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## Fianna Fail In The North

The Fianna Fail party has announced its intention to return to the Six Counties after 70 years' absence.

De Valera profited from the Appeasement phase of British politics in 1938 by gaining the removal of the Royal Navy from 26 County territory, and thus establishing a necessary precondition for the independence of the Irish state. The meaning of Appeasement in its time, as distinct from later mythology, was the relinquishing of some degree of authority by the British Empire to Indian nationalism, to the Irish State, and Germany freeing itself from the shackles of the Versailles Treaty. When Churchill first raised the banner of Anti-Appeasement in the early 1930s, it was in opposition to a minor concession to Indian nationalism at a time when German resurgence under Nazi rule still lay in the future.

The appeasement of Ireland, in the form of evacuation of the British naval bases which would have made it impossible for the Irish State to act independently in the event of war, was almost certainly accompanied by agreement by the Irish side to let Northern Ireland be. Anyhow that was when Fianna Fail stopped contesting Parliamentary seats in Northern Ireland. And it did let Northern Ireland be. It was Fine Gael and Labour, in a wild reversion to a kind of Republican anti-Partitionism, that stirred things up ten years later with the aggravating, but essentially futile, Anti-Partition campaign, whose main effects were the definite commitment of the British Labour Government to the Northern Ireland system, and the IRA invasion of the North in 1956.

Fianna Fail has now returned to the Northern electoral scene for the declared purpose of breaking Sinn Fein. We doubt that it will succeed. We know that it doesn't deserve to.

The present arrangement in the North owes nothing to Fianna Fail, apart from a spurt of purposeful activity by Albert Reynolds before he was undermined by the *Irish Times*. That was before the Good Friday Agreement. (Haughey, too, gave behind-the-scenes encouragement to the Hume/Adams process.)

The best that can be said about Fianna Fail under Aherne's leadership is that it did not prevent the implementation of the GFA, though it helped to whittle it down.

*continued on page 2*

## Irish Budget 2008

Brian Cowen's fourth Budget was conservative, boring and politically astute. In short, it was very much in line with his previous three Budgets. There is no particular obligation on the Minister to be radical and entertaining. The absence of a coherent political opposition to Fianna Fail and the continued strength of the economy by international standards discouraged a radical break from the policies of recent Budgets.

### TAX CREDITS

It was the first budget since 1997 in which there was no evident Progressive Democrat influence and therefore there was no pressure on Cowen to reduce the top rate of tax.

Tax Credits increased roughly in line with inflation. The individual and married persons' Tax Credits increased by 70 and 140 euros respectively (to 1,830 and 3,660). This represents a 4% increase. Cowen thinks that inflation will be only 2.4% (per the EU harmonised calculation). The more traditional national method of calculation puts the figure at about 3.0%. In the 2007 Budget Cowen was predicting an inflation rate of 2.6% but the actual rate turned out to be 4.9%. So inflation rate projections should be viewed with scepticism.

*continued on page 4*

## Reflections On Palestine

Part 5

### Abbas's Palestine

The English language *Palestine Times* used to be a staunchly pro-Abbas paper. Between the General Election, which saw a Hamas-led Government elected, and the Saudi-brokered agreement between Hamas and Fatah, it took a more or less neutral position and reported politics comprehensively and fairly.

When Abbas went back on that Agreement and launched his *coup* against the Government, he shut the

paper down. David Morrison tells me he also shut down anything to do with Hamas. Abbas's coup was not as complete as he would have liked. His confederate Dahlen's military takeover in Gaza was preempted by the Palestinian Government using Hamas militias.

The *Palestine Times* is now published on-line only and is overtly pro-Hamas. Too much so, I think, to be really effective. When I went to talk to a newspaper seller I normally go to in Jerusalem about it, he wouldn't speak but made

*continued on page 28*



Here is how the liberal Zionist newspaper *Haaretz* portrayed President Ahmadinejad of Iran on 5th December. Readers may be reminded of Nazi caricatures of Jews.

## CONTENTS

|   |    |
|---|----|
| <b>Fianna Fail In The North.</b> Editorial  | 1  |
| <b>Irish Budget 2008.</b> John Martin   | 1  |
| <b>Abbas's Palestine.</b> Conor Lynch (Reflections On Palestine, 5)   | 1  |
| <b>Editorial Digest</b> (Ulster Scots; Pyjamas; Pearse Doherty; Sammy Wilson;<br>Fianna Fail; Bertie Ahern At Bodinstown)   | 2  |
| <b>Letters To The Editor.</b> (Roger Casement from <i>Tim O'Sullivan, Jeffrey Dudgeon</i> ;<br>Poppies, <i>Seán McGouran</i> )                                      | 3  |
| <b>Will Labour Leave Northern Ireland Members In Limbo?</b><br>David Morrison   | 5  |
| <b>Labour Party Conference Debate On Palestine.</b> David Morrison  | 7  |
| <b>Fine Gael Negativity.</b> Report   | 7  |
| <b>What Is Possible?</b> Wilson John Haire  | 8  |
| <b>Shorts</b> from <i>the Long Fellow</i> (Drugs & Society + <i>Irish Times</i> on Katy French;<br>Another Omission; Harney Must Go; Social Partnership; EU Treaty) | 10 |
| <b>Myths, Old And New.</b> Cathal Brugha launches <i>Myths From Easter 1916</i>   | 11 |
| <b>Scribbled Recollections.</b> Tim O'Sullivan report, Casement Symposium   | 12 |
| <b>A West Briton On... Neutrality And... Allegiance.</b><br>Manus O'Riordan and Brian Inglis  | 14 |
| <b>The State And The Obvious.</b> Joe Keenan (Ah, The English, 2)   | 16 |
| <b>Irish Language And Lawyers.</b> Seán Mc Suibhne (report)   | 18 |
| <b>Land Grabbers.</b> Brendan Clifford (part 2)   | 21 |
| <b>Does It Stack Up?</b> Michael Stack (Cork Poppy; Kilmichael Night; The 7th;<br>Irish Culture?; Budget; Libertas; Catholics On Throne?)                           | 24 |
| <b>Sharon's Scheme.</b> Report  | 25 |
| <b>John Dulanty—High Commissioner For Whom?</b> Manus O'Riordan<br><i>Some Realities of Betjeman, Bowen &amp; Anglo-Irish Relations</i> (Part 2)                    | 30 |
| <b>Cork Heroes?</b> Jack Lane   | 30 |

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

From *Fat Cats To Compacts*: Mark Langhammer (back page)

Stormontgate, Castlereagh, the Northern Bank robbery, the McCartney 'murder': these are the events by which the GFA was whittled down by Blair and Trimble and Blair and Paisley, with either the acquiescence or the active participation of Ahern. And it was hoped that, along with the scaling down of the GFA, Sinn Fein would be seriously damaged. When Sinn Fein not only held its ground, but increased it, Blair put the screws on Paisley. He did so only when time was running out for himself, and he wanted something on his political epitaph besides the shambles he made of Iraq and the wreck of Yugoslavia. But he did it.

And, whatever the Agreement is worth, credit for implementing it belongs entirely to the Sinn Fein leadership and Blair—and to Paisley, the best calculator of reality in the North for almost forty years, who saw when there was nothing else to be done.

The McCartney 'murder', an incident in a pub brawl, was hyped into an international incident by Ahern and his Justice Minister, and the McCartney sisters were set up for a painful disillusionment. They were given the world but they lost the Short Strand. And it was no use telling the Short Strand that it was acting under the duress of IRA terrorism, because if there is one piece of the North that knows what it is and what it isn't, it is the Short Strand.

And the Northern Bank Robbery—

Ahern knew quite definitely that Adams and McGuinness did it. So why didn't he have them prosecuted? Because policing wasn't his business, nor even the giving of information to the police! And if Adams and McGuinness really thought they hadn't done the Bank Robbery, why didn't they sue him for defamation? That was the line spun for him by Radio Eireann.

Along with the other good reasons why he could not be sued for defamation, Ahern's then Justice Minister has provided a conclusive one. He slandered *Daily Ireland* as Nazi and successfully entered a defence of Crown immunity when prosecuted.

Public life in the Republic is being debased by the Tribunals, and the treatment of Ahern by Mahon is outrageous. But Ahern himself has done as much as anyone, and more than most, to debase public life.

Before the Bank Robbery there was Stormontgate. After making use of Stormontgate to disrupt implementation of the GFA to help Trimble, the British administration found it expedient, for another purpose, to let it be known that the central suspect was its own agent.

And before Stormontgate there was Castlereagh—a break-in to a high security barracks in broad daylight by unmasked men, with the security cameras switched off.

We don't know who did the robbery or the break-in. We only know that nobody

has been charged, and that otherwise sceptical people profess to have no difficulty in seeing a strong *prima facie* case that the Provos did them. There was a sudden onset of gullibility in the interest of *Saving Dave*—but Trimble proved to be unredeemable.

If Ahern is now being disgracefully treated by RTE on other matters, he used RTE disgracefully in this matter.

But Sinn Fein survived all the dirty tricks—which it could only have done by being the political substance of the Catholic community in its determination to develop.

Of course we have no objection to Fianna Fail finally engaging with the internal realities of the North. And it is good to see that all we have said over thirty years about the need in the North for party politics connected with a state is finally having some effect. But we trust that its only success in the first instance will be picking up the pieces of the SDLP—which had its chance, and bungled it.

We understand that Fianna Fail intends to be Abstentionist in the North, like Sinn Fein. The way this is being put is that it will not contest Westminster seats. Well that's Abstentionism. And Fianna Fail's grounds for it seem to be identical with Sinn Fein's. And that cuts the pretentious posturing down to size.

## Editorial Digest

ULSTER SCOTS can be great fun—if sometimes not quite politically correct. Ciaran Mac Murchaidh pointed out in the *Irish News* (29 Nov) that the term for "*special needs*" children was claimed to be Wee Daftie Bairns. Appropriate to our times is the term for telephone: *Lang-Bletherer*.

PYJAMAS have again exercised the Belfast press. The headmaster of a school in the Short Strand has had, for the second time, to remonstrate with mothers for still wearing pajamas when bringing their children to school. It does indeed take one a back seeing women all over Belfast at nine in the morning wearing their nightclothes. Particularly striking are the furry slippers, usually pink or ex-pink.

SENATOR PEARSE DOHERTY opening Sinn Fein Conference in Dublin on 8th December: "This weekend Fianna Fáil announced that they have registered as a party in the Six Counties. It will take far more than a bit of paper from the Electoral Commission to make them an all-Ireland party. If Fianna Fáil are truly to become an all-Ireland party and move beyond a rhetorical position on Irish re-unification if they are really interested in Irish unity they need to begin the practical preparations now.

"2016 shouldn't just be about commemorating our past, it should be about shaping the future. And that means more

than lofty speeches. It means expanding the work of the All Ireland Ministerial Council, it means removing the impediments to all Ireland economic development, it means northern representation in the Oireachtas, it means putting in place a practical strategy for re-unification. Only time will tell how serious they really are. And we will see what position they take on the measures we will be putting forward in the Dáil and Seanad on preparing for unity and independence."

DUP MLA SAMMY WILSON had the following to say on 7th December in the course of opposing MLA Jim Allister's plans for a new "traditional" Unionist Party: "The DUP has settled the constitutional question—Northern Ireland's position within the United Kingdom is secure. Sinn Fein is bound into British institutions at Stormont, republicans are legally obligated to support the police and the courts and the recent IMC report showed that they were committed to peaceful and democratic means. The DUP will not be deviating from this position and we have been perfectly clear that if the PIRA is involved in terrorism there will be serious repercussions.

"The Democratic Unionist Party has achieved what it set out to—we have forced our opponents on to territory they never wanted to occupy. Now that we have achieved that, our people want us to get down to the business of making devolution work. We have been able to stop plans which would have been damaging for unionists and have been able to further policies which can strengthen unionism and Northern Ireland. What has Jim done?"

FIANNA FAIL: There are websites associated with the new development in the North. The new *Cumann* are called after Watty Graham, and William Drennan, both United Irishmen. There are also websites, including:  
ffnorthernforum.com

BERTIE AHERN at Bodinstown:

"We think it is our duty, as Irishmen, to come forward, and state what we feel to be our heavy grievance, and what we know to be its effectual remedy. We have no national government and we are ruled by [those] whose object is the interest of another country, whose instrument is corruption and whose strength is the weakness of Ireland.... We require a cordial union among all the people of Ireland [and] a complete and radical reform of the representation of the people in Parliament.... [We acknowledge] that no reform is practicable, efficacious or just which shall not include Irishmen of every religious persuasion."

"This Declaration and Resolutions of the United Irishmen of Belfast inspirationally urged the "promotion of constitutional knowledge", "the abolition of bigotry in religion and politics", "the equal distribution of the rights of man through all sects and denominations of Irishmen" as well as the essential goal of "the prosperity and freedom of Ireland." More than two centuries on, those aims remain our aim." (21.10.2007) □

## The Casement 'Black Diaries' An Overlong Controversy in Outline (Part 3)

In reaction to Roger Sawyer's letter (*Irish Political Review*, Nov. 2007) regarding the development of his views on the authenticity or otherwise of the Casement 'Black Diaries' I have a few points to make.

