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*Northern Ireland; Indonesia*

## Was It War?

There is at present a dispute going on about whether there was war in Northern Ireland from the 1970s to the 1990s.

As we recall it, the British Army was deployed in the streets of Derry and Belfast in August 1969 by the Government of the state to take the place of the forces controlled by the subordinate Government at Stormont—the RUC and the B Specials. A new IRA came into being in the North during the Winter of 1969-70, the Provisionals, and it declared war on Britain in the Summer of 1970. The established IRA of the period before 1969, the Officials (also known as the Stickies since, as a sign of modernity, they replaced the Easter badges that were pinned on the lapel with a badge that could just be stuck on) also declared war on Britain while asserting that its war was different in kind from the Provo war. The Officials declared that their war was a National Liberation War against Imperialism, while the Provos were engaged in what was in essence a local sectarian war.

The Stickie argumentation was not entirely groundless. The Provos, in their substance, arose out of the mayhem to which the dysfunctional 'Northern Ireland state'—in fact the Six County variant of the British state—led in 1969, while the Stickies were essentially an anti-Treaty group. But the difference, in practice, told in favour of the Provos.

The Stickies' anti-Treaty war was conducted in a medium of ideological fantasy and was unsustainable. It was called off after a series of fiascos.

The formal split between the Official and Provisional Republican movements occurred on the issue of participating in the Free State Dail. The Sinn Fein leadership at the Ard Fheis early in 1970 carried a motion to participate and those who dissented withdrew and called themselves the Provisionals.

This formal ground of division went against the division of substance that had already occurred on the ground in the North.

The 'Officials'—to give them their name slightly ahead of time—had been disarming the IRA in 1968-69, and expelling people who dissented from that policy. But in August 1969 they issued statements, about what their disarmed army would do, which helped to provoke the Loyalist pogrom, leaving the populace helpless in the face of the pogrom.

A new military movement then sprang up amongst people who had been on the

*continued on page 2*

## The Mass Break-out From Gaza

In recent days, we have witnessed the extraordinary spectacle of a mass breakout by Palestinians from their Gaza prison. The breakout was made possible by Hamas blowing up stretches of the Israeli-built border wall between Gaza and Egypt, near Rafah, and bulldozing other stretches of it.

Over two years ago, a US-backed agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) was supposed to guarantee a border crossing between Gaza and Egypt at Rafah, controlled by the PA and free from Israeli control. It never did. Israel always had a veto on whether the crossing opened. In addition, Israel has never permitted commercial traffic through the crossing in either direction.

The following describes the agreement and how it has operated, or rather failed to operate, in the past two years.

### AGREEMENT ON MOVEMENT AND ACCESS

On 15th November 2005, the PA signed an Agreement on Movement and Access (AMA) with Israel. The previous August, Israel had withdrawn its settlers and ground forces from Gaza. At the time, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said that the "agreement is intended to give the

*continued on page 6*

### Reflections On Palestine

#### Part Six

## A Visit To Gaza

The checkpoint for people entering Gaza is at Erez on its Northern border. Checkpoint comes nowhere near describing the place. It is the size of an airport terminal with lots more security and without all the shops—so it wasn't all bad! At a security kiosk in the car park I was asked if I was carrying any weapons. A bit like "did you pack your own bag, sir". You don't even dream of getting funny. In the main building my passport

was taken and returned after about ten minutes. After that I walked through various doors which opened and closed without me ever again seeing a human being.

My visit to Gaza was arranged by Irish diplomatic staff. I had a gruesome account of the things that were likely to happen to me in Gaza delivered to me when I applied and when that application was accepted. Being kidnapped seemed to be the least of it. On the very large number of times I spoke to Arab soldiers there, the first question I was always asked, after my nationality, was did I feel safe. Leaving

aside the obvious danger from the Israelis I was always able to honestly answer, yes. The gangsterism and banditry which had previously flourished was nowhere in evidence. Hamas had seen to that.

The Gaza side of Erez is a strip of land churned up by tanks and bulldozers. Most of the buildings have been flattened. Those that survive are ruins, many of them destroyed while still in the course of being built. At the time I was the only one crossing and that 500 metres or so felt like something out of a John le Carre novel. You know that the Israelis are watching and pointing guns but you cannot see

*continued on page 4*

## CONTENTS

<b>Was It War, Northern Ireland; Indonesia.</b> Editorial	1
<b>The Mass Break-Out From Gaza.</b> David Morrison	1
<b>A Visit To Gaza.</b> Conor Lynch	1
<b>Readers' Letters: Casement And San Ramon.</b> Tim O'Sullivan	3
<b>Editorial Digest.</b> (Sean Hoey; Ulster/China Exhibition; GAA & DUP; Liberty)	4
<b>Trocaire &amp; Gaza.</b> Report	5
<b>Irish Labour.</b> Mark Langhammer (Report of letter)	7
<b>Labour Party Commission On Northern Ireland.</b> Membership	7
<b>Shorts from <i>the Long Fellow</i></b> (Ireland Goes Scandinavian; France Goes Irish; Brits Go Home; Ireland Should Follow Russians; Where Is Labour Going?; State We Are In)	8
<b>Commemorating The First Dail.</b> Manus O'Riordan	9
<b>Cork Housing Action Committee.</b> Photo from 1969	11
<b>Brian Hanley, Coolacree And Related Matters.</b> Jack Lane	11
<b>Joe Devlin And The Demise Of Redmondism.</b> Joe Keenan (review)	13
<b>Spies And Lies—<i>Cui Bono?</i></b> Julianne Herlihy on Ambassador Dulanty	15
<b>Fianna Fail—<i>'mafia-like'</i>?</b> Seán McGouran	18
<b>Bias About The Great War.</b> Philip O'Connor (report of letter)	19
<b>Barack Obama On Gaza.</b> Report	21
<b>Scribbled Recollections.</b> Tim O'Sullivan (Part 2 of Casement Conference report)	22
<b>Connolly's Correspondence.</b> Report of a Book Launch	23
<b>Does It Stack Up?</b> Michael Stack (Angelus; Planning Objection; Treason?; Hidden History's Coolacree; Doorley And The Carmelites; Global Holes)	25
<b>Land Grabbers.</b> Brendan Clifford (Part 3)	26
<b>Thomas Moore And The Moslems.</b> A Poem	28
<b>Judges And Democratic Society.</b> Manus O'Riordan (report of letter)	29

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

"The Men Of Much Property"

(back page)

receiving end of the pogrom and who had not until then been connected with the Republican movement, and it was joined by those who had been expelled or had lapsed from the Republican movement in 1968-9, and whose outlook was anti-Treatyite. This alliance of old anti-Treaty Republicans and new Republicans produced out of the internal realities of the Northern Ireland state' lasted for a number of years, after which there was a parting of the ways, with the formation of Republican Sinn Fein.

The Stickie motion to enter the Free State Dail, combined with Stickie rejection of Provisionalism (as it was called) on the ground that it had essentially to do with Northern affairs, and condemnation of the demand to abolish Stormont (the Stickies wanted to retain it), ought logically have led to a disbanding of the Official IRA, and a line of development somewhat like Fianna Fail and Clann n Poblachta. But it didn't. The Stickies were intent on being revolutionary. So they fought their own war in a medium of ideological fantasy for a few years. Then they called it off and went through a series of metamorphoses culminating in what we see today as Eoghan Harris, Proinnsias de Rossa and Pat Rabbitte.

They built themselves into the structure of the Free State from the mid-seventies onwards as the ultimate anti-Provos, while at the same time gaining recognition from

the Soviet Communist party as its counterpart in Ireland on a par with the Communist Party of Ireland. They looked to Sir Nicolai Ceausescu of Rumania as a herald of the future, and were on close terms with the leaders of North Korea and the German Democratic Republic. When Ceausescu was overthrown and the Soviet system unravelled in 1989 they remade themselves yet again.

We don't know that the Official IRA was ever disbanded. It was actively threatening people only ten years ago, and strong representations to politicians who by then were disclaiming all connection with it seemed to have an effect on its conduct.

But who is there to appear and take responsibility for its doing at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that certain well-intentioned people seem to be hell-bent on setting up?

Peter Hain, before his fall, *"said the government could not tell the people of Northern Ireland how they should deal with the past. 'Only the people themselves can try to answer that question', he said"* (BBC news). But he knew very well that *"the people themselves"* is only a figure of speech without any corresponding reality in the public affairs of a democratic, or even a pseudo-democratic, society which functions through division. So he set up an Independent Consultative Group, co-chaired by Denis Bradley and the retired Protestant Archbishop of Armagh, now

Lord Eames, to deal with it.

Britain itself never deals with such things. It always 'moves on'. When others do dreadful things Britain usually says that they must confront the truth about themselves in order to be able to move on. But in its own affairs Britain knows that confronting the truth about itself would be disabling and would prevent it from moving on. So it just moves on.

During the past five years it has played a part in wrecking a viable state in which most people had lived reasonably satisfactory lives before war was made on it in 1991, and in which life lived under sanctions between 1991 and 2003 appears good by the standards that have existed since the wrecking of 2003. Three quarters of a million innocent civilians, at a conservative estimate, have been killed as a consequence of the wrecking. But Britain is intent on 'moving on' as usual, and implementing the Gospel maxim of letting the dead bury the dead.

The circumstances of a slaughter were so notorious in one instance that it had to go to trial. The verdict, delivered in late January, was described as a whitewash by survivors, who were 'seeking closure' as we say in these parts. Of course it was a whitewash. That is what court-martials are there for when the reputation of the Army is at stake.

There will be no 'closure' for Iraqi victims of the wilful destruction, by means of invasion, of the functional Iraqi state. They will just have to shrug it off while Britain moves on to other things.

The matter of Truth and Reconciliation was raised in Parliament a few years ago—and was stamped on by Michael Mates, who had been a Northern Ireland Office Minister, and who understood what would be involved if it was to be undertaken in earnest. The British State was not going to present itself at a Commission as a guilty party confessing its misdeeds in return for absolution.

The British State is of course the guilty party in general, and the major guilty party in particular. It made a woeful arrangement in 1921 for the governing of this integral part of itself, and then when it took over direct administration in 1972 it organised the terror system that Bradley and Eames have been given an insight into—an insight which has shocked them.

We were not surprised that Lord Eames proved to be an ignorant innocent. That is what Anglican Archbishops in Ireland should be. But we were shocked that Denis Bradley was shocked by what he saw in the glimpse he was given into the findings of the Stevens Inquiry.

What seems to be at issue in the dispute over whether or not what went on between the Provos and the British Army was war is collateral damage. If it was a war,

collateral damage must be allowable, but not if it wasn't. And in addition it seems that archaic notions about war persist in Unionist culture. War consists of men in uniforms, drawn up in ranks, shooting at each other—a notion that became obsolete in 1940 at the latest.

In the memoirs of a laicised priest who decided to do his bit for Britain in the 2nd World War there is an account of how, having done his basic training in 1940, he was trained how to creep up behind people in the dark and slit their throats with a knife. That was the British method of warfare in France from June 1940 to June 1944.

The Provo war was a declared war carried through to a Ceasefire and a peace settlement. It is argued that the war aims were not achieved in the peace settlement. That is often the case with wars whose character as legitimate wars is never disputed. The declared British war aim in 1939 was to uphold the integrity and independence of Poland. Although 20 million people were killed in that war, a peace settlement was made in 1945 without Polish independence. And the territorial integrity of 1939 Poland has never been restored.

The SDLP view seems to be that, if it was a war, it was not a necessary war. How many wars are necessary? There was no necessity for the British declaration of war in 1914, which led to 50,000 Irish deaths, and which is now being glorified by Somme celebrations. Twelve million died. And the British war aim of establishing universal democracy and upholding the rights of small nations was not realised. The first state to discard the British war aim at the end of the war was Britain itself, when it ignored the 1918 Election result in Ireland and set about governing the country by naked force.

The SDLP maintains that what was achieved through war could have been achieved long ago without war. So why didn't the SDLP achieve it? Why did it not pursue an evolutionary line of development in a relationship with willing Unionists? Why did it welcome Faulkner's 1971 offer of development through Parliamentary Committees, only to pull out of Stormont immediately afterwards? Because it lacked the quality of leadership needed for an independent course of action.

Then in 1974 it had a power-sharing arrangement in the North, and a Council of Ireland conditional on withdrawal of the Dublin sovereignty claim. When the Dublin Government said in Court that the sovereignty claim stood, there was a surge of Unionist opposition to the Council. The SDLP might have saved power-sharing by deferring the establishment of the Council, but it refused to do so, and the entire Sunningdale arrangement fell.

Both of those instances demonstrate

## Casement And San Ramon

Regarding a letter from Jeff Dudgeon in the *Irish Political Review* of January 2008 which claimed there was no place called *San Ramon* in the vicinity of Buenos Aires, Argentina I would like to refer to *Familia*, the journal of the Ulster Historical Foundation (Volume 2, no. 8, 1992) and an article by Pat Nally, Secretary of the Longford-Westmeath Argentina Society. The title is *Los Irlandeses en la Argentina—the Irish in Argentina*. Towards the end he mentions a visit he made in 1991 in the province of Buenos Aires to a cattle auction on the estancia (ranch) *San Ramon* of the Duggan family originally from Ballymahon, Co. Longford.

It is not hard to imagine that the Eddy Duggan mentioned in the diary for 24th March 1910 is also of the same family as Thomas Duggan of Ballymahon, who indeed did have a son called Eduardo or Eddy. The juxtaposition of an association with a place name *San Ramon* and a lover called *Ramon* at around the same time in the diary raises interesting questions. However, one cannot draw any firm conclusions until our knowledge has been enriched by a lot more careful and multifaceted research. **Tim O'Sullivan**

that the SDLP did not have it in it to pursue a course of action independently of Sinn Fein and in opposition to Sinn Fein. We supported it in both instances until it gave way in both.

After 1974 all the SDLP represented was a possibility by which Whitehall could make an oblique deal with Sinn Fein. That is more or less what happened in 1998. But the SDLP blew its opportunity in the implementation of the deal.

Whitehall responded to the war as a war in the first instance by introducing internment, which was a war measure. It was later said, by the SDLP amongst others, that it was internment that caused the war. That is ideological memory. The war was on before internment. The SDLP withdrew from Stormont immediately after welcoming Faulkner's proposal of Parliamentary Committees—on the excuse of an Army shooting and internment, even though the responsible body was Whitehall, not Stormont. It then took part in the anti-Internment agitation, with its necessary implication of criminalisation.

The Provos, who were the only statesmen around, knew how to profit both from the anti-Internment agitation and the consequent criminalisation (demanding the restoration of the political status which was ended by the ending of internment).

The contention that the war was unnecessary for the achievement of what was achieved by the war is a debating point pitched at a very remote level of abstraction from actual events.

### GENERAL SUHARTO

General Suharto died in late February. The *Irish Times* published a very mild, self-effacing comment on the event.

The BBC remarked that up to a million of his opponents were killed by his regime. The first half million were killed straight off in the coup which brought him to power in 1965. The British Ambassador

to Indonesia, Sir Andrew Gilchrist, was one of the engineers of the coup. That very high-powered trouble-shooting Ambassador was posted to Ireland a couple of years later, and it is a reasonable presumption that he had a hand in the manipulation of Jack Lynch. When Major McDowell of the *Irish Times* approached 10 Downing Street during the crisis of 1969, it was Ambassador Gilchrist who was instructed to develop the contact.

Gilchrist and Suharto saved South-East Asia from Communism by killing half a million people—so it was said. Suharto then governed Indonesia as one of the free world's elder statesmen, and the half-million were forgotten as necessary casualties of Progress, with no agonising over the necessity of it.

The end came in May 1998 when—

"protests against Suharto's 32 year old reign became a popular uprising against his corrupt, repressive and family-dominated administration. Indonesia had been crippled by an economic crisis sweeping the Asia Pacific region. Its currency... had plummeted, banks had collapsed. On May 1st government had raise prices of cooking oil and fuel to meet conditions set by the IMF. This alone made an explosion inevitable."

That's Conor O'Clery in the *Irish Times* on 28th January. He does not mention where this economic crisis of the Asian Pacific came from.

It came from the new surge of globalism made possible by the ending of the Cold War. States within the Western sphere had been given considerable latitude to make protectionist arrangements during the Cold War, but now the US wanted free access for its capital everywhere and it subverted the regime of the biggest of its client states—supporting for that purpose Megawati Soekarno, daughter of the President who was overthrown in 1965.

President Mahatir of Malaysia resisted demands to open his economy to Western capital. The *Irish Times* ran its little witch-hunt against him—supporting the agitation against him by the Muslim fundamentalist free marketeer Anwar Ibrahim. Mahatir held out. The economic crisis sweeping the Asian Pacific region did not sweep Malasia. And now the *Irish Times* forgets.

General Suharto was a respected statesman in the Western media until 1998. Some time after his fall he visited London. Jeremy Paxman reported on BBC's *Newsnight* that "*that old thug Suharto*" was in town.

The dogs know when to bark.

## Editorial Digest

SEAN HOEY was acquitted of the Omagh bombing on December 20th. He was also acquitted of 57 other charges. For him that should have been the end of the matter. But next day the *Irish News* front page headline read "Still No Justice". The rest of the page carried boxes with pictures of all 29 people killed in the bombing with an extra box in the middle saying "*Omagh Accused Acquitted*". Most readers of newspapers are left with impressions rather than a headful of detailed facts. Newspapers know this. And the impression given by the *Irish News* was that Hoey got off or got away with it. The IN editorial says:

"After almost ten years the families are no strangers to pain and disappointment but yesterday represented a further low. On the basis of the evidence Sean Hoey has been acquitted. But the authorities are guilty of an abject failure to provide justice for the victims and the ramifications of this damaging verdict will be felt for some time."

What sort of impression does this leave?

Lawrence Rushe, whose wife was killed, is quoted in the editorial as saying that the police investigation was "*a disaster*". What Mr. Rushe also said was: "*I'm stressed but not over-disappointed. I wouldn't have liked the wrong man to be charged.*" But you'd have to plough through pages of IN reports to find that.

At the time of the bombing, and for a good while afterwards, there was a widespread belief that the RUC and/or MI5 were involved through having infiltrated the RIRA. No one has claimed that it was the RIRA intention to hurt anyone that day. The best the police could come up with was that the warnings which were given were confusing. If there is to be any further investigation the RUC/PSNI

*continued on page 25, column 3*

## A Visit To Gaza

continued

anything. The checkpoint at the Palestinian side, welcome as it was, is a sorry looking affair. A hut and a wooden barrier which you walk around. Well, there's nothing for miles on either side. I was simply waved through and took a taxi to where I was staying in Gaza city.

On the journey I was surprised to find buildings everywhere flying the yellow flag of Fatah and the red flag of the PFLP. The green flag of Hamas and the black flag of Islamic Jihad I expected, but not the others. Flying a Hamas flag in the West Bank would get you arrested and very likely shot. Fatah and the PFLP are politically tolerated in Gaza but they are not supposed to carry weapons in public, unless they are still in the Palestinian police. There are tensions but these seldom go beyond the odd fist fight.

All over Gaza are the portraits of martyrs. This was also the case in the West Bank until a few months ago. But Abbas and the Americans are determined to abolish any symbols of the liberation struggle.

The takeover of Gaza by Hamas was very much a pre-emptive strike. Strong-points had been established by Rashid Abu Shabak's Preventive Security Service which was really under the control of Mohammad Dahlan. This force was supplied with weapons by America and Britain, partially via Israel. There were also American and British advisers attached to it in a compound which a FATAH member laughingly told me they called the Dahlan Hotel. I was taken to see both American and British armoured cars—vehicles utterly useless against Israeli tanks or aircraft, but the perfect tool against local opposition.

Dahlan was in Tunis after his release from prison during the First Intafada and became close to Arafat's people, becoming his military chief in 2001. He was soon sacked. When Abbas first became Prime Minister in 2003, he appointed Dahlan Security Minister against Arafat's wishes. Even by the standards of the Palestinian Authority of the time, which to say the least, weren't all that high, Dahlan was considered bent. He was also a brutal man. He has built businesses abroad, especially in London. The boy from the Khan Yunis refugee camp did very well for himself.

He was involved in the negotiations at Camp David, Oslo, and elsewhere where he built up a strong rapport with the Israeli military and security apparatus and especially with the former Israeli Defence Minister, Shaul Mofaz. When Israel

decided to shut down its settlements in Gaza he promised that he would put down any opposition in the Strip.

It should be said that although the Israeli settlements and military areas in Gaza comprised about a third of the area, they were never of a kind with those in the West Bank. They were mostly pre-fabricated houses and their destruction took no time at all. Settlements in the West Bank are large towns and cities—the one I am most familiar with near Bethlehem has 40,000 residents and is building apartments for another 30,000.

The Israelis withdrew from Gaza in September 2005. Palestinian elections were held less than four months later, in January 2006. Much to everyone's surprise, not least the surprise of Hamas, Hamas won them. Dahlan began small-scale attacks on Hamas until he believed he had a large enough arsenal to take over Gaza completely. He was accused even back then of targeting senior Hamas figures for Israeli assassination and that he himself organised car bomb assassinations—especially the killing of Hamas military leader, Abu Youssef Al Qouqa in March 2006.

Readers may remember in an early instalment of this series that I took the Abbas/Hamas Mecca Agreement on the formation of a coalition government at face value. Ishmail Haniyeh of Hamas was Prime Minister. A majority of the Government were Hamas but with a proportional representation of Fatah or anyone else. The Finance and Security portfolios were to be given to people connected with no particular faction. I believed Mohammad Abbas to have been sincere about getting this Government up and running. I was wrong. The publicly available evidence as well as many private conversations I have had in Palestine point to Abbas being determined from the time of, or immediately after, the Agreement to destroy the Government and replace it with an unelected body with American encouragement and support. And most of the people I know in Palestine belong to one wing or other of Fatah.

Hamas militias were strongest in Gaza. Haniyeh's efforts to incorporate them into the army/police of the Palestinian Authority were rebuffed as Dahlan set about creating the sort of chaos in Gaza that would give him the excuse for a *coup*. The Palestinian Prime Minister, Haniyeh, ordered the Hamas militias against him at the end of May 2007 but their success was limited and they retreated before Israeli airstrikes. These airstrikes, by the way, accidentally caused casualties only among Dahlan's men. Unknown to Hamas most of the Preventive Security Service leaders and all their foreign advisers left Gaza shortly after. (This flight almost certainly included Dahlan himself—though Israeli

propaganda says he escaped by sea in the final battle.) Hamas attacked again in mid-June and destroyed Dahlan's base completely. An amnesty was given to his foot soldiers.

When I wasn't alone, I was driven around by a member of Fatah. (That I met up with him was chance, but I liked and trusted the man.) He was nervous about the fact that I was forever stopping and chatting to Hamas people. "I know they won't shoot me but one of them might hit me", he said. Well, they didn't. Most of them seemed to know him and took the mickey out of him sometimes. Soon he relaxed, perhaps too much. Through him I visited more families than would have been possible on my own. Many homes tend to be in courtyards and behind compound walls. The impression I got was one of a tense boredom and sheer poverty.

Cigarettes cost more than they do in London and they are as necessary as bread to most Gazans. I met many people in their thirties who were never outside this small concentration camp in their lives. (I hope that most of them had the chance to visit Egypt recently!) Sweets were a huge luxury. But the absence of money was the big problem. Inflation itself is only a problem if you have any money at all. Most people sat all day outside their homes doing nothing. I asked about reading to this most literate of people. I was told that concentrating on a book was impossible.

(I remembered that when in jail, though I read a lot, it took about ten times as long to read a book as it normally does. I'm now sure that this is a form of depression. And these people had the added problem of never knowing when they might become "collateral Damage". One man said: "if the Israelis want to kill someone and know where he is, it doesn't matter if he is visiting a children's hospital, they'll still fire a rocket".)

