum. The Imperial War Museum is devoted to the two British wars on Germany that are not usually referred to as Imperial wars. But its title is accurate because they were, indeed, Imperial wars. And so credit is due to the Imperial War Museum for calling a spade a spade.

If the Imperial War Museum ever opened a branch in Ireland it would probably have to call itself the Imperial Peace Museum so that the Irish who were inclined to pay homage to their Imperial warriors could feel good about what they were doing.

I must admit to being obsessed with war as a boy. I think everyone I knew of my age in London was. I could see the contrast when we went home to the rest of the family in Ireland because my cousins cared little for it.

London in the 1960s had reminders of war everywhere. There were still bombsites at the end of our street that had yet to be built on. The Prefabs were there too and we had an air-raid shelter in our backyard with helmets and even an old Lee Enfield. War comics, war films, model aircraft were our world. And we could engage in some contemporary warfare down at West Ham or Millwall on a Saturday if we were that way inclined.

England is an intensely militarist society, of course. And, in those years, when Ted Heath was moving it away from the balance of power and into a new future in Europe, there was a lack of wars to be fought. So this became the great time of football hooliganism, when young men, with nothing better to do, engaged in a bit of 'bovver' with each other (the conflict in Northern Ireland that was just re-emerging was seen in the British consciousness very much as a temporary peace-keeping operation in England at the time).

But, despite the obsession with war and the militarist nature of society, the attitude toward the wars of the past was very much different than today. I cannot remember the wearing of poppies at Remembrance as anything like the extent of today. Remembrance Sunday was only celebrated on that Sunday, with a lot of old veterans of the Great War marching rather harmlessly down to the Cenotaph, with many of them promoting the message: "*Never Again*".

## Thermobaric Bombs

There has been very little publicity about a new type of bomb which Britain is using in Afghanistan. The following is the report as published in the (Australian) *Sunday Times* on 23rd June 2008:-

"British Forces in Afghanistan have used one of the world's most deadly and controversial missiles to fight the Taliban.

Apache attack helicopters have fired the thermobaric weapons against fighters in buildings and caves, to create a pressure wave that sucks the air out of victims, shreds their internal organs and crushes their bodies.

The Ministry of Defence has admitted to the use of the weapons, condemned by human rights groups as "brutal", on several occasions, including against a cave complex.

The use of the Hellfire AGM-4N weapons had been deemed so successful they would now be fired from RAF Reaper unmanned drones controlled by "pilots" at Creech air force base in Nevada, an Defence Ministry spokesman added.

Thermobaric weapons, or vacuum bombs, were first combat-tested by the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in the 1980s and their use by Russia against civilians in Chechnya in the 1990s was condemned worldwide.

British Apache pilots had complained that the standard Hellfire anti-tank missiles were going straight through buildings and out of the other side.

Legal experts concerned that use of the weapons broke international law simply renamed them.

"We no longer accept the term thermobaric (for the AGM-114N) as there is no internationally agreed definition," a ministry

And it was a good excuse to see some war films on the telly, showing how England won the War, with some great escapes and an obscure battle in the desert against the nice Herr Rommel.

But it is clear that everything has changed today. Remembrance is a deeply political thing now and the message is that war is good for you.

And that message, which I presume originated with Thatcher and Sons (Major, Blair and Brown), now washes over Ireland.

Well, give me the militarist England of the 1960s over today's Peace Parks of Ireland any day.

Around thirty years ago Paul Weller (of the pop group, The Jam) wrote a song called *Little Boy Soldiers*. It is on the record called *Setting Sons*. It should be sung to the Irish admirers of *Our War*, as they are now claiming ownership of it. And it should be required reading for those History Professors of Trinity College who would like us to hate Huns again and do our duty in current and future wars:

"I'm up on the hills, playing little boy soldiers,  
Reconnaissance duty up at 5:30.  
Shoot, shoot, shoot and kill the natives,  
You're one of us and we love you for that.

Think of honour, Queen and country,  
You're a blessed son of the British Empire,  
God's on our side and so is Washington.

Come out on the hills with the little boy soldiers.

Come on outside—I'll sing you a lullaby,  
Or tell a tale of how goodness prevailed.

We ruled the world—we killed and robbed,  
The fucking lot—but we don't feel bad.

It was done beneath the flag of democracy,

You'll believe and I do—yes I do—yes I do—  
yes I do—

These days I find that I can't be bothered,  
To argue with them, well what's the point,  
Better to take your shots and drop down dead,  
Then they send you home in a pine overcoat

With a letter to your mum

Saying: 'Find enclosed one son—one medal and a note—  
To say he won.'"

Pat Walsh

spokesman said.

"We call it an enhanced blast weapon."

When a bomb, a warhead packed with fluorinated aluminium powder surrounding a small charge, hits its target, the charge disperses the aluminium powder throughout the target building. The cloud then ignites, causing a massive secondary blast that tears throughout any enclosed space.

The blast creates a vacuum that draws air and debris back in, creating intense pressure. The more heavily the building is protected, the more concentrated the blast.

The cloud of burning aluminium powder means victims often die from asphyxiation before the pressure shreds their organs.

Lockheed Martin air-to-ground missiles systems programme director Jim Gribshaw said the thermobaric Hellfire was "capable of reaching round corners to strike enemy forces hiding in caves, bunkers and hardened multi-room complexes."

## Historians?

David Marquand, a former Labour MP, a founder of the Social Democratic Party, a Chief Adviser to the European Commission, a leader writer on the *Guardian*, and a Professor of Politics, recently published a book entitled, *Britain Since 1918: The Strange Career Of British Democracy*. British democracy (or something close to it) was established in 1918. And the first democratic test of the first democratic British Parliament had to do with the electoral mandate to Sinn Fein to establish independent government in Ireland. Marquand does not even mention the Irish vote for independence. His first mention of Sinn Fein appears on page 369 and it has to do with Provisional Sinn Fein in the 1980s. The history of the British relationship with Ireland during the years immediately following the introduction of the democratic electoral franchise in 1918 is dealt with in a single sentence within a paragraph dealing with something else:

"Signs of strain were unmistakable..."

"An emblematic moment came in 1922 when Britain signed the Washington Treaty, giving the US parity with her in capital ships. In practice, she had ceased to be supreme at sea at the end of the 19th century, but it was one thing to abandon supremacy in practice, another to sign a treaty announcing that she had done so. Meanwhile, spending on the army was heavily cut. In most places strain was not obvious. Where it was, painful change was unavoidable. One such place was Ireland. In the years after the First World War, a handful of republican guerillas successfully defied the might of a recently triumphant Britain, and forced the Lloyd George Government to concede virtual independence to twenty-six counties in the south of Ireland. A second, far more complex, example was India. Instinctively, Baldwin approached the Indian quagmire in the spirit of evolutionary whiggism..." (p94).

Because of cuts in military spending at the end of the Great War, the British Government had to cut a deal with a handful of Republican guerillas!

That is the view of things one has come to expect from Professors Garvin, O Hailpin, Fitzpatrick, Foster, Patterson, Bew, etc. etc. and it is because of them that Marquand can say what he said. But one somehow expected better from him.

Did the fact that the new British democracy chose to deal with the Irish democracy by means of Black & Tans and Auxiliaries, at a moment when the world was looking to Britain for signs of what

the new world order was to be, have no influence on the subsequent course of events in Europe?

I'm sure that, if Irish academics posed questions like this, British intellectuals like Marquand would apply their minds to them. To put it another way: revisionist academic in Ireland, in the way that it responds to British influence, exercises a debasing influence back on English intellectual life.

Marquand writes at much greater length about the conflict in Northern Ireland that erupted forty years later. He sees it, *Irish Independent* fashion, as a conflict of "*rival tribes*" (p224). He does not ask how it could be that tribalism survived and flourished in the late 20th century in this region of the democratic British state. In other words, he does not ask what kind of entity the British state set up in 1921 in this region of itself.

He says: "*Catholics clung to a stubborn 'Irish' identity fuelled by the republican myth of martyrdom*". He does not ask why they did this instead of participating in the democratic life of the British state. Could it really be that he doesn't know!?

He writes: "*State institutions... were instruments of Protestant supremacy*". They were not.

Leaving aside the police (which in theory at least were local—County—bodies everywhere), state institutions were British.

About thirty years ago Paddy Devlin, who had been a Minister at Stormont, wrote that the Social Welfare system was structurally sectarianised, with different rates of benefits for Protestants and Catholics. That assertion passed muster with Professor Bew and Devlin's book was warmly welcomed by the Editor of *Books Ireland*. Angela Clifford, who had written a history of the Northern Ireland Social Welfare system in connection with the 1932 Outdoor Relief Riots, published a refutation of it. What she wrote was never disputed. A few years later we were approached by somebody who had been a student at the Jordanstown Polytechnic at the time. His class was given the task of discovering whether what she wrote was true. Since it was found to be true, nothing was said about it—or about the fact that Devlin's assertion was grossly inaccurate. And this was a fair sample of Irish academic practice in recent decades. (Jordanstown is now a college of the University of Ulster.)

British State institutions existed in Northern Ireland and were fairly administered. But Northern Ireland was excluded from the political system by which the State was governed, and which elicited popular consent to it. Politics in Northern Ireland was local and was disconnected from the business of governing the State. And the State

institutions carried on equably beyond the furore of devolved politics. That is why "*tribalism*" survived and flourished.

Marquand writes:

"Democratic collectivist centralism rested on bad history. It ignored the complex process through which an overarching "British" identity had been superimposed on older Irish, Scottish and Welsh identities; and it brushed aside the inconvenient truth that the British state created by the Act of Union in 1707 was multinational, like Austria-Hungary in the 19th century, not national, like France" (p222).

I argued something like that forty years ago. Taking the major political division in Northern Ireland to be national, I said that it was more appropriate for the multinational Six Counties to be governed within the multi-national British state than within the tightly nationalist Irish State.