In a letter to this publication (IPR May 2007), I described the span of time when according to himself he was inclined to believe that the said Diaries were forged as "*uneventful*". The reason for this was simple. The amount of books, pamphlets, articles, and letters he contributed to the cause of the forgery thesis amounted in total to zero. Whatever may have been his views privately, in the public sphere as a proponent of forgery he had no profile. In terms purely of public engagement he never "*entered the controversy from the opposite position*" (IPR March 2007, letters, R. Sawyer). He was, as far as public engagement goes, always on the one side, the side which claimed the diaries were entirely genuine.

In his letter (IPR Nov. 2007) Dr. Sawyer tells us that when he started his research in the early 1960s his main source of help lay in the papers of Dr. Alfred Noyes (*The Accusing Ghost or Justice for Casement*, 1957) who had corresponded extensively with the two other main forgery proponents of that era, Roger McHugh and Herbert Mackey. He describes this archive as a "*treasure trove*". I would not be so certain that by the early 60s, it merited such a description.

The 1957 *Accusing Ghost* book, by Noyes, rendered an invaluable service in dissecting former head of Special Branch Basil Thomson's five mutually contradictory accounts of how he had originally discovered the Diaries. The reason Noyes, "*had never examined the documents*", was that by the time they were put on restricted release at the Public Record Office at Kew in July 1959, he found himself acutely inconvenienced, as far as attempting an inspection and publishing a reaction was concerned. Since June 1958 he had been dead.

For similar reasons, the publication in 1959 of an incomplete and inaccurate transcript of the Diaries by Peter Singleton-Gates and Maurice Girodias was another significant event the Noyes papers could not have been much influenced by. In short, by the autumn of 1959 the Noyes correspondence had to have become *passée*. So, following "*all the leads I could in the Noyes-McHugh-Mackey archive*" as Roger Sawyer describes just did not cut it anymore as a means to engage meaningfully and fully with the forgery thesis.

Thanks to newly available research opportunities provided by the published transcripts and the chance to scrutinize the manuscripts in the PRO using high magnification optical equipment, McHugh and Mackey in 1959-60 developed a fresh critique based on forged interpolation being the key to what had happened. The analysis by Mackey, the medical specialist & McHugh the literature professor, while far from perfect, provided an inspiration that was to endure to the present day. **Tim O'Sullivan**

## Casement And 'Ramon'

In the November 2007 edition of the *Irish Political Review* an editorial note read,

"At the Casement Symposium of 27th October Paul Cullen presented important new evidence about interference with Roger Casement's Diaries. It seems that he several times visited San Ramon in South America, which the forger turned into 'Saw Ramon'.

In conjunction with this, a reference to grand new buildings conveyed a different sense to Casement's words, "Splendid erections".

I have looked through Casement's 'Black Diaries' and found 26 mentions of 'Ramon', few of which, by any stretch of the imagination, could refer to a place named San Ramon. Examples include "Ramon to breakfast at Restaurant here" and "Sent Ramon a post card of Zoo here".

There is only one use of the phrase "Saw Ramon" and that is in the entry of 13 March 1910 where someone of that name is mentioned three times: "Saw Ramón get off tram at Zoo and sit down on seat and read—pencil under ear—watched long and then on to station. Back at 10 p.m. Met Ramón after sailor with request of fleet. Ramon 10\$000 to meet tomorrow."

That entry is the day after the "splendid erections" entry which reads in full: "12, Saturday Morning in Avenida de Mayo. Splendid erections. Ramón 7\$000. 10" at least. X In."

On that day Casement was in Buenos Aires as he indicates in the previous day's entry: "11, Friday Arr. B. Aires and on shore to the Hotel of before. Algerian."

continued on page 5

# Irish Budget 2008

continued

There were substantial increases in other credits such as the incapacitated child Tax Credit which increased by 22%. The credits for the elderly were also significantly above the level of inflation.

The employee Tax Credit also increased by 4% to 1,830 euros. These increases were very modest compared to the 2007 Budget. In the 2007 Budget Cowen increased the personal Tax Credits by 8% and the employee Tax Credit by 18%.

Interestingly the 2008 Budget was the first Budget since the 1998 Budget that the Employee Tax Credit has not increased by a greater percentage than the Personal and Married Persons' Tax Credits. The Employee Tax Credit gives an incentive to individuals to enter the work force. This is particularly relevant to married couples in which the housewife is considering looking for a low paid job. The Government has obviously decided that this incentive is now adequate and will in future link it with the personal Tax Credit. The tendency towards *individualisation* of the Tax Credits has been halted.

However, the trend towards *individualisation* of the tax bands continues. This affects married couples at incomes significantly higher than the average industrial wage (projected to be 34,000 euros in 2008). The 20% tax band increased by 1,400 (4.1%) to 35,400 euros for individual earners. The tax band for single income married couples increase by 1,400 to 44,400 euros (a 3.3% increase). So the ratio of the married persons' tax band to the single persons' band is 1.25. It was double before Charlie McCreevy first introduced individualisation.

## HOME OWNERSHIP

The Government believes that home ownership is a desirable social objective, which should be encouraged. There is no political party in the country that dissents from this view.

About twenty years ago the real value of interest relief for mortgages began to be eroded. This was a policy which the present writer supported. But in recent years there has been a slight reversal of this policy for first time buyers. In the 2008 Budget the relief increased for first time buyers by 25% to €10,000 for single people and to €20,000 for married couples. This represents a tax benefit of €166 and €333 a month for single and married couples respectively.

Cowen also reformed the stamp duty system by introducing a progressive system of taxation (0% for the first 125,000 of the sale price, a marginal rate of 7% on the balance of the sale price up to 1,000,000 euros and a marginal rate of 9% on the

portion above 1 million).

This seems to be designed to help prospective owners climb on to the property market rather than to help existing owners. A second objective is to prevent a crash in the property market. The Fine Gael spokesman on Finance, Richard Bruton, accused Cowen of doing too little too late. But Cowen quite reasonably pointed out that if he had done this earlier it would have been like putting petrol on the raging property market fire.

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.

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.

## GOVERNMENT DEBT

On the spending side there will be an increase in overall spending of 8.6%. On the current side the spending increase will be 8.2% and on the capital side it will be 12%. Richard Bruton of Fine Gael criticised the Government for transforming a Budget surplus to a Budget deficit. But the overall level of public debt will increase from only 25 to just under 26% of GDP. This is one of the lowest in the EU. In the 1980s it was more than 125%.

We have had more than 15 years of rapid economic growth. The origins of that growth can be traced to the political decisions of the 1987-89 minority Fianna Fail Government. But thanks largely to the influence of the Progressive Democrats most of this economic growth has been reflected in higher disposable incomes rather than improved infrastructure.

Fianna Fail has rightly decided that our economic growth can only be sustained by massive public investment. Accordingly, it is pressing ahead with the National Development Plan. It will be allocating €2.7 billion euros to our transport infrastructure. Of this €1 billion will be allocated to public transport, which is a higher proportion than in previous years.

## SOCIAL WELFARE

The Government continued its policy

of improving benefits to the most vulnerable sections of society. But the improvements were far less significant than previous years. The lowest full adult rate will increase by 12 euros or 6.5% to 197.80 a week. Other social welfare claimants on higher rates also received the 12 euro increase and therefore their increase was less in percentage terms.

Enormous progress has been made in child support in recent years. However this year the level of progress was less than in previous years. There will be an increase of 6 euros a week or 3.75% to 166 euros a month for each of the first two children. Subsequent children will have an increase of 8 euros a month (4.1%) for third and subsequent children to 203 euros. The Early Childcare supplement for children under the age of 6 will increase by 100 euros per annum (10%) to 1,100 per child. So in 2008 a family with two children under the age of 6 will receive 6,184 euros per annum tax free.

There was a dramatic increase in the widowed parent grant of 2,000 euros to 6000 per annum.

Pensioners and carers did quite well in this Budget. But again the extent of the increases was far less than in previous Budgets. The state contributory pension increased by 14 euros (6.7%) to 223.30 per week and the non contributory pension increased by 12 euros (6%) to 212.00 euros a week.

## CONCLUSION

In recent years it has been fashionable to deride the importance of the Budget. However, the debate does provide a political set piece, which gives an indication of the state of the parties. For some years now it has been obvious that there is no coherent opposition to the policies of Fianna Fail. The Opposition has been relying on the pendulum theory of politics, which assumes that sooner or later the public will become tired of the current Government and will vote for a change of personnel. That theory was found wanting at the last election and there is no evidence that a similar approach by the Opposition will lead to a different outcome in the next election.

An example of the approach of Fine Gael was an attempt by one of its 'stars', Brian Hayes, to gate-crash a Fianna Fail press conference. The nine-o'clock news showed a Government spokesman explaining to the Fine Gael deputy that the conference was only for the press. Hayes had the demeanour of a grinning schoolboy who was delighted with himself at receiving a few minutes coverage on the main evening news.

If this is the best that Fine Gael can do, it will spend many more years languishing on the Opposition Benches.

**John Martin**

## Will Labour leave its Northern Ireland members in limbo?

The Labour Party has taken members from Northern Ireland since 2002 and a Northern Ireland Labour Forum (NILF) came into formal existence to organise those members in December 2003. The Labour Party has now agreed to appoint a Commission to consider whether those members should be allowed to stand in elections in Northern Ireland.

It did so on the Saturday afternoon of its Conference in Wexford (17 November 2007), when it had before it a resolution proposed by the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the party. The operative part of this resolution was as follows:

"[Conference] Directs the NEC to appoint a special commission, representative of the NILF, the PLP and the NEC, together with Party members with specialist knowledge and expertise—

1. to invite and receive submissions on and to consider the future role and organisation of the Party in connection with Northern Ireland and its internal affairs, and for that purpose to meet with relevant parties, trade unions and other interest groups,

2. to explore the potential to participate in elections there, and

3. to report its conclusions in sufficient time to enable the recommendations of the NEC, including any proposals to amend the Party Constitution, to be debated at the next following Party Conference."

(The full text of the motion is below).

The NEC motion was a reaction to two events:—

(1) the NILF had proposed a resolution to the Conference asking the NEC to prepare the necessary changes to the Labour Party constitution to permit candidates to stand for election in Northern Ireland, and

(2) Fianna Fail's announcing its intention to examine the possibility of contesting elections in Northern Ireland.

Before the Conference, the new leader, Eamon Gilmore, made it fairly clear where he stood on the issue. The *Irish Times* reported on 9th November 2007:

"Labour Party leader Eamon Gilmore vowed yesterday that his party would do nothing to undermine the position of the SDLP in Northern Ireland. Moreover, he expressed doubts about the wisdom of any party from the Republic attempting to contest an election in the North until powersharing arrangements have had a chance to bed down."

I counted eleven other mentions of erections in the diaries, admittedly only one of which was described as 'splendid'. Six were 'huge' and one simply 'big'. All of these undoubtedly refer to the male member, sighted on particular person or persons. An example is the entry of 21 October 1911, "Have just seen young Cholo boy 17 thick set, splendid legs and huge erection down left thigh opposite window."

The 'Splendid erections' of 12 March 1910 must have been splendid indeed if they refer to a place called San Ramon, as the nearest San Ramon in Argentina is nearly 1,000 kilometres west of Buenos Aires. **Jeffrey Dudgeon**

*Editorial Note:* Paul Cullen's talk was far more detailed than our brief allusion. Essentially, he suggested that the forger built on existing references in the text with his interpolations. It is hoped that a fuller account of this research can be presented in a future issue of this magazine.

## Sowing Poppies?

I was interested in Philip O'Connor's letter *Carnival Of Reaction?* (IPR 22 / 12). It was in response to a *Sindo* columnist cooing over Louis Walsh (the 'boy band' millionaire) wearing the British Legion's red poppy on *The X-Factor*, (ITV 1). The columnist (Andrea Byrne) seems to believe Mr. Walsh voluntarily decided to commemorate the UK's wars, in—among many other places—Kenya, where, in one incident, 20,000+ Africans were killed in revenge for the deaths of sixteen settlers. On *Have I Got News For You*, the 'satirical' show on BBC1 TV (Friday, 16.11.07), a very large young African-American comedian Reginald D. Hunter claimed he did not know what the poppy was about. He was probably being fake-innocent, but he said (and nobody contradicted him) "they stuck it in my lapel as I was leaving the dressing room...".

This puts the Legion's poppy in a very different light from what the *Sindo* was implying. British broadcasters have clearly been told to 'push' the poppy. In 2006, my local free sheet (*Camden New Journal*) published a complaint from the British Legion that there were very few volunteers coming forward to sell the poppy. And that that had been the case for some years, since the start of the war in Iraq.

It is only 'anecdotal' evidence, but the British Legion still seems to have problems finding people to sell the poppy. I only saw one seller while travelling about the London Underground, in Liverpool Street Station (also an over-ground station and bus terminal), he was not doing very well. This evidence has been confirmed by other witnesses.