Motor transport is beyond the means of most people and the donkey is everywhere.

I was surprised by how fertile Gaza is. The whole area is very flat, very overcrowded, by the sea, yet covered in ploughed fields or fields full of crops. I hope that Arabs like cabbage, because there seemed to be an awful lot of it about! There was an unexpectedly large number of trees though any woods within a mile of the Israelis had been cut down by them.

Yet there are rich people in Gaza. Nowhere like as many as in the West Bank, but plenty. They assembled in the beautiful garden of the Marna Hotel, and similar places, each evening, dining fairly well and smoking hubble bubble. Some of them drove very nice cars. I tried to keep my inherited class prejudices under control as they are completely irrelevant in the Middle East.

I have visited several refugee camps in

the West Bank. Thousands of people crowded together and a generation or more from their mostly farming roots. They are viewed with some suspicion by other Palestinians because they don't belong and in case they decide to take a part of the land that surrounds them—something that has never happened. But by now they have well-constructed buildings and spotless streets and alleyways. They have good schools, medical facilities, social facilities and a reasonable general infrastructure. Often the Israelis come and smash things up or lay siege, but the refugees have systems and structures to cope with this. Supplies from UNWRA and other institutions are very good. It is not a good existence but it is not a terrible one either.

The existence in the refugee camps in Gaza IS a terrible one. Structures that have not been destroyed or damaged are falling down for want of the means to keep them in repair. Rusting corrugated iron is everywhere. There are many buildings, and in one case a whole new city, which are standing uncompleted because of the blockade on materials by the US, the EU and Israel. One small city was completed by one of the Gulf States and is quite beautiful. Gazans don't like living in dilapidation and are, like most Arabs, excellent builders. But they have nothing to build with. (By contrast, even swanky areas in Tel Aviv look like slums, and no one seems to care—certainly no one in authority.)

I said I was alone entering the place. No Arab is allowed in or out. There are supposed to be exceptions for medical reasons. I saw no sick people coming or going though I was told that a few get through. But many do not. And some have died at the border.

But even tighter than the border at Erez was the border and former crossing point manned by the Egyptians at Rafah. (Happily that was recently breached, if only for the moment.) This is a great puzzle to Gazans. Rafah is the largest city in Gaza and spans the border. Families have been divided. Fiances were unable to marry. While I was there Egyptian border guards fired on some African refugees trying to enter Israel "proper". So they are even guarding Israel's border for the Israelis.

David Morrison tells me that there is some kind of EU police force which can operate at Rafah and let people and goods through. That was news to me and I heard no one in Gaza mention it. Such a Force has taken some trouble to make itself unknown and has certainly not turned up in Rafah.

I left Gaza again through Erez. This time I was checked on the Palestinian side by men in civilian clothes who appeared

to be Fatah and were in radio contact with the Israelis to let them know I was coming and presumably not to shoot. The exit was bizarre. This time there were a few other people leaving. I was ordered from one cubicle to another by an indistinct voice over small speakers, having deposited my bags and coat and the contents of my pockets as I entered with an Arab man operating a conveyor belt. For the rest of the process I was moved only by the voices on the speakers. Various scanning machines operated in some of the cubicles, including one that can see you as if you had no clothes on.

I have not here dealt with Israeli actions against Gaza. That will have to wait for another article.

**Conor Lynch**

### **Trocaire Press Release On Gaza**

Justin Kilcullen, Director of aid agency Trocaire, said after a recent visit to Gaza:

"Because of Israel's military occupation 80% of Gaza's population rely on food aid from the outside world. To prevent this aid from entering Gaza is an intolerable act of punishment. The Israeli government must immediately lift the humanitarian blockade on the Gaza Strip."

"Israel's decision to cut-off electricity supplies to Gaza has driven people to take desperate measures. Cutting off electricity means people don't have clean drinking water, proper sewage facilities and hospitals can't function properly. Recently people haven't even been able to safely bury their dead because of a shortage in materials."

Justin Kilcullen met with Minister Dermot Ahern this week to present the Government with a petition signed by over 3,000 people calling on the Irish Government to take a more active role in the Middle East. The petition was the result of a public awareness campaign run by Trocaire last year to highlight the impact of 40 years of Israeli occupation of Palestine.

"The Irish government has supported the EU's policy of boycotting Hamas. This is a failed strategy, which is isolating the people of Gaza and urgently needs to be reversed. Without inclusion of all parties including Hamas, in the Annapolis peace process attempts resolve the crisis in Gaza are certain to fail," Justin Kilcullen said.

"here are 1.5 million Palestinians squeezed into an area half the size of county Wexford. For almost seven years they have been caged into Gaza with very few chances to leave.

"...Israel's collective punishment of civilians, ...is a flagrant breach of international law."

Full story at: <http://trocaire.org/news/story.php?id=1223>

# The Mass Break-out From Gaza

continued

*Palestinian people freedom to move, to trade, to live ordinary lives" 111.*

The six points in the AMA were as follows in Rice's words:

"First, for the first time since 1967, Palestinians will gain control over entry and exit from their territory. This will be through an international crossing at Rafah ... ."

"Second, Israel and the Palestinians will upgrade and expand other crossings for people and cargo between Israel, Gaza and the West Bank. ...

"Third, Palestinians will be able to move between Gaza and the West Bank; specifically, bus convoys are to begin about a month from now and truck convoys are to start a month after that.

"Fourth, the parties will reduce obstacles to movement within the West Bank. ...

"Fifth, construction of a Palestinian seaport can begin. The Rafah model will provide a basis for planned operations.

"Sixth, the parties agree on the importance of the airport. Israel recognizes that the Palestinian Authority will want to resume construction on the airport."

Virtually nothing of this has been realised in practice.

## RESTRICTIONS ON PEOPLE AND GOODS

Contrary to what Rice said, the Rafah crossing was never under Palestinian control. Israel was always in a position to prevent its opening. Furthermore, the AMA [access agreement] itself placed restrictions on the movement of people and of commercial goods.

On people, the AMA says:

"Use of the Rafah crossing will be restricted to Palestinian ID card holders and others by exception in agreed categories with prior notification to the GoI [Government of Israel] and approval of senior PA leadership." 121

The Palestinian Authority has to notify Israel 48 hours in advance about the crossing of those in the exceptional categories (diplomats, foreign investors, foreign representatives of recognized international organizations and humanitarian cases) and, although Israel doesn't have a veto on an individual crossing (except by closing the crossing altogether), the PA has to give Israel a reason for overriding any Israeli objection.

In addition, under the AMA, Israel is allowed to request that the PA ban nominated Palestinian ID card holders from using the crossing and the PA was obliged to consult with Israel (and the EU monitors, of which more later), in the event of it refusing an Israeli request.

On goods, the AMA says:

"Rafah will also be used for export of goods to Egypt."

In fact, although Rafah has a functional terminal for handling commercial traffic, no commercial traffic has passed through Rafah to Egypt. The AMA [access agreement] does not allow the import of goods through Rafah: Israel refused to agree to this, since Rafah isn't under its direct control, and it doesn't trust Egypt and the PA to prevent the importation of arms.

These facts about the AMA give the lie to Rice's assertion that "*Palestinians will gain control over entry and exit from their territory*" at Rafah.

## ISRAELI VETO ON OPENING

In addition to these restrictions built into the AMA, Israel is in a position to close the Rafah crossing at will, just as it can and does close the four crossings between Gaza and Israel itself (Karni, Erez, Sufa and Kerem Shalom).

This has come about because there is a 3rd party to the AMA, with the following duties defined in the AMA itself:

"The 3rd party will have the authority to ensure that the PA complies with all applicable rules and regulations concerning the Rafah crossing point and the terms of this agreement. In case of non-compliance, the 3rd party has the authority to order the re-examination and reassessment of any passenger, luggage, vehicle or goods. While the request is being processed, the person, luggage, vehicle or cargo in question will not be allowed to leave the premises of the Rafah crossing point."

In other words, the 3rd party is a proxy for Israel, making sure that the PA does what Israel wants. The EU is that proxy. It has a force of around 70 EU monitors, mostly policemen, on hand to do the job (grandly titled the EU Border Assistance Mission for the Rafah Crossing Point, or EU BAM Rafah).

In addition to the EU monitors, who are physically present at the crossing, Israeli security forces monitor activity at the crossing remotely via CCTV and are in a position to acquire a complete record of the individuals passing through the crossing.

## EU MONITORS INACTION

When Israel decides that the Rafah crossing shouldn't open, it doesn't open. It doesn't open because, in those circumstances, the EU monitors do not take up their post at the crossing, and, under the AMA, without their presence the crossing isn't allowed to open.

I have been unable to find an official EU reason for this refusal to allow its monitors to take up their post, when Israel doesn't want the crossing open.

The EU Ambassador to Israel, Ramiro Cibrian, was quoted in the *Jerusalem Post* on 28th June 2007 as saying that "*the legal basis for the deployment of the EU force to Rafah was the agreement on movement and access from November 2005, which clearly stipulated that the Presidential Guard would control the crossing*" 131. And, since a few weeks earlier, Mahmoud Abbas' Presidential Guard had left Gaza, when it came under the control of Hamas forces, the EU couldn't allow its monitors to take up their post. In fact, you will search in vain in the AMA to find any mention of the Presidential Guard controlling the crossing, so that reason doesn't stand up.

If there were an AMA requirement to that effect, it could account for why the EU monitors haven't taken up their post at Rafah, and why the crossing hasn't been open, since Hamas took control of Gaza in June 2007. But, it doesn't stand up as a reason why the EU monitors did Israel's bidding and refused to take up their post on nearly 90% of the days in the previous 12 months, when the Presidential Guard was available to man the crossing, and the crossing wasn't open.

B'Tselem, the Israeli human rights group, gives other explanations of why the EU monitors fail to turn up at the crossing when Israel wants the crossing closed 141:-

(a) The EU takes the position that the AMA does not permit them to open the crossing when one of the parties to the agreement is opposed to doing so.

(b) Israel is in a position to physically prevent the EU monitors getting to the crossing, because the monitors reside in Ashkelon in Israel and cannot reach their post without going through the Israeli-controlled Kerem Shalom crossing into Gaza.

It's difficult to take (b) seriously since, if the EU wanted to avoid being physically prevented by Israel from reaching the crossing, the EU monitors could be stationed in Egypt or Gaza. (a) is nearer the mark—it seems like a convenient EU interpretation of the AMA that justifies it doing Israel's bidding. There is nothing in the AMA that I can see to warrant such an interpretation.

## AMA PROGRESS REPORT

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in the Occupied Palestinian Territory compiles detailed statistics about many aspects of life for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. It is an invaluable source of information about the opening of crossings, about checkpoints in the West Bank and much else besides. See its website 151.

It compiles fortnightly reports on the implementation of the AMA. Its report for 14-27 November 2007 states that the Rafah crossing had been closed to Palestinian ID card holders since 9 June 2007, a few days before Hamas forces took control of Gaza. It is still closed. For the previous 12 months, after an Israeli soldier was captured by Palestinians on 25th June 2006, the crossing was closed nearly 90% of the time. The crossing first opened under the AMA [access agreement] arrangements on 25th November 2005 and operated fairly satisfactorily (almost daily) until 25th June 2006.

On other aspects of the AMA, this UN Humanitarian Office report makes the following points, which are worth noting:

\*Obstacles to movement in the West Bank number 563, which represents an increase of 185 obstacles, or 49.7%, over the baseline figure of August 2005.

\* Convoys between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank: Truck convoys—implementation now 22 months overdue (since mid-January 2006); Bus convoys—implementation now 23 months overdue (since mid-December 2005).

\* Ports: Seaport—awaiting GoI [Israel] assurance of non-interference with seaport operation; Airport—awaiting commencement of discussions since November 2005.

#### THE MASS BREAKOUT

Israel has kept the Rafah crossing closed since June 2007. But, in recent weeks, Israel also closed the Gaza-Israel crossings, so that very few supplies have been getting into Gaza. This strangulation of Gaza produced a few mutterings of disapproval from official circles in the West about Israel's treatment of the Palestinians in Gaza—and there were large demonstrations in the Arab world.

In these circumstances, Hamas decided to facilitate a breakout for Palestinians from their Gaza prison into Egypt—blowing up stretches of the border wall between Gaza and Egypt, near Rafah, and bulldozing other stretches. Hamas chose its time well, since it was very difficult for the Egyptian Government to turn back the hordes of Palestinians crossing over into Egypt to obtain the essentials of life denied them by the Israeli siege of Gaza. Heavy-handed tactics might well have provoked popular anger in Egypt.

#### WHAT NOW?

Egypt is now being urged by the US and Israel to re-establish control of the border, but it's difficult for it to do that without the co-operation of Hamas—which would not find favour in the US or Israel. For its part, Hamas is not going to co-operate, if there is no prospect of lifting

the siege conditions in Gaza that obtained before the breakout.

To that end, Hamas has called for "*a new Palestinian-Egyptian arrangement for Rafah*" (*Beirut Daily Star*, 28 January 2008 [6]). Hamas is not ruling out the involvement of President Abbas and Fatah in such an arrangement. A Hamas spokesman, Sami Abu Zuhri, is quoted as saying:

"Hamas wishes to confirm that it refuses to return to the [previous] agreement on the Rafah crossing. [Hamas] demands that it be an Egyptian-Palestinian crossing in accordance with new arrangements, either agreed to in three-way talks between Hamas, Fatah, and Cairo, or two-way talks with Cairo if President Mahmoud Abbas continues to refuse dialogue with the Hamas movement."

Ismail Haniyeh of Hamas—the Palestinian Authority Prime Minister illegally deposed by President Abbas under US pressure—is quoted as saying that the existing arrangements for Rafah must be replaced with a procedure that excludes Israel. "*We don't accept a continued Israeli veto*", he said.

If Gaza is to be immune from strangulation by Israel in the future, not only must Israel be unable to prevent the opening of the Rafah crossing, the crossing must also cater for commercial traffic into Gaza, which is banned under the present access agreement. It's difficult to believe that this would ever be acceptable to the US or Israel, since it increases the chances of Hamas and other groups obtaining arms from the outside world. The difficulty for the US and Israel is that the present situation, with large gaps in the border wall and imperfect control by Egypt of what passes through the gaps, is even more conducive to arms reaching Gaza.

Israel may yet decide to retake control of the Gaza/Egypt border militarily.

Ireland has played a passive role in the EU over all this, as have other Governments which say they are opposed to the way the Palestinians have been treated. It seems that the national interest requires subservience to the policies of the Great Powers. And the populace acquiesces. And then people wonder why there's terrorism?

**David Morrison**

29 January 2008

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

#### References:

- [1] [www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2005/56890.htm](http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2005/56890.htm)
- [2] See [www.mfa.gov.il](http://www.mfa.gov.il)
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## Irish Labour

The following letter was submitted to the *Irish News* on 28th December

As a member of the (Irish) Labour Party I was surprised to see myself mistakenly described by your correspondent, Valerie Robinson, as a "*British Labour Party representative*" (*Irish News* 28 December 2007). I am not.

I am Chair of the (Irish) Labour Party's Northern Ireland Branch and served, until recently, on the National Executive of the Party. The Labour Party now accepts into membership from those resident in Northern Ireland. Whilst on the National Executive, I pressed the Labour Party to go further, and contest elections in Northern Ireland. The formal position, agreed at our recent Wexford conference, is that a Labour Party Commission will be set up to consider contesting elections in Northern Ireland. This Commission will be set up soon and will report well in advance of the local and European elections in 2009.

It is the case that the Labour Party, with over 6000 members, is bigger than either Sinn Fein or the DUP, and has more Parliamentary representatives (at state level Parliaments) than either. Labour is also the only governmental party of scale on the island of Ireland that can conceivably attract votes across all communities. Neither Fianna Fail, nor Fine Gael, could have similar appeal nor—for that matter—would a British Labour Party in full neo-liberal and global imperialist mode.

Ms Robinson's confusion may lie in the inclusive manner in which the Labour Party has allowed for dual membership. Labour Party members in Northern Ireland also retain membership of any other P E S. The Party of European Socialists includes both the SDLP and British Labour.

Those wishing to join the Labour Party should do so at [www.labour.ie/northernireland](http://www.labour.ie/northernireland)

**Mark Langhammer**  
(Labour Party)

## Labour Party Commission on Northern Ireland

At its November conference, the Labour Party agreed to establish a Commission on Northern Ireland that would make recommendations about standing candidates there. The makeup of the Commission has now been approved by the party's National Executive Committee. Its members are as follows:-

**Ruairi Quinn**, the former party leader, is the Chair of the Commission, which also includes two members of the Northern Ireland Labour Forum, **Mark Langhammer** and **Mary McMahon**. The other members are:

**Anne Gallagher**, who stood for the party in Connaught-Ulster in the last European election

continued on page 8, col. 1

# Shorts

from  
*the Long Fellow*

## IRELAND GOES SCANDINAVIAN

Carol Coulter, the Legal Editor of *The Irish Times* gave some interesting statistics on crime (4.1.07). Quoting from the *Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, Ireland has the second lowest rate of prisoners in custody in Europe. On an average day in 2006 we had an imprisonment rate of 72 per 100,000 of the population. Only Norway has a lower rate at 66 per 100,000.

The US, by contrast, imprisons 700 per 100,000 of the population, almost 10 times the Irish rate.

Europe in general is far behind the US. The countries with the highest rate of imprisonment in the EU are the UK and Spain with 147 per 100,000 or twice the rate of the Irish.

All of this might not be of much consolation to the victims of crime in this country, but for the rest of us it helps to get things in perspective.

## FRANCE GOES IRISH

The Long Fellow was saddened to see that the French have followed the Irish in respect of the smoking ban. Even in Saint-Germain-des-Prés—synonymous with Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, cigarettes and coffee—the barbarians have breached the gates (*The Irish Times*, 12.1.08).

But it seems that the battle was lost long before the French Government implemented the ban on 2nd January this year. A waiter at *Les Deux Magots*, one of Sartre's haunts, said to *Irish Times* journalist Lara Marlowe:

"They airbrushed the cigarette out

of Sartre's mouth in an exhibition at the Bibliotheque Nationale. That was censorship. Now they've extended censorship to the cafes."

And the Director of *Les Deux Magots* had already implemented the smoking ban 11 months before it was legally required because:

"More and more of our American clientele demanded non-smoking seating".

*Oh-la-la!*

## BRITS GO HOME

Garbled and one-sided reports in *The Guardian* and the *Irish Independent* (18.1.08) indicate that the Russians aren't too keen on the British Council. British Foreign Secretary, David Milliband accused the Russians of "*blatant intimidation*". The intimidation consisted of enquiries into the health of elderly relatives, family pets and threats of tax audits. Accordingly, the British Council has "*suspended operations*" in St. Petersburg and Yekaterinburg.

Apparently, British diplomats are talking to European and US allies to implement a range of punitive actions such as suspending Russian membership of the WTO and refusing admission to the OECD.

The British Council is obviously considered an important arm of the British State for such measures to be considered!

It is only at the end of the reports that we learn that the British Council was breaking Russian laws and insisted on continuing to flout its laws. Konstantin Kosachyov, head of the foreign relations committee of Russia's parliament, is reported as saying that the British Council was free to resume its work once its status complied with the law.

## IRELAND SHOULD FOLLOW THE RUSSIANS

Perhaps the Irish State should take a closer look at the British Council here, whose main function seems to be to advocate the celebration of the blood sacrifice of Irishmen in the interests of British imperialism. This, of course, is in direct conflict with the founding principles of this State.

The Irish State should also follow the example of the Russians in regard to the teaching of history. After the dark days of the Yeltsin era the Russian State has decided to restore some self respect. President Vladimir Putin told a group of history teachers last October that it was their duty to make schoolchildren "*proud of their motherland*" (*The Guardian*, 2.11.07).

Unfortunately, our own State, in particular the State Broadcasting Service, seems only to be interested in denigrating our own "*great patriotic war*" of 1919-1921.

## IRISH ACADEMICS MUST TRY HARDER

Now that the documentary *The Killings at Coolacrease* has been revealed as a piece of anti-national propaganda some academics have trailed in on the coat tails of the non-academic historians who have exposed its lies.

In the excellent *History Ireland* (January-February 2008) NUI Maynooth lecturer Brian Hanley acknowledges that the executions were not motivated by sectarian malice, a land grab or ethnic cleansing. He also deals competently with the question of the legitimacy of the War of Independence. But he concludes rather condescendingly:

"Our aim should be to encourage more research and more discussion, not to shout each other down in pursuit of present-day agendas."

But if ordinary people, most particularly Pat Muldowney of the *Irish Political Review*, were not "*shouting*", the propaganda would have been accepted by default. And where were the professional historians when this debate was taking place? The Long Fellow is aware of only one professional historian, Fr. Brian Murphy, who participated in the debate. The rest acquiesced to the pro-British ideological viewpoint.

## WHERE IS LABOUR GOING?

And where is the Labour Party in all this? The answer would appear to be in the heart of the revisionist camp. In the August 2007 of the *Irish Political Review* the Long Fellow noticed that Limerick Labour Party Councillor Kieran Walsh had initiated a move to reinstate posthumously Lord Dunraven as the Freeman of the city. Dunraven had been stripped of this honour in 1918 because of his support for the recruitment of Irishmen into the British army during the First World War.

More recently Labour Party Councillor Tom Kelleher has successfully initiated a motion calling on Fingal County Council to create a memorial to Tom Kettle who was killed in the Somme in 1916 and was one of the most enthusiastic British Army recruiters (*The Irish Times*, 16.1.08).

In most countries the Left supports the revolution but in Ireland it troops in behind the counter-revolution.

## THE STATE WE ARE IN

Mary O'Rourke's accusation of treason against the leaders of the Opposition was quite reasonable. The most senior politician in the State was representing the interests of the State abroad and meanwhile back at home the opposition was calling for his resignation. What were Ahern's hosts to make of all this?

But Fintan O'Toole finds O'Rourke's criticism "*good for a laugh*" (*The Irish Times*, 22.1.08). And he considers Fianna Fail to be the epitome of "*banana*

## LP Commission continued

**Pat Magner**, former party National Organiser

**Ronan Farren**, a member of the SDLP in Northern Ireland and of the Labour Party in Dublin

**Mike Allen**, the party General Secretary

Both Ruairi Quinn and Ronan Farren spoke in the debate last November, when the party agreed to establish the Commission, and both made clear their opinion that the Labour Party shouldn't "interfere" in the SDLP's area of operation. Both are therefore unequivocally opposed to the Labour Party standing for election in Northern Ireland.



republicanism".

The Long Fellow disagrees with O'Toole but must concede that *The Irish Times* columnist is being logical and consistent. If the most successful political party in the State is the "epitome of banana republicanism" it is difficult to see how the State itself can be legitimate. And it follows that if the State is not legitimate, it cannot have legitimate interests.

#### ICELAND AND THE GREATEST CHESS PLAYER

For a few years in the early seventies the world was captivated by the game of Chess. The match between Bobby Fischer and Boris Spassky in 1972 was considered a metaphor for the Cold War. The stakes were so high that it took many months before Iceland was agreed as an appropriately neutral venue.

In the early seventies Fischer was a virulent anti-communist. But following the ending of the Cold War he became "anti-American". In a discussion on the *Off the Ball* radio programme on Newstalk 106 (22.1.08) his anti-Americanism was presented as evidence of his madness.

The programme broadcast a recording of Fischer being interviewed on Philippine Radio as the 9/11 attacks were taking place. Fischer expressed the view that America had brought this upon herself. Perhaps that was an injudicious sentiment, but hardly evidence of insanity. There must have been many people who wondered if the US could continue to disrupt the world without any consequences for herself. Fischer then raised a very pertinent question as the 9/11 events were unfolding. He wondered how the US intelligence services could not know about this in advance when there must have been hundreds of people involved.