But, if that was so, why had the Six Counties not settled down within the multinational British State as Glasgow and Liverpool had?

It was an obvious question. And as soon as it was asked the answer was obvious: because the Six Counties were excluded from the dimension of the British State which operated beyond nationality—its system of party politics. British party politics preceded the British Parliamentary Union of 1707 and contained and absorbed all political movements thrown up after 1707. (And when the Liberal Party destroyed itself by launching World War in 1914 it was arranged that the Labour Party should be its evolutionary replacement.)

Britain was multi-national in a very different sense from Austria-Hungary, as the names indicate. It was never organised by nationality. Griffith's "*Hungarian model*" was delusory in its moderation. Balfour said at one time that, if it came to it that there must be one or the other, Irish independence would be preferable to Home Rule because the latter would be a drag on the British Constitution. Joint British/Irish government of the Empire on Austro-Hungarian lines never stood a chance.

British state power was tightly centralised. It seemed to me that the communal roots of local authority were torn up by the prolonged Reformation with its scorched earth policies. In the 18th century, the century of freedom for the gentry, the local authority was the local gentleman. When an internal apparatus of state of another kind was established and representative local authorities were set up, this was done as Westminster saw fit. A Local Authority was a highly conditional devolved body that Westminster could do what it pleased with. Many of the English Counties that I at least once knew the names of are no



longer there. But the geometrical divisions of the French Republic that Burke ridiculed are still there, and they have some meaning.

Britain knows Ireland in the mode of pragmatic dogmatism. A dogmatic assertion that plays is pragmatic. That is the source meaning of the term.

British politics operates as far as possible with stereotypes. Stereotypes are reassuring and stabilising. It lost Ireland ninety years ago because something happened within Ireland that falsified the stereotypes. Thirty years ago Raymond Crotty wrote an article for the London *Times* saying that Ireland had become intellectually defunct and calling on British ruling circles to do its thinking for it once again. The call was heeded. The stereotypes which made Britain feel good about Ireland, and which prove themselves true by playing in Ireland, were resurrected and are flourishing. And now Irish academics are making sprightly British intellectuals like Marquand very dull by the way they live the stereotypes.

Dermot Keogh, formerly a journalist on the *Irish Press* and now a Professor of History at Cork University, has just published a long biography of Jack Lynch. It is an apology for Lynch's conduct in 1969-70. It asserts that Lynch's conduct gave effect to a policy; that Blaney and Haughey, the senior Ministers in Lynch's Government, disagreed with Lynch's policy and ran a policy of their own in conflict with it; a kind of dual power resulted from this with Blaney running a "parallel government"; because Lynch's policy was the policy of the state, the operation of the "parallel government" was subversive of the state; the Northern policy of Blaney's "parallel government" was a war policy while Lynch's Government had a peace policy; and that this state of affairs gave rise to the arms Crisis, which was resolved by the Arms Trials.

Blaney's "parallel government" was subjected to criminal prosecution for subversion by Lynch's Government. That is the case asserted by Keogh. One would therefore have expected an account of the arms Trial to be the heart of the book. But, in a book of 600 pages, it is skipped over with five short sentences. One can see sufficient reason for this. Blaney, the major figure in the "parallel government" had the charges against him dismissed in the District Court, even though his name figured prominently at the Arms Trial. If Keogh had dealt with the trial, he would have had to account for this. He would also have had to account for the Not Guilty verdict that was the outcome of the trial of Haughey.

Lynch rejected the Trial verdict. He regarded Haughey as a criminal who had got away with his crime—at least that is the logical implication of his rejection of

the verdict. But he did not act against Haughey within the Party. One would have expected a subversive who somehow escaped criminal conviction to be at least expelled from Party membership, particularly when he accused the Leader of putting on a political show trial that damaged the state. But Haughey remained in active Party membership, returning to the Front Bench in a few years and taking over the leadership of the Party and the state from Lynch within a decade.

Ten years after the Arms Trial (which was either fraudulent or grossly bungled or both), Lynch was indicted of gross negligence in the conduct of government in 1969-70 when the Diaries of the Secretary of the Department of Justice, Peter Berry, were published posthumously, and had to defend himself in the presence of Haughey as Taoiseach.

So what was it all about?

Keogh's long chapter about the affair (125 pages of which the trial occupies six lines) ends with a speculation of *what if* Lynch had not in 1969-70 "successfully stood out against physical-force nationalism". Here is his conclusion:

"The Blaney-Haughey alternative may not merely have provided a change of leadership: it might have been a case of regime change, with bloody consequences for the North of Ireland" (p287).

That there was a Blaney-Haughey alternative which attempted to oust Lynch is one of those things that can only be known through an Act of Faith. But, if there was, and if Lynch successfully defeated it, it needs no Act of Faith to see that Lynch's success had "bloody consequences for Northern Ireland" on a scale that nobody thought possible before the Arms Trial.

One of the things that the Arms Trial did was abandon the Northern Catholic community, or free it. To be abandoned is to be freed. What an abandoned community does with its freedom depends on what substance it has in itself. The Northern Catholics had looked to Dublin for two generations. Lynch's inflammatory television speech of mid-August 1969 (experienced as inflammatory even by Protestants active in the Civil Rights movement), raised great expectations of Dublin support amongst Catholics. Dublin delivered on the expectations it had raised for about eight months. Then, out of the blue, a representative of the Northern Catholics to the Dublin Government, John Kelly, was arrested on a charge of criminal conspiracy by Lynch because of his association with agents of the Dublin Government who had been delivering on Lynch's August undertaking. He was acquitted, along with Capt. Kelly and Haughey, but the manner in which Lynch

handled the acquittal only made the sense of abandonment—and betrayal—more complete. And that was when the Northern Catholics, finding themselves on their own, discovered the ability to act on their own. They made war and peace on their own account, obliging others to make terms with them.

Keogh records that in late August 1969 the British Ambassador (Gilchrist, who had not long before overseen the massacre of about a million people in Indonesia) "hoped and expected that the Irish Government would take every possible step to curb the activities of the IRA and in particular to prevent their crossing the border to attack the North" (p194). That hope was released. And that was one of the reasons why there was a powerful insurgency of the abandoned Northern Catholic community acting independently, instead of defensive operations supported by the Dublin Government and limited by it.

In 1956 there was a formal invasion of the North by the IRA in orderly military formation. It grew out of the great anti-Partition agitation launched by Fine Gael when it was re-discovering itself as Republican. Because it was an invasion it came to nothing. The IRA was in the course of re-making itself as a Marxist party of class revolution in 1969 and was an irrelevance in the North. The pogrom of August 1969 gave rise in the first instance to Defence Committees in which Catholics who had served in the British Army played a crucial part. Their purpose was communal defence, conducted in consultation with Dublin. When Lynch ended that relationship and prosecuted their representative for criminal conspiracy, the phase of defensive insurgency was ended. A new IRA was formed out of the Northern crisis and the revolutionary insurgency began.

There has never been a credible explanation of Lynch's action. Possibly he thought he was pricking the bubble that he had helped to blow in August, and he expected the Northern Catholics to relapse into the old sullen subordination. It had the contrary effect.

Keogh shows no interest whatever in the curious constitutional entity called Northern Ireland and the effect it had on both of its communities in their interaction. That is a quality he shares with Lynch.

He skips over the Arms trial, and relies for evidence of a conspiracy on "a secret memorandum", drawn up by Military Intelligence "in the latter part of 1970" (p239). This secret memorandum is in the "Jack Lynch Papers"—but where are they?

The Prosecution case was put to the test at the Trial and it failed. The Court transcript of the trial—the most important ever held in the state—has been 'lost'. Lynch got a new, politically pliable

Director of Military Intelligence to put together a secret case about Arms Conspiracy to be made public at a future date when it would be immune from the cross-examination that destroyed Lynch's case at the Trial. Keogh appears to be the chosen medium through which it is released—but only fragments of it.

The object, of course, is to discredit those who enacted Lynch's policy between August 1969 and his unexplained reversal of April 1970, especially Col. Hefferon and Capt. Kelly. This will be considered in a future article.

**Brendan Clifford**

## ES AHORA \*

Now that a full blown recession seems to have gripped the country according to all the economists, it is a good time to look outwards and see where there is business to be got. Looking to the UK is not an option with its own currency outside the Euro and indeed *competing* with it (though to listen to Minister for Foreign Affairs, Michael Martin, you might miss this vital point—but then what is a former secondary school teacher to know about the intricacies of foreign and national markets/currencies).

The smart thing is to follow Charlie Haughey and Albert Reynolds, who initiated trade with the oil-rich Arab countries. Having Libya as a customer for our beef etc. was hard economic sense though it was ridiculed by (surprise, surprise) the Dublin media and politicians who should have known better. Now is the time to grab opportunities and win contracts from places where building is almost a fledgling industry.

Many might think Tom Parlon, Director General of the Construction Industry Federation (CIF), as a former PD member of Dail Eireann, might still be hampered by the right-wing ideology of that now former party, but out in the world, it is surprising what people realise when needs must. He has announced that Irish construction firms should "*look to Iran*". He heard from the Iranian Housing Development Minister Khajeh Daloui himself about the huge opportunities for our firms, as "*Ireland's construction expertise*" has a growing international reputation. As Tom puts it:

"We have been approached by a number of international agencies with a view to attracting Irish construction companies to undertake major infrastructure projects abroad... The request by the Iranian Government to meet and discuss the opportunities available in that country is further proof of this global recognition"

But our Government, consumed as it is by fiercely negative headlines and subsequently ever-falling polls (Hello! there is a financial crisis and popularity is not going to be there for a while, while hard decisions *have* to be made which will be exploited *for the here and now* by a rubbishy opposition) have to take their heads out of their nether regions and get the business done. The oil rich Iranian government plans to build 1,356 million units by March 2009 and a total of 7,888 million new houses over the next five years. The Central Bank of Iran will guarantee the investment and repatriation of profits by participants. Now what are we waiting for with potential deals like that—get with the programme.