This poppy business is not a minor matter. Irish people in Ireland are being brainwashed into believing that wearing the British Legion's red poppy is a 'modern' 'inclusive' matter—rather than something that is being repudiated by the public in GB itself. We should keep an eye out for this sort of propagandist nonsense and try to publicise the truth about the wearing of the poppy. It is to commemorate all of England's wars since 1914, and they are a grisly list, from Ireland and Iraq in 1920 to Iraq and [Northern] Ireland more recently.

The matter will have to be handled fairly delicately, if individuals want to wear the red poppy—or the Peace Pledge Union's white poppy—that is their business. But what needs to be fought is the rest of us being fed sentimental, dishonest drivel about the poppy—and the wars to enrich the City of London. **Seán McGouran**

It's fairly clear from this that, if Fianna Fail had not made its move, Eamon Gilmore would have got the Conference to veto his party members in the North standing for election. The Fianna Fail move prompted his proposal that the Labour Party set up a Commission. But if the Fianna Fail move comes to nought, then it's a pound to a penny that he will ensure that the Labour Party doesn't contest elections in the North either.

\* \* \* \*

Former Labour Party leader, Ruairi Quinn, went to the rostrum to propose the resolution on behalf of the NEC. But, he never got around to it. Instead, he delivered

a hymn of praise to the SDLP (at whose birth he had assisted in 1970) for its long years of devotion to non-violent politics in Northern Ireland. He also claimed responsibility for getting the SDLP admitted to the Socialist International and had just come back from attending its 25th annual conference.

This chimed with the leader's sentiments and with the NEC resolution itself, paragraph 3 of which said:

"Noting and reaffirming our historic relationship with the Social Democratic and Labour Party, as sister parties in the Party of European Socialists, and confirming our belief that all people on these islands owe the SDLP a profound debt of gratitude for its persistent and

ultimately successful witness to the non-violent alternative and the power of political engagement..."

One was left wondering why he wasn't proposing merger with the Labour Party's fellow member of the Socialist International in the North.

Before Ruairi Quinn had finished praising the SDLP, the chair cut him off and he never got around to proposing the resolution. One of the endearing things about the Conference was that the leadership was treated on a par with ordinary members when it came to speaking rights.

It was left to the seconder of the resolution, Mark Langhammer, the Chair of the Northern Ireland Labour Forum, to propose it (see text below). He said: the motion will create a Party Commission on Northern Ireland at a time of political fluidity; it will consider political organization at a time where a measure of political realignment is a practical possibility after years of "freeze". This is not a time for Labour to wait any longer.

There were three speakers from the floor in the debate. The first was Michael McBrien, who told the Conference that he had joined the SDLP when he was 16 and had been involved in many elections for the party. However the Conference needed to be clear, the SDLP was not a socialist party and did not have the cross-community support necessary to move politics in the north forward.

The second speaker, Michael Robinson, also spoke for the NILF stating that, whilst he didn't resile from the tributes paid to the SDLP, they were nonetheless a creature of partition, didn't have trade union affiliation and never would. Indeed Paddy Devlin a founding member of the party had declared them to be "*class traitors*" when they brought down a Labour Government and ushered in Thatcherism, when they brought Frank Maguire an Independent Nationalist MP with them to Westminster to secure a vote of No Confidence. Michael informed the Conference he had been at the ICTU Conference at which Bertie Ahern had declared himself to be "*Socialist*". Fianna Fail had "*stolen Labour's clothes*", he said, "*don't let them steal our votes in the North*".

The third speaker was in the unusual position of being a member of the Labour Party in Dublin and a member of the SDLP in Portstewart. He was Ronan Farren, son of Sean Farren, the former SDLP Minister at Stormont. He began by telling the Conference of the recent death at an early age of John Fee, former SDLP MLA from South Armagh. He mentioned that John Fee had been severely beaten by republicans and left the Conference with the impression that his death was as a consequence of the beating (which took

place in 1994). His message to the Conference was that the Labour Party shouldn't do anything to damage the electoral prospects of the non-violent SDLP—and he was enthusiastically applauded by the Conference for that message.

Labour Party involvement in Northern Ireland would, he said, damage the emerging moderate centre in Northern Ireland politics—the UUP and the SDLP. Now that they are speaking at each other's Conferences, could merger (with the Alliance Party?) be far off? He ended with the resoundingly partitionist message that Southern parties should stay out of Northern Ireland.

The resolution was then put to Conference and was carried without dissent. At the time of writing (7 December 2007), the Commission was yet to be established.

\* \* \* \*

The Northern Ireland Labour Forum had organised a fringe meeting to take place late on the Saturday afternoon of conference, by which time the decision to establish a Commission had been taken. The meeting, entitled "*Should Labour wait again?*", had an impressive line-up of Labour Party figures on the platform. It was chaired by Joe Costello TD from Dublin; and two other TDs, Jan O'Sullivan from Limerick and Kathleen Lynch from Cork, were on the platform, along with Senator Dominic Hannigan and Councillor Gerald Nash, former Mayor of Drogheda. From that line-up, it was clear that contesting elections in the North was firmly on the agenda of the Labour Party.

Senior SDLP figures were present at the Conference, including North Belfast MLA, Alban Maguinness, and South Belfast MP, Alisdair McDonnell. I wondered if they would come to the meeting and, if they did, what attitude would they adopt towards the prospect of the Labour Party standing for election in Northern Ireland. They did come and both Alban Maguinness and Alisdair McDonnell spoke—and both were wholly conciliatory towards the Labour Party entering Northern Ireland politics, in marked contrast to what had just been said on the SDLP's behalf in the Conference hall.

There was a straightforward acceptance that the possibility of Fianna Fail contesting elections in Northern Ireland posed a serious problem for the SDLP, a problem that might be fatal. (An SDLP person at the meeting was overheard predicting to the person sitting next to him that the party would lose 60% of its vote to Fianna Fail.) Yet, as an avowedly anti-partitionist party, the SDLP couldn't resist Fianna Fail or the Labour Party operating on an all-Ireland basis and survive

electorally against Sinn Fein in Northern Ireland (even if they managed to repel the Southern parties).

Neither Alban Maguinness and Alisdair McDonnell expressed any antagonism towards the Labour Party contesting elections in Northern Ireland. Both said that this was a question the SDLP and the Labour Party should address together in a comradely fashion. At their Conference a couple of weeks earlier the SDLP had set up an internal working party to consider how the SDLP should react to the possibility of all-Ireland politics.

\* \* \* \*

Seamus Skelly, who was the Labour Party General Secretary in 1970 when the SDLP was formed, was present at the meeting and made an interesting contribution. He recounted how he dissolved the Labour Party in Northern Ireland in 1970 in order to assist with the formation of the SDLP. At the time, the party had branches in Derry and in Newry and Warrenpoint and a number of elected representatives in Local Government. He was very keen that the Labour Party should re-establish itself in Northern Ireland.

#### TEXT OF NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MOTION ON LABOUR IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Conference—

1 Welcoming the eventual establishment and functioning of the institutions for power-sharing within Northern Ireland, together with North/South and British-Irish institutions, and looking forward to a period of reconstruction, reconciliation and constitutional stability in Northern Ireland and to a deepening of friendly social, economic and cultural links across the island of Ireland and between Britain and Ireland;

2 Considering that peaceful and stable conditions allow for new developments in politics and political relations across these islands and enable a form of party politics that reaches across the sectarian divide, on a genuinely cross-community basis;

3 Noting and reaffirming our historic relationship with the Social Democratic and Labour Party, as sister parties in the Party of European Socialists, and confirming our belief that all people on these islands owe the SDLP a profound debt of gratitude for its persistent and ultimately successful witness to the non-violent alternative and the power of political engagement;

4 Further noting that membership of the Northern Ireland Labour Forum is open to Party members living in Northern Ireland; that the NILF may hold meetings, elect officers and elect delegates to the Party Conference; that its principal function is to support the activities of the Party within this State; and that the Party Constitution does not at present permit it to put forward candidates to contest elections in Northern Ireland and requires it to support in such elections the candidates of the SDLP;

Directs the NEC to appoint a special commission, representative of the NILF, the PLP and the NEC, together with Party members with specialist knowledge and expertise—

1. to invite and receive submissions on and to consider the future role and organisation of the Party in connection with Northern Ireland and its internal affairs, and for that purpose to meet with relevant parties, trade unions and other interest groups,

2. to explore the potential to participate in elections there, and

3. to report its conclusions in sufficient time to enable the recommendations of the NEC, including any proposals to amend the Party Constitution, to be debated at the next following Party Conference.

*National Executive Committee*

**MARK LANGHAMMER, LABOUR FORUM,  
BELFAST, SECONDING NEC MOTION  
79 ON BEHALF OF THE NEC:**

Colleagues, this motion will create a Party Commission on Northern Ireland at a time of political fluidity; it will consider political organization at a time where a measure of political realignment is a practical possibility after years of "freeze".

It starts with no pre-conceived outcome for or against contesting elections.

The Commission will take submissions; it will meet political parties, trade unions and other interests; I trust it will take evidence in session in Northern Ireland.

We're familiar with de Valera's edict in 1918 that "*Labour must wait*". **This is not a time for Labour to wait any longer.**

A parallel Commission is underway within Fianna Fail, led by Dermot Ahern—to report by next Easter. It is important that Labour makes the political weather on this. No other Party is better placed to so—Labour is the only Party that can conceivably have appeal across all communities; the only Party that can appeal to people as citizens.

A strong Labour Party in Northern Ireland can give political coherence to the trade union movement; and the structure of trade union organization may provide a template for Labour organization in the North.

Delegates, the Northern Ireland administration is up and running. And let's be clear, the Stormont administration is better than unelected Direct Rule. But the fact remains that Stormont is an administration—it is not a Government. It is made up of 4 communal parties, two Catholic and 2 Protestant. If we're honest, current trends indicate that this might soon be only 1 Catholic and 1 Protestant party.

The Labour Party is a governmental Party; it is a party of critical mass with over 6000 members, 20 TDs, 6 Senators, over a hundred councillors; we are bigger than Sinn Fein and bigger than the DUP; we are a Party of '*gravitas*'; a Party capable of formulating reasoned, practical policies in the interests of working people. **There is no Party like us in Northern Ireland.**

Finally, the Commission will be cognizant that an island wide economic dynamic is underway.

The Republic of Ireland invests, through the National Development Plan, in infrastructure in Northern Ireland; it invests in the 6 Cross Border implementation bodies; it

invests, through the Department of Foreign Affairs, in a myriad of community and reconciliation projects in Northern Ireland.

As sure as night follows day, an island-wide **polity** will follow.

It's incumbent on Labour to lead that development—there is no better Party to do so.

Support Motion 79

## REPORT

# Labour Party Debate On Palestine

There was debate on "*International and European affairs*" on the Sunday morning of the Labour Party Conference in Wexford held in November. The agenda for Conference in this section included a resolution on "*Palestine and Israel*" proposed by the NEC, which was the work of the party's foreign affairs spokesperson, Michael D Higgins.

The text of it was as follows:

"Conference calls on the Contact Group, the EU and the USA to work towards the establishment of a permanent secretariat and so to advance an agreement within the framework of international law and UN Resolutions such as would respect the right of Palestinians to enjoyment of their fundamental rights and also recognises the legitimate right of Israel to security."

Speaking in support of the motion, Michael Robinson of the Northern Ireland Labour Forum said he had feared that the motion was more timid than the circumstances would dictate and that the balance of this issue was not always to be found in the middle. He had been reassured however by the speech of the mover, Maggs O'Brien, who had just returned from the Occupied Palestinian Territories and had borne witness to the appalling situation she found.

Michael still felt there was a certain naivete about the motion in the assertion of the principles of International Law. The notion of International Law is based on the understanding that there must be the consistent application of universal principles, rather than the mere arbitrary exercise of power. He said it would be difficult to convince a Palestinian that there was such a thing, when, because of the US veto in the UN Security Council and its overwhelming support for Israel, the daily conditions of life for Palestinians were a defiance of the notion.

Indeed a report by the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), Professor John Dugard, had noted: "*The International Community has identified three regimes as inimical to human rights—colonialism, apartheid and foreign occupation.*" Israel, he asserted,

was guilty of all three. His report went on to state: "*The 1973 International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid appears to be violated by many practices.*"

The report had continued, noting:

"There is a humanitarian crisis in the OPT resulting from the withholding of funds owed to the Palestinian Authority by the Government of Israel (estimated at about US \$50 to \$60 million per month) and from the economic isolation of the territory by the United States, the European Union and other states in response to the election of the Hamas Government." It concludes: "In effect Israel and sections of the International Community have imposed collective punishment on the Palestinian people."

Michael said that "*the International Community, including the EU may do these things, but they don't do them in my name nor in the name of this party*". It is for these reasons that the "*Industrial arm*" of the movement, which was ahead of the Party in this, had recognized the situation for what it was and had determined through ICTU, to embark on a thoroughgoing campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions, and for an end to the Euro-Med, "*favoured trading*" status agreement with Israel.