But Fischer's greatest sin was to participate in a re-match with Spassky in Yugoslavia in 1992, which was a breach of an embargo against that country. America could not forgive her famous son who had brought glory to her 20 years before. No obstacle to the destruction of Yugoslavia could be tolerated.

For the rest of his life the American State pursued him around the world. In 2004 he was discovered in Japan and the Japanese were about to hand him over when Iceland intervened.

The people of Iceland remembered how the eyes of the world were on her in 1972: a country with a population of a quarter of a million. And then they thought of their old friend, that extraordinary American. He was an outcast in his native land but Iceland gave Fischer a warm welcome. And it was in that cold country that the greatest chess player found his final resting place.

## Commemorating The First Dail

The 90th anniversary of the First Dáil will take place on the 21st of January 2009. Why mention that date so early in 2008? Because, for one, despite being persistently corrected by Jack Lane, RTE's Joe Duffy repeatedly blustered on his *Liveline* show on the 6th of November 2007 that—during the War of Independence—"there wasn't a constituted [Irish] Government] as such... the Government of Ireland was the British Government... whether you like it or not!" And because, as Brendan Clifford observed in the October 2007 issue of *Irish Political Review*, were it not for the pressure exerted on Taoiseach Jack Lynch by Máire Mac Swiney Brugha forty years ago—at a time when the media was not yet drowning in Duffyite ignorance—the State would even have failed to mark the 50th anniversary of that most democratic manifestation of national self-determination. As Brendan Clifford also pointed out, the resulting 50th anniversary commemoration was itself no less dramatic, due to the leadership given by Denis Dennehy of the Irish Communist Organisation to the Dublin Housing Action Committee, for which agitation he was imprisoned and on hunger strike during the course of that commemoration. In the August 2006 issue of *Irish Political Review* I further recalled a meeting in my own family home that had been convened in order to prevail upon the 1916 hero Joe Clarke to make a most effective intervention on Denis Dennehy's behalf.

So it was that the lead story of the *Irish Times* on the 22nd January 1969 carried the following headline: *President's Call In Day Of Unrest: Veteran's Protest At Assembly To Commemorate First Dáil*. The paper reported that:

"at both civil and religious ceremonies in the city, there were disturbances and protests. In the Mansion House, a veteran Republican, Mr. Joseph Clarke, was carried out after he had protested about the imprisonment of Mr. Denis Dennehy, a leading member of the Dublin Housing Action Committee, for squatting in a house in Mountjoy Square. 'This is a mockery', shouted Mr. Clarke, survivor of the [1916] battle of Mount Street Bridge, as ushers took him outside. At a Mass to celebrate the anniversary in the Pro-Cathedral in Marlboro Street a few hours earlier, four people were arrested after a woman had shouted: 'Release Denis Dennehy'. And at the Custom House, eight members of the Dublin Housing Action Committee were arrested where they took part in a sit-down demonstration... For two hours during the day five members of the Dublin Housing Action Committee picketed the General Post Office... Last

night the Committee held a mass rally at the GPO and expressed their determination to continue their campaign. 'We intend to continue our protests against Denis Dennehy's imprisonment and against housing conditions in Dublin', two leading members declared ..."

Under the heading of *Day Of Marching And Noisy Protesting*, the front page's second story further elaborated:

"From early morning yesterday members of the Dublin Housing Action Committee paraded the streets and staged protests at strategic points against the imprisonment in Mountjoy Jail of Mr. Denis Dennehy. He was sent to jail for failing to comply with a High Court order to leave a house in Mountjoy Square, where he had been squatting with his wife and two children. Hundreds of police patrolled the streets, and particularly the entrance to Dawson Street where the first Dáil celebrations were taking place in the Mansion House. Later a protest meeting held outside the General Post Office by members of the Dublin Housing Action Committee was followed by a parade to Mountjoy Prison, where a sit-down protest was staged. Mrs. Denis Dennehy was among the protestors... At the Mansion House outdoor meeting there were constant chants of 'occupy, occupy, occupy' from some people in the crowd as Dublin Housing Action Committee stewards linked arms and stood five deep before the doors of the building. A debate about whether or not they should occupy the Mansion House continued... News of the action by the Cork Housing Action Committee was received with cheers... There were still more calls to move into the Mansion House as the Committee's treasurer, Mr. Michael O'Riordan, said that the shooting of the two policemen at Soloheadbeg started a revolution. They did not want to shoot policemen but they did want to start a revolution."

On page 11 of the *Irish Times* the heading of *Nine Men Arrested In Cork* was given to the news that had been so enthusiastically cheered in Dublin:

"Nine men were arrested last night shortly after they took over the council chamber of the Cork City Hall. The group of men, who called themselves the Provisional Council of Cork, forced their way into the City Hall and then barricaded themselves in with desks, iron bars and ropes ... A statement signed by Pádraic Ó Súilleabháin, chairman, and Conchúir Ó Loingsigh [Conor Lynch], secretary of the Cork Housing Action Committee, was issued: 'On this day, January 21st, 1969, the 50th anniversary of the first sitting of An Chéad Dáil Éireann, we, the members of the Cork Housing Action

Committee, proclaim ourselves the Provisional Council of Cork City. This action has been taken because of the obvious incompetency on the part of the present Cork Corporation, and particularly because of the utter disregard for the present housing crisis in Cork City. The Cork Corporation, which builds a mere 78 houses where 2,500 are urgently needed, cannot possibly be serving the interests of the people'... [See photograph on page 11.]

Back on the Irish Times front page, under the somewhat tongue-in-cheek heading of *Solemn Tone To Historic Ceremony*, Liam MacGabhann provided a very vivid account of Joe Clarke's interruption of President de Valera's address to the Mansion House Joint Sitting of both Dáil and Seanad. MacGabhann related:

"During that time, there were two interruptions, one completely out of order and one properly in Senate business. The first came just as Mr. De Valera was involved in his first sentence. Joseph Clarke survivor of the Easter Rising 'Thermopylae', the Battle of Mount Street Bridge, was among the distinguished visitors, and leaning on his crutches, interjected the following into the staid proceedings hitherto carried out in Gaelic: *'The Programme of the Old Dáil had never been implemented. This is a mockery. There are people on hunger strike in Mountjoy. The housing of the people...'* Dáil Éireann ushers grappled with the disabled veteran. They moved him to the outer door. There, it transpires, they gave him his crutches and released him. (Paradoxically, Joe Clarke was usher-in-charge at the first Dáil). Nearest spectators to this event were the Cardinal, the two Archbishops of Dublin and some of the Ministers' wives. The Diplomatic Corps watched it from the balcony. Mr. De Valera carried on as if unhearing ..."

"The second interruption—procedural, as the Senate was in session—came from a senator just after Mr. Lynch, the Taoiseach, had concluded his speech in Irish... Senator Owen Sheehy Skeffington told the Cathaoirleach: 'A Chinn Chomhairle, I rise to ask the Taoiseach, arising out of his speech, whether he sees the likelihood of the Democratic Programme of the First Dáil being implemented in the foreseeable future, or does he feel that it will continue to remain largely a dead letter'... Worthy of mention is that both 'interrupters', Mr. Clarke and Senator Skeffington, have associations with the 1916 insurrection. The senator's father was shot then by a firing squad..."

Readers can now view archive footage of the TV coverage of Joe Clarke's First Dáil commemorative demonstration on the RTE website at [www.rte.ie/laweb/11/11\\_t09c.html](http://www.rte.ie/laweb/11/11_t09c.html) for which the following explanatory note is also provided:

"President de Valera addresses the gathering. His speech is briefly interrupted by veteran Republican Joseph Clarke, who protests about the jailing of Denis Dennehy, a member of the Dublin Housing Action Committee, for squatting in a house in Mountjoy Square."

Under the stewardship of its then editor, Douglas Gageby, the *Irish Times* had indeed functioned very effectively as a paper of record in respect of a 50th anniversary commemoration that proved to be of historic significance in its own right. But it was also all the more effective because of Gageby's own acute appreciation of the historic significance of the original event that was itself been commemorated. *Lessons Of Remembrance* was the title of the introductory article in the special First Dáil Commemorative Supplement published by the *Irish Times* on the 21st of January, 1969, which said, *inter alia*:

"We in Ireland are much given to remembering. Orangemen in particular have long memories and parade their symbols of the past year by year... Three years ago the nation commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the 1916 Rising, today a ceremony in the Mansion House marks the fiftieth anniversary of the first Dáil... Today we publish a deliberately more discursive series of papers, based loosely on the Democratic Programme read to that first Dáil. The text of that programme is set out... as is the draft programme drawn up by Tom Johnson and William O'Brien. The socialism of the latter was watered down in the final document read out by Richard Mulcahy, but the spirit of it seems very much alive today. For there has been in the years since 1916 was celebrated a sudden rush of social conscience in the political world—civil rights, education and health services, housing. Outside events have had their influences, but the Government itself, in its sudden dam-bursting attack on education, led and inspired by Donogh O'Malley, may have helped to set off a reaction which it finds difficult to cope with ..."

In his editorial for that day, simply entitled *The First Dáil*, Gageby penned a brief but to-the-point history lesson that contrasts so sharply with Joe Duffy's cult of ignorance:

"Our supplement today commemorates the first meeting of the Dáil in the Mansion House, Dublin, fifty years ago. The meeting (some of the deputies were in prison and unable to attend) was not proscribed, although it was to be in the days ahead".

"The Dáil's membership was composed of those who had been returned to sit for their constituencies in Westminster, but following the prescription for Sinn Féin as written by Arthur Griffith, (then in prison), they met in a National Assembly after a

general election, the first Irish Parliament to sit since the Act of Union."

"Their task was prodigious: to rule a country without control of the administration. It must have seemed to the authorities in Dublin Castle a mere rhetorical flourish; but in the next few years a working alternative to the British Government in Ireland did in fact operate. Its writ ran where the official administration was powerless."

"Once fighting broke out, the Dáil had to function in secret; but it functioned. The impossible took place; and the judgements of the Dáil courts were respected. People who wanted justice in country places found that it was more practicable to resort to these courts where the British courts were powerless to enforce their decrees... Our hope for the fiftieth anniversary of that first Dáil is that those who compose the present Dáil may ask themselves if they are honestly attempting to fulfil the promise of those who attempted to build our State ..."

Douglas Gageby had loyally served that same State as an Irish Army Intelligence officer during the Second World War. It was for the type of perspective represented by his First Dáil editorial that Gageby would be denounced to the British Ambassador to Ireland as "*a white nigger*" by *Irish Times* Managing Director Major Tom McDowell, formerly of British Intelligence. For Gageby also had the audacity to reproduce in full the First Dáil's own Declaration of Independence that underscored the democratic mandate retrospectively—but quite unambiguously—given to the 1916 Rising by the same December 1918 General Election that had brought Dáil Éireann into being:

"Whereas the Irish Republic was proclaimed in Dublin on Easter Monday, 1916, by the Irish Republican Army acting on behalf of the Irish people; ... and Whereas at the threshold of a new era in history the Irish electorate has in the General Election of December 1918, seized the first occasion to declare by an overwhelming majority its firm allegiance to the Irish Republic; Now, therefore, we the elected Representatives of the ancient Irish people in National Parliament assembled, do, in the name of the Irish nation, ratify the establishment of the Irish Republic and pledge ourselves and our people to make this declaration effective by every means at our command."

Given Gageby's own reverence for that First Dáil it is not surprising that he would have had mixed feelings about the disruption of the 50th anniversary commemorative ceremonies. But in a further editorial entitled *March Of Time*, and published on the following day of the 22nd of January, Gageby proved more than capable of rising to the occasion:

"It would have been fitting if a truce

had been called on a day which was to commemorate a significant landmark in the history of this country and to pay tribute to a brave generation of Irishmen and women. But, from another point of view, it is better to bring discontent out into the open. Parliamentary democracy is today under fire, perhaps largely because it has failed to adapt itself—and that was one element in the demonstrations which erupted in Dublin yesterday. Thus it was unlikely that the celebrations would pass off without public protests from the various groups which have been so active in past months. The men of 1919 were practised at outdoor politics too, and perhaps it irked some of them less than it did the average Dubliner whose bus was an hour late".

"It is a long time since so many gardai have been seen in concentration in this city, and even the most detached citizen will be glad that the official ceremonies were able to go off relatively smoothly, and that the skirmishes were relatively unbloody. There are specific grievances as well as the more general malaise... When party advantage, however, is subtracted, there still remains the fact that there could be little agitation if Dublin had enough houses... The Government... may take a sanguine view of the hail of party papers that shower down from Fine Gael and Labour; it should regard as top priority the removal as fast as possible of the major grievances of the marchers—and by solving the problem rather than resorting to repressive measures..."

To have successfully forced that issue of the housing crisis to the fore of the First Dáil commemorations had indeed been Denis Dennehy's own historic achievement.

**Manus O'Riordan**

## Brian Hanley, Coolacrease And Related Matters

Brian Hanley did a review of the RTE Programme on Coolacrease in the current *History Ireland* (Jan-Feb 2008).

He was like a reporter arriving on a battlefield after the battle is over and telling us who won. He knows, as does anyone else who followed this story that Pat Muldowney, Paddy Heaney and Philip McConway in Offaly have won the arguments on this. But Hanley cannot say so with good grace. The amateurs just cannot be credited by this professional that they showed him and his colleagues how history should be recorded and written. He castigates them for '*posing and histrionics*' and behaving just like their opponents, but everyone knows that these characteristics were confined exclusively to the makers and proponents of the *Hidden History* programme which occasioned the controversy. He says the debate generated more heat than light but the dogs in the streets know that the heat was all with Eoghan Harris, Niamh Sammon and their supporters and the light was from Muldowney and colleagues.

He goes on to give us back to front history: "... *the modern Irish Republic ...is the result of the armed campaign waged between 1919 and 1921*". It is not. It is the result of the 1918 Election. The Irish Republic existed before the war. It did not need a war to establish it. The war is the result of the first democratic House of Commons' rejection of that democratic result and the attempt to crush its new democratic structures by terror. The 1918

Election is the source of modern Irish democracy. The only result of the war was death and destruction. War was a not necessary pre-condition for a successful Irish democracy. Britain decided on war to destroy the Irish democracy and succeeded in delaying the consolidation of the new state by also orchestrating civil war as a continuation of the initial war against the democracy. This two phased war delayed and stifled the democracy for nearly two decades. The war of 1919-21 was a British war to suppress democracy—not an Irish war to establish it. Let's keep that war in proper perspective.

Then we have Hanley's double think on sectarianism.

We are told that "*There was no attempt at 'genocide' perpetrated against Protestants during the revolution, nor was there any 'ethnic cleansing'*" and then on the other hand he tells us that "*we should accept the fact that there was undoubtedly an element of sectarian conflict during the revolution and that some people were targeted for sectarian reasons*". This is having your cake and eating it and gets us precisely nowhere.

There is only way to deal with this kind of pointless pontificating and equivocation—deal with the actual events—just like Muldowney and company have done over Coolacrease. Thanks to them that has been shown to have shown to be a strictly military incident pure and simple. And not even a major one.



**Members of the Cork Housing Action Committee outside the Courthouse during the trial of those who occupied the City Hall. Jack Lane (with megaphone), to his right, Pat Horgan and Brian Girvin (Irish Press)**

## DUNMANWAY

When dealing with sectarianism in the war the devil is in the detail (some might say, quite literally). And the details have to be dealt with. The elephant in the parlour on this issue is not Coolacrease but the 'Dunmanway killings' of 27-28 April 1922 when 10 Protestants were shot dead. How does Mr. Hanley's approach cope with that?

Was there or was there not sectarianism involved? I suggest Mr Hanley tells us. If he explains that incident convincingly he will establish credentials as a historian at least as good as those of Muldowney and his colleagues. Surely he could do that very easily with the resources available in the ivory towers of Maynooth?

So, being ever helpful, I would like to outline some of the mysteries about this event, a piece of genuinely 'Hidden History' that Mr Hanley might address and make his name by solving.

Who exactly did it? There is no evidence of any local or Republican involvement. If locals and/or republicans carried out such a well executed mini-massacre it would be well-known locally who did it. It was not an amateurish operation. These people were executed 'properly' unlike the Pearsons at Coolacrease.

There could be no hiding of those who did such a thing in a local rural community. Everything is known in such places. Even 'ordinary' one-off murders and crimes are discussed thoroughly in great detail and agreement soon reached on who did what and why. 'The law' and all officialdom may as well be on another planet as to what they can know or say or do about such things. But the only thing all are agreed on in this case is that nobody knows.

Plenty theories have been put forward to deal with it—was it a spate of revenge for what was happening in the North at the time? Was it a drunken spree? Was it just an execution of spies? But none convince completely.

Mr. Hanley is fan of Professor Peter Hart who made a big issue of Dunmanway but how come he did not discover the answer as to who did it? He must surely have tried hard and even in his most creative mode he did not come up with answers. Kevin Myers tried to help with names—but Peter said *thanks but no thanks*. He did not believe him. All his much acclaimed research and interviews with the living and the dead were for nought on this issue? Hart would have thrilled no doubt to be able to name names but he could not. This is therefore unfinished business on Hart's part that Mr. Hanley could usefully complete and do his friend a favour.

## THEORIES

The case that they were shot because their surnames were listed as spies on a

diary list and other documents—the *'Dunmanway find'*—left behind by the Auxiliaries when they pulled out is very strong and this counters the accusations of sectarianism. Meda Ryan in her excellent research—which proves conclusively that Hart is charlatan—provided crucial information that supports this case. Nobody has written more knowledgeably on all this and she certainly does not put it down to Republicans. However, non-spies were also killed and, combined with the fact that all were Protestants, this makes the sectarian accusation seem plausible.

But the mysteries persist. Those non-informers who were killed bore the same surnames as the informers who were killed. And this is very significant. Surnames in rural Ireland are a hopeless guide to personal identity. In fact they can be totally meaningless and absolutely misleading. People were and are identified by a string of first names which identify people very precisely across at least three generations. And if that is not sufficient a nickname can be thrown in for good measure to aid identification—and to add a little piquancy. (I grew up with neighbours who were known as, e.g., Mikie Pat Mick, Johnny Big Jack, Con Con Tim, Jer Big Dan, Dan Sean Maire, Hugh Connie Hugh, Jack twenty one, Con the pound, Jack the shop, etc., etc and I did not find out their surnames for years.)

IRA intelligence knew all this very well. There is no case of Volunteers killing anyone during the War because he happened to have the same surname as a known informer. However, British forces inevitably placed far more emphasis on surnames, and made several errors arresting or shooting people with the same surnames as those they wanted. That raises another possible motive—deliberate provocation to initiate a sectarian war?

And further mysteries persist: how could the Auxiliaries happen to 'forget' documents containing such critical information? Full information on local spies? And in Dunmanway/Bandon of all places. These are usually the first documents to be destroyed as they hold the most sensitive information of all. And the Auxiliaries were professionals. Nothing like this list of spies has been found elsewhere. The full provenance of the documents is not yet clear.

Flor Crowley has provided the most detailed information on the diary list that was left behind in four long items in the *Southern Star* (October-November 1971). And his description of the diary raises more questions as he himself appreciated. There is a mass of the most detailed information on IRA members that must have been collected by a large number of informants—at least one in

every townland he reckoned. But there were only four informants named in the diary and none of these were suspected then or since as informants by the IRA—though they then knew of several others who were not listed. He sums it up "*..the names of four informers are given in the book, four unknown informers, with no mention at all of those that were known. Did those four and the 'regular' informers whose names are known to us supply all that is contained in the book? It is hard to think they could do so*" (27.11.1971).

Naturally enough in such documents informants are listed by some sort of code which was probably the case here. But why disclose the surnames of just four innocent Protestants only? Why did they get such special treatment? And these then get executed? Does it not look like a set up? I have come across such lists in other contexts and the codes can be quite amusing.

Crowley asks himself the obvious question if this document was left behind "*...whether it was through carelessness or haste or pure design*" (S.S, 23 Oct. 1971). And he was certainly no conspiracy theorist—writing decades before Mr. Hart came on the scene. And Mr. Hart makes no reference at all to this document or others in the 'Dunmanway find' or the articles by Crowley? How odd of our intrepid researcher who even went to the other world to interview and research but apparently missed out on several quite important issues of the *Southern Star*?

And why did the killers say, according to an eye-witness, and as Hart repeated a couple of times: "*Take that, you Free Stater*". Would a Republican have said that to a loyalist spy in April 1922? This was in the period leading up the Collins-de Valera Pact, months before civil war hostilities broke out. Republican and Free Staters were not then at war and if this was true it would have been the first shots of the Civil War. Was it not sufficient for the victim to be a loyalist for an alleged Republican executioner? At that time it was certainly more damnable than being a Free Stater—which was then just a strong difference of opinion, with many neutrals especially in Cork which actually had an officially neutral IRA.. All this makes no sense whatever but has all the signs of a stupid and crude attempt to implicate Republicans.

The method used, doorstep shooting, was not an IRA method and they always took the opportunity to 'debrief' informers before execution. Why did this not happen if Republicans did it?

Why did the killings end as suddenly as they started? And Republicans led by Tom Barry rushed immediately to protect Protestant homes? Did they kill them one day and protect them the next?

Why did the document not contain the names of any Catholic informers? And if the killers were Republicans, why did they not shoot Catholic informers whom they knew? IRA intelligence officers had obtained the names of many such Catholic loyalists from other sources by then. Tom Barry had executed more Catholic informers than Protestants during the war. Catholics who informed were considered much more despicable than Protestants who did so. The latter would have been regarded as having done so as a matter of principle at least—however misguided.

If his troops had done this in these circumstances, shooting informers during a Truce, I am certain Tom Barry would have executed them or disgraced them and would do so personally if necessary—and probably with his bare hands. His military honour would have demanded it. He publicly disgraced and humiliated people who only robbed a Protestant rectory during the war as Manus O'Riordan has already described in this magazine.

Tom Barry, Sean O'Hegarty, Tom Hales could not figure out who did it and were always convinced that it was a provocation by British elements who sought to make the South a mirror image of the North at the time, make it appear ungovernable by unleashing a sectarian war, thereby discrediting any form of independence and provoking an opportunity to reassert imperial control. Is this credible? Does not some evidence point that way? If Mr. Hanley wishes he can do us all a favour by investigating these possibilities and producing a definitive view.

There could even be a Part Two to his investigation and see if there is a connection between two events. I refer to the killing of the arch conspirator and the ultimate military Imperialist, Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, a couple of months later. There is a theory that he was killed on the orders of Sam Maguire, probably one of the most underrated people in the War of Independence. Maguire fell out with the Republicans over the Treaty and fell out with the Treatyites over their abandoning of the Republic. So he has no followers to do him justice. Wilson was the brains behind the setting up of the B Specials but not just for N. Ireland's sake. He would not even deign attend the opening of Stormont despite pleadings from Craig. He wanted all Ireland back in the Imperial fold. Would a sectarian war not help prove that any other development was not feasible?

Maguire was a Dunmanway Protestant who knew the victims personally. He suspected the reasons they were killed was a provocation orchestrated by Wilson and/or his cronies for a wider and renewed war and was in a position to have the killing carried out being the top IRB man in London. He therefore had the personal

and political motives and the means to do it.

The other theories about Wilson's killing are that Collins forgot to cancel a much earlier order to kill him, which seems strange in the case of such a person; or that a one-legged man and his mate suddenly got it into their heads one day to kill the head of the Imperial General Staff and go off and do it in broad daylight in Eaton Square!

We have to take our pick of these theories until Mr. Hanley or one of his colleagues provides some definitive answers. Don't hold your breath.

Perhaps Muldowney could be persuaded to move on to Dunmanway?