Parlon cannot be faulted for flying to Iran and landing these great deals. But there seems to be a curious silence from our 'talking heads' and RTE. Is it because there might be just a fuss made about our dealings by the likes of the UK? Yet we were treated to the sight of their Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, going with *his begging bowl* to the Saudis and others in that region. It would be a true mortification if our Taoiseach acted in such a creeping and fawning way. So Cowen get off your butt—as the Americans would say—forget those house-trained pollsters and get back to doing what you do best. I have heard you speak at many a Fianna Fail function and you had 700-800 people on their feet because it was very obvious you could deliver. Go ahead—you have certainly nothing to lose now if that's how bad you see things.

Minister Batt O'Keeffe is speaking truth to power, i.e. the people, and picking up the mess made by the silly promises of a former Education Minister, Michael Martin. Third level fees have got to be introduced—it is the only economically viable thing to do. And when the RTE News at 6 picked up on the pictures of the students horsing around in a make-believe protest (after the truly persuasive protest of the elders of our community) well it was enough for me looking at their expensive threads, hearing about their drinking/drug clubbing activities, to know when enough was enough. When we protested as students in the 80's—not *that* long ago—I was wearing my Dunne's duffle coat as were many others and it saw me through college days and well beyond.

Belfast is supposed to be a newly jiving have-it-all city, so a number of us went up to meet for a weekend dinner—the date decided ages before hand—and as it was my first time going there I was looking forward to it—yet with a slight apprehension. On the train up, I looked at the farming fields and saw that the wet summer had wreaked an awful lot of damage. Still, land drainage is not an

exotic science and I would have thought there would be more of an effort made to get more crop yieldage (what are the third level courses teaching—if not agri-business, aqua-business *et al—oh yes* that's right its all media and drama studies but for how long?) Was it Hitler who famously speculated about *what if* the Dutch had got Ireland and we had got the Netherlands? Doesn't bear thinking about really. And I am wedded to the land, being a daughter of it.

We saw a trenched-coat man getting on in Newry, and thought nothing of it at first but still I noticed he came into our carriage and sat inside the doors. There was hardly any-one on the train. When we finally got to Grand Central Station what was first noticeable was the number of plastic poppy wearers—but then something much more sinister caught my eye. I have been many places but I have never picked up on the level of security via CCTV cameras which boasted not only of watching us but of "*storing our images*". And in the foyer, they had even a notice warning that "*our vocals*" were being picked up and stored. Here at home, there might be CCTVs around but one knows they are seldom working and, if they are, it is for the purpose of traffic control or property surveillance. And they are small compared to those in Belfast.

We went to our hotel, and the man (the trench coated one) followed and stood watching us in the foyer of the hotel as we asked for our rooms. I was seriously freaked out when we went out to the pub, met our fellow diners and came back to our hotel and he was still there now openly staring at us. We needed a light meal and while in the restaurant as it darkened outside as we looked out the window, he passed by having looked at his watch and—we thought—had come to the end of his watch.

Of course the next day was the march of the soldiers and it was negotiated that they passed in buses rather than on foot. The whole feel of the place was scary and some of the party who were tough men thought at first that they would go out and see for themselves—but finally watched it from the hotel windows. We watched as the soldiers in full dress uniform with plumes out of their berets pass in their buses. Then they were followed by very badly dressed men—mostly men—some of whom had tattoos of the British flag on *their shaved heads*. These people had some poppies, many were dilapidated, and their faces bore signs of hardship. I was confused as I thought these to be the nationalists, but they actually were the unionists. (It went through my mind that if the protesting students in Dublin had their clothes, they would have attracted some sympathy.) It was a terrible sight to see all these men, smoking and obviously lacking in nutrition, making as if they were the

chosen.

When we finally got to see the nationalist part of Belfast, there was the urban Gaeltacht and that was jiving but by then I wanted to go home as quickly as possible. But to my horror, no taxi or train from Grand Central was working while the march was on. Eventually I approached a black taxi-man (we were warned that one lot of taxis were not "our side" but in the compulsion to get away I just approached this man and he said it was impossible to travel and indeed there were many white police-4-wheelers stringing out across the road where there was much shouting and throwing of flags and other Unionist paraphernalia. In the end, the man agreed to take us to the train station as we assured him money was no object. Smilingly, he shook his head and landed us there having gone through other areas where our own national flag was flying and parked at several side-streets were the police-4-wheelers again. By the time the train came for Dublin we were off and I swore that never again would I come near Belfast. I kept asking my companions, were we yet out of the woods—and then the Mountains of Mourne were behind us in their glorious purple-hued colours and one said now we're home and dry.

I happened to look out of the window for one last glance and there in the fields were sheep, dyed with the colours of red, blue and their natural white backs—called to look, we all stared out and one wit said "well talk about being dyed-in-the-wool". Dublin never looked so good.

While commemorations of Britain's wars have taken on new life here in the 'South' (I hate using that phrase as constitutionally our national name is Ireland or in Irish, Eire, but I am using it only as shorthand here) with the President going off to open so-called 'Peace Parks' in Mayo and in Cork, an actual fancy-dress party was held in the City Hall orchestrated by the Fine Gael Lord Mayor, Brian Birmingham and others, it looks as if our own national self-esteem is on the *proverbial drip*. RTE has so saturated our population with their propaganda, not to mention the three main national dailies, that to even ask any questions as to the propriety of any of this, immediately earns the response of being an Anglophobe. This is of course pure nonsense. But hey whatever works *they* seem to think and if they get away with it once or twice—well they are on their way. I have had enough of this blackguarding. We pay their bloated salaries and we get *this* in return. And once the politicians see what way the wind is blowing, their supineness in the face of it, is enough to sicken one.

But funny enough there seems to be a bit of a backlash—not much yet—but it is there and for the moment that will do me fine. I have been to two very important

## Ireland was 'betrayed' before First World War ended

The following letter appeared in the *Irish Examiner* of 17th November

Several letters in favour of the Remembrance Day concert held in Cork City Hall on November 8 based their support for it on the understanding that the Irish Party supported the British government's conduct of the war until it ended on November 11, 1918.

Such was not the case. On April 18, 1918 the Irish Party, having withdrawn from the House of Commons over the passing of a Military Service Act, joined with other Irish parties to issue a declaration from the Mansion House, Dublin.

The declaration stated that "the passing of the Conscription Bill by the British House of Commons must be regarded as a declaration of war on the Irish nation... It is in direct violation of the rights of small nationalities to self-determination which even the prime minister of England—now preparing to employ naked militarism and force his act upon Ireland—himself officially announced as an essential condition for peace at the (Paris) peace conference".

Among those who signed the declaration were John Dillon and Joseph Devlin (representing the Irish Party), Eamon de Valera and Arthur Griffith (representing Sinn Féin), William O'Brien (All-for-Ireland League), Tim Healy (Independent) and, representing Labour, Thomas Johnson, William O'Brien and M Egan. Within days the Roman Catholic bishops issued a statement expressing their opposition to conscription. Moreover, the two worst fears of those who signed the Mansion House declaration were to be realised: the promise to recognise "the rights of small nationalities" was broken when Lloyd George prevented the case for Irish independence being heard at the Paris peace conference; and the employment of "naked militarism" by the British army began immediately—well over a year before the Black and Tans arrived in Ireland.

Three stages may be identified in this move towards rule by the military rather than by Dublin Castle.

Firstly, on May 10, 1918 Lord French accepted the offer to become Lord Lieutenant of Ireland "as a military viceroy at the head of a quasi-military government".

Secondly, French took steps to send an extra 12,000 troops to Ireland (25,000 were already there) and planned to establish four "entrenched air camps" which could be used to bomb Sinn Féiners.

Thirdly, following a proclamation by Lord French on May 16, 1918 in relation to an alleged German plot, more than 100 members of Sinn Féin were imprisoned without trial under the Defence of the Realm Act.

By the end of the world war, about 200 Sinn Féiners were imprisoned under this act. In other words, as the world war ended, a British army of occupation was enforcing martial law in Ireland and neither of the two political promises that had inspired Irishmen to fight in England's interests had been met: there was no Home Rule and there was no freedom for a small nation rightly struggling to be free.

These historical realities provided the background against which Irish soldiers fought in the war and, in the words of Eamon de Valera addressed to US President Woodrow Wilson, manifested "unselfish heroism".

However, to focus on their bravery while neglecting the presence of the British army in Ireland and the duplicity of the British government would be to tell only one part of the story—and that a very unbalanced one.

To provide the necessary balance, it is helpful to recall and to remember (the essence of Remembrance) the words of the Mansion House conference that "a declaration of war on the Irish nation" was made by the British government in April 1918.

**Dr. Brian P Murphy OSB**

events in the past fortnight and will report on them thoroughly in next month's issue. Sure the fightback has only begun.

**Julianne Herlihy**

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### Correction

In the November 2008 issue of *Irish Political Review*, the article "Irish Regiments: The Empire They Fought For" by Philip O'Connor carried a misprint. The statement following the "Indian Mutiny" attributed to Charles Darwin in relation to the Indian people of wanting to "do my utmost to exterminate the race" was in fact made by Charles Dickens in an editorial in the December 1857 issue of his magazine *Household Words*. The author wishes to apologise for this slip.



# Coolacrease

## Executions Were A War Time Tragedy

The following report appeared in the *Offaly Express* of 11th November

A new book "Coolacrease: The true story of the Pearson executions" which claims to disprove RTE slurs against Offaly was given both a welcome and emotional reception when it was launched on Thursday evening by Seanad Cathaoirleach Pat Moylan.

### RTE'S HIDDEN HISTORY 'DAMAGED LOCAL TOURISM'

The book, published by the Aubane Historical Society, and written by Paddy Heaney, Pat Muldowney, Philip O'Connor and other contributors, disputes an RTE documentary 'Hidden History' which described the execution of the Pearson brothers at Coolacrease as a sectarian act.