In closing, Michael reminded conference of the words of Golda Meir who had famously declared: "*There is no such thing as the Palestinian people.*"

"Well" said Michael, "there is such a thing as the Palestinian people and they have the right to return to their own land. They have a right to live there in dignity and they have a right to expect your support."

**David Morrison** produced these reports from the Labour Party Conference

## Fine Gael Negativity

Fine Gael has warned the SDLP that if it were to enter into formal relations with Fianna Fail in the North, it would fundamentally change its relations with the other parties in the Republic and the SDLP would lose its unique selling point of having good relations with all southern parties. In a press statement issued on 28th November, after meeting SDLP leader Mark Durkan, Fine Gael leader, Enda Kenny, said:

"I would remind the members of the SDLP that their party has enjoyed positive relations with all parties in the Republic, giving the SDLP unprecedented access down through the years to Irish governments of all political persuasions. This has also resulted in cross-party political support for the SDLP.

"For our part, Fine Gael has always had a strong relationship with the SDLP. I would argue that, during the height of

the Northern troubles, it was Fine Gael's policy that was closest to that of the SDLP. Former Fine Gael Taoisigh Liam Cosgrave, Garret Fitzgerald and John Bruton were insistent on the SDLP being centrally involved in all efforts towards a peace settlement. In recent years I have been consistently critical of the current Government for excluding and sidelining the SDLP from the negotiations on the restoration of power-sharing. In addition, members of Fine Gael have actively supported SDLP candidates for both Westminster and

Assembly elections.

"Positive relations with the southern parties can be a unique selling point for the SDLP in an era of growing north-south economic and political cooperation. However, the SDLP membership need to know that if they decide to enter into an exclusive or formal relationship with one party, then the SDLP's relationships with the other parties in the south will change very fundamentally. Such a move would, I believe, be politically damaging to the SDLP in the long term."

experience of having to live with such a large and mostly hostile Protestant community. If anything, their environment is mainly benign in comparison with some areas of the North. They have no particular life-threatening territory to enter on their travels. Nor do they have to put up with daily insults about their religious beliefs and random assaults.

There is still a large so-called security force along with a number of loyalist armed groups to contend with.

A British soldier (as reported by *Republican News*), a former lance-corporal with the Devonshire and Dorset Regiment has revealed that high-technology spying equipment is still being used to monitor the homes and activities of republicans North and South. He claims that while *green* troops were being withdrawn, up to a thousand covert ones were replacing them. If disturbed they have been given the right to open fire. This is the continuing reality of the North. Coupled with MI5 being recently entrenched in headquarters within the military fortification of the Hollywood Barracks in County Down. Along with this, the British Army's notorious 14th Intelligence, also known as the Force Research Unit, is still operating in the North and possibly in the South.

Sinn Fein, on behalf of the Catholic population, in the North has attained the right of equality for that community. Anyone who has lived and been brought up under the old Stormont regime will understand what this means. There are already loud protests and overreaction about the Catholics getting important jobs. This includes some Protestant members of my own family. Even from within my own family it was a bitter truth to see the young Protestant members gain good-salaried jobs, buy cars and get mortgages on houses while the Catholic side of the family were mostly on the dole.

As for the anti-imperialist fight, the Southern-based republicans saw the Northern conflict as the cockpit for all their ambitions. They wanted the military conflict to go on until the Brits left. They never did say precisely what would happen to those Protestants who were not wooed over by their fallacies of 1798, and the greatest majority cannot be wooed over by a few historical figures in the past who happened to be Protestant. Northern Sinn Fein, on the other hand, has a better understanding of the Protestant community now but need to stop patronising

## What Is Possible?

*Irish Republican News* ([Http://republican-news.org](http://republican-news.org)) of 28th November reports the resignation of Sinn Fein Assembly member Gerry McHugh from the party. McHugh is the Assembly member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone and a member of the Fermanagh District Council. He cites "*undemocratic practices*" as his reason for leaving: "*It's top-down dictation*", and "*I feel the direction Sinn Fein is taking is more about appeasement of the British government and administrating British rule in Ireland rather than working towards the end of British occupation*".

Some of the anti-Imperialist section of the Republican movement (referred to in the Joe Keenan article *What Is To Be Done* (September 2007 IPR) continues to leave Sinn Fein. The *Republican News* website also says:

"Sinn Fein has been unable to find candidates to fill positions on the District Policing partnership in Strabane, County Tyrone. The party was given five posts on the board but could only find three councillors willing to participate. As a result the two spare posts were offered to the DUP."

A life-long republican, Gerry McHugh, intends to stand as an independent at the next election. I would think Sinn Fein has been expecting such defections to happen, having attained its goal of power-sharing and being able to operate on a level playing field now. That is probably the end of his political career, as happens to most independents. Sinn Fein seems confident and strong enough to be able to report these rifts in their own publications.

By designating a section of the republican movement as anti-imperialist doesn't mean that the overwhelming majority of Northern Catholics aren't anti-imperialist. They most likely need time to consolidate their achievements.

Hibernianism has been mentioned a

number of times in the *Irish Political Review* since the article *What Is To Be Done* by Joe Keenan appeared in the September 2007 issue. To me that article was a wake-up call for those who tended to denigrate the risen Northern Catholic with accusations varying from war weariness to surrender. As Joe Keenan pointed out the Catholic goal had been achieved and a ceasefire had to be negotiated. Certain Whitehall seurocrats thought the war should continue but the continually developing military prowess of the South Armagh Provos must have caused the seurocrats to be overruled.

I also used the word Hibernianism in a comment on Joe's article. This must be the wrong description and could be misinterpreted as Sinn Fein's present position. Soon after, IPR published the views on Joe Devlin, as seen by James Connolly, along with many other remarks which seemed to imply that Sinn Fein had taken this pre-partition stance. But back then it was a very different world that could never have forecast the successful Northern struggle more than eighty years hence.

Sinn Fein has taken the decision to engage with the one million Protestant community on a political level. It is also engaging with the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). Taking part in some form of dialogue with the need to have major reforms in the PSNI, is realistic and a must for the Catholic population. It certainly is not being acquiescent in the face of continual British plans for their hiatus called Northern Ireland. The PSNI is being asked some very awkward questions at the moment and the European Court of Human Rights is listening. This EU organisation rarely sides with the victim but it frees the North out of its media straitjacket for a few minutes.

Southern republicans have no

them.

Still the Sinn Fein of Adams and Mc Guinness tends to try and show its republican credentials from time to time. Again 1798 remains a favourite. I would think this to be a useless exercise which is fooling no one and must be embarrassing to the Catholic community that they represent. They have also recently taken to describing the British military forces and their surrogates as Crown Forces, much in the manner of Republican Sinn Fein. That is a reminder of the heroic 1916-1921 struggle down South. Maybe Sinn Fein feels it needs more depth. But a different set of conditions now hold sway in the North, with the Northern Sinn Fein's history barely thirty years old now.

What Sinn Fein is doing today, in my opinion, is what a well-developed communist movement would do—being pragmatic, dealing with the limitations, occupying electable seats under any form of government or make-do assemblies. Obviously such a movement is also ruthless in rooting-out dissenters. Northern Sinn Fein is not for the puritan republican. Most effective political and military organisations are not for the fair-minded. Sinn Fein is on its own in the North with plenty of political enemies to contend with.

I sometimes wonder about the high-profile spies within the Northern republican movement in the past (and I don't mean the Sean O'Callaghan's of this world). What was their object in passing on information about their comrades? Was it a strategy against certain trends in their movement? The long war was a life and death matter which hatched double-agents, maybe much in line with the highly successful German communist spy-ring, the *Rote Kapelle* (Red Orchestra) during WW2. The old Irish taboo of not informing (observed by both Catholic and Protestant) seems no more. Sean O'Callaghan even boasts about it in his book. That was one former Southern republican who didn't understand the Northern struggle. Having said that, his book was interesting to read.

Sinn Fein has turned out to be a highly-modern movement and definitely unlike the older puritanical movement of non-participation with the enemy. Old Sinn Fein was a movement in the 1950s of meetings in bare-rooms and incarceration in urine-smelling cells. I was never tempted to join them as a teenager back in the late 1940s. As a young communist activist in Belfast I certainly, with others of my group, met plenty of them for the purpose of hammering out a common policy, but their world was too Catholic even for the Catholics among us. Too stern. Too entrenched in the politics of the South.

During the 1950s the Southern IRA invaded the North and seized the town of Belleek for a time. More disastrous raids in the border areas caused severe IRA casualties. They were not supported by the Catholic population and, having very few safe houses, were reduced to digging hideaway bunkers in fields: a few were discovered on land owned by the Catholic farmers. Most of these farmers hadn't given permission for this but were arrested just the same.

It all seems like fantasy now but what was on the agenda for some young leftist Belfast radicals—mixed Catholic and Protestant—was the infiltration of the Irish Army in an effort to bring about a military *coup-d'état*. There was certain amount of discontent in the Irish Army at the time at inaction over the North. A number of them had already got round to getting application forms. From this distance in history it now seems like pure folly but some of these young people in later life achieved success in high-flying careers by their own efforts.

Another plot was to assassinate the entire cabinet of the Stormont government. One of the group had a father working in the civil service at Stormont—a former soldier and a member of the Unionist Party—he worked in the stationery department sharpening pencils and filling inkwells. He innocently gave his son a grand tour of the Stormont building, who mapped it out. An angry young Englishman who resented being conscripted and doing his National Service at Palace barracks, Holywood, at one point offered sten-guns to a member of this group. Various members met him at week-ends in Belfast dance halls. It would be like smashing a wasp's nest then hoping the right people would get stung, a kind of agent-provocateur work.

A couple of years later with youthful enthusiasm waning news came through of the attack by Fidel Castro, and his comrades, on the Moncada military barracks at Santiago de Cuba on July 26th 1953. The CPNI immediately denounced Castro as an *adventurist*.

That is the North—constant plotting. And this radical group of youths was no exception. They were the pre-history of what was to eventually happen. Any Northern Catholic knew in their bones that a great conflagration would one day happen. When there is such a feeling of being oppressed you are not thinking in the slot of anti-partition but how you will get Stormont off your back and what you will do to those who try and stop you.

England's brutal war against those fighting injustice is now an integral part of the Catholic physic. Most Northern Catholics are anti-Imperialist by emotion and intellect anyway. I have witnessed a group of them with tears in their eyes when the news of Indian independence was announced in 1947. The pre-1921 history of the Northern Catholic has no relevance for the present day. They have been through the meat-grinder since then.

You read about old republicans living into their nineties, having led a life of deprivation, imprisonment, living as social outcasts in their own country and existing in limbo from any political engagement with their enemies. Most Northern Catholic young people are not going to even try too compete with that image. It seems like the passive martyrdom of old republicanism. Some of the provos have since admitted to preferring rock bands to Irish traditional music and a few have said they supported football teams like Manchester United or Arsenal. To me these are people secure enough in their identities to take in the more constructive parts of England.

Southern republican influence in the North had been on the wane maybe fifty years before the advent of Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness. There didn't seem to be anywhere to go for disillusioned Northern republicans. Some of them joined the Communist Party of Northern Ireland (CPNI) and the younger ones the Young Worker's League—the youth wing of the CPNI. The communist movement in the North being Protestant-dominated then gave rise to a small republican group forming within it on the sly with some young Protestants attracted to it. These were the people who tried to direct the Party back into its previous Nationalist furrow of the 1930s. When this didn't happen some serious plotting began.

As for the future, what the Northern Catholic has gained can't be taken away. It is difficult to visualise an all-out anti-Imperialist struggle taking place in both sections of the country anytime soon. But it isn't hard to forecast that dissident republicans will still try and inveigle the Northern Catholic to sacrifice themselves in the name of puritanism and ultimately political isolation. The fact will always remain that British hegemony in the North will have to be dealt with one day along with their encroachment of the South. Maybe the first step in that direction has been taken but not in the fashion that the republican puritans would recognise. Maybe.

**Wilson John Haire**

# Shorts

from  
*the Long Fellow*

## DRUGS, BUT NO SEX OR ROCK AND ROLL

The Long Fellow once saw a British Television programme about Mariah Carey. In the course of a discussion on Carey's personal problems, an American contributor interrupted and said: "*But you don't understand America is not like Britain. In order to be famous you have to be talented. Carey is not like the Spice girls. She can sing.*"

In Britain mediocrity is celebrated and talent is denigrated by nonentities. Since the famous have no talent, they have nothing to sell except the intimate details of their dreary private lives. And it appears that Ireland follows Britain. There is also the phenomenon of the famous for being famous and nothing behind it, or almost nothing behind it.

Ireland's party girl of 2007 was not at a party when she collapsed from a cocaine overdose before dying five days later.

Kevin Doyle and John Grey were not famous and *did* collapse at a party. But it was some party. Doyle had never met his hosts before. A lucky bag of drugs was distributed at the "*session house*" in a Waterford council estate. Fifteen people collapsed from eating damp cocaine and three became seriously ill. Doyle and Grey's life support machines were switched off more than a week afterwards.