**Jack Lane**

**PS:** Brian Hanley's article says the Cooneyite Pearsons were Evangelical.

As far as I know, Evangelicals rely on the direct, written word in the Bible (as opposed to some intermediate human doctrine or interpretation of the Bible words), and they believe that the death of Jesus is in itself the source of eternal

salvation, or the means of getting into heaven independently of individual merit.

Cooney's sermons reject both of these Evangelical positions: the truth is obtained, not by reading any written material such as the bible, but by physically hearing the preaching of Jesus via an Apostolic Succession, the Cooneyite Preachers having acquired Apostle Status by means of person to person transmission originating with Jesus himself. And the death, or Blood, of Jesus is just that—the blood of a dead man, with no special, mystical power to confer Salvation passively.

These points of difference between Cooneyism and Evangelicism are not minor theoretical differences; they are the defining points of Cooneyism. This is what put them in violent conflict with all other Christian denominations with other Protestants heading the list.

Surely a lecturer in Maynooth would be expected to make an effort to understand these things and not just repeat the usual meaningless clichés . . .

**Jack Lane**

**Pamphlet Review: *Joe Devlin: What Now?, His Confrontation of the British Parliament, After The 1918 Election.*** Edited by Brendan Clifford. 48pp. 978-1-874158-19-6. A Belfast Magazine No. 32. Oct. 2007. E7, £4.50.

## Joe Devlin And The Demise Of Redmondism

In his biographical sketch of John Redmond, Nicholas Mansergh commented:

"He was moreover by temperament inclined to underestimate opposition. In the summer of 1913 he was saying that the 'argumentative opposition to Home Rule was dead, that all the extravagant action, all the bombastic threats are but indications that the battle is over'. Right down to 1914 he continued to assure Asquith that Carson and the Orangemen were bluffing."

Going down to the wire with the Third Home Rule Bill Joe Devlin was equally dismissive of the Protestant threat to all things bright and beautiful. On 20th February 1914, just a month or two shy of the Curragh Mutiny and the Larne gun-running, Devlin delivered a report for the consideration of the British Cabinet making it crystal clear that no one had anything at all to fear from the straw men of Carsonia. According to Wee Joe:

"We have exceptional sources of information in regard to the Ulster Volunteer movement, and we are convinced that its danger is grossly exaggerated. The main ground for this conviction is the fact that, in Belfast, the headquarters of the Carsonite movement, where the Catholic and Protestant Home Rulers would be among the first victims of any outbreak among the Orangemen, the Home Rulers regard the whole thing with absolute contempt, and are

astonished that anybody outside Belfast should take it seriously" (quoted in Eamon Phoenix, *Northern Nationalism*, page 10).

That is probably the worst of Devlin. Devlin at his best can be found in a recent Athol Books publication: *Joe Devlin: What Now?* The core of this booklet is Joe Devlin's speech made during the debate on the King's Speech at the opening of Parliament in the wake of the 1918 election at which the Irish Parliamentary Party was destroyed in Southern Ireland and put on notice in the North.

That speech was, as Clifford puts it, an open confrontation of the British Parliament, in which Devlin asked a series of very pertinent questions of Prime Minister Lloyd-George to which no one on the (coalition) government benches felt able to reply:

"I have risen for the purpose of asking the Prime Minister, if he were here, or the Leader of the House, if he were here, or the Chief Secretary for Ireland, if he were here, or any responsible Minister, high or low, great or small, this question: What is the meaning of this passage in the King's Speech:

"The position in Ireland causes Me great anxiety, but I earnestly hope that conditions may soon sufficiently improve to make it possible to provide a durable settlement of this difficult problem."

"That is a very enigmatical sentence. It is characteristically Lloyd-Georgian.

Why was that paragraph put in the Speech of the King, unless we had some explanation of it from the Prime Minister? I waited here and listened to his reply to the two rather meek and humble speeches from the two leaders of the Opposition. I waited here and listened with interest to get some explanation as to what that passage meant. I wanted to know from him what is the position in Ireland, what is the Government in Ireland, who are the Government in Ireland, what is going on in Ireland, and what you propose to do with Ireland. Do not imagine by your pledge-breaking, by your false promises, by your criminal treatment of Ireland, that you have rid yourselves of your responsibility when you engage in a conspiracy, which is successful, of driving the constitutional representatives of Ireland out of public life. For nearly forty years this party, of which there are only a few of us left, laboured by constitutional means to win the great constitutional end of a great constitutional party, namely the right of our people to govern themselves on their own soil. We won that great reform by the constitutional judgment of the electorate of this country. We won it because it was a just cause, and because it was sanctioned by public opinion. We won it because it had the moral sanction of the Colonies. We won it because mankind in every English-speaking country in the world was in its favour. Yet the Gentlemen who from these benches are now lecturing labour upon their extreme courses, are the very Gentlemen who destroyed the possibility of that solution and have cast Ireland again into the melting-pot of agitation and discontent" (*What Now?* pp10-11).

Clifford's introduction puts the matter of Devlin's 1919 speech very succinctly:

"Devlin was by far the most substantial and consequential figure in the Home Rule leadership in 1914. The others, whatever their prestige, all belonged to the past. They led a Party which was subjectively empty, except for Devlin's contribution to it. And in 1918 they were all brushed aside by the electorate, except for Devlin, who held West Belfast easily against de Valera. He went to Parliament in February 1919, as a remnant of the great Party, which had served as a representative fig-leaf for British government in Ireland, told the members of the Government that it was they who had destroyed the Party that had enabled British rule in Ireland to pass muster as representative, and asked them what they intended to do now that the Irish electorate had voted for independence.

"But for Devlin, that great question about the democracy and national rights for which the Great War had allegedly been fought would not have been raised in Parliament in a way that demanded an answer. And it would not have been demonstrated that Parliament had no answer to give, even to one of its own—which Devlin undoubtedly was" (ibid, page 5).

Though Clifford says that "*Devlin's*

*speech would merit extensive annotation in a parallel column, like one sometime sees in Bibles but I can't do that here"*, he does in fact very briefly present a significant amount of contextual material. As well as an introduction and Devlin's 1919 speech, the booklet contains extracts from the *Irish News of Devlin's Election Campaign Against Sinn Fein* and a chapter on *William O'Brien*.

All of which brings to mind some material I have to hand on the development of the Home Rule question in Ulster, which leads up to another of Devlin's finest hours (one which only occurs *in extemis* but nevertheless shows how at the end of all his manoeuvring to compromise even the Irish imperialist par excellence at the last stood to a firm line of principle beyond which he would not go.

John Redmond, Chairman of the Irish Parliamentary Party from 1900, became truly its leader in 1914 following on a disastrous speech in Parliament in which he pledged himself and his colleagues as recruiting sergeants for England's war on the world. To begin with the Party's success at raising cannon-fodder was greatest in Ulster. Then in May 1915 the War Coalition was formed with Carson and Bonar Law in the Cabinet (Redmond was invited but refused). Shortly after that (in June I think) senior Catholic clerics and local nationalists met in Omagh, County Tyrone, in a conference which aimed to oppose any compromising Redmondite attempt to "*impose an exclusion scheme on nationalist Ulster*" (Phoenix, op. cit. page 24). From just around that time recruiting was dead in Tyrone.

On 3rd June 1915, Michael Fogarty, Bishop of Killaloe, formerly a supporter of the IPP wrote to Redmond:

"The English have got all they wanted from Ireland, and don't care two pence about her feelings. Such is our reward for her profuse loyalty and recruiting. The people are full of indignation, but are powerless...

"As far as Ireland is concerned, there is little to choose between Carsonism and Kaiserism, of the two the latter is a lesser evil: and it almost makes me cry to think of the Irish Brigade fighting not for Ireland but for Carson and what he stands for—Orange ascendancy here.

"Home Rule is dead and buried and Ireland is without a national party or national press. The Freeman is but a government organ and the national party but an imperial instrument. What the future holds in store for us God knows—I suppose conscription with a bloody feud between people and soldiers. I never thought that Asquith would have consented to this humiliation and ruin of Irish feeling. There is a great revulsion of feeling in Ireland" (from *Conflict of Nationality in Modern Ireland*, A.C. Hepburn, ed. pp91 -92).

Then in May 1916 Lloyd George persuaded Redmond to accept the exclusion from Home Rule of the six Northern counties. While assuring Carson (in writing) that the exclusion would be permanent he told Redmond that it would be temporary, that Irish representation at Westminster would be unchanged and that there would be no Northern Parliament. Great disquiet in the Northern Party followed and led to the 'Black Friday' conference in Belfast's St. Mary's Hall on 23rd June 1916. Dissent was greatest in the west of the six counties so Joe Devlin saw to it that the conference was packed with his loyal Belfast followers. The vote went the leadership's way by a wide margin (475 to 265) but Redmond and Devlin both had to threaten resignation to carry it through. Conference voting figures show that the Party was nigh to death in Fermanagh, Tyrone and Derry City, and on life support in County Derry.

According to Eamon Phoenix:

"...the convention of June 1916 was a watershed in the history of northern nationalist politics. As a result of its decision, and the exclusion proposals, the nationalist organisation began to disintegrate. The accompanying weakening of support amongst the local branches of the A.O.H. and the clergy, as seen in the by-elections of 1918, also made way for the displacement of the party by Sinn Féin" (ibid. page 43).

Then on 22nd. July Lloyd George told Redmond that the exclusion of the Six Counties would in fact be permanent and that Irish representation at Westminster would be greatly reduced. Redmond pledged to fight the Bill all the way down the line. Southern Unionist opposition to being marooned in a Southern sea of Home Rule scuppered Lloyd George's exclusion plans later that month but they resurfaced as the Fourth Home Rule Bill which became the Government of Ireland Act of 1920.

On 13th. February 1920 Devlin, who was considering attending Westminster for the second reading of the Government of Ireland Bill, wrote to his oldest and most important ally, Bishop O'Donnell of Raphoe (in 1904 O'Donnell had the ban on the Hibernians as a "secret society" removed, just in time for Devlin's take over of the organisation at its national convention in Dublin in July 1905):

"This will mean the worst form of partition and, of course, permanent partition. Once they have their own parliament with all the machinery of government and administration, I am afraid that anything like subsequent union will be impossible. I propose, if an opportunity is offered, to attack the Bill, and to do so from an Ulster point of view, giving reasons why we Catholics and Nationalists could not, under any circumstances, consent to be placed under

the domination of a parliament so skilfully established as to make it impossible for us to be ever other than a permanent minority, with all the sufferings and tyranny of the present day continued, only in a worse form" (quoted Phoenix, *ibid.* page 76).

So at the end of March Devlin went to Westminster and spoke against the Bill as a partitionist measure. Bonar Law taunted him with having agreed to the permanent exclusion of the six northern counties back in 1916. Devlin felt impelled to explain himself again to his ally O'Donnell, writing to him on 2nd. April 1920:

"It was impressed upon me during the controversy about partition, and indeed it strongly influenced my action (four) years ago, that in the absence of any agreement about the six counties, a parliament would be set up in Ulster, and I considered that it would be the greatest and last of all calamities... You will, therefore, understand, that in consenting at the time (1916) to the proposals... I thought they would avert the setting-up of an Ulster parliament, and, at the same time, create a condition of things that would force Ulster to take the initiative in bringing about ultimate unity. Indeed, Sir Edward Carson has stated repeatedly in the smoking room of the House of Commons that, if these proposals had been agreed to, Ireland would now be united. At all events, by agreeing to them at the time, setting up a parliament for the twenty-six counties, keeping Ulster under the control of the Imperial Parliament, with 100 Irish member, 85 of whom would have been Nationalists, still having the same power over governmental and administrative matters for Ulster as formerly, and recognising that the whole scheme would have been unworkable, my visualisation is that they would have been glad to come to the parliament of the twenty-six counties to plead for union. On the other hand, if once a parliament were established in Ulster, with all its governmental and administrative machinery, and all the vested interests that were bound to be created in consequence of its establishment, it would mean a permanent arrangement. For that reason, I believed that what could be done ought to have been done at the time to prevent such a parliament being brought into existence" (quoted Phoenix, *ibid.* page 82).

All of which I think shows that even at the end of their tether, at the highest conceivable point of their willingness to compromise with the English, Redmond and Devlin could not bring themselves to agree to and advocate what became the Government of Ireland Act, 1920. Standing on their own ground they are a standing reproach to those revisionists who would have them a willing party to the dismemberment of their every principle and policy. Only over their dead bodies I think.

Joe Keenan

## Spies and Lies—Cui Bono?

Julianne Herlihy takes issue with Manus O'Riordan's views on Ambassador Dulanty

"Treachery is a problem we will have to live with for a long time, and the nearest we can come to a solution is to recognize the problem for what it is. The man tempted to become a traitor will be helped if public opinion keeps it clear before him that treachery is a sordid and undignified form of crime. .... we should abandon all sentimentality in our views of the traitor, and recognize him as a thief and a liar. He may be other things; a criminal is very rarely simply a criminal. But to a marked degree the traitor is also a thief and a liar."

(*The Meaning Of Treason* by Rebecca West. The Reprint Society, London, 1952.)

When Eamon de Valera became President in March, 1932, there were underground rumblings about a *putsch*. Many people now see those manoeuvrings then as somehow treacherous. Though the wild talk had some strong people behind it, especially in the business community—it eventually died down due in no small part to the fact that the hierarchy of the Irish Catholic Church warned against it and Mr. Cosgrave in the end "*refused to have anything to do with it*". The post of Minister of Defence was given to Frank Aitken who had been Republican Chief of Staff during the final stages of the Civil War. So tensions were inevitable—especially as the Army officers had been on the other side: "*de Valera had made it clear on coming into office that he had no intention whatever of adopting a "spoils system"* and even if in the Civil Service and the Army there were men in key positions who were his personal enemies, no official action would be taken against them so long as "*they served the State loyally*". This was to be the pivotal trade off. "*He believed, with Edmund Burke*", that "*magnanimity in politics is not seldom the truest wisdom*". So the civil servants and the Army officers retained their posts and the governmental machine began to function smoothly. Frank Aiken became an immensely popular Minister for Defence and all danger of a military coup disappeared. From now onwards **the Army was to be the Army of the State, not of a Party**" (*Eamon de Valera* by M.J. MacManus. Talbot Press, Dublin, 1944). Mr. MacManus was the Literary Editor of the *Irish Press* and a great friend of de Valera, and his biography of the latter is a very fine study of his subject.

Politics is never black and white but this period is especially difficult. Ireland was operating under *The Constitution Of The Irish Free State Act, 1922*. Dev quickly let the British know that the Oath of Allegiance was to be abolished. So he sent a note to Mr. J.W. Dulanty, the Irish High Commissioner in London, informing him of that fact, which he was to deliver to Mr. J.H. Thomas, the British Dominions Secretary who immediately accused Dev of breaking the Treaty in the House of Commons. Mr. Thomas had been "*an*

*efficient General Secretary of the National Union of Railwaymen in his time but he was sadly miscast on the diplomatic stage*" (MacManus, p288). The next question was one of "*the Land Annuities which the British Government were informed were to be withheld from them and banked in the Irish treasury*". The Labour Government of Ramsey MacDonald was worried and sent Mr. J.H. Thomas, the British Dominions Secretary, and Lord Hailsham to Dublin to have talks with the De Valera Government. These failed as had been expected. The Tories were now buying for blood and the Government said tariffs were to be imposed on imports from Ireland. Dev's reply was to ask for mediation in the International Court in The Hague but the British refused. They sought for arbitration within the British Commonwealth but Dev knew from the Boundary Commission that everything was stacked against him there and so wouldn't hear of it. But, whatever about the British jingoistic reaction, there was raw politics at play for Mr. Cosgrave's denouncement of the Irish policy, and he called Dev's actions a "*reckless folly*" and he also called on the farmers to likewise follow him. Behind the back of the Government Cosgrave also sent his own representative to London, John Mac Loughlin, Leader of the Senate, to tell the London Government to hold firm against Dev and thus assure his own return to power where these issues would be dealt with **to the British interests**. Two days later, Cosgrave and his colleague in this intrigue, the former head of the Ministry of Finance, Patrick McGilligan, sent Donal O'Sullivan, clerk of the Senate, again to urge the British to stand firm and oppose Dev's policy.

Into all this drama came Churchill who had returned from his tour of the United States, thundering at Plymouth: "*We stand absolutely on the Treaty. If Mr. de Valera and his Government will repudiate the Treaty they repudiate the title deeds of the Irish Free State, which becomes an anomalous body without a status at all, either in or out of the empire.*" The issue that most concerned the British at this time was actually the Oath which if passed might see Ireland weaning itself away

from the Commonwealth—"an appalling vista" to quote Lord Denning in different circumstances but still to do with Ireland. Frank Pakenham, "*ascion of a great Anglo-Irish family and a youthful member of the Conservative Research Department over which Chamberlain presided*", who had met and interviewed Dev now advised the British not to act as advised by Cosgrave and the others, as it could just throw Ireland into the IRA and a depression "which might even lead to a revolution. In that event Bolshevism was more likely than surrender".

With these fast moving events, Dulanty didn't know whether he was coming or going. He was trying to assess a situation which even the chief participants didn't know or fully understand. But he held the line attempting to read Dev and give advice which didn't precipitate any rash moves. For this alone, this diplomat for Ireland had shown his mettle and had impressed Eamon de Valera and even the cabinet. (Read in particular *British Policy Towards Ireland 1921-1941* by Paul Canning. Oxford University Press, 1985.)

In his book *De Valera The Man & The Myths*, T. Ryle Dwyer (Poolbeg Press, 1991, reprinted in 1995) openly stated that "*Cumann na nGaedheal actively resorted to underhanding and indeed, treacherous, if not treasonous methods*" to hamper Dev's bargaining position. But when Dev himself went to London,

"he was accompanied by O'Kelly and the secretaries of his two departments, Sean Moynihan and Joseph P. Walshe as well as John Dulanty, the Irish High Commissioner in Britain".

"They met with the Prime Minister Ramsey MacDonald, with Thomas, Hailsham and two other senior cabinet colleagues—Stanley Baldwin, the Conservative Leader and Herbert Samuel, the Home Secretary."

The meeting didn't go well but it was here for the first time that Dev—while thinking he was negotiating on the 1926 Agreement, the so called Ultimate Financial Settlements—heard about the secret Agreement signed by Cosgrave in 1923.

When Dev came back, he ordered a search for the 1923 document and as the President told the Dail, the Irish copy was in very poor condition. "*It is literally falling in tatters, half-pages, parts of pages not typed, interlineations and so on. Honestly, I never saw a contract of any kind presented in such a form. There is not even an Irish signature on it*" (Cosgrave had signed the British copy; p166 Ryle Dwyer). But the British held a copy of the Agreement signed by Cosgrave and said it was legally binding on the Irish Government. But they reckoned without Dev's formidable close analysis of any type of contract. He told the Dail about the Agreement but, since it was not even ever disclosed to them—not to mind ratified

by them, he was very sure of his ground. In any event the 1926 Agreement doing away with the Boundary Commission had *legally absolved* the Irish Government from having to pay a proportion of the British Public Debt and the Irish Land Annuities accruing from the Land Acts, 1891-1909 by specifically "*releasing the Dublin government from any obligation to service the British public debt*" (Dwyer p167). Now Dev was clear that the position he had taken up was sound "*both in law and justice*".

Neville Chamberlain, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, privately admitted that the Dublin Government had a legal case. However the British badly needed the money, unemployment was soaring, and the National Government of Great Britain were determined to get the monies off Ireland by piling on the pressure. However they had to be careful as South Africa and Canada were warning them not to give "*moral ground*" to de Valera. The Wall Street Crash and the USA depression were by 1929 and 1930 having an effect on Britain and by 1932 there was a full-blown depression in Britain. Ireland was Britain's second best customer, after India, and Britain was Ireland's best customer. So a proposal was made by the British to impose tariffs on Irish produce so as to recover for the Exchequer in London the amounts lost by withholding the Land Annuities. But the British kept putting off a firm decision. Various forms of reprisal against the Free State were considered and not proceeded with. Chamberlain sought advice from his Treasury official, S.D. Waley who wrote him:

"We could not well refuse *arbitration*, but the terms of reference will need to be carefully framed so as to take into account the intentions of the government and the inequities of the case. On the purely legal issue de Valera *might* beat us, if he contends that: (i) the Government of Ireland Act 1920 *did* come into force as regards Southern Ireland to the extent of giving away the Land Annuities; (ii) the release of the Free State from the liability to contribute to the British 'Public Debt' must imply a waiver of the Land Annuities; (iii) the 1926 Agreement could not of itself impose a *new* obligation to pay the Annuities, not having been confirmed by the Free State Parliament...t".

Now the British were in a quandary, but even more perilous legal advice came to them from Chamberlain who was relying on his Treasury advisers. In another memorandum to his colleagues, he pointed out that "*from a purely legal and technical point of view*" an arbitrator might hold that de Valera was right, and that it would seem "*most undesirable*" to expose themselves to such a decision when they were clearly in the right. "*The Foreign Office shares these misgivings about the legal validity of the Irish Treaty*" (Canning

p127). But it still was the abolition of the Oath itself that ignited the most passions in the usual quarters, especially in the Press, and amongst the Churchillian politicians who really hated de Valera and his party. In March, 1932, J.W. Dulanty, acting on Dev's request channelled by J.P. Walshe, informed the British Dominions Secretary, James Henry Thomas "*that the oath was not mandatory in the Treaty, that it was a relic of medievalism and that its removal was purely a domestic matter*" (*The Restless Dominion: The Irish Free State And The British Commonwealth of Nations 1921-31* by D.W. Harkness. Gill and Macmillan, London, 1969).<sup>1</sup>

In a series of quotations, one can easily piece together the bruised egos of the Imperialists.

In her memoirs, Lady Londonderry had this to say about the Irish: "***Democracy as the British know it is not for Southern Ireland. They are a different race. They want firm, wise but powerful control, to prevent them from trying to eat each other up***".

Carson to Linton-Oman (founder, British Union of Fascists.) 1st February 1933: "***I hope it may not be necessary to renew the old fight but of course it entirely depends on the strength or weakness of H.M. Government, which is always an unknown quantity, especially in relation to Ireland.***"

Robert Cecil to Edward Wood, 7th January 1927: "***Indeed, I don't think Winston takes any interest in public affairs unless they involve the possibility of bloodshed.***"

Baldwin to Crozier, 12th June 1934: "***There are three people, you know, who are impossible to deal with—de Valera, Ghandi and Beaverbrook.***" (All from Canning's book).

There were two men who were pivotal to Dev's success at negotiating with the British. One was Mr. J.W. Dulanty, the High Commissioner in London and the other was Mr. Joseph P. Walshe, Secretary to the Department of External Affairs where Dev was also the Minister. Both

<sup>1</sup> During The Imperial Conference 1930, the Prime Minister of Canada, R. B. Bennett, Conservative Administration, a fierce imperialist lashed Thomas who was known from then on as 'Jimmy Umbug' in Canada and one Canadian senator wrote to the former with this insight: "*your method of dealing with the Irish Spaniard was a stroke of genius. But its political skill would not be apparent to stupid Anglo-Saxons like Jimmy Umbug who were trained in the methods of Bill Sykes...*" Bennett had invited de Valera to the Ottawa Conference not knowing of course that he would be President by then. But Thomas got on great with Sean Lemass because they both were inveterate gamblers and an inability to pronounce the h didn't hinder a good working relationship.



had been very close to the previous Party in power and such sympathies were suspect to a number of Fianna Fail people. After all, they owed their positions and careers to the Treaty settlement. but Dev dealt with them honestly, and they respected that even if they found the new Anglo-Irish policy initially "*painful, they bore it with resignation*". In December's issue of the *Irish Political Review*, there is an article by Manus O'Riordan titled *John Dulanty—High Commissioner for Whom? Some Realities of Betjeman, Bowen and Anglo-Irish Relations*. In the article, there is a reference to the fact that had de Valera been aware of certain contents in British State papers, he would have Dulanty "*arrested, charged with high treason and firmly placed behind bars in the interests of national security*". This *passionate assertion* appalled me and is—as far as I can ascertain—totally false.