A large crowd gathered for the launch at the Offaly Historical and Archaeological Society in Bury Quay, Tullamore and they showed their support for the publication, hailing it as 'a tremendous piece of local history'.

MC and one of the authors Philip O'Connor said it was a book of great importance. He said the War of Independence had not ended at the time of the executions, an issue of great national importance and said it was dealt with in a 'controversial' way by RTE.

"It was a tragedy that happened in a time of war. Senator Eoghan Harris described it as a sectarian atrocity and said the men were deliberately shot in the genitals. He described it as ethnic cleansing," said Mr O'Connor.

He said there were also claims that the executions were carried out by the IRA to get land and that a mafia silence descended over Offaly.

Mr O'Connor said the basic facts were always known and that in 2000 Paddy Heaney's book "At the Foot of Slieve Bloom" showed that the orders came from senior level within the IRA during a dangerous time.

"The IRA command ordered the men to be executed. It was not a local event," said Mr O'Connor.

He said in 1918 the people of Ireland voted to have the Dail established and for a republic and that war was declared by the British Government to make the election null and void. He said there was talk of 'uncontested seats' but denied this saying it was the election with the least 'uncontested' seats and was won by a landslide.

Mr O'Connor spoke of the court of enquiry which was held in Crinkle, Birr into the executions. The Pearson family were interviewed and there was even a

reporter present.

The court found that the main reason was a military engagement with an IRA road block, in which four IRA members were wounded, a raid in which the Pearson brothers partook. He said the British Military Court agreed it was a reprisal, a retaliation for the Pearsons attack on the IRA.

"There were other large Protestant farms around and none of those families or homes were touched. This was a particular case because of a particular situation," said Mr O'Connor.

He said that documents obtained by the Land Commission showed no "sectarian division of land", or no "sectarian land grab."

Finally he said that academic historians who appeared in the RTE documentary and the broadcaster itself, now have "a case to answer".

Local Historian and one of the authors Paddy Heaney thanked all those who came forward with accounts of what happened.

"We were all very annoyed when the documentary came out. Some were reluctant to take part in it," said Mr Heaney. He said however "it would be sad if we let down the men and women of that period."

He said those interviewed were not treated well.

"We were hauled into Charleville and degraded," said Mr Heaney. He said the documentary did untold damage to tourism in the area.

"Some of us have put in 35 years of hard work trying to encourage people to come to the Slieve Blooms. It was amazing the documentary did a whole lot of damage. It was a pity the documentary portrayed the local area in a wrong light entirely," said Mr Heaney.

He said the book was dedicated to the people of the area involved in the War of Independence. "A lot of them emigrated and are buried in a foreign land with no tombstone to their memory. This book will be a memorial to them."

Another author of the book, Pat Muldowney said a lot of controversy has grown since the documentary was first aired. He said all other stories crumble compared to the true story found in Paddy Heaney's book.

He said when he learned of the discontent amongst those interviewed for the documentary he had a feeling it wouldn't be balanced. He said British

Military documents had confirmed what Paddy Heaney's book had said.

Mr. Muldowney said his own interview on the Joe Duffy show saw him challenged on whether there was a legitimate government in Ireland at the time. "He was saying it wasn't an Irish army. The first Dail was elected in 1918 and the second was elected in 1921," said Mr Muldowney.

Launching the book Senator Pat Moylan said the book made for compelling reading for anyone with an interest in local history. He said while he had an interest he was not nor never has been an historian.

"It was 87 years ago and the analysis is best left with historians," said Senator Moylan.

He said his own father had been a volunteer with the Republican forces during that time and was part of the fight for Irish Independence.

"It was a great and patriotic generation. There was much suffering and sacrifice so the people of our country may chart their own destiny in the world."

He said the IRA were working under the mandate of the Irish people, because of the Declaration of Independence in 1919.

He said there was never a mandate for ethnic cleansing, and questioned whether the shootings were the botched result of inexperienced marksmen, and said it was chilling from a modern perspective.

A comment from the floor described the book as "a tremendous piece of local history."

It was said that the RTE documentary was now being shown in secondary schools.

Following this there were calls for Senator Pat Moylan to launch an objection with the Minister for Education and the Taoiseach about the documentary being shown in schools or to ensure that the book is made available in schools where the documentary is being shown.

**Coolacrease.**  
**The True Story of the Pearson Executions in Co. Offaly, an Incident in the War of Independence**  
by  
**Paddy Heaney, Pat Muldowney, Philip O'Connor and others. 427 pp.**  
**ISBN 978-1-903497-47-0.**  
**Aubane Historical Society. 2008.**  
€20, £18.

## Address By Philip O'Connor

Firstly, I would like to thank Steve McNeill, chairman of OHAS, for hosting the event this evening.

I would also like to extend a particularly warm welcome to Senator Pat Moylan—Cathairleach of the Seanad—for agreeing to launch the book.

There are many people I would like to thank for this book—

Jack Lane who urged that it be done,

Especially Paddy Heaney, who had researched this story thoroughly, and first published an account of it in 2000, and Pat Muldowney who took up the issue, working with Paddy to reconstruct the full detail of the story and track down the documentary record;

Many people who provided new details and information—such as Simon Comer, Nick Folley, Niall Guerin and Claire McGrath-Guerin

Philip McConway for new information from his current research into the War of Independence in Offaly;

Seán McGouran for accessing the records of the Irish Grants Committee in the British National Archives;

Malachi Lawless for compiling the transcripts of the RTÉ programmes;

Brian P. Murphy (who unfortunately can't be with us as he is in hospital for a hip operation), Brendan Clifford, Nick Folley and John Martin for contributing excellent chapters to the book;

The staffs of the Military Archives, the National Archive, the Records Branch of the Department of Agriculture, the Land Registry and the Land Valuation Offices (Dublin) and the British National Archives, Kew (London),

Angela Clifford and AHS for a marvellous work of production

Most of all, a special thanks to the people of Cadamstown for consenting to information on their families being published in this book

This book is about an incident at the end of the War of Independence, and is important in both national and local history. But because of the way it was treated recently in the national press following a documentary on RTE, it has become a battleground in the struggle over the very meaning of that history.

The incident, as everyone now knows, was the shooting by the IRA of two brothers—Richard and Abraham Pearson—and the burning of their house—Coolacrease House—in 1921.



(Apologies for the poor quality of this photo. A better version can be seen on the Offaly Express website.)

**Authors of *Coolacrease: The True Story Of The Pearson Executions*, Paddy Heaney, Philip O'Connor, Pat Muldowney and Jack Lane, with Senator Pat Moylan who officially launched the book at the Offaly Historical & Archaeological Society, Bury Quay, Tullamore on 6th November. Those attending the launch included J.J. Dillon, whose contributions to the Coolacrease programme were edited to give a misleading impression. Also present was Michael Connolly, son of Joe Connolly (commander of the Active Service Unit which carried out the execution). He very warmly welcomed us and the book. (Picture: [www.JeffHarvey.ie](http://www.JeffHarvey.ie))**

Senator Eoghan Harris proclaimed it to have been a sectarian atrocity, carried out in a horrendous manner (deliberately shot in the "genitals" and left to die), and the programme claimed it had been done by the local IRA in furtherance of a land grab by local people. It was claimed the event was shrouded in a mafia-like silence locally, and Sen. Harris demanded atonement by the people of Co. Offaly.

The basic facts of what happened have always been known locally, and they were researched twenty years ago by Paddy Heaney and recounted in his pioneering book *At the foot of Slieve Bloom*, which appeared nine years ago. There was no local cover-up.

The few IRA records from the time make it quite clear what happened: the Pearson brothers attacked a group of local IRA men building a roadblock, wounding three of them—Tom Donnelly, Mick Heaney and Jack Brophy—as well as an RIC man—Bert Hogg—who had been apprehended by the roadblock party coming from the Pearson house. Mick Heaney was seriously wounded, and died a few years later of his wounds. On the basis of many sources of information, the IRA also concluded that the Pearson brothers had been passing intelligence to the British side during those dangerous times. They were ordered to be executed for taking up arms on the British side during a time of war.

The decision to execute the Pearson brothers was taken by the senior IRA command, not by local men. Also, the execution party did not involve local men, but consisted of the active service unit of the South Offaly Brigade, based at Kilcormac. In addition, many of the leaders of the local IRA leaders—e.g. JJ Horan (a substantial farmer and elected Sinn Fein councillor for Kinnity), JJ McRedmond, John Dillon etc.—were

imprisoned at the time, Dillon and Horan following denunciation by the Pearsons after the so-called 'Mass path incident'. Following the roadblock attack most of the local republicans had been rounded up and interned. In other words, there was no attack by the "local" IRA on the Pearsons.

The execution was of course a tragedy, as all such events in time of war are. But we must remember why there was a war. It was not some kind of continuation of the 1916 rising. The major fact of Irish history at that time was the election of November 1918 in which Sinn Fein, standing on a platform of withdrawing from Westminster, convening a Dáil in Ireland and establishing a Republic, had won a landslide. Some commentators now attack those elections, referring especially to the issue of some uncontested seats. But it was the first election in which the entire adult population over 21 had a vote, and in fact the number of uncontested seats was a record low compared to all previous general elections in Ireland—the facts of this matter are brought out for the first time here in the article by Brendan Clifford. The fact is that the British Government refused to accept the outcome of the election in Ireland, and launched a campaign of military suppression and terror in Ireland. The IRA came about by people taking an oath to defend the democratically elected Dail and its institutions against this military onslaught. The War of Independence was a popular resistance movement against the war of terror with which the British responded to the results of the general election in Ireland.