But they were all very well behaved. If there was music at the house, the neighbours were not aware of it. The first they heard of anything untoward was the arrival of the ambulances.

And in the case of Katy French the combined resources of the national media took days to establish where she was before she was rushed to hospital.

A few weeks before, Ian O'Doherty, a journalist from the *Irish Independent*, said on the *Late Late Show* that he and his friends used to regularly snort cocaine but he stopped. The reason for stopping was not out of any sense of social responsibility but that he was bored. O'Doherty believe that the individual has a right to do whatever he wants with his body.

The remarkable aspect of this admission of having committed a criminal offence is that it was made in front of the Minister of State responsible for Drugs policy, Pat Carey. Carey made no comment. Exactly the same thing happened on *Prime Time* a few days later, except in this case the journalist was Gavin Lambe-Murphy of the *Irish Daily Mail*, who has also not been charged for crimes against journalism.

We still have a society, but aspects of social life have retreated into a private sphere. The consumption of the old drugs (alcohol and nicotine) takes place in a social setting (the smoking ban notwithstanding), where there is social control. The new drugs, by contrast, are taken in public toilets and private houses out of sight (and mind).

It appears that Ireland has less of a problem than other countries. The statistics show that Spain is at the top of the cocaine abuse league table in Europe. Elsewhere in the world the USA is not far behind Spain. Dr. Chris Luke, a doctor working in Cork University Hospital said on RTE radio that the volume of cocaine-related cases is similar to what he experienced in a Liverpool hospital ten years ago.

Of course there is no reason why the Irish should compare themselves with the worst countries in the world. There is no doubt that Ireland has a problem. Dr. Luke is sceptical of the value of educating teenagers on the dangers of drugs. Such an approach merely offers a menu of options to curious youngsters. Potential users are rarely deterred by being made aware of the dangers. On the other hand, he believes front-line workers such as Gardai, medical staff and social workers should receive a thorough education and training programme.

A few years ago the Long Fellow was shocked to see French teenagers being subjected to a random search by the Police. But the drug problem in France does not appear to be of the same scale as Ireland. Perhaps such repressive measures are a price worth paying?

## THE IRISH TIMES COVERAGE

A footnote to the Katy French story was the coverage of *The Irish Times* on 8th December. Alone among the national daily newspapers the self proclaimed *newspaper of reference* failed to report that the post-mortem indicated that French had traces of cocaine in her system, even though this had already been confirmed on the previous night's RTE news. Whether this omission was explained by snobbishness or incompetence is a moot point.

If it was snobbishness the newspaper made up for this (if not the incompetence) the following Monday. The beatification of French in the John Waters column was an event wondrous to behold!

## ANOTHER OMISSION

The Long Fellow noticed that the on 8th December *The Irish Times* had an interesting report from London on the aborted Kieran Fallon race-fixing trial. A certain Mr. Bernard Purcell wrote the report.

This calls to mind another journalistic omission almost exactly eight years ago. But this time the omission was not confined

to *The Irish Times*. The *Irish Examiner*, *Irish Independent* and *Sunday Independent* also failed to discover in December 1999 a letter from the British Ambassador Andrew Gilchrist. The letter, which was released by the British Public Records Office under the 30-year rule, describes a conversation with Major Thomas McDowell who was the Chief Executive of *The Irish Times* in 1969. As regular readers of the *Irish Political Review* will know the British Ambassador wrote that McDowell referred to his editor Douglas Gageby as a "*renegade or white nigger*" on Northern matters.

Bernard Purcell was representing the *Irish Independent* eight years ago and now he is writing for *The Irish Times*.

## HARNEY MUST GO

The Long Fellow is fortunate in not having recent direct experience of the Health Service. Anecdotal evidence suggests that it is not good, although not quite as bad as some reports in the media would suggest. A work colleague, who has no private insurance, was recently diagnosed with cancer and was treated quite promptly. Other acquaintances have had less satisfactory experiences.

Mistakes occur even in some of the best Health systems. For example Guillaume Depardieu the son of the famous actor Gerard contracted a serious infection while in hospital and had to have his leg amputated. And yet many consider the French system among the best in the world.

Nevertheless there appears to have been far too many mistakes in the Irish system and no health expert thinks our system is anywhere near being the best in the world. Private and public systems run parallel to each other and the encouragement of a market-driven private sector creates a vested interest in the failure of the public system. Why pay private insurance if the public system is first class?

With all the billions of Euros ploughed into the system the Irish Health Service is second rate. In the No Confidence debate Mary Harney was complimented on her determination and willingness to do the job. But since when have good intentions been accepted as excuses for failure? She has been operating on the false premise that the problems of the health service can be cured with the implementation of market solutions. She has failed and reform will continue to fail as long as she is Health Minister.

## SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP

One of the few interesting comments on the current state of the Health Service came from the former Fine Gael leader Alan Dukes in a discussion programme on News Talk 106. Dukes believes that the abolition of the local Health Boards a few years ago was a disaster. The replacement of them with the Health Service Executive

has resulted in a new bureaucracy with the added problem of eroding public accountability.

The intervention of Dukes prompted thoughts of a "Tallaght Strategy" for the Health Service. Dukes correctly pointed out that, unlike with the economy 20 years ago, there is no party consensus on the Health question (he didn't say that Fine Gael doesn't know its own mind on anything these days).

It is also the case that Fianna Fail, unlike in 1987, doesn't need the support of Fine Gael. But it does need support from the wider society. The Long Fellow thinks that the mechanism of social partnership, which was decisive in solving our economic problems 20 years ago, should be applied to the problems of our Health Service.

#### EUROPEAN CONSTITUTIONAL TREATY

This year the eyes of Europe will be concentrated on Ireland. The right-wing populist President of France has ignored the popular will of the French people and decide, now that some some cosmetic changes have been made, to ram it through the French Parliament. So Ireland will be the only country to hold a referendum on the issue.

Already the campaign for a "Yes" vote has begun. The European Green Group has urged recalcitrant Irish environmentalists to support the Treaty. Pierre Moscovici, a possible future leader of the French Socialist Party, visited Ireland in December to urge support for the Treaty as well.

But there are three straws in the wind that bode ill for supporters of the Treaty. Firstly, the EU is trying to impose standard Corporation Tax rates across the Union. Normally, the Long Fellow would support such a measure, if the EU were moving in a social direction. But the EU remains wedded to free market values. Why should Irish people support such measures, which are against the national interest if there are no prospects of any compensatory gains?

Secondly, in recent times world commodity prices have increased because of urbanisation in China and the pressure to find substitutes for fossil fuels. The price supports and production quotas under the CAP may have outlived their usefulness.

Finally, the EU's rigid adherence to a free market ideology has even alienated some pro-market europhiles. The *Sunday Independent* journalist and former employee of the European Central Bank, Marc Coleman, who has been writing more interestingly since he was released from *The Irish Times* strait-jacket, was shocked at the heavy-handed interference of EU bureaucrats in Eamon O' Cuiv's language policies. Coleman believes that there are some things that are more important than the Free Market and one of them is the preservation of Irish culture. He supports O'Cuiv's policy of preserving

Irish speaking clusters in the country by restricting the influx of non-Irish speaking workers into these locations. He also supports a policy of total language immersion in the Gaelscoileanna in opposition to the policy of Education

Minister Mary Hanafin.

#### HAPPY NEW YEAR!

The Long Fellow wishes all his readers a happy New Year and warmly anticipates a very interesting 2008!

#### Report of Remarks by Prof. Cathal M. Brugha's Launch of Eoin Neeson's *Myths From Easter 1916*

### Myths, Old And New

I am very happy to be associated with congratulating Eoin Neeson on his latest book, *Myths From Easter 1916. Gon-eiri leis an leabhair, agus go mba fada buan é Eoin féin.*

Eoin's family and mine are connected. My grandfather, Terence Mac Swiney, and Eoin's father, Sean Neeson, became friends in Frongoch after the 1916 Rising. My grandmother Muriel (Murphy), had long been a close friend of his mother, Geraldine (Sullivan), who became Muriel's bridesmaid. Both were accomplished pianists and pupils of the distinguished Cork piano teacher, Tilly Fleischmann. Indeed, maybe we owe it to Geraldine Neeson for introducing my grandparents to each other.

Talking about owing and reference to Germany, I should mention that my mother owes a lot to Germany, where she grew up, but also to the Clissmans who are represented here by her old friend Budge (Mulcahy) Clissman, who intended to be here.

Terence Mac Swiney, when Lord Mayor of Cork, was also Brigadier of the Cork City Volunteer brigade, of which Sean Neeson was Brigade Intelligence Officer. Both were teachers and very involved in cultural activities.

For many years now Eoin's books and writings have contributed significantly to our knowledge and awareness of recent Irish history. His pioneer work, *The Civil War In Ireland*, did much to clarify our understanding of that sad event, and helped to fill a gap in our history.

In *Myths From Easter 1916* Eoin disposes of some of the misrepresentations about the Rising and its aftermath. For doing this we owe Eoin Neeson a good deal. Here he deals trenchantly and precisely with prejudice directed at the Rising and with related questions that need clarification because of the growing obfuscation by ill- or un-informed 'revisionists'.

We are in the decade coming up to the 100th anniversary of 1916, following which the perspective on the events that led to our freedom will be, more or less, set in stone. It is important that we passionately pursue and confront the truth in an open and reconciliatory fashion,

despite the emotional legacy of hurt following the War of Independence and the Civil War. I am thinking particularly of all three so-called 'sides', in other words, including the Anglo-Irish who lost out in the War of Independence.

Some of this third group are associated with historical revisionism, and appear to be helping to create some of the myths about this period, that Eoin so ably deals with in his book.

In these few words I would like to address the problem of revisionism. History and politics are mirrors of one another. All the historians I have ever known had strong opinions about politics. I have no problem with that. We have just had an election campaign, with its inevitable winners and losers. The writing of history will also have its winners and losers. The only way to ensure that there is a balanced view of the history of how we gained our independence is by having a vigorous historical debate, in which all views are given an airing, and the truth is revealed. Our recent election campaign was affected by media attempts to bias the outcome. There is a parallel problem with historical debate, when historians such as Eoin Neeson have difficulty publishing their work. That is why I am so happy that the Aubane Press have published his book.

History is about providing a simplified understanding of events. On the other hand, a true understanding reveals nuances and shades of colour that are much more revealing than the cartoon image that people can often develop.

For his *Third Myth* Eoin demolishes the view that the start of the Civil War was a simple matter. The War of Independence was a success, in that much was achieved for comparatively little cost in terms of lives lost and damage to property and the economy. The Civil War was a disaster, especially from the point of view of those heroes who fought in the War of Independence.

The aftermath of the Treaty divided the Army into at least four camps. On the Republican side there were those for and those against taking a stand in the Four Courts. On the pro-Treaty side one group was planning to use the Treaty as a

"stepping-stone" and were actively engaged in starting a mini-War of Independence in what was to become the Six Counties. This latter policy died with Collins in Béal na mBláth. The other group on the Free State side favoured implementing the Treaty as it was. It was these who took on the job to make the new state work. And, to their credit, when less than a decade later in 1932 they lost the General Election, they did not baulk at handing over the reins to people that they had every reason not to trust.

However, after every war, the winners write the history. The enthusiasm for *post-hoc* validation, and for security of the institutions, extended into ensuring that the nation's children would not be contaminated by so-called "dangerous views". Former heroes of the War of Independence who had taken the Republican side in the Civil War were denied work, especially in the teaching professions. Many emigrated. In the History Departments of the Universities the Free State line dominated. Authoritative historians, with the notable exceptions of Dorothy McArdle and Thomas P. O'Neill, that reflected a Republican perspective, found it hard to get published.

There wasn't much appetite for historical controversy anyway. It made sense not to teach the history of that time of terrible divisions amongst great comrades, and within families in some cases. It was left to another era to write the history about events about which there were many versions.

We are now in the decade coming up to the 100th anniversary of 1916. Now is the time for recollection, analysis and review of the events a hundred years ago. It is the responsibility of this generation to ensure that the truth is uncovered, now that the records have, in the main, been released, been deposited in accessible historical archives, and properly catalogued.

It is also important that records in private collections are not lost, that boxes of papers associated with grandparents who never spoke about their part in the War of Independence are not consigned from the attic straight to the dump without a care whether they might be of historical value.

We are indebted to people such as Eoin Neeson, Brian Murphy, Manus O'Riordan, Jack Lane, and many others, who tirelessly work to correct falsehood and reveal the truth about our history. We are equally deeply grateful for their work in the *Irish Political Review* and the Aubane Press, because these provide valuable outlets for views that the established media, and in some cases publishers, find unpalatable. Were it not for the people in the Aubane Press, Eoin's book might not have ever seen the light of day, and that would have been a loss.

History is ongoing; it is not static. The national perspective of Pearse and the international perspective of Connolly still have relevance today. It is important that we assert the view that we owe our national freedom to the people who fought in the War of Independence. But neither should we forget the importance of 1916 and the 1918 Election in forcing the British to back off in their threat to conscript thousands of young Irishmen to go to the front lines to fight in the British/Tsarist Imperial War. Many Irishmen owe their lives to this. The War of Independence ousted those who ruled in Ireland on behalf of the British Empire. This pro-British Empire world-view has not gone away. It has evolved into an Anglo-American view of world politics, which is as inappropriate now as when it was formed in the early 20th Century.