O'Riordan seems to source this in Brian Girvin's book *The Emergency Neutral Ireland 1939-45* (Macmillan, London, 2006). I have thoroughly read this book and am at a loss as to how anyone could thus *interpret* his findings. Diplomacy is not an exact science nor indeed is espionage. Everyone plays the cards that are dealt them—some with more considerable skill than others. Misfortune can be parlayed into opportunity but time is of the essence. In war everything is heightened as Bowen herself would later write and impressions can change within the hour. If a skilful politician or diplomat can *seem* to manoeuvre from one position to another without creating or exciting the wrong reaction—then this is to be applauded. As Joe Lee noted about these events in his outstanding history *Ireland 1912-1985 Politics and Society* (Cambridge University Press, 1989, p250).

**"The British approach was vague, chimerical, histrionic—very Irish! The Irish response was cold, clinical, calculating—very English!"**

I found that stereotypical analysis almost racist—but then Joe had been Nicholas Mansergh's pupil in Cambridge and some of the latter's lack of *diplomatic finesse* had obviously rubbed off. And Lee, the former Irish civil servant, himself acknowledged that the profoundly difficult situation in Anglo-Irish diplomatic affairs of that time was handled well by Dulanty and indeed Maffey, the British representative to Ireland.

So who was J.W. Dulanty, the Irish High Commissioner in London? He never lived in Ireland but

"he was born in Manchester of Irish parents. He studied at the Manchester School of Commerce and also studied law at Manchester University, later entering the Middle Temple of the London law courts. In 1908 he worked as a secretary to the Faculty of Technology at

Manchester University and he was also appointed educational adviser to Indian students studying at English northern universities. He also wrote for G.K.'s *Weekly* and was on the staff of the *Clarion* under Robert Blatchford's editorship. He numbered Shaw and Joyce among his friends and was later guardian to Joyce's grandson. Dulanty had become involved in Irish politics and John Redmond had appointed him director of the United Irish League of Great Britain."

As far back as 1908 when Churchill tried to get elected in the North-West Manchester seat, Dulanty threw all the UIL might behind him but he lost. That is how his friendship began with Winston Churchill.<sup>2</sup>

"In 1917, Churchill asked Dulanty to serve under him at the Ministry of Munitions. In 1918, Dulanty was awarded a CBE and a CB in 1920 by which time he had become an assistant secretary at the Treasury and was even offered a more prestigious post to do with Ireland but he refused and resigned as he didn't agree with British Policy.

"He then went into business at a high level becoming Managing Director of Peter Jones Ltd. (the London department store) and in 1926 he was appointed Irish Trade Commissioner in London. He became High Commissioner in 1930, a post he held for the extraordinary span of twenty years. In 1950, he became Ireland's first Ambassador to the Court of St. James. After his retirement, he returned to business and took up Directorships at McBirney's in Dublin and the National Bank." (I was very lucky to be referred to a book *Republicans & Imperialists: Anglo-Irish Relations In The 1930s* by Deirdre McMahon, Yale University Press, 1984. Ms. McMahon committed herself to a **full investigation of all the sources** and thus was well able to make her assessment of Mr. Dulanty.)

De Valera and Dulanty had many meetings in Dublin and according to McMahon, the former "*would regale de Valera with all the latest political gossip: who was rising, who was falling etc. de Valera thoroughly enjoyed it. Dulanty quickly gained de Valera's confidence and the length of his appointment testifies to the relationship established between the two men*" (McMahon p25). So to suggest that Dev had the wool pulled over his

<sup>2</sup> In *King's Counsellor: Abdication And War: The Diaries Of Sir Alan Lascelles*, Ed. By Duff Hart-Davis. Phoenix Paperback, London, 2007, there is a delicious account of the worries of London about the Duke of Windsor who had proposed to travel to Castle Leslie for some *vague political purposes*. Shane Leslie of Castle Leslie was a first cousin of Churchill and the wind was up and John Maffey was ordered back to Dublin and report on any sightings of the foolish Duke, but they unfortunately never materialised. The Duke was strictly monitored by able men like Walter Monkton and others.

eyes, during some of the most important negotiations of his career is beyond belief. And indeed, guided by Dev, and ably served by civil servants like Dulanty and Walshe, and the Government, the *very nature of the relationship* between Ireland and Britain was constitutionally changed forever. Thus the rather hysterical charge by O'Riordan (IPR December 2007, and repeated in January's edition of IPR) that Dulanty was guilty of "**high treason**" and **various definitions thereof** left me absolutely stunned. Under the Constitution of the Irish Free State, our allegiance was as a Dominion "*declared to be vested in the King*" (Article 51); it was the swearing of the Oath that Dev declared to be invalid and eventually he succeeded in getting rid of it (Article 17). But even in the 1937 Constitution, Article 39, it was and is held that "*Treason shall consist only in levying war against the State...*" This liberal attitude towards what consists of treason is vastly different from Britain. Rebecca West in 'The Meaning of Treason' a book with *such a very English mien* had no hesitation about the treason of Sir Roger Casement or William Joyce, both which she accepted had an Irish dimension. She wrote about trying to decipher the *accent* of Joyce which "*was difficult to identify*". But there was little doubt about it when one saw him in the dock. "*He had the real Donnybrook air. He was a not very fortunate example of the small, nippy, jig-dancing type of Irish peasant...*" (p6) And just in case, Britain also passed *The 1940 Treachery Act* so that every case they wished was covered. During the twentieth century "*traitors*" "*who actually did harm to British interests were tried under Official Secrets or emergency powers legislation*" or under the above Act—"*these were aimed at spies and enemy agents: high treason was reserved for those who had taken a political stand against the state during wartime*", "*however futile and, indeed laughable their efforts might be.*" *The response by the state had to be draconian and seen to be draconian or as Adrian Weale puts it "brutal and merciless"* (Patriot Traitors: Roger Casement, John Amery And The Real Meaning of Treason, Adrian Weale, Viking, London, 2001).

De Valera also met with Dulanty in his suite at the Grosvenor House Hotel, Park Lane when he was passing through London en route to Dublin from continental Europe, most usually when he was seeing an eye surgeon in Zurich. In Volume V of *Documents On Irish Foreign Policy, 1937-39*, (published by Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, 2006) the Editors published a series of documents that had been found in the autumn of 2005 in the basement of the Embassy of Ireland at Grosvenor Place in London.

"The Irish High Commissioner in London, John Dulanty, remained the

central figure after de Valera in all aspects of British-Irish relations. Twenty one documents printed below, mainly confidential reports on British-Irish relations written by Dulanty, come from "the files found." "An almost complete set of confidential reports covering Dulanty's years as High Commissioner (1930-'49) make up a sizeable portion of this collection. Until their discovery few of Dulanty's pre-1941 confidential reports had been located. It was assumed that they had been destroyed as part of a haphazard destruction of material in the Department of External Affairs on 25th May 1940 that was undertaken to remove sensitive documents in anticipation of an imminent German invasion of Ireland." (p.xiv) (I have read these reports and they are riveting but they disprove O'Riordan's thesis even more and they deserve wider analysis than I can give in this article).

The revisionist historians who have consistently stated that they wanted to break the narrative of Irish history have accomplished their aim to a great degree. So when large chunks are taken out of context, they then lose all meaning. Then when somebody's reputation is attacked it is difficult to understand unless one goes right back to the beginning. It is a laborious task but it is very necessary. The onslaughts on Dev have become a national sport—his own grandson Dr. Eamon de Valera lamented the latest so-called biography on him but still the attacks go on. In the *London Review of Books*, 29th November 2007, Vol, 29, No. 23, there is a review of a book written by Sir Ian Kershaw (the Hitler biographer) by R. W. Johnson in which the latter asserts that among the "Fascist dictators" that Hitler had to deal with "Mussolini, Petain, Franco, Metaxas and Salazar (and perhaps one should add de Valera)" and these leaders wanted to "join forces with the Third Reich and at what price". Now, R.W. Johnson was for twenty years a Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford and has been since 1995, a Director of the Helen Suzman Foundation in Johannesburg but whither such bilge? In the next issue of the *London Review of Books*, there was a letter of complaint from Dr. Donal O'Drisceol, Cork who lamented this drivel but he couldn't resist administering a kick to Dev too, such is the pavlovian reaction to him now.

In the next issue of the IPR, I will deal with Manus O'Riordan's claims about Bowen, Betjeman (allegedly "turned" no less, by the Irish into a double agent) and Nicholas Mansergh outed as being some kind of deep-throat double agent at the heart of the British administration! Manus did admit that this later claim was a "slim possibility" but *really!*

**Julianne Herlihy**

NOTE: The research for these two articles are for a forthcoming book on Bowen and are copyrighted.

## Part 2 of Review of Roy Johnston's Memoirs

### Fianna Fáil—'mafia-like'?

In a paper *On the Problems of Democratic Unity* to a (temporarily resurrected) Wolfe Tone Society (WTS) Roy Johnston (RJ) worried at Fianna Fáil's "mafia-like control of the working-class". The fact that FF behaved like a Labour Party may have had something to do with the matter. Fianna Fáil introduced reforms in the working class interest, and the working class voted for the party to encourage it to introduce more such reforms. The matter may not be as crudely simple as the above but it isn't 'rocket science'. There may have been a "convergence of progressive elements" in the parties of the Left, but FF had been a mass political party for more than half a century at this point. The paper was published in *The Ripening of Time*, Issue 9, March 1978. Dr. Johnston feels it may have made a bigger impact if it had been published somewhere other than the journal of an "ultra-left splinter group" (p334).

The reason for the reconvening of the WTS was to issue a statement agreeing with Jack Lynch's call for "national unity" (meaning uniting Ireland). This is really strange as Dr. Johnston takes practically any opportunity that arises to attack Fianna Fáil, and anyone contaminated through dealing with it. He identified in his (1978) paper, "the type of parasitic bourgeoisie which is currently (2002) being exposed in the Tribunals". One assumes that this is not a reference to members of the legal profession who have made fortunes in these Constitutionally-ambiguous variety shows, which have 'exposed' very little. The reporting of them, and even their own reports consist of innuendo and hearsay. Politicians (largely Fianna Fáil) have had their words, and private financial arrangements, 'taken down, twisted round, and used as evidence against' them. The Tribunals have created a situation where the democratic process has been made ancillary to a bogus 'judicial process'.

An obsession with FF's wicked ways runs all through the book, on page 82, Joseph Johnston ('Joe' or JJ—RJ's father) attacked De Valera's attempt to change the PR system of election to a first past the post one. "...[A] Government (meaning Fianna Fáil—SMcG) Senator adduced arguments suggesting that PR was at the root of the current state of European politics. JJ took strong exception to this...". He suggested that it had prevented single party government, and it appealed to "the minority". The thrust of RJ's argument is that PR has not prevented single party government. JJ's response suggests that he did not take FF's Republicanism seriously. Fianna Fáil may well have had its collective tongue in its

cheek, but it officially looked forward to an Ireland of citizens. And not of self-conscious minorities. It is interesting that the attempts to get rid of PR are treated as plot to strengthen FF's position.

Presumably the most able political formation in the State did not set out to weaken itself. But the notion that a First Past The Post system would also consolidate a major party of opposition does not appear to present itself to RJ's mind (or that of any other any oppositionist), which speaks volumes about the quality of Irish politics. The major oppositionist party would probably have been the conservative Fine Gael, with FF as the radical party. But it is not written on stone that the Labour Party that would not have won out. Though it is probable that FF would still have been the radical party in the State.

There is a curious aside (p91) about a row between JJ, Sir John Keane and Frank Aiken (something of a *bête noire* for JJ—and other opposition politicians). RJ refers to an *Irish Times* poster reading *Senator Johnston on Irish Re-union*. He seems to be implying that Aiken censored a speech by his father. But there is no record of such a speech in JJ's papers. Despite that RJ writes ominously: *There is unfinished business here*. It could be the relatively trivial business of a speech not delivered, or a misunderstanding on the part of the *Irish Times*. (There is also the question of posters in war time 'Éire'. Was there enough paper to go round for the papers to have the luxury of posters? RJ surmises that these incidents occurred in 1944.)

Aiken is the villain of the piece (p94), in accusing Senator James Douglas of being 'pro-Blueshirt', RJ's italicised intervention reads (in part): "*The 'Blueshirt' jibe from the Fianna Fail benches confirms the need for a revaluation of that movement. JJ had also been close to Dermot MacManus: part of the Blueshirt intellectual support system.*" The Blueshirts have to be re-evaluated simply because the term was used by a FF Minister in mid-1945! This implies that the Government had no democratic validity. But FF had a habit of winning elections. The Opposition parties accused FF of calling elections to suit itself. But that is persiflage, the small change of any parliamentary system. Suggesting that Frank Aiken was particularly evil for throwing the jibe across the floor is absurd. There is also the small fact that—like almost half the electorate at one point—James Douglas might well have been 'pro-Blueshirt'. Apart from Maurice Manning's rather shifty study of the phenomenon,

Aubane Historical Society has engaged in reassessing the Blueshirts, over the last fifteen years since the publication of Ned Buckley's poems.

In regard to the 1945 Land Bill, RJ comments: *"It is worth remarking that this allocation of land individually to landless people in rural areas was the way in which Fianna Fail in the 1930s purchased votes using public money, generating the pathological political culture in which subsequent corruption has flourished."* This has to do with the, reasonable, argument that big estates and farms ought to have been made into co-operatives, or worked as 'commercial farms'. It may have been better if FF had redistributed the land in the recommended way. It didn't and the results have to be lived and worked with. JJ and similarly inclined people could have used Fianna Fáil's *Irish Press* to agitate about co-operatives.

As to the suggestion of FF 'purchasing votes'. There is no indication of how this was done, or how FF policed these votes!. Labour Party agitators in Scotland were wont (when the place was a Tory stronghold), to imply that tweedy types sat outside isolated polling stations in the Highlands counting the people who turned up to vote and assessing who had not voted the 'right way'. 'Kangaroo courts' were hinted-at, and tenants *were* chucked out of their houses and jobs in revenge. Did anything of that sort happen in Ireland in the 1930s and '40s? It certainly did not.

Dr. Johnston appears not recognise a class distinction in the followings of FF and FG. The Blueshirts consisted, among others, of big farmers hurt by the 'Economic War'. There were also small landholders, and people who were genuinely afraid that the 'Civil War' might be avenged, or even recommenced. Most small landholders supported FF, a preference their children might have brought into the burgeoning towns with them. But, as noted above, FF made laws which were of use to working class people. Dr. Johnston's seems to think that FF not being Socialist makes such behaviour invalid.

RJ (p104) quotes JJ on Irish industrial development by the end of the War. He (JJ) seems to regret that this was based on the profits made by farmers in the course of WW1. But where else could the capital be got other than from banks which are based on profit? (I am assuming, possibly wrongly, that he was complaining about the farmers' tax burden.) He described (in a debate on the Industrial Alcohol (Amendment) Bill 1946) on 15th January 1947, that some Irish industries were 'well founded'. He named the cement and the electricity industries, one was heavily protected, and the other was in State hands

Letter by *Philip O'Connor* from the January-February issue of *History Ireland*

## Bias About The Great War

As a subscriber and regular reader of *History Ireland* I was very perturbed by the article *Brotherhood among Irishmen? The Battle of Wijtschate-Messines Ridge, June 1917* by Tom Burke MBE, chairman of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association, which appeared in the September/October issue of *History Ireland*, and particularly by the loose editorial standards applied to the printing of it.

I must take exception to the description by HI of the battle in its editorial lead-in, as "when loyal Ulstermen and Irish nationalists fought side by side for the last time against a common enemy". Since when was Germany an "enemy" of nationalist Ireland? What had Germany ever done to Ireland to become its "enemy"? My understanding of German relations with nationalist Ireland prior to Britain declaring war on it in 1914 was overwhelmingly positive and friendly. It was German scholars who re-discovered and codified the grammatical basis of the Gaelic language. Also, nationalist labour leaders Connolly and Larkin considered Germany socially far in advance of Britain and as the progressive power involved in that war. And didn't the 1916 Proclamation refer positively to Germany as our "gallant allies in Europe"?

Mr Burke extols the feats of arms of the southern and Ulster divisions in jointly fighting the "common enemy" in that appalling imperialist bloodbath. His ecstatic writings on this common "sacrifice" has led to a well-earned MBE, but what of his statement that "Willie Redmond dreamed of building a new Ireland, a nation at peace with itself and its neighbours"? This is historically simply untrue. Redmond was wedded to the idea of Ireland as a partner in Britain's world empire and benefiting from that arrangement, as well as helping to administer it. The only neighbour with whom he wanted Ireland to live in peace was Britain. With all others he would have Ireland at war where the exigencies of empire demanded. His vision for Ireland was one of West Britain.

I have no problem commemorating the Irishmen who died in the slaughter of the First World War (several relatives of my own were involved). But commemoration is the key word here, and where this becomes a eulogising of the "cause" for which they fought—the British Empire—then a line has been crossed where "commemoration" is no longer the issue. In talking of "common cause" and the "common enemy" Tom Burke crosses that line and becomes a partisan in a very bloody enterprise indeed.

Finally I would like to take issue with the editorial policy in relation to the publishing of photographs accompanying the article. Am I the only one who finds them deeply offensive? These propaganda photographs of Irish soldiers celebrating victory by playacting in the stolen uniform parts of dead or captured German soldiers are included without any editorial comment. I can only imagine the objections that would ensue had the photos been of German soldiers celebrating a victory in a similar manner and had they been reprinted free of editorial comment putting them in historical perspective for what they are.

from start. (There is no mention of the immediate post-war hydroelectric scheme on the river Erne involving partnership with 'Stormont'.) The industries which were not 'well founded' are not named, the sugar industry was pretty successful.

JJ was opposed to the building of a fertiliser factory on the grounds that its product would be "more expensive than imported..." material. This was relatively shortly after a World War in which both sides (racist fascism and racist liberal capitalism) had invaded and bullied small (and not so small) states at will. The attitude of some Fianna Fáil Ministers dealing with JJ may have been rather too brusque, but they must occasionally have thought he was from a different planet.

In discussing these matters I am making the—possibly false—assumption that RJ generally agrees with what JJ has said and written, unless he indicates that he does

not. In December 1947 JJ made the following intervention in the Senate: *"During the past fifteen years the Minister's Party has by no means been in the political wilderness—on the contrary it has enjoyed the fruits of office—but perhaps during much of that time it was in a sort of moral wilderness, living on the husks of exploded political, economic and ideological fantasies. ..."* There is more of this truly obscure stuff, which RJ writes is "worth quoting in full". It seemed to be about FF being about to lose an election. RJ writes that JJ "complimented the Government on taking part in world conferences and generally acting the good neighbour in regard to European recovery".

The implication being that the FF Government had not done such things since 1932. But 'De Valera's Ireland' had a distinct foreign policy, based on the use of the League of Nations (rather than the

British Commonwealth, alias 'Empire'). Despite the realisation that the League had proved useless as a means of keeping the peace of the world, and helping small nations, the person who kept the organisation in being during the War was the Ulster, Protestant, Sinn Féiner, Seán Lester. The League was able to morph into the 'United Nations' organisation because of his efforts. This sort of thing rather knocks the notion that Ireland was 'insular' (which seems to be the import of what JJ said) on the head. Ireland opened out to the world in other ways, not least by setting up a national airline. There is no doubt that Great Britain was Éire's most important trading partner, but JJ appears to have been of the opinion that it should remain the only one.

There is a slightly strange 'dig' at FF in relation to Dev's brainchild the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies (DIAS), where RJ worked in the mid-1950s. Despite Dev, RJ claims that the future of the Institute was in doubt. The Minister of Education, Jack Lynch, visited the facility and made a game attempt to understand what was going on. (It had to do with high-energy particle physics.) RJ writes that Lynch appeared to defer to his Israeli colleague Gideon Alexander, as the "*foreign expert*". This clearly still rankles with him.

It is difficult not to have a certain amount of sympathy with RJ in this matter. He was irritated about his part in the process, and the work of the DIAS, a world leader in aspects of science, being (apparently) downgraded. He makes the incident the source of a generalised condemnation of 'the Establishment'. "*Slave minded deference to Church and foreign expert went hand in hand.*" (The reference to the Church has to do with the row over John McGahern's sacking from his job as a National School teacher, as a result his first published novel.) The State, as ever, in those days did what the Church wanted. It is moot whether or not Jack Lynch deserves this abuse. He was hardly the first Government Minister to truckle to the Church. Ten years earlier Seán Mac Bride had repudiated a Ministerial colleague (Noel Browne) for attempting to do something (which FF did when it won the next election). This was his Mother and Child Scheme a modest piece of welfare legislation.

One can't help feeling that RJ was not in a position to criticise Lynch, or anybody else, for deferring to 'foreign experts', given his own deference to CDG (C. Desmond Greaves) who ran the British Communist Party's Irish front organisation, the Connolly Association. English people are not as 'foreign' in Ireland as Israelis, but CDG represented Soviet Communism, which was regarded as

exotically unpleasant. CDG seems to have had a proprietorial attitude to the Left in Ireland. But he seems not to have had an 'instinct' for what was going on in Irish society, particularly in the 1960s. (He may have deliberately misinterpreted Connolly, but, so far as he was concerned Connolly could only be a proto-Leninist.) What frightened the Unionist Establishment in Northern Ireland in the 1960s was that the Croppies were becoming Brits. They were joining Brit Trade Unions in droves, and were fascinated by 'proper' Westminster politics.

RJ writes (ps 231/232) "*...when NICRA [the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association] demands began to be realised... there was not in existence a broad-based non-violent democratic movement, with an all-Ireland structure to take advantage of it. Fianna Fail irredentism took over, with a strong Catholic-nationalist flavour, and the basis for the armed B-Specials pogroms of August 1969 and the subsequent emergence of the Provisionals, was laid.*" This is an extremely confusing assertion. RJ mentions 'proto-Provisionals' on a number of occasions, people like Jimmy Steele and Proinias MacAirt. They were really questioning, not so much the demilitarisation of the IRA, as the high-handed way it was being done. RJ admits that Cathal Goulding was using military authority to push through the politicisation of the movement—and not discussion in democratised structures. It is difficult to know what RJ expected from Civil Rights agitation: he writes that he had a different concept of how to treat the North than CDG or Anthony Coughlan. The addition of Catholics in Belfast and Derry and to an extent Newry to Brit politics was rather hard to break. If the Labour Party had extended its organisation to Northern Ireland in 1969 the Provisional IRA would probably have been stillborn. The Unionists are the authors of their own misfortune in that department, they drove the Brit Catholics back into the Taig corral.

It is dubious to claim the FF was 'irredentist', or any more so than the other parties in the Republic: Fine Gael, after all, is the United Ireland party. RJ appears not to believe that there is any validity whatsoever in the 'Northern Ireland' entity, which may be a reason why he objected to the 'Civil Rights' strategy—it might have consolidated the place. He also appears to be implying that the B-Specials had to be provoked into acting against the Taigs. But that was their reason for being from the very early 1920s. 'Stormont' is not blamed for mobilising the force in August 1969. Very few people could have been under the impression that such an action would not have dire consequences.

The UVF, whether of the 1912 or 1966

mobilisation, is not mentioned in this text. Neither is the fact that the UDA was in place in embryo in the Shankill and Woodvale 'Defence Associations' by early 1969. The Peoples' Democracy and the "*IRB military conspiratorial tradition*" in the Republican Movement bear all of the responsibility for the balloon going up in August. The fact that Ardoyne was under siege from Spring 1969 is not noted.