A key source of information on the events at Coolacrease are the proceedings of the official British Military Court of Inquiry held at Crinkle into the events at Coolacrease. These already contain much of the key evidence debunking the Harris

mythology: the Pearson brothers were not "shot in the genitals" as the Senator claimed. They received various wounds to the back, legs, arms etc., and only in one case, a wound to the groin area on one of the men. The evidence at that Inquiry also demolishes the later myths that the family was forced to witness the execution. Indeed, of the many fanciful stories of this nature later related in connection with the execution, few were mentioned at all at the Inquiry. The British Military Inquiry also accessed evidence from the top RIC officers of the Divisional area, who recounted that the executions were probably in reprisal for the Pearson attack on the IRA roadblock (they even thought one of the volunteers had been killed). This RIC assessment was, ironically, probably based on evidence from the Pearsons themselves. All of this evidence, though made available to Niamh Sammon and Eoghan Harris, was suppressed in the making of the RTE documentary.

Another area the book examines in some detail are the claims of a land grab. Niamh Sammon claimed that the programme was based on "confidential" files in the Land Commission which proved her claims. And she claimed that a respected historian—Dr Dooley—had examined these records and that that provided the basis for the programme's claims of a sectarian land grab. In fact, the only "evidence" provided for this were the very colourful claims which the Pearson family itself made to a later British compensation commission called the "Irish Grants Committee."

The IGC was a very strange fish indeed. It was established after several compensation bodies had already investigated all kinds of compensation claims for property and life lost during Britain's war in Ireland. The IGC was set up following a vociferous campaign by well connected loyalist lobbying groups to provide additional compensation for what was called "extraordinary hardship" over and above material losses. It was staffed by senior unionist and Anglo-Irish loyalist personnel and collected and heard evidence from one source only—the Southern Irish Loyalists Relief Association. Given that no contradicting or other evidence from any other Irish source was ever sought or heard by the Committee, it was a very one sided body. It is hardly surprising in these circumstances that people would embellish and spin extraordinary stories to it. Nevertheless, the first claim by the Pearsons was rejected by even the IGC as too fanciful to be taken seriously. A subsequent claim was successful and brought the family compensation of £7,400, though as the book shows, hardly anything in that claim stands up to serious scrutiny, and even most of the claims it

did contain were actually rejected by it. These include claims of trespass, boycott and land grabbing by local people against the family which the evidence assembled in this book shows simply never happened.

Finally, it was claimed by the Pearsons in their compensation claim that their farm was squatted and that the Land Commission accepted this *fait accompli* and divided the land among local IRA men after William Pearson had been forced to sell it for a quarter of its value to the Land Commission at the point of a gun! This nonsense was accepted by the Sammon-Harris documentary, and backed up in its essentials by various academics who participated in the programme.

In fact, the Pearsons negotiated a very good price from the Land Commission—over twice what they had paid for it—and also received compensations for some losses from the County Court in Birr. The Land Commission at that time, as civil servants who had transferred from the British to the Irish system, did everything by strict procedure, and that included never dealing with land squatters. In addition, the IRA, the Republican Courts and the Free State authorities never accepted seizures of land, and invariably repossessed it and returned it to its owners. But there was no squatting or land grabbing at Coolacrease, as this book proves. The Land Commission paid over the odds for the land, and then distributed it in strict adherence to procedure. Ironically, one of those procedures at the time—arising from a British Act of 1919—was to give preference to ex-British Army soldiers, and the first four allocations of land from the farm were indeed offered to men who had fought for the British in WW1. Of the 14 allocations only three—of 12, 18 and 30 acres—were finally made to men who had been involved in the independence struggle. There simply was no land grab at Coolacrease, sectarian or otherwise.

The RTE documentary sought to tar the people of Cadamstown as sectarian land grabbers, the army of the Dáil as operating a murderous land grabbing campaign locally, and the officials of the Land Commission as complicit in a sectarian crime. This book comprehensively demolishes all of these charges.

## Coolacrease

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from the addresses on the back  
page or from

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## Address By Pat Muldowney

I'd like to add my voice to the acknowledgements of the previous speakers. I would also like to thank members of the Offaly news media who helped to publicise the story—including Ger Scully and others who are here tonight. And, whether he likes it or not, I want to acknowledge a particular debt of gratitude to Niall Meehan who was a pillar of strength and good counsel throughout the controversy.

Three separate issues can be seen as emerging from the Coolacrease story.

First there are the actual events of 1921. These were described by Paddy Heaney in his book *At the Foot of Slieve Bloom*. But in the course of the past couple of years, Paddy's account was challenged and subjected to intense criticism by top academics, top broadcasters and top pundits. They produced a new version of the events in opposition to Paddy's.

But it turned out to be very easy to demolish the new version. The top academics, top broadcasters and top pundits were talking off the top of their head. Paddy's account, on the other hand, turned out to be robust and well-founded.

In fact, Paddy set the top professors an examination, and the professors flunked the test!

The second issue emerging from Coolacrease is the public controversy surrounding the RTÉ Hidden History programme which was first broadcast about a year ago. This is the issue of the interpretation and implementation of the Broadcasting Act which lays down standards which broadcasting must comply with. This issue is discussed in detail in the book.

Though I wasn't in the programme I had a role outside of it. I first met Paddy about three years ago, and he told me then that he had been approached by television and film people. I got involved in some internet debate about the Coolacrease story. I got in touch again with Paddy in June 2007, and he told me that a television programme was being made, and that the interviews were already done. He was concerned at that time about possible bias.

So I made contact with the programme and the upshot was that I was invited to be interviewed for it. I went to see Paddy and he introduced me to Philip McConway, and both of them coached me in preparation for what they regarded as prejudicial interview practice. In addition, I was able



to get hold of the official British records of the Coolcrease events, and these confirmed Paddy's account of what had happened.

I was interviewed for the programme on July 28 2007, and the interview confirmed suspicions that the programme was not going to be objective, fair and balanced. So the only thing to be done was to prepare to publicly contest the programme as soon as it was broadcast. And that is what was done. All this is described in the book.

The third issue in this affair is what I call the Joe Duffy issue. That is, the revision and re-interpretation of the events which resulted in an independent Irish State during the first half of the twentieth century, 1912 to 1948.

In the week following the broadcast, just over one year ago tonight, for two days in a row Joe Duffy gave over his Liveline afternoon radio programme to countering the criticism to which the Coolcrease Hidden History programme was being subjected. While he was interviewing me on air I made reference to the Irish government of the Second Dáil, and to its army. Joe Duffy—the people's friend, the voice of the common man—challenged this and said that, whether we like it or not there was no constituted Irish government or Irish army at the time, that the official government was the British-appointed one in Dublin Castle, and they had their own armed forces on the ground in Ireland.

This leads us onto the delicate ground of legitimacy. The first Dáil was elected with an overwhelming independence mandate in 1918. The independence mandate was confirmed in elections in 1920 and 1921 when the second Dáil was elected.

The 30th Dáil was elected in 2007. The government that it produced can be criticised and opposed, but its authority and legitimacy are not seriously questioned.

So what is the root of the Joe Duffy issue? In the US Presidential election of 2000 there was a dispute about the counting of votes in Florida. Disputes about vote-counting in the Lebanon, the Ukraine and other places sometimes cause dangerous and violent crises.

What is it that induces us to into a social contract with each other, in which we comply with laws, pay taxes, and acknowledge authority outside of ourselves?

What is the source of legitimate political authority? If it does not come from the ballot-box then where does it come from? This is the Joe Duffy issue. This is part of the revision or re-interpretation of the origin and character of the independent Irish state.

This challenge is not limited to some radio presenter, or to a few newspaper

shock-jock columnists who entertain us by sticking pins in what they regard as Irish sacred cows.

Revisionism is now the mainstream view. The Irish Labour Party website says that constitutional or democratic Irish self-government began in 1922, not in 1918. Many Fine Gael spokesmen say the same thing. A leading Fianna Fáil spokesman and government minister has declared, on the record, that this is the case.

The implication for the Coolcrease story is clear. If it is the case that the authority that the Pearsons aligned themselves with was the legitimate one, then they were innocent victims of murder. The only thing they can be accused of is recklessness, or excess of valour in their active defence of legitimate authority in Ireland.

Likewise, the Hidden History documentary may have been a bit slipshod in its research and its use of sources. But its heart was in the right place—that is, if we accept the mainstream view of the origins of legitimate, democratic government in Ireland.

What is the source of this revisionism which is now the mainstream? Ultimately, this is the British view, according to which a law enacted by the British government in 1920 established a Parliament in Southern Ireland whose powers were finally determined by the 1922 Articles of Agreement between the British government and Irish representatives who had been elected to the Parliament of Southern Ireland in 1921.

The British view of Irish affairs is now predominant in Ireland. In the 20th century the Irish fought one and only one war against a foreign power. That war is now subjected to intensely hostile critical analysis, while involvement by individual Irish people in a variety of foreign wars is acclaimed as something to be commemorated uncritically and indiscriminately.

In case anyone thinks I've been partisan in naming political parties, the only senior politician I've ever discussed this with was in Sinn Féin, and his view was that the Irish should reclaim their rightful role in the Remembrance ceremonials.

So the revisionist or British view of Irish history now has broad acceptance in Ireland. This is the most significant aspect of the Coolcrease story.

#### Michael O'Leary (Ryanair):

"We had an amazing boom for 10 years. What Europe now needs is a recession. It's the only way to get wages down, to get costs down."

(CNBC 4th November)

## Fintan's Faulty (?) Ear

In the *Weekend Review* (*Irish Times* 30.08.08) Fintan O'Toole has an encomium of Davy Hammond. It is called the "*non-sectarian singer of the Ulster song tradition*". Hammond was a "musician, song collector, teacher, broadcaster and film maker", according to the caption under his photograph adorning the article.

It is a good, short, retelling of Hammond's life and achievements. But when he got onto the folk singing and folk songs, one begins to wonder if Mr. O'Toole had been paying that much attention. He claims that "*The Ulster song tradition is one of Europe's great cultural treasures*". (It was being explored by the BBC in Belfast from at least the 1940s. This is not an attempt to diminish Hammond's achievement, but to put it in context.) O'Toole claims that there are three important "*things*" about 'Ulster song'.