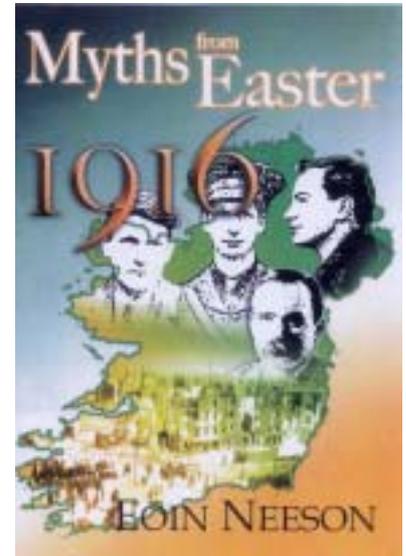
For some years now revisionist historians have been delving through the newly-released files, looking for evidence to support their case. In some instances their wish to serve their cause is stronger than their passion for the truth. They can be selective in the facts they report, the sources they use, and the authors they cite.

I am reminded of the words of Cicero: "*Who does not know that the first law of historical writing is the truth?*" and of Abraham Lincoln: "*History is not history unless it is the truth.*"

I would like to congratulate Eoin Neeson on writing his book and Jack Lane and all at Aubane Press on publishing it. *Go raibh maith agaibh.*

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Minister for Justice, Brian Lenihan, also launched the book.



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11th Roger Casement Symposium, October 2007

## Scribbled Recollections

### The Congo

Two speakers focused on the theme for this year which was "*the Congo*". Appropriately they both were natives of equatorial Africa.

Fidèle Mutwarasibo spoke of Rwanda and its connection to the war in the Congo. Though Rwanda has no natural resources except the arable land, it had a big influence on what happened in Congo. When the Tutsis re-established control over Rwanda in 1994 their enemies took refuge in Congo. This set off a chain of events which led to a lot of bloodshed. Regimes from other countries also came into Congo in an effort to take control of some of the countries rich and vast resources.

He described the events of 1994 when there was an extensive massacre of Tutsis which has since been described as genocide. He saw the current Government in Rwanda as a form of dictatorship.

He described the events of the last decade or so in Congo, where millions have died in a brutal war. Communities have been terrorised with the threat of

rape. Child soldiers have been used. Much of the motivation for the trouble has been related to efforts to acquire control over resources.

A contributor from the floor spoke of the Tutsis as having been troublemakers for hundreds of years. They had been in league with Belgian colonisers. Now they were in league with the Americans. They had a history of waging war.

Dr. Jean Pierre Eyanga, originally a native of Congo, said he had been a leader of a political resistance movement there and that he had been a senior Veterinary Surgeon. His talk was mainly about the history and geography of Congo.

Most striking are the vast resources of the country. There is Cobalt, Colton, Tin and Uranium, and oil among many more metals and minerals. It has the potential to be among the wealthiest countries of the world. Many of these materials are used for the manufacture of heavily demanded consumer goods such as mobile phones. Yet annual per capita income is no more than \$120. The population is estimated at 53 million.

There are many languages spoken and there are more than 200 ethnic groups, the majority of them Bantu. This diversity makes politics and government more difficult. French is the European language in wide use. There are very many native

languages of which Lingala, Kingwana, Kikongo and Tshiluba are the main ones. In times gone by, before colonisation, different tribes and linguistic groups lived amicably together. Society was organised according to a hierarchy of institutions. At the base was the family and above that the village and above that the tribe or ethnic group. The village could contain people of diverse ethnic groups.

He believed that western business and political interests did not see it as advantageous for them to have a functioning Congolese state. Such a state would be able to negotiate good prices for the countries' great resources. Consequently instability, factionalism and warfare were encouraged.

He narrated a brief history of the Congo from the time of Leopold II to Casement's investigations to decolonisation in 1960 to the regime of Mobutu.

The recent war in Congo has claimed 4 million lives and the fighting is not over yet. It has been a cruel and brutal time. He mused at the end if perhaps it was not now time for another Casement to arrive on the scene.

## **Colaiste Uladh 1906 - 2006**

Seósamh O Ceallaigh, a secondary teacher from Falcarriga in Donegal spoke about his book of the above title, written in Irish, on the history of *Coláiste Uladh*.

This college, in Clochaneely in the Donegal Gaeltacht was set up in 1906. Its purpose was to provide some instruction in the Irish language to teachers. At that time there was little knowledge extant on how Irish was written and teachers were not instructed on how to teach it in the official school system.

In 1904 *Coláiste na Mumhan* was founded and in 1905 *Coláiste Chonnacht*.

The founders of *Colaiste Uladh* were an interesting bunch. They were mainly women. Mostly they were Protestant. Ide MacNeill and Margaret Dobbs were very involved and they had a lot to do with the evolution of the language movement. Rose Young was involved in the enterprise too. She was like some of the others a unionist.

Casement had helped with the setting up and financing of the College. He had attempted to learn Irish himself. He found it difficult and never mastered it. It appears he acquired a limited command of it. He had a reputation among people who knew him there as a generous and caring man.

Pearse and Joseph Mary Plunkett had also attended the college. These people were not nationalists merely, O Ceallaigh emphasised but cultural nationalists. Independence was meant to herald significant cultural change.

The middle class people who founded the college led an utterly more opulent lifestyle than the local people subsisting

on fishing and small farms. The coming of the College gave the locals a new feeling of value as it indicated that their language and culture was held in esteem, at least by some.

The speaker teaches history in a Donegal secondary school. He is not impressed with the current history curriculum. For instance, in a textbook used for the Junior Certificate there are only 12 pages devoted to the Golden Age in Irish history, from the 6th to the 9th centuries out of 400 pages. There is not enough effort made to give the young a positive view of their historical inheritance.

Education in the Irish state, in terms of the ideals of the cultural nationalist founders of the movement that led to that state, has been a "*miserable failure*". He lamented the continuing gradual loss of connection with the past and with a sense of place. New housing estates were springing up with names like *Cedar Downs*, phoney anglicisms devoid of relevance to where they were supposed to name. Much popular culture is a matter of *Coronation Street* and *Eastenders*.

His father, a shopkeeper who used to do some folklore collecting, had given him a pride in the Irish language and Gaelic heritage. He was enthusiastic about transmitting this on. He was of the opinion Irish is a difficult language to learn. Still, the business of teaching it has been handled very ineptly. He saw the language being recognised as an official language of the EU as a very positive development.

A speaker from the floor asserted that the main reason Irish had become an official EU language was for the benefit of Irish employees of the Brussels bureaucracy. For promotion purposes a command of three EU languages was required. By giving official status to the Irish language Irish officials had only to master one continental language to become in a position to advance their careers.

## **Investigating The "Black Diaries"**

Kevin Mannerings began by discussing the essentials of propaganda as envisaged by Admiral Sir Reginald "Blinker" Hall, who was Director of the Office of Naval Intelligence during the Great War. Hall discussed these ideas in an incomplete draft autobiography. Interestingly, that particular piece of writing comes to an abrupt halt at the point the infamous diaries are about to enter the scene.

These ideas are also discussed in *The Eyes Of The Navy*, published in 1955 by Admiral Sir William James, one of Hall's deputies.

Essential to this approach to propaganda is that an image is taken from the enemy, is manipulated or twisted around and then fed back. Hall is known to have used this

method on many occasions during WWI, such as when he manufactured forged medals commemorating the sinking of the Lusitania.

In essence much of the material fed back is true and so it authenticates the false information which uses it as a carrying medium, so to speak.

Original diaries, which have been subjected to deletion and interpolation, fit this pattern of approach very well.

The world was first alerted to the atrocious treatment meted out to the native people of the Putumayo by a German explorer named Hardenberg. An article of his appeared in *Truth* magazine. There was a shocking picture of the remains of a woman who had been tied up and forced to die from lack of food and water. The reason she had been subjected to this brutal death is that she had protested at her daughter being press ganged into becoming a sexual slave. Hardenberg's themes were sexual exploitation and violence.

Casement had written that, before the exploitation by the rubber industry, VD had been unknown in the Putumayo. He had set out once to encounter one of the harems of one of the rubber barons. He noted there were girls as young as nine.

Part of Casement's mission, as he saw it, was to counter a regime of sexual exploitation. The propagandising process of the Diaries was to turn this around on its head and make Casement himself into a sexual predator.

Mannerings called our attention to a reproduction of the Diary entry for Monday 2nd January 1911. The first words are "In Paris". The capital "I" and "P" are described as unique in the writings ascribed to Casement, in the way they are formed. He claimed this was an indication the forgers were in the process of learning their craft.

He theorised the project of modifying the Diaries could have served as a master class in forgery wherein practitioners steadily practised and improved their skills. Thus some material appears crude and unconvincing. This is what can account for the anomalous "I" and "P".

This page, however, can not be examined with high-tech interpolation detection equipment as it is coated with polyvinyl acetate!

In the National Library of Ireland there is a letter that appears to have been sent from Count Bluecher to Roger Casement. On the top of the letter there is scrawled a brief sexual comment, a reference to the perceived level of arousal of the man who had personally delivered it.

This is interesting as one of the examples of what appears to be interpolated matter appearing in an archive at a remove from the Diaries themselves. He displayed a reproduction on the screen.

This letter had passed through the hands

of British Intelligence. Bluecher's wife was English. Both of them had been debriefed after the war. Correspondence had been examined.

The letter has not the usual greeting and signature of Bluecher's letters to Casement and so it looks like a summary copy that he had kept of an original he had sent by post. It appears the summary copy was not returned. Instead, it was modified and was eventually presented with other written materials to the National Library in Dublin.

One question which has lingered regarding the Diaries question is when exactly they came into the possession of

the Special Branch. They had been in Casement's lodgings in Ebury St. in a trunk. Kevin believes the best answer lies with the statement of Gertrude Parry, Casement's relative, who stated she went to the lodgings, in 1914 and discovered his belongings had been taken away. This left plenty of time to carry out an extensive forgery.

This is in contrast to Casement's MI5 file, which claims the authorities only got hold of them in 1916.

**Tim O'Sullivan**  
(27th Oct 2007)

*To be continued*

for himself in the following passages from *West Briton*.

#### EXTRACT FROM *WEST BRITON*:

"It [Malahide, Co. Dublin] was in fact, quite a typical English village; it might have had a Miss Mitford for chronicler, a John Betjeman as its poet laureate. But Malahide was in Ireland; and in that part of Ireland which had severed itself from the United Kingdom. In India too, I believe, a few small English colonies stayed on after the country of their adoption gained its independence, continuing to behave exactly as they had done under the British Raj; not out of calculated defiance but simply because they could not believe that their world could be overturned by the signatures of English politicians they despised and local nationalist leaders they detested. So it was in Malahide. Because the members of the old Protestant Ascendancy were so firmly established there, they could live their lives almost as they had before the Treaty of 1921—the great betrayal, as some of them regarded it... And after a few years of life in the new Irish Free State, the Unionists in Malahide found that nothing sinister was going to happen to them—that there was no need for heroics. Their social world remained stable; like a prawn in aspic it gradually began to go stale, but it did not disintegrate. All around them '*that other Ireland*' as George Russell (A.E.) had called it, was coming into its force; but they remained almost unaware of its existence..."

"The emergence of the new Ireland grated mainly when it touched old sentiment. We hated to stand for the Irish National Anthem, '*The Soldiers' Song*'; at private dances we always asked the band to omit it, and play *God Save the King* instead; and whenever *God Save the King* was played in public—say, to greet the English army riders at the Horse Show—we sang it so lustily that the Government eventually had to put a ban on it. We relished the story of the Irish peer who, having deserted to the Irish side, tried to keep his hat on and remain seated at the Horse Show when *God Save the King* had been played; the hat had been knocked off his head, and he had been lifted to his feet by some loyalist in the row behind. But though we felt malicious over this side of the Free State's activities, it was from resentment rather than fear; we were convinced it was a passing phase—that the men in power would eventually come to their senses. Even when de Valera came into power in 1932 there was little alarm. His constitutional juggling did not make any visible difference; the Union Jack remained hanging in church, the prayers for the royal family continued..."

[Upon the outbreak of War in September 1939 Inglis simultaneously volunteered for the RAF and commenced employment

## A West Briton On Irish Wartime Neutrality And National Allegiance

### INTRODUCTION BY MANUS O'RIORDAN:

A *Wikipedia* encyclopedia entry begins as follows:

"*Brian Inglis* (1916-1993) was a British journalist, historian and television presenter. He was born in Dublin, Ireland, and retained an interest in Irish history and politics."