In an italicised intervention (p262) RJ ruminates on who planned the pogrom. He gets very close to blaming Ruairí Ó Bradaigh who seems to have been retailing Belfast street intelligence (conceivably about the violence in and about Ardoyne). The pogrom probably was not planned, in the sense that there was a central 'command' who or which gave orders. There were far too many groups involved: the Defence Associations, which appear to have been genuinely spontaneous formations, and the UVF, which according to Gusty Spence, was set up by a 'Stormont' Minister, and the 'B-Men'.

When Robert Porter, Minister of Home Affairs (in what looked very like a slightly sleazy police state), was asked at a press conference after the events of the 14 / 15 August 1969 how many Specials had been mobilised he claimed that the did not know. The assembled journalists just laughed at him. But it is probable that he genuinely did not know. The B-Specials (the Ulster Special Constabulary from 1968) were in essence a Protestant society. In country areas they probably had closer connections with the local Orange Lodge than with the professional police. Forcing the croppies to lie down was not a matter that required a great deal of thought organisation in the Wee Six.

RJ (p263) remarks that "*it should have been possible to break through to the British Government ... beginning to be aware of the RUC and B-Specials problem... to pre-empt the pogrom. Why did this not happen?*" The London Government knew all about the RUC and USC, but they (Labour and Tory) did not want to dirty their hands in 'Ulster'. They pretended that the place had constitutional rights, and that 'intervention' was a big step, which was nonsense. The troops who were 'sent' to Belfast, came all the way from Ballykinlar, County Down.

Fianna Fáil, and in particular Neil Blaney are blamed for the formation of the Provisional IRA, though the PIRA was a spontaneous growth, which had one gun in October 1969 when it split from the Dublin headquarters. RJ claims that by 1971 "*... Provisionals... seen... as totally destructive influence on the working class unity we had tried to nurture...*". This is as arrogant as the claims made by the PD (Peoples' Democracy) about their own 'revolutionary rôle' in destroying the

'Government' of 'Northern Ireland'. The actual Government of Northern Ireland resides in Westminster. Working class unity was the work of decades by the Trade Unions. It is probably the influence of the Unions that made the workplace, by and large, neutral ground. (There have been workplace killings—but the response has usually been strike action, public protests, or even more direct action. When a (Catholic) Council worker in Belfast was shot in the early 1990s, every other employee 'walked off the job'—but not before a handful of Inspectors with UDA 'connections' were told to get out of certain yards—and not come back). Admittedly, these were 'bottom up' actions, but they do demonstrate the depth of Union solidarity.

RJ puts the above situation in the context of a "Heath-Lynch collusion" to drag us into the EEC, with Ireland being England's perpetual patsy. This is described as bringing Ireland back into "the Empire"—whose empire is not specified. Can RJ and people like Derry Kelleher and Uinseann Mac Eoin have assumed that the UK would immediately take over the direction of the Community? Neither France nor Germany, nor Italy, or even the Benelux states were particularly fond of Brit arrogance. They had built the Community in spite of rather than because of the 'Anglo-Saxons'. It has taken the same 'Anglo-Saxons' decades to destroy the Community / Union. And now it does have Ireland as a perpetual patsy. The latter is largely the destructive work of the people RJ was allied with in the fight to keep Ireland out. Being part of the European Union (a misnomer now that Manchester Liberal policies are the order of the day) has done Ireland nothing but good. Haughey (not even mentioned in the Index) was sneered at simply because he was a European figure.

Practically the last mention of Fianna Fáil in this book has to do with an Open Letter to Jack Lynch, dated August 9 1971, here it is:

"1. The claim that civil rights for the Six Counties within the UK constitute the 'Achilles heel' of Unionism stands vindicated.

2. Crude nationalistic statements from 26-county political ends (?—SMcG) by spokesman close to the Government have helped identify undeservedly the civil rights movement with the partition question and to drive it into the ghettos, giving rise to the present danger of civil war in which the prime suffers would be the divided working people.

3. The onus is on Westminster to undo the damage done by the Carsonite rebellion. This is possible if it (a) abandons all claims to rule Ireland (b) announces a programmed disengagement (c) disarms the Orangemen and bans the Orange parades (d) imposes a

Bill of Rights on Stormont and concedes enough independence to Stormont to enable it to take its own EEC decision and to deal with Dublin as it wishes.

4. The onus is on Dublin to secularise the Constitution and to provide for an Irish federal regional structure.

5. Any talks between the reformed Stormont and Dublin to be entirely a matter for the Irish without interference by Westminster.

6. No internment, whether as part of a package deal or otherwise.

7. No political settlement involving re-drawing the border, movements of populations, 'Catholic areas' or any principle which questions the Irishness of Protestants."

If the above had been put into effect the civil war which had been raging for a good year at that point would have become many times worse. The working class were fighting that war, car bombs and 'civil rights' rather cancel each other out. The term "Carsonite rebellion" would irritate the least militant Unionist, and disarming "the Orangemen" is much more ambiguous than the people who drew up this wish-list, realised. It was almost certainly the Order which put a brake on 'Orange' violence at this period. Asking Westminster to impose a Bill of Rights on Stormont, then scupper, shows that the authors were not being serious. An independent Stormont would have had to raise its own finances—unless this is a forerunner of Provisional thinking of the early 1980s: 'Get out of Ireland—but leave the cheque book behind you...'. The first act of an independent Stormont would be to undo any restrictions on Orange parades, then re-form its own military force. As for dealing with Dublin, its preferred method would probably have been machine gun emplacements, and lots of razor wire.

The people of the 26 County State made it clear on a number of occasions that they would change their Constitution when they felt like it and a united Ireland had to come on their terms. (And the 26 County State—despite wishful thinking by some—is a democracy.) If Westminster were paying for the upkeep of the Wee Six it would have to be represented at any negotiations on Irish unity. Insisting on the 'Irishness of (Ulster, presumably) Protestants' is an odd demand. What if they question it? Or come to the conclusion that their 'Irishness' is different from their neighbours? Would there be a return to the status quo ante, a re-drawing of the border, or would they have take what they get and like it?

There is no indication that Jack Lynch read this 'Open Letter'.

Lynch appears (p 506) to be exonerated from any involvement in the 'Arms Crisis'. RJ writes that analysis of the role of the "Haughey / Blaney / Boland caucas" in

Fianna Fáil in "helping to arm the Provisionals" is needed. However, the whole Oireachtas was involved in arming the Catholics in the North in the winter of 1969 / '70. Any chicanery involved was **not** on the part of the three men mentioned. The Government and Opposition were intimidated by the British Ambassador and Diplomatic Corps (see *August 1969, Ireland's only appeal to the UN*, Angela Clifford). Describing them as a 'caucas' is a bit dubious. Boland founded his own party Aontacht Éireann, which was not successful. As Neil Blaney put it, "I didn't leave Fianna Fáil, Fianna Fáil left me", and he remained TD for his Donegal constituency for a quarter of a century after the 'Arms Trial'. Haughey went on to irritate the Irish Left by becoming Taoiseach and making Ireland prosperous.

**Seán McGouran**

(Part One appeared in *Irish Political Review*, October 2007)

TO BE CONTINUED

## Obama On Gaza

**Those who are tempted to sympathise with Obama's candidacy on racial grounds should take warning from the message below.**

Letter from Senator Barack Obama to Zalmay Khalilzad, Permanent US representative to the United Nations

"22 January 2008

"I understand that today the UN Security Council met regarding the situation in Gaza, and that a resolution or statement could be forthcoming from the Council in short order.

"I urge you to ensure that the Security Council issue no statement and pass no resolution on this matter that does not fully condemn the rocket assault Hamas has been conducting on civilians in southern Israel for over two years.

"All of us are concerned about the impact of closed border crossings on Palestinian families. However, we have to understand why Israel is forced to do this. Gaza is government by Hamas, which is a terrorist organization sworn to Israel's destruction, and Israeli civilians are being bombarded by rockets on an almost daily basis. That is unacceptable and Israel has a right to respond while seeking to minimize any impact on civilians.

"The Security Council should clearly and unequivocally condemn the rocket attacks against Israel, and should make it clear that Israel has the right to defend itself against such actions. If it cannot bring itself to make these common sense points, I urge you to ensure that it does not speak at all.

See [http://jewishstandard.net/content\\_images/ObamaLetterbig.jpg](http://jewishstandard.net/content_images/ObamaLetterbig.jpg)

## Scribbled Recollections

### *A HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN ON BOARD U19*

When Roger Casement left for Ireland on board a German submarine with two members of his Irish Brigade—Robert Monteith and Daniel Julian Bailey (also called Beverley)—they travelled on the submarine U20 under Captain Sweiger, the same craft which had sunk the *Lusitania* the previous year. **Pádraig O Cúanacháin** explained in his talk to the Foundation.

The U20 developed a problem with its rudder and had to return to port. They then set out aboard the U19. Before departure on U19 a photograph was taken of Monteith, Bailey (Beverley), Oberleutnant Otto Walter, a Roger Casement clean-shaven but for a moustache, and the sub's Captain Raimund Weisbach. Each of these men, in different ways, was to experience a difficult destiny.

Weisbach had been the torpedo officer on the U20 when the *Lusitania* was sunk. The U19 was his first command as captain. In August 1916 he took command of the new U81 which carried out a number of successful patrols sinking numerous merchant ships. Walter was first officer on this craft. On 1st May 1917 it was torpedoed and sunk by the British submarine E54 off the west coast of Ireland. The torpedoing and sinking of a submarine by another submarine is a rarity in naval warfare. Most of the crew were killed. However, Weisbach and Walter survived and were taken prisoner. They were held as POWs in what is now Cobh, known then as Queenstown. In WWII Weisbach held a position as an onshore officer in the Kiel submarine base. The two men were among a group of surviving former German naval officers who visited Ireland in 1966 at the government's invitation to take part in the commemorative events of that year.

The journey on the submarine was to prove difficult for Casement because of his poor health. The constant noise, stench and cramped conditions on board made things harder. With Monteith and Bailey he left the submarine on a small rowing boat. Before it reached shore it capsized, drenching all three. After reaching Banna strand Casement hid out at a secluded area near the shore known as McKenna's fort where he was later captured.

Monteith went on the run. Thanks to the help of sympathisers and his own ingenuity he eluded capture and eventually made it to America.

The mysterious Bailey also went by the name of Beverley. He had joined the Irish Brigade at the POW camp at Limburg. He was soon captured by the RIC after coming

ashore at Banna, perhaps at his own volition. It is thought that he readily gave information and it is quite possible he was all along a spy. It is not clear what became of him afterwards. A Julian Bailey is recorded as having died in late 1916 on the western front. This could be the same man. There was a story circulating in the Limburg area after the War that Bailey returned to Germany to meet up with a local girl he had fallen in love with. However, she had taken up with another man and distraught, Bailey committed suicide. The reality, however, is that the fate of this character still remains shrouded in mystery.

### **THE 1910 'BLACK DIARY' – THE ARGENTINE CONNECTION**

Paul Cullen, speaking at his first Casement symposium, gave a provocative and stimulating talk which referenced entries in the 1910 Diary for March of that year. His interest in the subject arose by accident as a result of research he was conducting into a sculpture currently on display at the William Harvey Institute, Charterhouse, London, by the well known sculptor John W Mills. It is titled "*The Lion and the Unicorn and Digitalis*".

This research took him to the Wellcome Library of the great medical research charity *The Wellcome Trust*. Here he read letters from Roger Casement to the pharmaceutical magnate after whom the Trust is named, Sir Henry Wellcome. Casement had been a friend of Sir Henry and they had corresponded. Through pursuing the Wellcome connection he was to discover that Casement had corresponded and been friendly with Thomas Duggan, a very wealthy Irish immigrant to Argentina.

Duggan (1838–1913) was a very successful rancher. Originally he came from Ballymahon, Co. Longford. He was sympathetic to the cause of Irish republicanism and funded nationalist causes—including that of Parnell and Davitt. Casement visited his friends the Duggans at their *San Ramon* estancia or ranch a number of times between 1906 and 1911.

On 11th March 1910 Casement arrived in Buenos Aires, a city preparing to celebrate the centenary of the "*May Revolution of 1810*". As a result many new buildings and public edifices were under construction in the centre of the city. On 12th March there is a mention in the Diary of "*splendid erections*", which is actually an innocent reference to the vista of new construction that met the eye.

By attaching a tail to the "San" in San Ramon on March 13th "San Ramon" became "Saw Ramon" and "Ramon" the

character was invented. The real origin of Ramon, it was claimed, was the ranch *San Ramon* near Buenos Aires where Casement's friends and supporters, the Duggan family, resided.

Paul Cullen has been assisted in his research by his children Aisling and Shane. He says he has been in contact with the Duggan family in Argentina and has obtained confirmation from a Luisa Duggan that indeed Casement met with her Uncle Eddy and her father on 24 March 1910.

### **SOME FINAL SCRIBBLES**

At the end of the symposium this scribbler took it upon himself to make a small contribution of his own.

Firstly, as the Congo was the main theme for the day, he read a section from Don Akenson's *An Irish History Of Civilization vol II* which served to illustrate the passion and ingenuity Casement brought to bear to make a reluctant world take heed of the awful injustices taking place in that country at the beginning of the last century.

Then he turned his attention to some other matters that came to his attention in the last year. He recounted how he had looked through the 14th edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* for 1932 to see what it said about Roger Casement. There was no mention of any Diaries whatsoever. But there was a reference to his writings which were described as "*anti-British pamphlets*". The Diaries began to seriously impinge upon the public consciousness only in the 1950s.

What is also striking about the 1950s is the way a number of people came together to agitate for the remains to be returned to Ireland and to combat perceived injustice being done to his memory on account of the diary material. Prime movers in this were Herbert Mackey, Roger McHugh and the English poet and man of letters Alfred Noyes. McHugh and Noyes wrote a play which appeared in the Gaiety theatre on 10th March 1958, simply called *Roger Casement*. The then Taoiseach Eamon de Valera attended. Every allegation made against Casement was confronted. A review in the *Irish Independent* suggested it was too burdened with the effort to make points on historical matters to hit the target dramatically.

Going through the newspapers of the time an exciting report of a meeting I came across was from the front page of the *Irish Times* of 15th August 1959. A headline, not the main one, said *Casement Diaries Zaid To Be Forged*. "*The result has been obtained by erasure, bleaching out of letters and interpolation*" according to Dr Herbert Mackey. He said how so far he had only seen the 1903 Diary. He had examined it using specialist equipment including "*a magnifying lens capable of giving a ten times enlargement*". He had

announced that he had spent many years studying "calligraphy, the art of handwriting and graphology which is aimed at the detection of forgery". He claimed in his opinion "the forgeries had not been done skilfully".

There followed a general discussion about the attitudes of these "forgery theorists" of the 1950s and 1960s. Were they what would be called today 'homophobic'?

A contributor from the floor claimed this could certainly not be said of Prof. Roger McHugh who wrote a significant article in the magazine *Threshold* in 1960. The language he used was very carefully chosen so as not to exhibit an anti-gay prejudice. His criticism focused on the idiocy and derangement of the sexual protagonist rather than on his orientation.

This scribbler also referred to the Irish Times obituary of Maire Gavan Duffy, daughter of George Gavan Duffy, a defence counsel at Casement's trial and one of the signatories of the Anglo-Irish Treaty. This woman born in 1914 was an Irish cultural nationalist and a devout and active Catholic. She worked hard on behalf of the underprivileged both in Ireland and further a field. The obituary reported *Máire Held Roger Casement In The Highest Regard*.

Obviously her view of Casement must have been influenced by her father's view of him. Would a devout Catholic hold a habitual and profligate sexual sinner in the "highest regard"? Sense and experience does not encourage such a conclusion. Thus we become inclined to imagine her father's picture of Casement must have been one which dismissed the diary allegations. This is no cast-iron argument in favour of forgery, naturally. Nonetheless, it presents us with food for thought.

Lastly, I was able to report on a most interesting article from the *Sunday Tribune* of 3rd June 2007. The heading was *Book Of Kells To Tell Its Secrets*. A team at Trinity College, Dublin had been investigating the *Book Of Kells* over the past two years in an effort to find the composition of the inks and paints used in the making of the book and their geographical origins. They had considerable success with a technology known as "Ramon Spectroscopy". This was to ring a bell. *Ramon Spectroscopy* was described in the Giles Report on the Casement diaries as being a "destructive" form of testing and thus not suitable for testing the contested diaries. It was odd indeed that it was nonetheless found suitable for Trinity College's great ancient treasure. It was odder still to read an article in the London-published *Independent* some days later which stated that one reason Trinity chose this technique was its very non-destructiveness.

Tim O'Sullivan

REPORT of a Launch

## Connolly's Correspondence

Dublin's Liberty Hall saw the launch on December 6 of *Between Comrades: James Connolly, Letters And Correspondence 1889-1916*. This 700 page volume has been compiled and edited by the Connolly biographer and former General Secretary of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, Donal Nevin. The following are but a small sample of the extremely interesting observations to be found in this book.

### Connolly on Washington and Slavery

To Daniel O'Brien, Secretary, Irish Socialist Republican Party, Dublin, 15th September 1902:

"...This place I am to-day was Washington's Headquarters during the War of the Revolution. His house is open to visitors, and is stocked with mementoes of the Revolutionary War, and of Washington and his family. One curious memento is the Will of Washington's mother. Among the items of this Will is one where the old lady leaves to one of her children, 'my Negro wench, Little Bit, and all her future increase'. Surely this is a paradox. Here we have the family of the greatest patriot of Revolutionary America—a patriot passionate with love of 'Freedom'—consigning to perpetual servitude, not only the living Negro woman, but all her children yet unborn. It forms another illustration of the necessity for insisting upon a clear definition of the term 'freedom' as of all other terms so glibly used in political warfare..."

—James Connolly, Newburgh, New Jersey

### Connolly on the Kaiser and the 1905 Russian Revolution

To John Carstairs Matheson, Edinburgh, 27th December 1905:

"Dear Comrade

... The Russian Revolution is one thing I have great hopes for, if only the Kaiser can be persuaded to interfere. If he does not I much fear that the heroic working class of Russia will only pull the chestnuts out of the fire for the liberal party. *Yours fraternally, James Connolly*"

### Edinburgh-born Connolly on the Edinburgh Derby Scottish Cup Final and on learning German

To John Carstairs Matheson, Editor, *The Socialist* [Edinburgh], 17th April 1906:

"... Send me the paper now and then; it will keep me posted on things. I am in absolute ignorance of what is really going on in the Labour movement. The only information I got lately was when a little Scotchman in the shop told me that 'the Herts were in the final of the Scottish Cup, they knockt hell oot o' tha Hibs',

whereat I felt very much depressed."

"I am enclosing you a money order for fifty cents and I want you for that to send me Hugo's simplified German Teacher. I think there are three books in all, at sixpence each. You know the series I am sure. In the department of Singer's [Sewing Machine Co.] where I work the majority are Germans, and German is the principal language spoken. So I am thinking that I can do a little learning on the Berlitz system whilst earning my daily bread if I only had a few books to teach me the rudiments."

—James Connolly, Newark, New Jersey

### Francis Sheehy Skeffington, Socialist Pacifist, on the War

To Irish Labour leader William O'Brien, Dublin, 3rd August 1914:

"Dear O'Brien,

This war means the end of the British Empire. If Germany wins, that is obvious. But if Russia wins, Russia will speedily turn on India, and end matters that way. I am hoping against hope for a German victory; I fear the Germans are hopelessly ringed in. *Yrs. FSS*"

—Francis Sheehy Skeffington, Rathmines, Dublin

### Connolly on Mortality Benefit and the War

To ITGWU official Peter Keely, 25th February 1915:

"Dear Keely,

In reference to your letter inquiring if the death benefit is payable on account of members of our Union killed in the war, I have to inform you that the Mortality benefit of the Union only covers cases in *Civil Life*. Therefore the answer is in the negative. *Yours fraternally, James Connolly, Acting General Secretary, Liberty Hall*"

### From Connolly to Winifred Carney, ITGWU, Belfast

"Dear Miss Carney,

...The authorities are making great parades through the city of the German guns, supposed to be captured, with a view to getting recruits. I hear that the employers have already sent in their lists of 'eligible' and 'indispensable' men. It is on the lines I suggested it would be. All the true blues and sycophants are returned as indispensables..." [2 December 1915]

"... How about the Dardanelles now? Was I not correct in my forecast? It looks blue for the poor Empire. I fear that Ireland will be the only consolation she will have. We, of course, will remain with her to the end. I understand that it was by a wholesale use of hospital ships as transport that the British troops got off the Peninsula at all. It is not very creditable, rather discreditable in fact, but it served John Bull's purpose..." [22 December 1915]

"... There are two German submarines in Dublin Bay, and all the shipping of the Port has been held up for three days. They have sunk already nine ships in the channel. The Mistress of the Seas seems

to be neglecting her job..." [29 December 1915]

"...The submarines were in the Bay, and the Channel Islands for three days, so *they must have surmounted that difficulty*. There are all sorts of rumours around here about the plans for Military Authorities for Dublin, and very sinister rumours they are..." [31 December 1915]

"... According to this morning's press, the Conscriptio Act is to apply to Ireland. This will surely disorganise a great many things, and might mean great changes, even in the Transport Union. The submarines are gone, and everything is again normal..." [3 January 1916]

"... I am presiding at Skeffy's [Francis Sheehy Skeffington] meeting to-night. The prices of admission are so high that I rather dread a small attendance. But he is rather popular just now. Would you not like to be here where things happen all the time? But of course things sometimes happen in Belfast—the Corporation sing '*God Save the King*' for instance. Did the Home Rule members sing likewise? It must have been a great sight..." [4 January 1916]

### Statement issued by Commandant-General James Connolly, Army of the Irish Republic (Dublin Command), Headquarters, 28 April 1916

"TO SOLDIERS

This is the fifth day of the establishment of the Irish Republic, and the flag of our country still floats from the most important buildings in Dublin, and is gallantly protected by the officers and Irish soldiers in arms throughout the country. Not a day passes without seeing fresh postings of Irish soldiers eager to do battle for the old cause. Despite the utmost vigilance of the enemy, we have been able to get information telling us how the manhood of Ireland, inspired by our splendid action, are gathering to offer up their lives, if necessary, in the same holy cause. We are hemmed in, because the enemy feels that in this building is to be found the heart and inspiration of our great movement.

Let us remind you what you have done. For the first time in seven hundred years the flag of a free Ireland floats triumphantly in Dublin city. The British army, whose exploits we are forever having dinned into our ears, which boasts of having stormed the Dardanelles and the German lines on the Marne, behind their artillery and machine guns, are afraid to advance in the attack or storm any positions held by our forces. The slaughter they suffered in the first few days has totally unnerved them, and they dare not attempt again an infantry attack on our positions. Our commandants around us are holding their own..."

"... (We have every confidence that our Allies in Germany and kinsmen in America are straining every nerve to hasten matters on our behalf). As you know, I was wounded twice yesterday, and am unable to move about, but have got my bed moved into the firing line, and with the assistance of your officers, will be as useful to you as ever".

### Trial of James Connolly, 9 May 1916

[Statement by James Connolly (Prisoner Number Ninety) at his trial]:

"... We went out to break the connection between this country and the British Empire and to establish an Irish Republic. We believe that the call we thus issued to the people of Ireland was a nobler call in a holier cause than any call issued to them during this war having any connection with the war. We succeeded in proving that Irishmen are ready to die endeavouring to win for Ireland their national rights which the British Government has been asking them to die to win for Belgium..."