From the last to first they are "*infused with a passionate sense of place*", and they are hybrid. The main element is plainness. "*Though sectarian stereotypes need to be avoided, there is an obvious difference between the baroque, wonderfully ornamented singing of Gaelic sean-nós and the generally more direct, unadorned style more typical of Ulster. That difference clearly has something to do with the religious cultures of Catholicism and Presbyterianism*".

Quite where the Anglicans come into this it is difficult to divine. Surely all genuine 'folk' song is '*infused with a sense of place*', passionate or otherwise? The *sean-nós* tradition and plainsong (the '*traditional*' music of the Roman Catholic Church until the vandalism in the wake of Vatican II) could hardly be more different. (There is a question about the word '*baroque*'. Baroque architecture and '*art*' is curlicued and over-complicated. '*Baroque*' music is actually quite simple.) Gaelic song in Ulster is not generally part of the *sean-nós* tradition. It is quite simple and straightforward, *Ard a'Chuine* or *Buachaill o'n Eirne* come to mind. They are distantly related to Scottish ballad-tunes.

The folk music of (Protestant) Ulster has strong connections with Scotland. The immigration from Scotland and the north of England when industry was taking-off strengthened these connections (with the Northern Ballad tradition straddling the Anglo-Scottish border). Irish 'Rebel' songs were influenced by this tradition. But, as noted above, not everybody in the Protestant community is of Scottish, or even northern English, origin.

There was a time when '*Rebel songs*' became the actual '*folk*' song of the English urban working class—it lasted well into the 1970s. There is a certain amount of truth in the accusation that '*Rebel*' songs are vainglorious and crude. But so are a great many folk songs (not to mention matters like the British bourgeoisie bellowing '*Land of Hope and Glory*' on the Last Night of the Proms). And some '*Rebel*' songs are anything but crude either musically, or in their language, the *Croppy Boy* and *Boo-lavogue* (both about Wexford in 1798) come to mind.



# Does it stack up?

## Stack

### COMPTROLLER & AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT

It all adds up—€3.8 million here and €5.38 million there, €9.85 million elsewhere and so on. It seems nobody is in charge. From 2002 onwards there have been no border patrols, no checkpoint duties, no searches and no explosive ordinance disposal requests. And yet the Defence Forces were paid allowances for these duties for 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, and 2007 to a total of nearly €25 million euro. This was extra to their pay. Even soldiers attending courses of instruction received the allowances. What is this waste of taxpayer's money all about? It simply doesn't stack up or does it? Is it about buying votes or keeping the Irish Defence Forces sweet about 'peace' in a certain province? And who was awarded the contract in December (!) 2006 for 216 Garda vehicles which are still in storage in 2008? In the private sector, heads would roll for this major misconduct costing €3.8 million euro.

The Revenue Commissioners themselves and some Revenue staff were major tax dodgers. The C&AG stated the amount came to €1.656, 920 in tax, interest and penalties in respect of allowances (that word again) paid to Revenue staff as Benefits-in-kind for costs of travelling to and from work. It has always been Revenue practice to deny deductions to employees in the private sector for costs of travelling to and from work and employers who paid such costs for employees were not allowed to deduct it either. "Do as I say not as I do" seems to be the Revenue motto. No mention of B.I.K. tax on the provision of Revenue staff car-parks. And there are no parking spaces for their paying "clients"—the tax-payers. And the heavily subsidised meals in the canteens? One could go on and on. It reminds me of the time it was discovered that the overtime payments to Revenue porters in Lower O'Connell Street, Dublin was paid in cash out of "Petty Cash" and was not taxed under PAYE nor PRSI. It seems those days may still be with us. Travelling costs to and from work also are paid in the Irish Prison Service. One officer received €24, 117 in 2007. So the taxpayer has to pay for them to live where they like? How about the Costa Brava anyone! To pay anyone for the cost of going to and from work is the equivalent of a rise in pay and should be treated as such for tax reasons.

### WHERE IS THE MONEY SPENT?

In the Department of the Environment, €1.2 billion in levies which were contributed by the public under the Planning Acts for the provision of roads and sports grounds remained unspent. Why do we have to have toll roads when the money is there already for the roads? And a sure way of reducing teenage crime and vandalism is to provide Sports Facilities for use by them near their their own neighbourhood. It should be a standard provision in any sizeable development that the **developer** would provide land for a children's playground and a football/hurling pitch within the area of development. Paying money to a City or County Council is no substitute for the actual land for children to play on. If the Planning Acts need to be changed it should be done now, immediately and the land should be transferred to the Council.

The C&AG also reported that €9 million intended for flood relief works was not spent because contracts were not completed. He stated that the money should not be made available by the Office of Public Works to the Councils until the contracts have been signed. We would ask why did the flooding take place mostly where new modern roads have been built. If the designs had included drains—*yes actually*—to let the rain run off, don't you know—then there would have been less flooding. And building houses in flood plains—well what kind of planning officers have we got? Also it seems to be crass stupidity to build tunnels instead of bridges in a climate where we thankfully have a lot of rainwater. Huge amounts of energy are needed to keep the pumps running in tunnels. Can we afford to waste energy like that? The "tunnels" in Limerick and Cork are not tunnels at all. They consist of huge sections of concrete pipes made onshore and laid into dredged river-bed trenches. The joints between the huge pipes leak profusely requiring a lot of closure time for what is now called "Routine Maintenance". Just think of the money necessary for such works and who gets the oh-so-lucrative contracts.

### GUN LICENCES

There are over two hundred and thirty four thousand gun licences now in Ireland. (26 counties). What are the licensees shooting at? Why do they want guns? And, most important, is it in the interests of the rest of us to have all those guns in the community?

In twelve months to 31st July 2008 the Gardai in County Wexford issued 141 new licences and in County Wicklow 112 **for handguns**. In comparison Letterkenny, Co. Donegal issued 41 handgun licences. There can be no compelling reason for the issue of all of these licences.

Almost incredibly—but we'd believe

anything of our elected legislators now—the law on gun licences is uncodified and is spread throughout five Firearms Acts and also the Criminal Justice Act 2006.

Judges have asked for new legislation. In July last Justice Peter Charleton said in court there is "a pressing need" to make the law clearer. He said reasonable people were "entitled to feel alarmed" about the increasing number of pistols licensed for private use in Ireland. At the time, in July, the Minister said that he would bring in legislative proposals to the Cabinet in the autumn. However in November, there was the appalling killing of an innocent man, the very popular Limerick player Shane Geoghegan by hitmen which has resulted in emergency legislation being discussed in Cabinet under which the Minister of Justice said all handguns presently licensed must be handed in to Gardai and the licenses will not be renewed.

This seems to be progress. We'll see when the legislation is published?

### THE ENVIRONMENT—ANOTHER VIEW

We have only one world. It is not equally shared out—some people have a much bigger slice of the cake than others and by definition, if some fight and get more, then others will get less or almost none of it. Our ancestors lived off the fruits of the earth and later began to dig into the earth for stone, bronze and iron to make weapons and knives. Logical I suppose.... but there have been no iron cookers found by archaeologists. Just mostly iron weapons. Which are mostly used to carve out a bigger slice of the world cake and leave less for someone else.

We heap honours and money and respect on those with the biggest and most weapons—i.e. the greediest and most aggressive people. Material culture i.e. greed, is what is driving the affluent world now and this culture has serious drawbacks when the greedy people have to deal with a recession. They have to do with less but they do not know how to. Nor how to **accept** it and **deal** with it. Economists think in terms of "getting the economy going again". But the economy *is* going: only it is a little smaller now because two billion Chinese people are taking a small bit more of the world cake and this is a moving process. More and more, little bit by little bit, is going to those people who had very little previously. And it has got to come from somewhere. There is only one world cake and we're sharing it out more equally. That's why we have "recession" and it is only fair that we should have a little more "recession" so as to share out some more to those who had not their share of it previously. It is a painful and slow economic process. Weapons should not be part of the process except to restrain the greedy people and if necessary to enforce law and order.

## BRITISH DEMOCRACY

As I noted in the November *Irish Political Review* under this heading, the Law Lords who are and were appointed by the Prime Minister in Britain duly did their thing for Queen and country. They decided that the Chagos Island people who were evicted from their homes by British forces at the request of the USA, and dumped on the island of Mauritius, had no rights because what was done to them was done for the security of the realm.

None of the Queen's subjects can now feel safe as a result of the Lords' decision. But that's British Democracy in action and I suppose the British are used to it.

Michael Stack

## Parade Of Death

The following letter by David Morrison appeared in the *Belfast Telegraph* of 26th September 2008 (Text in square brackets not published) *City's Army Parade Queried*

You quote a Ministry of Defence spokesman saying that the proposed military parade in Belfast in November "is about people from the community who have served on operations and are being welcomed back". That is not the whole truth. [In reality, the parade is about recruitment:] its purpose is to persuade more young "people from the community" to join the British armed services to kill and be killed in Afghanistan and other foreign fields.

If these young men and women were being recruited to defend us from aggression from abroad I would have little objection. [But they are not: they are being recruited to commit aggression abroad.]

The Government sells these military adventures abroad as necessary to protect us from terrorism at home. [In fact, they have increased the threat from terrorism at home, as Tony Blair admitted in his resignation speech at Sedgefield on 10 May 2007, when he said:

"Removing Saddam and his sons from power, as with removing the Taliban, was over with relative ease. But the blowback since, from global terrorism and those elements that support it, has been fierce and unrelenting and costly."

Had Britain not invaded Afghanistan and Iraq, there would have been no terrorist blowback in Britain—and the almost 300 young people who have died in these military adventures would be alive today.