Malahide-born Brian Inglis did rather more for an understanding of Irish history than just retain an interest. Settled in England for the last forty years of his life, he was editor of *The Spectator* from 1959 to 1962. But in the post-War years he had written the *Irishman's Diary* column of the *Irish Times*. His 1962 autobiography, simply entitled *West Briton*, is so frank about the Anglo-Irish response to Irish independence that Republican Ireland, in the shape of an *Irish Press* review, enthusiastically proclaimed: "*It's not only worth reading, but, to give high Irish praise, it's also worth borrowing*".

Of particular interest is his account of the War years, when he served in the RAF from 1940. There is none of the whingeing of Cathal O'Shannon—who joined the RAF when the War in Europe was over—about not being permitted to strut around Dublin in his British uniform while home on leave. And Inglis would have had nothing but contempt for the Eoghan Harris *makey upper* about a "cold welcome" for British ex-servicemen in post-War Ireland, and his grotesque invention that, as such, O'Shannon was a supposed victim of "*frost in the Irish Times itself*", to say nothing of the contemptible slander of the Protestant patriot Douglas Gageby that was central to that Harris yarn.

In the December issue we took note of the fact that Elizabeth Bowen expected to freely continue coming and going on her intelligence mission for the UK Ministry of Information in the event of a British invasion and occupation of Southern Ireland. This makes nonsense of Martin Mansergh's claim that "*in a sense, she was*

*an agent of both*", and had her projected activities become known to this State, de Valera would have been as fully justified in interning her as soon as she set foot in this country as he would have been with any German intelligence operative.

In contrast to Mansergh, Inglis was refreshingly honest about the real threat of a British invasion in order to seize the Irish Ports, and of the various responses that might have come from the Anglo-Irish in such an eventuality. At one extreme, Field Marshal Montgomery would have enthusiastically participated in such a British occupation. But there was also Lieutenant John Richards-Orpen of the Irish Army, whose loyalty was unequivocally to this State and who would have fought to defend it against the British invader. Towards the end of his life in the early 1980s I myself encountered Orpen, when he was a representative of the National Farmers Association on the National Economic and Social Council, and was immediately impressed by the thoughtful, constructive contributions to economic debate, enunciated in the poshest of tones by this Enniscorthy farmer. On Orpen's death the *Irish Times* agricultural correspondent Michael Dillon, himself the nephew of the executed 1916 leader Joseph Mary Plunkett, wrote on 24th July 1984 of that Protestant patriot: "*These few words cannot do justice to a man who gave such voluntary service, and who never put his own interests even equal to those of his country.*"

And then there was Inglis himself, undoubtedly leaning far more to the left of the Anglo-Irish hyphen and completely loyal to British interests, but with sufficient an Irish conscience that—in the event of such a British invasion—he would have resigned from the RAF and surrendered himself up to the British authorities for internment. No further commentary is required before letting Brian Inglis speak

in the Irish Times—at first as a leader writer in the office of editor RM Smyllie but then, after a few weeks, as film critic—MOR'.

"To know the film critic of the *Irish Times* rather impressed our set... The *Irish Times* also received complimentary tickets to all the chief dances and hunt balls... This was a help, that euphoric winter of 1939-40. While the phoney war left England puzzled and uneasy, we in Ireland, with no black-out and little rationing, could enjoy ourselves after the fashion of the bright young things of the twenties. Most of us were waiting to join up, with no inducement to be tranquil... We played golf, or mixed hockey matches on Portmarnock strand, or went to the races; attended cocktail parties, always in much the same group; had dinner at the Dolphin or Jammets, went on to a dance at the Gresham; and finished up at sleazy cafes off O'Connell Street for sausages and chips. The wait for OHMS [On His Majesty's Service] letters which did not come began to give us ever more frenetic ideas... In May we hatched a scheme for a marathon game of golf... The week-end following, Smyllie and others assembled at Amiens Street station for the press and advertising agents' outing to Bundoran, in County Donegal; a jaunt organised by the Great Northern Railway, who annually took fifty or more journalists and agents to the north in a special train (originally the royal train provided in Ireland for the use of Queen Victoria) and threw us together in unusual harmony for a week-end's drinking...

"The OHMS letter was on my table at the *Irish Times* when we arrived back off the royal train, instructing me to report to Padgate Reception Centre at the end of the week. On the departure morning [3 June 1940], Smyllie wrote a couple of kindly *au revoir* paragraphs in the *Irishman's Diary*. Already the wartime censorship was deleting references to Irishmen joining up in the British forces, so he adopted what was later to become his standard evasion technique. Mr. Inglis would be absent from Ireland, he wrote, 'for an indefinite period. He has always been interested in flying but had few opportunities in Ireland to follow his bent. I shall be surprised if he has any further cause for complaint in this regard'...

"The longest I was away without home leave was little over a year, and twice I found myself stationed in Ireland; in 1943 as an instructor at Killadeas, on Lough Erne; and in the last winter of the war on a Flying Boat Squadron a few miles down the Lough at Castle Archdale. From both, 48-hour passes were easily obtainable to go to Dublin, where I could stay with friends or at the University Club; with the help of a few 'owed' days-off, passes could

be made to last four or five days. There was nothing to stop us going across the border a few miles to the west except a shortage of transport, and sometimes we even set off on borrowed bicycles for week-ends in Bundoran. I was even able to join the Dublin journalists and advertising agents there when they came up for their annual week-end; Smyllie was there...

"The Irish Army had a camp at Finner, near Bundoran; and we used to meet officers from it in the hotel bar. A few of them were from Anglo-Irish families; men who had made up their minds that as their homes and families were in Ireland they should offer their services to their own country's defence. For anybody in our set it needed some courage to make this decision. The 'Free State Army', as we still thought of it, had won some reputation for its equestrian capabilities at the Horse Show; but otherwise none of us took it seriously, and our aunts and cousins thought of anybody who joined it in terms of white feathers... In the early stages of the war most of us would have agreed. We heard with malicious pleasure of the discomfiture of an Irish peer whose son, one of the crowd who had come to our dance and parties, had elected to join the Irish Army, a decision which had delighted those members of the Kildare Street Club who did not like the peer and thought his son a pipsqueak. But by the time I encountered the Irish Army Officers at Bundoran—I had known one of them, John Richards-Orpen, before; his sister had been up at Oxford before the war—there was no feeling of embarrassment left, let alone hostility. Presumably this was the result of having to defend, in mess arguments, the right of the Irish to go their own way; for as time went on, however little we might care for the ideals and policies of Ireland's rulers, we adopted a kind of protective chauvinism, half-serious, half-exasperated, in their defence. Some of us even defended de Valera's refusal to hand back the three Treaty Ports, left in English hands in 1921, and returned to Ireland by Neville Chamberlain in 1938 in spite of Churchill's gloomy and, as events showed, justified warnings. We might concede that Chamberlain had been foolish to hand them back, and regret that the Navy and Coastal Command should be deprived of their facilities at a time when the Battle of the Atlantic threatened to go against the Allies; but we realized that there could be no question of de Valera agreeing to return them. To do so would have been to abandon neutrality: a principle we had come grudgingly to respect...

"In general neutrality was strictly maintained; and those of us who went there on leave—at least if we took time off from drinking in the Hibernian buttry,

eating steaks in Jammets or the Dolphin, and dancing at the Gresham, to talk to people who knew the country's mood—returned to our units knowing that de Valera would have ordered resistance to any invader, Axis or Allied; that allied arguments, about the need for a pre-emptive takeover to protect Ireland from the Nazi menace would continue to be rejected: and that in rejecting them, de Valera would have had the support of the overwhelming majority of the Irish people. In the event of the Allies deciding Ireland must be occupied, the Irish Army could put up only a token resistance; but thereafter the Irish would consider themselves to be at war with England, and the experience of the Troubles suggested that their nuisance value would be more trouble than the Ports were worth.

"Those of us whose homes were in Southern Ireland occasionally speculated on what we would do if Churchill ordered that, say, the Treaty Ports must be reoccupied. My own feeling was that it would be impossible to stay on in the RAF. This was not from a belief that by sanctioning the reoccupation, the English would be exposing the hollowness of their protestations about fighting for the freedom of the world and for the rights of small nations. If Churchill had decided that the step was necessary for England's survival, I would have accepted his decision was reasonable—from England's and the Allies' point of view; also that England's survival was of more importance, in the long term, than Ireland's territorial integrity, which in any case could not last long after a Nazi victory. But if the reoccupation of the Ports were to be resisted, as surely it would be—if Ireland were formally to declare War on England—then, however brief and farcical might be the actual hostilities, a residue of bitterness would inevitably remain. In Ireland itself, guerrilla tactics would certainly be resumed on the 1920 pattern; and how could Irishmen serving in the British forces expect to be trusted, afterwards, in positions of responsibility? In the Pioneer Corps, perhaps; but not in the RAF... Many Irishmen in the British Services, of course, could have been trusted completely—General Montgomery, for one: though his home was technically in Southern Ireland, in Donegal, he was an Ulster Unionist whose home had been arbitrarily cut off from the United Kingdom—to which his loyalty had always unquestioningly been given—only by the accident of a border drawn after he had grown up and left Ireland. But a Malahider? And one who could be found, in the unlikely event of a detailed investigation of his past, to have consorted, if not with 'Republicans and Shinnners' (an activity of which Anglo-Irish men who were friendly to the nationalist cause in

the Troubles had been derisively accused), at least with journalists ... many of them far from friendly to England? There was even one occasion, during the War, on which I took a drink with Smyllie and the German Press Attaché in Dublin, who had the engagingly loaded name of Karl Petersen... To have exchanged casual pub conversation with the citizen of a country which I was engaged in fighting would, I thought, make a good story to tell when I got back to the mess. But Smyllie was alarmed in case anybody should notice us and report the meeting to the English authorities, and he drew me away. Still, even if the authorities knew nothing of my past except the official records, should war break out between England and Ireland they could have little reason to trust anybody born and brought up in an enemy country, however strenuously he protested his devotion to the allied cause.

"The moment for decision appeared imminent only once, when I was doing my elementary flying training in Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia. A garbled radio message started a rumour in the camp that Ireland had been invaded by the English; and the two of us who were Irish on the course conferred on what we ought to do. It did not enter our heads that we should try to escape; but both of us felt that in the circumstances we could not continue on the course even if the camp commander encouraged us to. We had decided to present ourselves for, presumably, internment, when the rumour was killed by a revised transmission of the message...

"By the time the war ended I was more Irish—in the sense of thinking of myself as Irish—than when it began; too indignant with Churchill for his sneers at de Valera in his Victory broadcast to be appeased by his references to the Irish volunteers who had won VCs; and taking it for granted, when my demob number came up on New Year's Day, 1946, that I would be returning to work on the *Irish Times*, and to make Dublin my home. At first the *Irish Times* and Dublin seemed hardly to have changed. Smyllie went to the Board and told them I must be brought back on to the staff. Although not compelled to keep places open for its workers who had joined the English forces, the *Irish Times*, like most of the older-established firms in Dublin, was anxious to honour what it felt to be an obligation, and he had no trouble in persuading the Board... Most of our set, too, from before the war had returned. In contrast to the massacre of the Anglo-Irish in the army during the First World War, the second caused few casualties; few of those who attended the parties of the phoney war period did not return..."

**Brian Inglis, *West Briton***

## Kipling and the English...ah, the English

Part Two

### The State and The Obvious

England is truest to itself when it remembers itself on Remembrance Sunday. At which time it marches past the symbols of itself in hymn and colour and applauds itself. At which time it wipes itself clean of the blood of its slaughters and applauds them. It would probably forgive itself, if it hadn't remembered to forget there could be anything to forgive. So, everything forgotten in the ceremonial and commemoration of Remembrance. All dissolved in a solemn pageant. Nothing left but Pomp and Circumstance. And Glory.

What is it then that forgets and is remembered, that commemorates and glorifies? What manner of social being is England?

The term which Aristotle used in the Politics to describe humanity, "*Politikon zoon*", is most usually translated as "man is a *political animal*". Which was no more true of the mass of us in Aristotle's day than it has been true at any time since.

And leave alone the truth of it, the accuracy of it, as so translated, is debatable. What it literally means is "*an animal that lives in cities*". I'm not familiar enough with Greek to know if "*Polis*", which certainly means city, means both city and state. And even in Athens, even in the period in which it very briefly established an empire in the Greek world, I doubt that its citizens understood their city-wide associations as the institutions of a state. Juries and magistracies may have been such and seen as such but the, older, more stable and more important institutions of family, household and tribe were not.

All in all what is unlikely to have been true and accurate of humanity in that time and place is even less likely to be true and accurate of the mass of us in the general run of history. But England. Now then, England. England is a political animal. Generally speaking.

Just so. And in particular...

#### KIPLING'S MOTHER

Kipling's Mum was a wise old woman. And Kipling was good to his wise old Mum. Good enough at any rate to credit her with one of his best known, if not quite his best, lines. As follows from the autobiographical *Something Of Myself*.

"What I most needed was that my people should come over and see what had overtaken their son. This they did on a flying visit, and then my 'kickup' had some worth.

"As always, they seemed to suggest nothing and interfere nowhere. But they

were there—my Father with his sage Yorkshire outlook and wisdom; my Mother, all Celt and three-parts fire—both so entirely comprehending that except in trivial matters we had hardly need of words.