### Execution of James Connolly, 12 May 1916

"At midnight on Thursday 11 May 1916, an ambulance arrived at the house where the Connolly family were staying. An Army Officer said that James Connolly was very weak and wished to see his wife and eldest daughter. On

arrival at Dublin Castle they were escorted to Connolly's room. As they entered, James turned his head towards them. Nora recorded the following last conversation with Lillie:

"Well, Lillie, I suppose you know what this mean?" 'James, James. It's not that—it's not that,' Mama wailed. 'Yes, Lillie,' he said, patting her hand. 'I fell asleep tonight for the first time. I was awakened at eleven and told I was to be shot at dawn.' Mama was kneeling, her head on the bed, sobbing heart-breakingly. Daddy laid his hand on her head. 'Don't cry, Lillie,' he pleaded. 'You'll unman me.' 'But your beautiful life, James,' Mama sobbed. 'Your beautiful life.' 'Hasn't it been a full life, Lillie,' he said. 'And isn't this a good end?'

James Connolly was executed in Kilmainham Jail on 12 May 1916."

### QUOTATIONS from:

Donal Nevin (ed.); author of *James Connolly: A Full Life*

### Does It

### Up?

**Angelus?** RTE 1 is reclaiming ever more of its now outed proud commitment to secularism. Completely funded by the tax payer, it has quietly jettisoned one of its more iconic images since broadcasting began. The Angelus has disappeared. Not entirely, mind you—just the word, it has now been rebranded 'RTE Religious'. And as the Bell sounds, the various video clips of people reels on with only an elderly person ever blessing themselves. The non-so-subtle message is of course that this is relevant to the elderly and will pass away as the quaint custom it is, as soon as they too pass on.

**Planning Objection.** Staying with the Catholic Church, the local curate Father Philip Daly in a County Donegal parish wants to build a retirement home at Lacknagh, Portnoo. He has served the parish for seven years and wants to live out his remaining years in the area. But his plans have hit a big time glitch. The high flying and powerful couple, Justice Adrian Hardiman and his wife, Judge Yvonne Murphy, have a holiday home there (and one also in Spain) and have written in with four other objectors to An Bord Pleanála opposing the priest's home as it "would destroy scenic views" between their villa and the sea if Father Daly went ahead. A local councillor, Enda Bonner has got stuck into the row and said that the objectors have only holiday homes in the region whereas Fr. Daly's home would be his only place to live. In a spirit of some

### Stack

generosity, the Hardimans—social ethicists that they are—have said they wouldn't object and indeed "would welcome" Fr. Daly provided he built on *their* side of the road.

**Treason?** Fianna Fail TD Mary O'Rourke has been advised to consult a dictionary by Fine Gael leader Enda Kenny after she accused the latter of "an act of treason". Given the topicality of this it seems there is a lot of treason running about. O'Rourke rounded on Kenny after he attacked (yes I know "attacked by Kenny" seems an oxymoron given the mild nature of the man) but the latter hurled insults at Bertie Ahern just as he was off being a statesman in South Africa. Now O'Rourke and Kenny as parliamentarians should know better. It is the Constitution that should have been consulted—specifically Article 39. But never mind, the headlines and phone lines made a meal of it and it vented the spite of the media to a glorious degree.

**Hidden History's Coolacrease.** Now 'History Ireland' is totally financed by the taxpayers of this country as it should be as *the* academic forum for historical debate. But when it came to the most debated historical event in the last number of years - whither its stance in its latest edition January/February 2008? Firstly the Editor, Mr. Tommy Graham, while congratulating the makers of the programme for "*textbook (and brilliant) media spin*", thought the response was "*predictably ill-informed and emotive*". Then he gave space to a Mr. Brian Hanley under the title *Fear And Loathing At Coolacrease*. Mr. Hanley took "*issue with RTE's Hidden History documentary, The Killing at Coolacrease—but also with its critics*". Don't you just love that twinning? Suffice it to say the



article contributed nothing but with the idea that somehow it was saying something.

Mr. Hanley is a history lecturer at NUI Maynooth according to the footnotes and when I asked around why he wrote so badly, I was told he wanted to get on in the academic community—which explained everything.

Then at the end of the magazine we came to 'Bookworm' who was very upfront stating Bookworm had:

"no intention of getting embroiled in the controversy connected with the recent RTE 'Hidden History' documentary about the killings on 30 June 1921 by the IRA of the Pearson brothers at Coolacrease., Co. Offaly... except to mention the re-publication (third edition) of the book that inspired it, Alan Stanley's *I met murder on the way—the story of the Pearsons of Coolacrease* (Alan Stanley, Quinagh, Carlo, 109 pp hb).

The author then instructed his readers to check out indymedia for a "counter-interpretation", adding—

"Whatever the rights and wrongs of his account, Alan Stanley had done a great service by rescuing the story of the Pearsons from obscurity".

**Doorley And The Carmelites.** Every Saturday in the *Irish Times* magazine, a Tom Doorley has a column titled *Eating Out*. It is the usual run-of-the-mill stuff but it lacks the acerbic wit of the great Helen Lucy Burke or the *Sunday Times'* A.A. Gill. They know and write well about good food but Mr. Doorley comes across as quite the amateur really. He doesn't go far from the beaten track and, having never worked in a kitchen/restaurant (which neither of the others has done either but they have a superb palate and a sense of style in their writings), makes heavy going of his reviews. He recently wrote a piece on Capella Castle-martyr, Co. Cork, a new hotel sited where the Carmelite Order ran a secondary school and seminary until they had to close their doors in our new celtic-tiger Ireland. Doorley appeared "a bit bemused by the announcement" that the highly upmarket group Capella should have put "*Castle-martyr on its list*". He then went on to denounce "*the 18th-century house, destroyed by decades of religious institutional use*"—he elided the *c* word, but anyone reading his fare would know immediately what he meant. Well I can assure Mr. Doorley, that both before and after the takeover, I had the immense honour of attending there and there was little or no destruction and what there was of it certainly didn't come from the great Carmelite Order whose loss the town still mourns as many others do.

**Global Holes!** The global warriors are out in force and are quickly setting an agenda for us which we will end up paying

for as usual. I love the fact that Al Gore's bank balance jumped from \$10 million when he was just an ordinary Vice President and professor to \$70 million as a crusading global warmer. But whatever happened to the 'hole in the ozone layer' over the Antarctic? Some years ago we were told it was opening up at a rate of knots and we'd all be boiled to death by the rays of the sun. They told us it was caused by CFC's from fridges and by propellant gases used in aerosols—such as in hair-sprays etc. They even predicted sunbathing in Australia was not on any more—too many UV rays were getting through the 'Hole'—skin cancers were going to go through the roof. Whole scientific careers were made on the back of the 'Hole in the Ozone'. Papers were written, lecture tours were laid on, grants of money were extracted from governments, politically correct politicians were afraid to criticise the scaremongering scientists and environmentalists. A lot of money was made and then—it all went magically quiet. While the hot air was being generated below, something miraculous had occurred—the Hole had closed up and no one speaks of it any more.

After a lot of scrambling, something else had to be found and step forth—*global warming* was the new 'hole'. Well that is what they sometimes call it but on a freezing cold day in Washington DC, or Paris or Moscow, the people were now a bit sceptical—but once they renamed it "Climate change" things were on the up. Now whenever the weather does generate news, as it did always—perhaps now generating more—'climate change' is the cause and its high priests/priestesses are well paid to tell us how bad it is going to get, if we don't change from using our incandescent light bulbs for example. That mercury is in the new ones—well one has to pay small prices for saving the planet. That these latter lights are already causing huge problems, especially for migraine sufferers with the resultant lost work days—well for The Cause there is always pain . . . for somebody else. John Gormley of the Green Party started his days as a global warrior warning about the new Ice Age—well with these kinds of prophets my motto hasn't changed. Live life and enjoy it and don't be conned *too much*.

**Michael Stack**

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## Editorial Digest

continued

are certainly not competent to carry it out. They have even lost the ability to fit someone up.

The judge at the trial accused Detective Chief Inspector Philip Marshall and Detective Constable Fiona Cooper of lying. No one has yet been charged with perjury. These two police have merely been called before the new ombudsman. No one at all seems to be inquiring into the man who led the investigation, Chief Superintendent Norman Baxter, according to himself. And the overall boss at the time, Ronnie Flanagan, has been promoted.

BELFAST CITY LIBRARY is currently displaying an exhibition called *Embassy to China 1792-1794*. The Ambassador was George Macartney from a landed family near Ballymoney, Co. Antrim. He was paid the then huge sum of .£16,500. His was a joint mission on behalf of Prime Minister Pitt and the East India Company. He had been Ambassador to Russia and Chief Secretary in Ireland. His number two was George Leonard Staunton, of Galway, whom he met in the West Indies where Staunton had been secretary to the Governor of Dominica. And where, as the Library delicately put it, he had estates. He owned slave camps.

Staunton wrote an account of the journey: "*An authentic account of an embassy from the King of Great Britain to the emperor of China...*" in 1797. Macartney refused to kow-tow to the Emperor because this would be beneath his dignity. He was then invited to the Forbidden City where a letter awaited him telling him to get lost. As we know other more forceful tactics were used later.

The Library's version of imperialism is interesting:

"By the late eighteenth century Britain was becoming a major imperial power with ambitions to extend its diplomatic and trading relationships throughout the known world. The East India Company was already trading in Macau and wanted to expand further into China."

THE BELFAST NEWS LETTER has decided to resume its coverage of Gaelic games following the attendance of Culture Minister, Edwin Poots, at a match between Down and Donegal in Newry. It had stopped coverage four years ago without explanation. Other DUP politicians have also been attending GAA matches. But the practice is to turn up five or ten minutes late to avoid having to stand for the National Anthem!

*continued overleaf, column 1*

# Land Grabbers

## Part Three

Terence Dooley, a history lecturer at Maynooth, authenticated RTE's 'land grab' explanation of the War of Independence that followed the British refusal to accept an Irish election result. I found this puzzling in the light of one good book written by Dooley on the period and a couple of books that were not bad. He acknowledged a particular debt to the influence of his Professor, R.V. Comerford. So I looked up Comerford in search of enlightenment—and found myself transported back across thirty years to New Left Marxism at the end of its tether.

His book *Ireland* (Oxford University Press, 2003) begins:

"Just as preparing to circumnavigate the globe implies a negation of flat-earth theory, so the no less challenging proposition of writing on the invention of a nation implies a rejection of the essentialist view of Irish nationality."

Columbus staked his life on his belief that the earth was round. I don't know what Professor Comerford thought he was staking when he set out to write a history of Ireland as an invented nation, but he clearly thinks he is striking out boldly into uncharted regions.

Alas, he is only inventing the wheel. The general notion of nation-invention is old hat and the notion that the Irish nation is an invention is older still—old but ever new: what else was Carroll Professor Foster's *Irish Story* about. (I'm getting over my comprehensive ignorance of educational matters very slowly. I now understand that an adjective Professor is not a real Professor: he just has a job amidst the University buildings bought for him by a millionaire. I take it that Comerford's Professorship is non-adjectival, and is real in the sense that it is a reward of time served within the closed-shop, or profession.)

### Editorial Digest concluded

LIBERTY, the journal of SIPTU, had the following interesting comment to make on "green" fuels in its December 2007 issue:

"The headlong rush to develop biofuels is taking place with little or no regard for its impact on local people or indeed the long-term impact on the planet... In a nutshell what is beginning to happen in many parts of the world—especially the poorer areas—is that increasingly land is being cultivated to produce bio-fuels rather than food. This has a two-fold impact on the local people—creating both shortages and higher prices for food."

Here is his bold step backwards to the future:

"The intellectual escape from the futility of this prescriptive approach is summarised in the title of Benedict Anderson's celebrated book, *Imagined Communities*, with its implication that the nation is a "construct" and not a "given" (p1).

So here we are back in the future. The New Left, rigorously and scientifically Marxist—all dressed up with nowhere to go amidst the disorderly order of the two-party system of the British state which gobbles up revolutionaries for breakfast and could hardly keep going without them. So what is the poor (*correction*, rich) earnest, scientific revolutionary to do? Sell out? Mature? as so many who went before them did. They are too knowledgeable for that. Too scientific. Too structured. Too inhibited from opportunism by scientific knowledge of the illusory nature of all that pertains to the "*category of the subject*".

But along comes Northern Ireland in 1968—a "revolutionary situation" within the British state!

Looking back on it all, Lord Bew said he wished he had stayed in bed instead of going on the Burntollet march. Well, I did stay in bed, while the New Left Marxists played at revolution in Britain's Six Counties.

In a sense I was wrong and they were right. The Stormont system, against all probability, did wreck itself on the trivial "*one man, one vote*" issue in local government.

The "one man, one vote" demand was conceded in the Summer of 1969 as far as I recall, but the concession was scarcely noticed. By then the "revolutionary situation", that one of the New Left managers had tried to persuade me of and get me involved in, had been precipitated. The "Northern Ireland state" had been thrown into flux. Revolution was on!

And what did the New Left do in this revolutionary situation which it had helped to bring about? It produced a revolutionary pamphlet called *Explosion In Ulster* which was sold up and down the Falls Rd, and I suppose in Ardoyne, though I never saw it there. And then, mission completed, it went home, leaving the revolution to look after itself, and turned its mind to other things. When the war started in earnest, in 1971, it was no longer there. And by 1972 one needed to have an incorrigible memory to know it had ever been there as an active component of the situation.

It was then that I first heard of the new, philosophically perfected, Marxism. Lord Bew told me about it. He insisted that I should familiarise myself with it. I did so. And I decided if that was what Marxism was to be henceforth I would have nothing to do with it.

The "Ideological State Apparatus" was one of the categories of the New Left (or Althusserian) Marxism of those years. I forget what the other Apparatuses of the state were in that scheme. The Ideological State Apparatus was held to be the vulnerable segment in the system of the imperialist state. So the way to make the revolution was to get a job in it and advance your career in it. Whether the University lecturers and professors would then erode the imperialist state gradually or overthrow it in a revolution I cannot say. I didn't pay enough attention to it to find out whether there was an agreed position or a conflict of gradualness and revolution. It was the Legal Marxism of Tsarist Russia, or the Cathedral Marxism is Germany, all over again, though with less thought and more pretension.

English academia was dominated by Marxists of one kind and another by then. The Communist Party was academically entrenched. (One of its members was Master of Balliol. I don't know what that is but it was obviously a very prestigious position because of the way it was proclaimed.) And the various Trotskyist organisations were making their way up. And Irish academia was, of course, following the English fashion. And by the late 1970s Althusserian jargon was everywhere. Only Trevor-Roper, amongst established historians, seemed to be free of it.

At a certain point I began to hear about social relations being imaginary. I think "*Social Relations Are Imaginary*" was the title of a pamphlet by one of the high-powered Althusserian academics in the mid-1970s.

As I read Althusser's book I was sure that, for all the philosophical name-dropping, he could not have taken on board what Kant had to say about these things. After he (Althusser, not Kant) strangled his wife in an act of altruistic suicide, he wrote his autobiography in the quiet of a sanatorium—the French are the only civilised people in these matters—and confirmed that he had not read Marx, or indeed any of the others. He had just picked up hints from hearing them discussed. From which I infer that those from whom he had picked up the hints had not bothered their heads much about Kant either. And why should they? France is style, and what has style got to do with all that workmanlike but obscure German philosophy?

Kant took the world to bits and then put it together again in working order. But in following him in the doing of this one does not really come back to where one started. One of the things you become aware of is that the world becomes known by imagining it. The interaction between the individual and the world doesn't work if the individual cannot imagine the world.

The Althusserian who was overcome with the realisation that social relations are imaginary must until then have taken relations between people to have been of a kind with relations between billiard balls.

The big-wig New Left Marxist back in the 1970s was Perry Anderson. At a moment when the socialist movement was going badly astray he published big books about far-fetched subjects. The New Left publisher, Verso, established a world market for itself for books of that kind, and I believe it gained a degree of control over Penguin Books. The last I heard of Perry, he was a Professor in California.

Northern Ireland was a playground for these revolutionaries, until they succeeded in bringing about something resembling a revolutionary situation. Then, when things became dangerous, they moved on into the Ideological State Apparatuses.

But now, more than thirty years later, a bit of New Left nonsense comes as a revelation to a Maynooth Professor of History: nations are imaginary.

Benedict Anderson, Perry's brother, dashed off *Imaginary Communities* around 1980. I don't recall very much was made of it at the time. There is in fact very little in it in the way of an exposition of the idea in the title. That idea is merely that nations are imaginary because no member of a nation can know all the other members of it personally.

The Irish nation of three, or four and a half, millions, was—as far as each member of it was concerned—an imaginary body, because no individual in it could ever know all the others individually.—But if one is to play that game, I don't see how knowing them all individually would render their existence as a nation less imaginary. Their existence as a nation would not lie in their individuality but in something they had in common, and that common attribute, being social, would *ipso facto* be imaginary. And every structure maintaining an imaginary collective body is itself imaginary. The professions are imaginary. The law is imaginary. The market, whether free or restricted, is imaginary.

Back in 1971 a particularly daring escapade by a group of new Republicans was explained to me by an old Republican on the grounds that they lacked imagination. They acted as they did because they had not got an imaginative

grasp of the situation in which they acted. Reality must be imagined in order to be effectively subjected to purposeful action.

Between the figures of three and four and a half million that I mention there lies a difference in the meaning of "*imaginary*". The former was the population of Northern Ireland, the latter of the Six Counties. The nation of four and a half million was imaginary in a dysfunctional way. It could not be handled in accordance with the purposes of those who imagined it, whereas the three millions could. In between the two there was the half-million in the North which could not be handled purposefully within the imaginary world of the million, for lack of certain public fictions which are required for civil government in what we call the democratic era.

I described the imagined nation of four and a half million as being imaginary in the sense in which the word is ordinarily used, and said there was a national division between the one million and the three and a half, even though half a million of the three and a half were detached from the other three.

Here is the opening paragraph of Professor Comerford's book:

"Just as preparing to circumnavigate the globe implies a negation of flat-earth theory, so the no less challenging proposition of writing on the invention of a nation implies a rejection of the essentialist view of nationality. The essentialist assumption incorporates the belief that nations are individually prescribed by nature or by some divine plan, that each has its own personality, and a naturally defined (and thus obvious) membership and extent, and that each has about it some kind of informing spirit, reminiscent of the Platonic soul. That this outlook has lost its intellectual punch is consistent with the demise in Ireland during the 1990s of the old debate, particularly noisy in the 1970s and 1980s, about the "two nations". The controversy was premised on the assumption that nations are individually mandated by some natural or divine law, and at issue was whether or not unionists in Northern Ireland participated in British nationhood and were thus entitled to opt out of an all-Ireland polity. Most participants in the debate, not surprisingly, came to conclusions that supported their prior political preferences: unionist sympathisers advocating the case for the presence of two nations on the island and nationalists proclaiming "one land one nation". The well-disposed neutral participant [neutral *and* a participant!] might contrive a one-and-a-half nation theory" (p1).

I suppose the last remark is a piece of smart alec to indicate that the whole thing is too absurd to notice. Yet it is what

the Professor chooses to notice in the most important paragraph of his book—his display paragraph.

Who were these essentialists who in the 1970s and 1980s noisily propounded the idea that the population of Ireland consisted of two nationalities rather than one? We are not told.

Obviously I cannot be one of them. I certainly wrote about there being two nations in Ireland, and Partition having a basis in national division. But in the course of doing so I said what I took a nation to be—which was about as far from "*essentialism*" as one could get. I took two works on nationality as expressing what I took a nation to be. Both described nations in terms of what is now called contingency. And in reading parts of Comerford's book I felt I was reading myself from forty years ago, when I was getting to grips with the issue.

The two books I cited were both called *What Is A Nation?* one was by Ernest Renan, a bourgeois French literary man of the late 19th century, and the other was a Russian Bolshevik Social Democrat, Joseph Stalin. Both took the subjective conviction of nationality to be a necessary feature of its existence. Renan said that national existence was something that had to be confirmed by daily referendum—I think it was daily. Stalin went into the conditions tending to bring about the subjective condition of national belonging, and he summed them up as the creation of the national market for capitalism, and said that nations were a phenomenon of capitalism. Although it was Renan who was the bourgeois, I do not recall that he related the nation to capitalism. But neither was his account of nationalism incompatible with Stalin's.

Stalin's pamphlet on nationality became part of Leninism, but was rejected by Rosa Luxemburg who refused to take nations as being real for the purpose of political action.

Fifty or sixty years after that the big-wigs of bourgeois academic theory, Kedourie and Gellner, rehashed that old dispute within Marxism without mentioning that it had all been gone over before. (The bourgeois academia which emerged at the end of the Cold War seemed to live off crumbs from the Communist table.) Gellner took up Stalin's view and Kedourie Rosa Luxemburg's. (See *Envoi: Taking Leave Of Roy Foster*, Aubane Historical Society 2006.)

It was evident to me in 1969 that the population of Ireland was not, for practical political purposes, held in a consensus of national sentiment. I pointed out what was as clear to everybody as the Emperor's new clothes, and said that Irish politics could only proceed on the basis of a recognition of national division, which might make *rapprochement* possible.

If there is national division, does that mean that there are two nations, or should we say, like Professor Smart Alec, that the Ulster Protestants are only a half-nation?

What is a half-nation? The Ulster Catholic community might be meaningfully described as a sixth-nation, being roughly that proportion of Ireland which shared a sense of nationality. But what meaning is there in an Ulster Protestant half-nation?

I doubt that much could be found in the way of two-nations publications in the 1970s that was not written by me. And nothing that I wrote found expression in the broadcast or printed media. (Martin Mansergh has recently praised the *Irish Times* for not allowing the two-nations view to be mentioned in its columns.) It is true that about 10,000 copies of *The Economics Of Partition* were sold, but it was never reviewed and only a few bookshops in the island stocked it. So I wonder what "old debate" the Professor is talking about. I suspect he is inventing.

Invention is another of his gimmicks, following Eric Hobsbawm's *Invention Of Tradition*. But, while he soon explains away that invention as rhetorical exaggeration, the noisy debate between the essentialist two-nationists and orthodox nationalists is pure invention.

The explaining away is done on page 2:

"...that is not to say that it [the nation] is imagined into existence without rhyme, reason or pattern. To say that it is invented is not to suggest that the nation is for that reason less real or less meaningful. Invention can have overtones of deceit or fraud, but these are not at issue here. Neither should the concept of invention, as applied to a nation, convey a suggestion of creation from nothing, of something drawn on a blank sheet. Rather there are overtones of the Latin *invenire*, meaning 'to find' or 'to discover', for nations are defined and developed largely on the basis of what is already there. That aspect of the essentialist viewpoint has validity. What is no longer defensible in the current state of understanding is the essentialist view that 'what is already there' prescribes or determines what happens next. Rather, what is now generally understood is that choices are continually being made, and initiatives being taken."

So the Maynooth Professor is a Stalinist!

And the other carry on was much ado about nothing? Or hocus pocus as cover for prestidigitation?

The book (which is part of an Oxford series on 'Inventing The Nation') is not written as a historical narrative (as others I have looked at are) but is organised in Themes.

In Theme I, *Politics*, the 1918 Election is skimmed over in a quarter of a paragraph (p42). On page 43 we are told that those

who stood for the electoral mandate were rebels. And that Britain created two "entities", conceding "effective independence to one of them". However, "Substance was one thing, form was another". The form of a republic was denied and became the "catch-cry" of opponents of the treaty. But: "Even those who had accepted the Treaty and fought to have it enforced were eager to remove the constraints it imposed". So what was substance and what was form? And is effective independence with imposed constraints conceivable?

Nothing whatever is said about the strange "polity" imposed on the other entity.

Themes 2,3, and 5 are *Origins, Religion and Literature* respectively. The 1859 Revival is not even mentioned in either *Origins* or *Religion*, even though it is fundamental in the affairs of the Ulster Protestant community in both respects, both in its internal development and in distinguishing it from Protestantism in the South. Anglican clergymen from the South—hard-line Protestants—went to observe it and were bewildered. But Protestant Ulster has been marked by it ever since—an experienced event which is ongoing, rather than a proclaimed 'myth'. They have different ways with these things. And it struck me forty years ago that their way would prove more durable than ours.