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Witness Statement No. 637

## Muriel MacSwiney's Memoir of the War of Independence

### PART TWO

It was towards the end of Easter Week that the Volunteers surrendered their arms. Some of them gave up wooden instruments wrapped in stuff and kept their rifles. During the week on my visits to the Volunteer Hall, I often saw Terry and Tom MacCurtain. I think they were still hoping that something would happen in Cork. I think they were very much concerned about maintaining discipline and morale among the Volunteers. The surrender of the arms put an end to any hopes they had.

Mary MacSwiney was arrested at St. Angela's on the Monday of the following week. She was teaching a class of small children when it happened. She was of the opinion that the children were expecting it. Miss O'Brien was also arrested. They were the only women. The Volunteer leaders were also arrested. The Bishop and Mayor had made an agreement with the military which promised no arrest.

Mary MacSwiney went up next day – Tuesday – to the school and one of the nuns, probably the Reverend Mother, said to her that they "*thought her own good feelings would have prevented her from coming back*". So she went home and did not go back again. After some time she got a letter from the Reverend Mother saying that they "*had no intention of dismissing her*".

I think it was next week that all the Volunteers throughout the country were arrested and brought into Cork Gaol. The city Volunteers were also picked up one by one. I was talking to Tomás MacCurtain one day and when he went back to his home in Blackpool he was arrested and the next time I saw him was in Richmond Barracks. I and many others went to the Bishop to protest about the Volunteers' arrest. I did not know him. I cannot remember what he said. I learned afterwards, a year later, that Terry was very annoyed with him on account of the arrested and would prefer not to see him. Tomás MacCurtain said to me that he did not expect Dr. Cohalan would be made Bishop because he had acted as arbitrator for the Volunteers. Mr. Butterfield, the Mayor, had acted with Dr. Cohalan.

The executions created revulsion of feeling in Cork as elsewhere. The news was posted up on the pavement in front of the "Cork Examiner" office, day and night, and the crowds gathered to read it.

I came to Dublin to see the prisoners who had been moved up there from Cork. I went to Richmond Barracks and found a

Sergeant Major who when he heard my name was Murphy - his own name – admitted me at once and anyone else who happened to be a Murphy. I saw Tomás and, I think, Terry and the Lynchs from Mionán Bridge near Bandon. These were Diarmuid's brothers, Micheál and another. The latter had not been a Volunteer and like many, was arrested by mistake, but Micheál had done a lot with his motor-bicycle. Micheál is, as far as I know, still living on the farm as Mionán Bridge.

They were deported then and I was back in Cork and those who were interested in the Volunteers – probably the MacSwiney's among others, asked me to find about the National Aid fund which was just starting. I went to Dublin to Eccles Street where Louise Gavan Duffy was teaching and to Min Ryan in Ranelagh Road. I also saw Deóra French who put me on to Mrs. Wyse-Power. I did not achieve very much, chiefly because the organisation was only beginning. When I went back to Cork there was a meeting of sympathisers in the City Hall to start a branch of the National Aid and a Committee was formed.

About the end of May. Seán O'Sullivan who was the city Commandant, and had up to then escaped arrest, asked me to go to England to visit the different prisons where the Volunteers were interned, as no news or communications were coming from them. I was a free lance, but I had no money at all. The Volunteers gave me £5 and I went to London and visited Wandsworth Prison bringing comforts for the prisoners. There were not many Cork men there. I asked to see Arthur Griffith but he was not allowed to see me. I saw Ginger O'Connell and Douglas French-Mullen. I cannot remember who else I saw but I saw several. I then went to Wakefield where most of the Cork Volunteers were. I spent a week there. I had a permit from the War Office which made things easy for us. But other visitors had difficulty. Towards the end of the week everybody was gaining admission. Deóra French was among them. She had wired to me to let her know whether it was possible to see friends.

I went to stay in Cambridge about Christmas 1916-1917. While there I read in the press that Terry and some of the other Volunteers who had been released after 1916, had been re-arrested. Although we had corresponded there had been no thought of an engagement between us. I went then, however, to try and find Terry, first to Shrewsbury, where an English soldier told me "*They were here but they're gone. You'll never find them*". Then I went to the Lawrence Ginnells in London, whose kindness I shall remember to my dying day. Naturally they were in communication with the prisoners, they always were. Lawrence Ginnell was for years called "the Member for Ireland",



## PAY DEAL continued

some cases re-joined—by other private sector unions in supporting the deal.

Apart from Unite, only the tiny Guinness Staff Association registered a 'no' vote. Until now it has been taken for granted that these deals require the backing of the biggest general union, SIPTU and usually that of the largest in the public sector, IMPACT.

"On this occasion, either union could have rejected the deal and it would still have passed comfortably. Indeed had both rejected it, it still might have squeezed through. This is a measure of the level of membership endorsement of this relatively short deal, which has taken almost nine months to conclude, from start to finish." (*Industrial Relations News*, 18.11.2008).

Private sector unions such as the IBOA (Bank employees) and Mandate (Retail Trade) reversed their opposition to *Towards 2016*, the framework agreement under which this so-called 'Transition Agreement' is a part.

Mandate members—the Union did not even enter the process last time—backed this deal by a staggering 90%. A union that represents lower paid workers, Mandate had hoped that by staying out of Module One of *Towards 2016* they

would make progress by picking off key employers, and while they had some success, circumstances were against this strategy.

### PUBLIC SECTOR UNIONS

IMPACT, meanwhile, recorded a higher turnout this time (up to 40% plus), and 91% of those voting backed the deal, a margin that surprised the union's leadership given the 'Lisbon factor', the unpopular Budget, the 'Benchmarking Two' report and so on.

An even higher margin of acceptance was recorded in the Public Services Executive Union.

Public sector unions, the CPSU and the TUI, also reversed their positions.

CPSU members even went against their National Executive, backing the deal in a high turnout (56%) by 60% to 40%.

Despite the outcry over the Budget, especially from teaching and health unions, this deal was backed by all four teacher unions, not just by the traditional backer of social partnership, the INTO, ASTI also backed it, as did the TUI, the latter recording a 70% yes vote and reversing its position on recent agreements.

The Irish Nurses Organisation (INO) voted for it, as did the communications union, the CWU. The CWU had also backed the first phase of *Towards 2016*, returning to its traditional backing for social partnership after rejecting a number of deals since the turn of the century. The New Deal:—

### Private Sector:

- \* A pay pause of three months (including the Construction Sector).
- \* A pay increase of 3.5 per cent for a period of six months.
- \* A pay increase of 2.5 per cent for a period of 12 months or, for workers on €11 per hour or less on the date that increase falls due, a pay increase of 3 per cent.

**Under the terms of the deal, low-paid workers with a salary of €20,000 will see their salary rise to €20,700 in the first stage of the agreement. In the second phase, their salary would rise to €21,321 over 21 months.**

### Public Sector:

- \* A pay pause of 11 months.
- \* From September 1, 2009, a pay increase of 3.5 per cent for nine months.
- \* **From June 1, 2010, a pay increase of 2.5 per cent—except for workers earning up to and including €430.49 per week (€22,463 per annum) on that date, who receive a 3 per cent increase.**

**For those earning €430.49 a week or less, which equates to an annual salary of €22,463, a 3 per cent pay rise will apply in the second phase of the deal.**

**Workers on a salary of €50,000 will see their pay rise to €51,750 in the first stage of the agreement. The second increase of 2.5 per cent will bring their salary to just under €53,050.**

because he was the only member of the Irish members of the British House of Commons who had not sold himself to British Imperialism and Capitalism. I should like to emphasise that as it has been conveniently forgotten in Ireland today. Mrs. Ginnell, old and ill, who so ably seconded her husband's work and made it possible at great personal sacrifice, has not been by the British Government.

I returned to Cambridge and found a wire from Terry who had had the same thought as myself. It was from Bromyard, Hertfordshire, where he was with Seán Nolan from Cork. Tomás MacCurtain and Peadar Ó hAnnracháin and another Volunteer (I am afraid I forget who it was) were in Ledbury, quite near. They were all not in prison but had to report regularly to the prison.

We got engaged at once. This was February. My family were, of course, violently opposed to my marrying Terry; they looked on the Volunteers as murderers and criminals. A year before the Easter Rising Terry had given up his job as technical teacher; he did nothing except drill Volunteers and work for the Gaelic League. As when we married we intended to have children, and as Terry's work for Ireland naturally came before everything else, we waited until after my 25th birthday (June 8th), as my father

long dead had left me money which I was only to get at 25 if I was unmarried, or married with the consent of my mother. Naturally my mother did everything she could to prevent my marriage. We took the money reluctantly as we both hated private property and thought that most of the evils of the world came from this. After all England's case was that Ireland was her private property, and therefore, a domestic question. We were married on June 9th in Bromyard, a tiny place.

I had not believed in the doctrine of the Roman Catholic religion since I was a young girl but I remained formally a member of that Church, as I had no objection to them as an organisation. Later when I had seen more of the world and was less ignorant I left them publicly. This was at the time of the Civil War in 1922. I consider everybody has a right to whatever religious beliefs they think right or to the freethinker ideal which is mine. It is a private and personal matter. It is extremely wrong when religious bodies interfere with the government of a country as they do in Ireland today.

Some of the Volunteers who had been deported in 1917 escaped back to Ireland. We wanted to do the same, but wanted first to be married as Terry might have been arrested. I went to London to interview our Irish Organisation there –

The Self Determination League. I met Art O'Brien and I think Seán McGrath. They laughed when they heard that we wanted to go back but not separately. Just after we were married and were going anyhow, the deportation order was lifted. Dick Mulcahy, who was one of Terry's best friends (Tomás MacCurtain and Fred Cronin were the others) came over to be our best man. Naturally Terry's sisters were there; Annie was one of my bridesmaids, and Geraldine Sullivan who at that time was a very dear friend of mine.

On arriving in Dublin with Terry, I met De Valera for the first time, also Pierce Beaslaí; the latter took off his hat to show us his shaven head, he had just been released from penal servitude. We went to visit the Eoin MacNeills. It struck me that whereas in Cork only working-class people or at any rate those who worked for a tiny living were Volunteers, in Dublin there were people like the MacNeills. I was personally for the working-class people.