The great Veto Controversy within Catholicism that went on for a generation after 1808 and determined that the Catholic Church in Ireland should be under the direct rule of Rome, and which had the consequence of Irish Catholicism being re-made into a new, extreme, brittle, Romanism, should have been included under all three Themes, but it is not mentioned at all in the book.

Canon Sheehan was the most popular and influential novelist there has ever been in Ireland. He should have been mentioned in all four categories, but is not mentioned at all. Nor is William O'Brien, who organised the successful land purchase agitation along with the leader of the Ulster Protestant tenant-farmers, T.W. Russell; who waged a Conciliationist campaign against the 3rd Home Rule Bill; and who subverted the Home Rule Party in Munster on the ground that it had become a Catholic Ascendancy party.

These things should be looked at in more detail. For the moment I will only say that I saw nothing in Professor Comerford's book that could have encouraged Terence Dooley to characterise the War of Independence as a Land Grab.

**Brendan Clifford**

## Thomas Moore And The Moslems

### LETTER VI

### From Abdallah in London to Mohassan in Ispahan

Whilst thou, Mohassan (happy thou!)  
Dost daily bend thy loyal brow  
Before our King—our Asia's treasure!  
Nutmeg of Comfort! Rose of Pleasure!—  
And bear'st as many kicks and bruises  
As the said Rose and Nutmeg chooses;-  
Thy head still near the bowstring's borders,  
And but left on till further orders!  
Through London streets with turban fair,  
And caftan floating to the air,  
I saunter on—the admiration  
Of this short-coated population—  
This sewed-up race—this buttoned  
nation—  
Who. While they boast their laws so free,  
Leave not one limb at liberty,  
But live, with all their lordly speeches,  
The slaves of buttons and tight breeches.

Yet, though they thus their knee-pans  
fetter  
(They're Christians, and they know no  
better),

In *some* things they're a thinking nation,  
And on Religious Toleration,  
I own I like their notions *quite*,  
They are so Persian and so right!  
You know our Sunnites, hateful dogs!  
Whom every pious Shiite flogs,  
Or longs to flog—'tis true, they pray  
To God, but in an ill-bred way;  
With neither arms, nor legs, nor faces  
Stuck in their right, canonic places!  
'Tis true, they worship Ali's name—  
*Their* heaven and *ours* are just the same—  
(A Persian's heaven is easily made,  
'Tis but—black eyes and lemonade).  
Yet, though we've tried for centuries back,  
We can't persuade the stubborn pack,  
By bastinadoes, screws, or nippers,  
To wear the established pea-green slippers!  
Then—only think—the libertines!  
They wash their toes, they comb their  
chins,  
With many more such deadly sins!  
And (what's the worst, thought last I rank  
it)

Believe the chapter of the Blanket!

Yet, spite of tenets so flagitious,  
(Which *must* at bottom be seditious  
As no man living would refuse  
Green slippers, but from treasonous views;  
Nor wash his toes, but with intent  
To overturn the government!)

Such is our mild and tolerant way,  
We only curse them twice a-day

(According to a form that's set),  
And, far from torturing, only let  
All orthodox believers beat 'em,  
And twitch their beards, whene'er they  
meet 'em.

As to the rest, they're free to do  
Whate'er their fancy prompts them to,  
Provided they make nothing of it  
Towards rank or honour, power or profit;  
Which things, we naturally expect,  
Belong to us, the Established sect,  
Who disbelieve (the Lord be thanked)  
The aforesaid Chapter of the Blanket.  
The same mild view of Toleration  
Inspire, I find, this buttoned nation,  
Whose Papists (full as given to rogue,  
And only Sunnites with a brogue)  
Fare just as well, with all their fuss  
As rascal Sunnites do with us.

(From, *The Twopenny Post Bag*, 1814;  
in *The Life And Poems Of Thomas Moore*,  
Athol Books, p75.)

## REPORT

# Judges And Democratic Society

The following letter appeared in the  
*Sunday Independent* (13.1.1970)

In his interview with Jody Corcoran [January 6] the democratically-elected Taoiseach argued that if Government Ministers were to be denied their democratic right to say anything negative about Judge Mahon's Tribunal, "then we are living in an era of the Star Chamber". The Taoiseach was not the first to highlight tensions between a functioning democratic society and judicial processes that were overstepping their remit. In June 1934 the Secretary of the Department of Justice, Stephen Roche, expressed the view that de Valera's election victory of 1933 signalled that the country wanted "a strong Executive" that would not be "hampered and humiliated at every step in the Courts". He believed: "The Courts have been given or have assumed a position in our civic society to which they are not entitled. There was a time in England when the Judges' job was to save the people from an irresponsible Executive; it may be necessary, in turn, for a responsible Executive to save the people from irresponsible judges." This statement can be found in the recently published book, "The Making of the Irish Constitution 1937", by Dermot Keogh and Andrew McCarthy. **Manus O'Riordan**

### NOTE

DUE TO PRESSURE OF SPACE A NUMBER OF  
ITEMS HAVE BEEN HELD OVER, INCLUDING  
A LETTER FROM DICK KENNY AND AN  
ARTICLE BY MARK LANGHAMMER ON THE  
'ELEVEN PLUS' IN NORTHERN IRELAND.

## PROPERTY continued

Whelan goes on to separate "the spin from the substance"!

"The narrow community of interests which wields most influence over policy-making in this country includes many who have a vested interest in the property boom.

"Much of the print media relies on lavish property supplements for a large portion of its advertising revenue. Most economic commentators, politicians and higher civil servants, if and when buying houses, are more likely to be in the market for larger and more expensive properties, and so will benefit most from these stamp duty changes.

"A very hefty portion of the political donations received by the larger political parties and by many individual politicians comes from donors in the construction and property sector.

"The disproportionate influence and power which the property sector wields explains the prominence of, and support for, the calls for reductions in stamp duty received in the media during the election campaign.

"It also goes far in explaining the peculiar consensus in favour of reducing stamp duty which has emerged across the political spectrum, which even includes supposed left-wing parties like Labour and the Greens.

"We are a nation obsessed with home ownership, and so the property boom which we have experienced until recent months has been a phenomenal bonanza for the overwhelming majority of Irish people.

"While investors have been the main beneficiaries of the boom, hundreds of thousands of average citizens have also seen the value of the asset which is their home soar.

"Notwithstanding this increase in property values, Ireland is almost unique in western societies in still having no annualised tax on domestic properties. In Northern Ireland and Britain the average householder pays hefty bills for domestic rates, which, depending on house size and location, can run to thousands of pounds, whereas south of the Border we have not had domestic rates for more than a quarter of a century.

"Bitten by the backlash which greeted proposals for a land tax in the 1980s and proposals for a property tax in the 1990s, our politicians have shied away from even discussing the introduction of any type of tax on property. This absence of taxes on the ownership of property is the reason why our exchequer had been happy to rely instead on stamp duty which, of course, is a tax on the acquisition of property.

"There was some merit in the criticism of the previous system of graded rates of stamp duty as being unfair, but overall stamp duty is actually

a relatively fair tax.

"It is a tax which is paid by a very small portion of taxpayers each year. Once first-time buyers had been removed from the stamp duty net, stamp duty became a tax on relatively wealthier homeowners which was payable at a time when they had made a windfall on the other property they were selling.

"Cowen estimated this week that the changes will cost €200 million per annum.

"Cowen announced a substantial increase in funding for social and affordable housing in this week's Budget. It was open to him to add this €200 million to that Budget line.

"In his Budget speech he also announced an intention to establish a Commission on Taxation which, among other things, will be charged with exploring the possibility of introducing a carbon tax.

"This commission should also be asked to take a look at how our tax system could be made more equitable by more effectively taxing asset wealth, particularly property" (*Irish Times*, 8.12.2007).

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"Even as house prices drop, developers are hoarding huge banks of land worth at least €15 billion in Dublin city and county alone." (*Evening Herald*, 21.1.2007).

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Since joining the EU in 1973 Ireland has received over €17 billion in EU Structural and Cohesion Funds support (to end 2003). Under the programming period 2000-2006, Ireland received €3.35 billion from the Structural Funds. The Cohesion Fund contributed €586m during the period 2000-2003.

Could somebody explain how a state that spent €10 billion on overseas property in 2006 could still be entitled to EU subsidies?

As *Labour Comment* goes to press, the *Sunday Independent* (27.1.2008) has declared all-out war on Ahern and Cowen calling for an end to Stamp Duty altogether and further reductions in personal taxes to 'save the country'. Marc Coleman, their latest signing from the *Irish Times* is in the vanguard of this call. He recently launched a book titled *The Best Is Yet To Come*—unleashing Ireland's potential.

It is hard to believe that it could get any better for Mr. Ganly, the speculators, and Sir A.J.F. O'Reilly but why should they stop now? And who will stop them? If Fianna Fail don't—nobody will!

You can never tell a glutton to stop eating!

## PROPERTY continued

Revenue (i.e. to the ordinary taxpayer).

The details will not be known until the Finance Bill is passed because it is probable that a lot of lobbying has and continues to be done by various property interests.

It will be a rare event if the Revenue or the Minister forego taxes without recovering them somewhere else. Don't look too far!

Again, a victory for those who proclaim that property has only rights and no duties!

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"The changes in stamp duty on residential property mean at long last, we have finality on the rate of stamp duty applicable. The new measures are clearer and end any speculation on the stamp duty costs on acquiring residential property. Stamp duty can no longer be held as a reason for the slowdown on the sale of houses." (John O'Flynn, *Irish Examiner*, 7.12.07)

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### THE LABOUR MOVEMENT AND STAMP DUTY

Although described as a reform of Stamp Duty, what the Minister announced was above all else a reduction in Stamp Duty—and a substantial reduction at that.

Moreover, it is a reduction which will be of considerably more benefit to the wealthier sectors of society than it will be to average house-buyers.

The impact of the changes is such that a person buying a house worth €285,000 will benefit to the tune of just over €3,000, while a person buying a house worth €1.7 million will benefit to the tune of over €30,000.

Despite this, no voices were heard to question the wisdom of a tax change which is so unequal in its impact. All of the commentary centred on whether Cowen has been too late in making these reductions and not on whether reducing Stamp Duty is, in itself, a good idea.

It also goes far in explaining the peculiar consensus in favour of reducing Stamp Duty which has emerged across the political spectrum, which even includes supposed left-wing parties like Labour and the Greens.

"The Opposition said that while the reforms were welcome, it was all 'too little, too late'. The Labour party's finance spokeswoman, Joan Burton, T.D. said: 'It's no surprise that he did the U-turn given the woeful shortfall in the tax-take which was announced last

weekend. The guy simply had ruled out Stamp Duty reform for weeks and months and then introduces these reforms. But, while there is a cautious welcome to the reforms it remains to be seen whether it will restore confidence" (*Sunday Independent*, 9.12.2007).

"The present writer found the reaction of David Begg, the General Secretary of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, to the Budget very strange. Begg claimed the Trade Union movement had understood that mortgage interest relief would not be restricted to first-time buyers. If this is true, it shows that the Trade Union movement has lost touch with its working class origins. There is no good socialist reason why extra tax relief should be given to home owners, particularly in a country that does not have property taxation" (*Irish Political Review*, January, 2008).

### STAMP DUTY: THE CHANGES!

Budget 2008 Stamp Duty reforms, will see savings on Stamp Duty liabilities of up to 37 per cent for non-first-time house purchasers.

Minister Cowen increased mortgage interest relief, but surprised most economists and property commentators when he introduced sweeping changes to the current Stamp Duty regime, along with increased owner occupier reliefs. Under the new simplified system, an exemption of €125,000 has been introduced with two rate bands instead of the existing six rate bands.

Non-first-time buyers will, under the new reforms, be exempt from Stamp Duty on the first €125,000 of the cost of a house. A rate of seven per cent will apply between €125,000 and €1 million and a rate of nine per cent will apply on the balance above €1 million.

The changes will result in a Stamp Duty saving of €10,750 on a typical second-hand house valued at €400,000. Also, new rules have been introduced to encourage first-time buyers of second-hand homes.

As part of the abolition of Stamp Duty for first-time buyers after the General Election 2007, the rules were that the exemption would be lost if the first-time buyer rented out or sold the house within five years. This period has now been cut to two years, recognising that many people seek to move on quickly from their first home.

The latest Permanent TSB/ESRI house price index showed a 4.7 per cent fall in national house prices over the last 12 months, from October 2006 to October 2007.

The value of an average property in Dublin currently stands at €473,749, according to the housing statistics published by the Department of the

Environment. The Stamp Duty bill on this property is more than €24,000, under the new regime, compared with €35,531 under the old Stamp Duty regime. This represents a reduction of €11,119, or 31 per cent.

The equivalent property outside the capital is currently valued at €369,837. The Stamp Duty saving on this property stands at 23 per cent under the new regime. The Stamp Duty liability following the new changes amounts to €17,1390.

This would have amounted to €22,190 prior to the Budget 2008.

The Stamp Duty reform package has been estimated to cost the Exchequer €190 million. The Minister's Stamp Duty receipts were down 14 per cent in the first nine months of 2007 due to a dramatic decrease in the number of transactions, and it is thought, this reform will increase the number of transactions, and therefore receipts.

The Stamp Duty reform in Budget 2008, only applies to non-first-time buyers as Stamp Duty was abolished for first-time buyers following the General Election in May, 2007. The changes do not affect newly built schemes—purchasers, both first-time and second-hand, are exempt from Stamp Duty on properties under 125 square metres in size in newly built developments.

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"Last year the record construction of almost 90,000 homes yielded more than €9 billion in tax revenue for the government. If that number were to halve next year, tax receipts could tumble much further. The decision to reform stamp duty was most likely a result of this scenario" (*Sunday Business Post*, 9.12.2007).

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### NOEL WHELAN:

#### "SPIN FROM THE SUBSTANCE"

Noel Whelan's remarks on the Stamp Duty debate stands out 'head and shoulders' above every other commentator: it wasn't a reform move at all, it mainly benefits the rich. Had Noel been a Labour man, one would have felt proud but he is a Fianna Fail man. He worked as a political organiser at Fianna Fail headquarters and then as an adviser to the Minister of State at the Department of An Taoiseach.

In two newspaper polls this month, support for the Labour Party has dropped three per cent to 10%. In the middle of the greatest economic crisis in a decade, the Labour Party and the Trade Unions are speechless—they don't know what to say. Both of course, are in full support of the Lisbon Treaty or will be by polling day.

continued on page 29

## PROPERTY continued

service the average new mortgage.

Sky-high property prices also pushed up rents. This in turn also pushed up prices, particularly services prices, as shops, pubs, restaurants all increased their prices to help pay these very high rents.

Caught in this vice of higher wages and rents, Irish services prices are now rising at 7.8 per cent a year as against an annual average increase in the price of physical goods of just 2.1 per cent. As we get richer, we tend to spend proportionately more of our incomes on services and less on physical goods so, overall, Irish inflation now stands at 4.8 per cent, also by far the highest in the eurozone.

Falling house prices would help break this vicious circle. Firstly, it would mean that homeowners would not have to pay such a high proportion of their incomes on mortgage repayments. Lower prices would also make houses affordable for those priced out of the market.

With the average Dublin house price still over €470,000, even after the recent price drops, the Central Bank estimates that just two out of every five households would qualify for a mortgage at current house prices.

Tenants would also pay less in rent, which would ease the upward pressure on wages. And lower rents would help reduce inflation on services as publicans, restaurateurs and other services providers would no longer have to cope with ever increasing rents.

While lower house prices would reduce homeowners' paper wealth—which isn't real—they would also help reduce the cost of moving house and the prices they pay as consumers for all kinds of services, which are very real indeed.

### SIR ANTHONY THINKS . . .

At a time when the media assume the role of the 'First Estate', without the responsibility, of course, the following makes interesting reading:

"Taoiseach Bertie Ahern insisted Tanaiste and Finance Minister Brian Cowen introduce last-minute stamp duty reforms ahead of the Budget announced last Wednesday (5.12.2007). *The Sunday Independent* understands that the call to reform the property tax came in the wake of the disastrous November exchequer returns (€1.75bn tax shortfall), which were announced last weekend.

"Mr Ahern and Mr Cowen are said to have held key discussions over last weekend about the Budget. It is believed that during these discussions, Mr Ahern convinced Mr Cowen that further stamp duty reforms were necessary given the

dire state of the housing market.

"Mr Cowen had consistently refused to touch stamp duty in the weeks ahead of the Budget but was forced to relent when his department announced the tax shortfall.

"This weekend, officially, both the Taoiseach and the Tanaiste said that the plan to reform stamp duty had been in place for several months and both denied that it was a last-minute addition to the Budget.

"Friends First chief economist Jim Power said: 'I don't believe that at the beginning of last week Brian Cowen was going to touch stamp duty. It was a panic move after the exchequer borrowings which were announced last weekend. Mr Cowen would not have touched it except for the dire results that came out last weekend.'"

"The *Sunday Independent* revealed three weeks ago that Mr Cowen had met a number of the country's leading developers who lobbied him for change. They said at that stage that he dismissed their calls and reform was unlikely.

"Upon that refusal, calls were made to the Taoiseach to intervene. The *Sunday Independent* understands that at that time Mr Ahern appeared unwilling to step in, however as the poor November tax-take became clear he insisted that stamp duty reforms be included in the Budget.

"Robert Ganly, president of the Irish Auctioneers and Valuers' Institute (IAVI) said that while he welcomed the 'surprise reforms' but that they are not enough.

"He said: 'The reforms are positive but he made a mistake in not including commercial property in his reforms. Even with the changes, Irish stamp duty rates are still far higher than elsewhere in Europe. They are still far too high.'" (*Sunday Independent*, 9.12.2007).

Mr. Ganly and the auctioneers argue that the nine per cent duty on commercial transactions has forced the majority of Irish speculators to invest overseas. An incredible €12 billion was invested by Irish people in commercial property last year, but only €1.5 billion was spent in Ireland. These people argue that the nine per cent top rate of Stamp Duty on commercial transactions is a major factor in this.

'Greedy' Ganly and his Auctioneer butties can never get enough, a more parasitic caste has never been imposed on a people. Ganly and the speculators are living in a 'property paradise', the only country in the European Union without some form of property taxation.

Independent News and Media, the O'Reilly family paper has been in the forefront of the forces seeking to hold the property market at its current exorbitant level, it has even descended to an almost personal level at this stage:

"The fact that a number of employees of the paper—including Anne and Eoghan Harris and Jody Corcoran—were having problems selling their own homes at the time may not of course, have been entirely coincidental." (*Irish Mail on Sunday*, 18.11.2007).

"In 10 years, the price of a new house rose by 153 per cent, but building costs rose by only 41 per cent." (*Irish Times*, 20.10.2007).

### VAT RULES ON PROPERTY

Ganly made no mention of Minister Cowen's proposed VAT rules on property. These will become effective from 1st July 2008, and are a most significant development as in many cases, it will result in a substantial change in the VAT treatment of property.

A major review of the VAT on property regime was instigated in May, 2005 by the Revenue Commissioners.

Currently, the builder pays VAT on the amount he gets for the building at a rate of 13.5%. He owes the 13.5% to the Revenue but in paying it, the builder is allowed to deduct the VAT (mostly at 21%) which he himself paid for materials used in the building.

The buyer has paid VAT at 13.5% to the builder in addition to the price of the building.

If the buyer is a "Registered Person" for VAT, he/she or it (if a Limited company) can claim the 13.5% as a deduction against VAT due on sales of goods or services if the building is used in the Registered person's business.

If the buyer is not a "Registered Person" the 13.5% cannot be claimed as a deduction or otherwise. Insurance companies and pension funds are not Registered Persons and so they cannot claim back the 13.5% VAT, and they are exempt from paying VAT on their own income.

Very many developed buildings are owned by Insurance companies or Pension funds.

Up to now where a building is leased for over ten years it is almost as if the building is disposed of, because VAT is to be charged and paid to the revenue on the capitalised value of the lease.

This VAT, it is proposed, will not be payable in future on leases over ten years, unless both tenant and lessor agree.

This innovation will be a huge cash flow benefit to the owners of rented buildings and will be a similar loss to the



## "The Men Of Much Property"

Fianna Fail was once the party that defended the home-owner and those who strived for a home of their own : not any longer. Fianna Fail is now the defender of the property-owner!

Twelve months ago, we praised Brian Cowen for taking a principled stand against the PD leader, Michael McDowell who claimed that "the government could do without the €2.6bn in stamp duty". Cowen *Calls The Shots* we titled the article but warned that this was only a battle—the speculators, the auctioneers, the solicitors, the construction industry along with their newspaper cohorts would sustain an unrelenting campaign to change the Stamp Duty charges in favour of a climate to uphold the exorbitant price of housing.

McDowell may have lost his Dail seat but he must be having a right old chuckle at the manner in which Cowen has implemented a serious plank of PD ideology and at a time when the PD party itself is in death throes.

\*\*\*\*\*  
"Minister for Housing, Noel Ahern, T.D. warned that people who trade in houses and apartments or buy land to sell on to developers should be 'taxed out of existence'. (30.8.2006).  
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### MARKET FORCES

For years now, we have listened to Government Ministers laud the wisdom of not interfering in the property market, yet, in the one single situation where such advice might accrue to the advantage of struggling citizens and especially, families—the fall in house prices—where at last they could obtain a home of their own at an affordable price—Ahern and Cowen 'mullack' their way through a Stamp Duty 'reform'.

Surely anyone with a concern for the family, indeed the social fabric of the State would be only delighted to see house prices fall to some realistic level from the current exorbitant and extortionate price prevailing?

For nearly two decades, the property speculators and their entourage of hangers-on have had the field for themselves : they have creamed it! Here at last was an opportunity for the 'men of no property' to obtain their own home. Old Fianna Fail would certainly have grasped this phenomenon!

\*\*\*\*\*  
"It is interesting that no political party thinks that a property crash would be a good thing. And yet the same political parties bemoan the fact that young people can't afford to buy a house. Time and again it has been proven that when the interests of existing owners are in conflict with prospective owners the interests of the former take precedence."  
(*Irish Political Review*, page 4, January, 2008).  
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### FALLING HOUSE PRICES

All of the coverage of falling house prices has so far focused on the 'losers' : the bankers, builders, auctioneers, etc. Though you might find it difficult to believe, far more people are likely to gain than lose from falling house prices.

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For the majority of homeowners, the value of their house is academic—it's a home, not an item of property at all—we'll live in it for the most our lives, no matter what : property crash or otherwise!

Anyone who bought their house before the turn of the century has seen their wealth increase exponentially as house prices soared. On paper anyway. The problem with the huge wealth created by rising house prices was that it wasn't real. If someone who already owned a house wanted to move to a bigger house, the gap between what they could expect to receive for their own home and what they would have to pay for their new home just kept getting wider and wider.

With falling house prices, this process goes into reverse. Although someone moving house would get less for their existing house, they would also be paying less for their new home.

An even bigger problem for homeowners was that the huge increase in their paper wealth generated by the increased value of their home was largely illusory. Unless they emigrated from the country, homeowners couldn't extract this increased value. If they did borrow more money against the increased value of their home, homeowners were confronted with sharply -increased mortgage repayments, which were very real indeed.

The doubling of interest rates over the past two years has driven up the cost of servicing these extra loans even further. As a percentage of national output, Irish private sector borrowing is now by far the highest in any country using the Euro.

Also very real were the increased costs generated by our sky-high property prices. Have you ever wondered why prices of Irish goods and services are up to 25 per cent more than the eurozone average?

Bank of Ireland economist Dan McLaughlin estimates that it now takes 38 per cent of the average pre-tax income to