After this we went to Ballingearry. It was my first visit to this beautiful place. We were in a farmhouse near Siobhán a Taggart (I am afraid spelt wrong). She was a very famous Irish speaker. When she was telling you a story in Irish she broke into verse quite naturally. I loved Ballingearry.

TO BE CONTINUED

## EURO continued

Investors are shunning an economy overly-reliant on financial services.

Now more than ever before is an opportunity for Gordon Brown to demonstrate his European credentials and place Britain firmly at the heart of Europe.

Not only would British entry to the Euro be a boost for European unity; it would deliver a right bloody nose for the Eurosceptics but above all, it would be a massive economic boost for Ireland alone among the 27 member states and the other 15 Euro zone countries.

Weaker Sterling spells really bad news for the Irish economy. Irish companies exporting to the British market will find it very difficult to compete in what is a shrinking market, particularly for our indigenous companies.

### INDIGENOUS INDUSTRY FACES DISASTER

The Irish Small & Medium Enterprises Association, has outlined that their exporter members are facing meltdown with regard to exports to the UK as sterling continues to dramatically weaken against the Euro.

The Association outlined that 95,000 jobs were at risk as the Euro has appreciated against Sterling by 24 per cent since the beginning of the year.

The threat to companies exporting to the UK has reached crisis proportions according to ISME.

"The pincer movement of reducing sales income as a result of negative currency movements and increasing domestic costs means that many exporters are walking a very narrow line between continuance and closure, with the most vulnerable being those with no offset on their raw material imports," ISME states.

A recent ISME survey confirmed that 47 per cent of companies export to the UK, with 65 per cent saying it was their main export market. Of these, 56 per cent are paid in Sterling and 39 per cent in Euro.

The survey also revealed that 65 per cent of firms said that the impact of the strengthening Euro vis-à-vis Sterling is having a negative impact on their business.

"Twelve months ago a company selling £100 of goods into the UK would have converted the revenue into €143; the figure today has dropped to €116, a difference of €27. This drastic reduction in income means a similar reduction in net margin as UK customers cannot be persuaded to pay higher prices.

These are small to medium indigenous companies who are now being bled

because of their reliance on the second largest economy in the European Union.

ISME avoids the politics of the situation, and that is understandable, where they are coming from.

**But how can you excuse the Irish Government, political commentators and the media for turning a blind eye as substantial elements of indigenous industry bleeds to death because of Britain's absolute refusal to commit itself fully to the European project?**

Were the 'Foreign Direct' Investment Multi-Nationals affected in the same manner, Dublin would create hell in Brussels.

Forget Lisbon—for Ireland's economic well-being, the question of full EU integration must in future bear the obligation of being fully part of the Euro currency mechanism, indeed the current bubble and burst situation may itself force such a course on Brussels.

It is time to determine whether Britain is a part member or a full member of the European Union!

A couple of weeks ago, the present writer couldn't believe what he was hearing when Sarkozy started bleating on about his concern over the Irish Government's decision to guarantee bank customers. Sarkozy reckoned it was causing liquidity problems for London.

How a man committed to the Euro should be so concerned about Sterling beggars belief. British perfidiousness need have no fears over Sarkozy!

## New National Wage Deal

**The most overwhelming vote for a new National Wage agreement since the process began in 1987 when Trade Unionists voted 90 per cent in favour of the new National Wage Agreement at a Special Conference of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions at Liberty Hall, Dublin on Monday, November 17, 2008.**

As individual Trade Unions announced their voting returns on November 14—it was all over "bar the shouting", so decisive was the voting outcome.

Congress' 26 affiliate Unions overwhelmingly endorsed the wage agreement by 305 votes in favour to just 36 against.

On the same day, Employer group IBEC, the other main social partner, voted to accept the deal.

The Agreement will give most workers a pay rise of 6% over 21 months (3.5% and 2.5%), or 3.4% a year, although anyone earning less than €11 an hour will get an extra 0.5%, or 3.7% a year. Their average is just over 3.5%.

Public sector workers must accept an 11-month pay freeze before they get the

first 3.5% increase but an estimated 300,000 private sector workers have already served the three-month pay pause for their sector.

This means they are immediately entitled to the 3.5% increase in December, 2008.

There were strong signs that the pay deal may have a troubled implementation as IBEC indicated that pay rises would not be paid "automatically".

Following the Trade Unions' ratification of the deal, it pointed out that employers could opt out of full or part payment of the pay increases.

The Director General of employer group, IBEC, Mr Turlough O'Sullivan said that people needed to realise that the pay terms would not be paid "automatically".

Construction Industry Federation boss, Tom Parlon admitted it was "likely" that his employer members would renege on paying the 6% increase over 21 months because they could not afford the increase.

CIF members are not due to vote on the wage deal until November 26, however, it is widely expected they will reject it. If they do, the Unions could potentially pull out of the deal, especially as 190,000 of their members work for CIF companies.

A total of 100,000 jobs have been lost in the private sector in the last 12 months, which is the most rapid loss since the 1980s.

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"This time it was the employers who gave a 'cautious' welcome to the deal, language that is generally the preserve of trade unions" (Industrial Relations News, 18.11.2008).

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### THE UNION VOTES

The level of acceptance within the country's largest union, SIPTU, was up again from the last time—with 80% backing for the deal on this occasion, although the turnout was lower. This is very significant, as the SIPTU vote on module one of *Towards 2016* was around 70%, which was considered a very comfortable margin at the time. What this means is that the two-thirds of the union's members that work in the private sector have increased their backing for centralised deals. SIPTU's public sector membership (higher than any single public sector Union) has always tended to give substantial backing to national pacts.

It wasn't just the overwhelming vote in favour at the Special Conference: 305 to 36. It was the record majorities in most individual Trade Unions that was highly significant, allied to the fact SIPTU, which had been in danger of standing alone in the private sector, has been joined—or in

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"But now, he says, it's every man for himself, and it's the bigger economies that have the resources to fall back on. 'I noticed the other day that the worst-performing stock market in the world this year is the Belgian stock market, but the second worst was Ireland's, and I'm afraid there is more pain to come'" (*Irish Times*, 14.11.2008).

## Never Mind Lisbon:

## What about London?

This is the opinion of Niall Ferguson who according to the *Irish Times* is one of the world's foremost economic historians; and whom Wikipedia describes as a "Defender of Colonialism" and author of *Empire: How Britain Made The Modern World*.

"As budget deficits increase across the world, the greatest burden will fall on smaller economies. 'The Celtic Tiger is going to look like a mangy cat this time next year,' says Ferguson whose opinion is based on the fragility of the Republic's economic base. 'It's a painful truth that smaller economies tend to suffer disproportionately in the bad times. Places like Ireland are great places to be when capital is flowing around the world, globalisation is in full swing, and everybody agrees that free trade is desirable'" (*ibid*).

The essence of his comments in the *Irish Times* was: "... it is in Europe not America that the most fundamental change will take place.

"The US can cope with this fiscal shock in a way that the European Union simply can't,' says Ferguson. 'The current crisis is the biggest test of European economic unity ever.'"

"The United States, he says, has a single unitary fiscal system that can support a substantial increase in public borrowing in the form of finance payouts, costing trillions of dollars. 'The European Union only has a partially unitary monetary system—the Euro—and no unitary fiscal system worth talking about. So what we've seen, and Ireland led the way, has been a series of individual actions by governments trying to prop up their banks'" (*Irish Times*, 14.11.2008).

But the "world's foremost economic historian" makes not a single mention of one of the great contradictions of the European Union, that of his own state, Britain, with the second-biggest economy in the Union, refusing to be part of the Euro currency zone which was introduced in 1999 and Britain's role as a bulwark against any serious effort towards

European economic unity.

The introduction of the Euro in 1999 was a major step in European integration. It has also been one of its major successes: around 320 million EU citizens in 15 member states now use it as their currency.

How can the EU hope to achieve a closer economic and fiscal union, and ultimately a single market when the member with the second largest economy, the UK, holding membership since 1973, shows absolutely no willingness to ever consider joining?

In Britain, the Euro is a foreign currency!

The greatest boost the Euro could receive right now is a declaration by the British Government that it is setting an immediate time-table for entry into the Euro zone. The time has never been more ripe following the disasters of the British banking system! Such a decision would go a long way towards the achievement of a successful unitary EU monetary and fiscal system.

Sterling has fallen by 9 per cent against the Euro (reaching a low of £0.866 on November 13—its lowest level since the

single currency debut in 1999) and by 11 per cent on a trade weighted basis over the past month.

The British currency is almost 18 per cent lower against the Euro than a year ago and down 20 per cent on a trade weighted basis.

The decline in the latter is due to the significant fall of 28 per cent versus the US dollar.

The British unemployment rate now stands at 5.8 per cent, which translates to 1.82 million people out of work—it will be two million by Christmas and the prediction is that it will reach three million into 2009/2010.

Gordon Brown has thrown caution to the wind and has embarked on what he calls 'fiscal stimulus'. It is borrowing to pay for tax cuts and Government spending in an effort to halt Britain's worst recession in generations.

As much as €120 billion is said to have flowed out of UK markets in the past two months.

"One of his key advisers, Gavyn Davies, a former top investment banker with Goldman Sachs, is urging him {Gordon Brown} to simply follow the example of South American dictators and print money which the Bank of England can lend to the Government when it is running short" (*Irish Independent*, 17.11.2008).

No wonder George Osborne, the Tory Shadow chancellor has warned that "sterling could be about to collapse".

When the clowns start kissing, it's time to leave the circus!

### THE 'MANGY' LION

The British 'Lion' is starting to looking pretty mangy itself, right now!

Furthermore, in light of the uncertainties and fragility of confidence in financial markets today, it is not beyond belief that sterling could weaken further almost to the extent of parity with the Euro in the months ahead.

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