"I think I can with truth say that those two made for me the only public for whom then I had any regard whatever till their deaths, in my forty-fifth year. Their arrival simplified things, and 'set' in my head a notion that had been rising at the back of it. It seemed easy enough to 'knock 'em'—but to what end beyond the heat of the exercise? (That both my grandfathers had been Wesleyan Ministers did not strike me till I was, familiarly, reminded of it.) I had been at work on the rough of a set of verses called later 'The English Flag' and had boggled at a line which had to be a key-line but persisted in going 'soft.' As was the custom between us, I asked into the air 'What am I trying to get at?' Instantly the Mother, with her quick flutter of the hands 'You're trying to say; "What do they know of England who only England know,"' The Father confirmed. The rest of the rhetoric came away easily; for it was only pictures seen, as it were, from the deck of a long fourteen-footer, a craft that will almost sail herself.

"In the talks that followed, I exposed my notion of trying to tell to the English something of the world outside England—not directly but by implication.

"They understood. Long before the end the Mother, summarising, said; "I see. "Unto them did he discover His swan's nest among the reeds." Thank you for telling us, dear.' That settled that; and when Lord Tennyson (whom alas! I never had the good fortune to meet) expressed his approval of the verses when they appeared, I took it for a lucky sign."

All of which I'm sure is fair enough. And what they know of England who know which ways the winds of the world do blow (even now) is clear enough.

"So the North Wind blew:

"What is the Flag of England? Ye have but my bergs to dare,  
"Ye have but my drifts to conquer. Go forth, for it is there!"

So the South Wind sighed:

"What is the Flag of England? Ye have but my reefs to dare,  
"Ye have but my seas to furrow. Go forth, for it is there!"

So the East Wind roared:

"What is the Flag of England? Ye have but my sun to dare,  
"Ye have but my sands to travel. Go forth, for it is there!"

And the West Wind called:

“What is the Flag of England? Ye have  
but my breath to dare,  
“Ye have but my waves to conquer. Go  
forth, for it is there!”

Put without a swing to it and more  
briefly. England is everywhere, encompass-  
ing everything and knowing no limit to  
itself. Which is what the winds of the  
world told Kipling that Kipling's old Mum  
knew better than he.

#### THE SEVENTIES

What then do we know of England?  
And do we so much as only England  
know?

I first got to know England politically  
in the seventies. That was good in a general  
way of things because there really is no  
other way to know England than  
politically. It was not so good in the more  
particular way of things because England,  
at the time I first got to know it, was not  
quite itself. It had come to a dead end and  
was prepared, for the first time, perhaps,  
since 1688, to reconsider itself in the light  
of an internal realignment of class forces  
and an external realignment of  
international relations. Workers' Control  
and Europe were on the agenda and  
England wasn't really feeling itself.

The difference between then and now  
is striking, and crucial for any under-  
standing of what England is and how it  
works.

In England in the seventies everything  
appeared to turn on the will of the organised  
working class. The power which had been  
glimpsed in the course of England's Great  
War, with shop stewards in the driving  
seat and Labour's Arthur Henderson in the  
War Cabinet (among other things having  
James Connolly shot) was consolidated  
after the General Strike by Walter Citrine  
and Ernest Bevin. Because of Bevin the  
working class survived the thirties as a  
movement which went on to win for it as  
much of England's next Great War as  
England can be said to have won. The  
power that was built up by Bevin as leader  
of the Transport & General Workers' Union  
and the driving force in the TUC was  
applied by him as Minister for everything  
fighting the war depended on to establish  
political rights for the working class in a  
social economy of his own devising.

The articulated system of social  
ownership, labour rights and welfare  
provision that underpinned and buttressed  
working class power in post-war Britain  
was Bevin's. Others may have thought of  
the economics of it and others still may  
have sketched the legislative framework  
of it, but it was Bevin alone who built the  
Welfare State. Conor Lynch, writing in  
this magazine last January, described that

individual's role in this history very clearly:

"The main socialist achievements in  
Britain were not achieved by a revolution  
or by any coherent demand or agitation in  
the working class. They, the Welfare  
State, The National Health Service, the  
Nationalisations, etc., were imposed by a  
dictatorship.

"During the Second World War, while  
the Prime Minister was concerning  
himself with military matters, Britain was  
being run by one man, Ernest Bevin.  
Every aspect of the economy and of  
people's daily lives was controlled by  
Bevin. He used exhortation for the most  
part in the hope that socialism would  
catch on, but he relied ultimately on  
extensive coercive legislation, and was  
not averse to such things as strike breaking  
and jailing.

"It was in this period and by these  
means that Bevin laid the foundations for  
the reforms which were formally enacted  
by himself and Clement Attlee between  
1945 and 1951."

There are really only two possible  
accounts of that history: Cde. Lynch's and  
the naive traditionalism of the Clapham  
omnibus. There have often, if not always,  
been naive traditionalists on the Clapham  
omnibus and many of them have been  
socialists. For them, during and after the  
War, there was only the working class and  
political tendencies within it, which  
sometimes allowed it to act in defence of  
its social interest but more often disabled  
it from so acting. Individuals had little to  
do with any of it. Right wing tendencies,  
trotskyist ones, the Party in its (reflected)  
glory days and in its later dogmatism, or  
the Labour Party torn one way and the  
other between these and the unbending  
opposition to everything of the employing  
class. All that, for them, explains working  
class power and the loss of it. And allows  
the comrades on the Clapham omnibus to  
imagine that there is a tide in these affairs  
which (turn, turn, turn) may again be  
taken at the flood; that, just as working  
class power was won it can be won again  
and next time they won't allow it to slip  
away, those naive traditionalists on the  
Clapham omnibus.

Dictatorship is not something which  
happens on the British Road To Clapham.  
Not as an instance of the role of an  
individual in history it doesn't. The  
dictatorship of the proletariat, some form  
of democratic centralism, *that* can at least  
be thought about, even looked forward to  
Up The Junction. But Bevin's dictatorship,  
which was on the classical model of  
Cincinnatus, who in a time of military  
emergency was found plowing his fields  
and persuaded to take on dictatorial power,  
then within sixteen days saved the state  
and retired back to his fields, that cannot  
be known on those mean streets down  
which an omnibus must go.

The strong working class position which

Bevin established did not long survive  
him. Initially, as its formal routines ran  
on, working class power increased until  
British industry stalemated and the  
economy tottered on the edge of collapse.  
That is what led to the Labour Government  
setting up the Bullock Committee's *Inquiry  
into Industrial Democracy* which was the  
high point of a bourgeois wave of  
surrender. But the organised working class,  
the labour and trade union movement,  
could not face the responsibilities its power  
entailed and trumped the Bourgeois  
surrender with a more complete and abject  
and completely unnecessary surrender of  
its own. They brought Thatcher into  
government on a wave of whining that has  
lasted now for almost thirty years and  
really has yet to peak.

So 1979 came and went and soon,  
having so successfully evaded the burden  
of ruling, the labour and trade union  
movement threw all that remained of its  
power behind Scargill's attempt to have a  
Miners' strike without a ballot of miners',  
that would become a general strike without  
any support, that would become a  
revolution without any revolutionaries.  
This they put all their heart and soul into  
and continued with until they had no heart  
and no soul left. And no power.

Free at last. Free at last. Great God  
Almighty, the British Left was free at last.  
Completely irresponsible and utterly  
powerless it was at last free to turn itself  
into the most vicious anti-working class  
Party and Government it could conceive  
of. The free spirit that was the British Left  
that had rejected workers' control and  
embraced Arthur Scargill then became  
New Labour.

Sometimes the trade union movement  
worries about New Labour. It worries that  
the Party might stop taking its members'  
money from it, which would make it  
irrelevant to the wages of its sin. For when  
the trade unions no longer fund it, what  
use will the Labour Party have for the  
university graduates in sociology,  
economics and politics who manage trade  
unions in this day and age? Of no more use  
to their masters than to their members  
those least of the bourgeoisie might have  
to work for a living!

I spent four years of the 1970s in  
London, arguing that involvement with  
structures of industrial democracy would  
encourage the self-activity of the working  
class which would lead to socialism. Not  
realising that before it could be active  
itself in its own interest the British working  
class had to be disentangled from England.  
Above all not realising that the British left  
was inextricably enmeshed in the  
structures of England, and its once and  
future Empire. Whatever else may have  
happened since I know at least this much  
now—that what has to be known to be

overcome is as much as we can know of England.

Going back to Kipling then; his poem *The Puzzler* (attached to a short story of the same name in the 1909 collection, *Actions And Reactions*) explained how the English ruling class, which had taken to him sufficiently to take him to its hearth and heart, saw itself in its characteristic actions:

"For undemocratic reasons and for motives not of State,  
They arrive at their conclusions—largely inarticulate.

Being void of self-expression they confide their views to none:

But sometimes in a smoking-room, one learns why things were done.

Yes, sometimes in a smoking-room, through clouds of "Ers" and "Ums,"

Obliquely and by inference, illumination comes,

On some step that they have taken, or some action they approve—

Embellished with the argot of the Upper Fourth Remove.

In telegraphic sentences, half nodded to their friends,

They hint a matter's inwardness—and there the matter ends.

And while the Celt is talking from Valencia to Kirkwall,

The English—ah, the English!—don't say anything at all."

Now that can be misunderstood as indifference or a habit of muddling through. But that isn't it. That isn't it at all. Really it is a description of how efficiently political instinct operates when it is grounded in some four centuries of successful statecraft.

In large measure Kipling's poems of Greater Britain are a versification of J. R. Seeley's *Expansion Of England* (first published in 1883). I very much suspect that there was a direct connection between the two, but my reading in this area has been haphazard and I cannot give more than the suspicion. That being said; what the winds of the world told Kipling and what he wrote of the *modus operandi* of the imperial ruling class can be found stated prosaically in Seeley:

"There is something very characteristic in the indifference which we show towards this mighty phenomenon of the diffusion of our race and the expansion of our state. We seem, as it were, to have conquered and peopled half the world in a fit of absence of mind. While we were doing it, that is in the eighteenth century, we did not allow it to affect our imaginations or in any degree to change our ways of thinking; nor have we even now ceased to think of ourselves as simply a race inhabiting an island off the northern coast of the Continent of Europe. We constantly betray by our modes of speech that we do

## Irish Language And Lawyers

A Chara, Our voluntary Irish language group, *Ionad Buail Isteach*, have to date collected 312 signatures on our website petition at [www.ionad.org](http://www.ionad.org), and 150 signatures on paper, to support the Irish language in the legal system. Our group opposes the Government Bill (formerly the Labour Party Bill) ending the oral Irish requirement for solicitors and barristers in Ireland because it will damage the status of Irish generally, and in the legal system in particular, and will make it impossible for Irish speakers to be given equal rights in the courts. We believe that court cases and services in Irish should be on offer in all Irish courts and that both fluent and weak Irish speakers should be encouraged to use whatever Irish they have in court. Could we not have official titles, forms of address in the courts, etc. in Irish in future. Support systems and language learning opportunities should be provided for all those studying and practicing law in Ireland. We believe that if a vital system is not working well, it should be improved, rather than abandoned. The Irish language requirement and usage is the only meaningful difference between our legal system and the English legal system. We support the call from law students asking the government to withdraw this bill and ask all TDs, especially those working at Committee stage, to oppose this bill. *Is mise, Seán Mac Suibhne, An tIonad Buail isteach, Baile Átha Cliath 2. [www.ionad.org](http://www.ionad.org)*

not reckon our colonies as really belonging to us; thus if we are asked what the English population is, it does not occur to us to reckon-in the population of Canada and Australia. This fixed way of thinking has influenced our historians. It causes them, I think, to miss the true point of view in describing the eighteenth century. They make too much of the mere parliamentary wrangle and the agitations about liberty, in all which matters the eighteenth century of England was but a pale reflection of the seventeenth. They do not perceive that in that century the history of England is not in England but in America and Asia." (1914 edition, page 10)

And Seeley's prose is open to the same misunderstanding as Kipling's poetry. He was explaining that, in badly conceived histories and the lazy habits of thought which they encourage, the Empire appeared to have been acquired in "*a fit of absence of mind*". The empire itself was not. Seeley knew the true tendency of English activity in the world and, like Kipling, was writing to bring that knowledge to the middle classes which had recently become essential to the enterprise. The Methodist shopkeepers and clerks of the new dispensation that had followed on from the Great Reform of 1832 were not born into four centuries of successful statecraft and three of imperial adventuring. All that had to be learned on them. In poetry and prose. By Seeley and Kipling.

Seeley begins his history of the *Expansion Of England* with the Elizabethan period when its human material was settling into those routines within which its unequalled political instinct grew. And begins with a clear view of his craft, certain that—

"...history has to do with the State, that it investigates the growth and changes

of a certain corporate society, which acts through certain functionaries and certain assemblies. By the nature of the State every person who lives in a certain territory is usually a member of it, but history is not concerned with individuals except in their capacity of members of a State" (page 7-8).

He takes the Elizabethan State as his starting point and takes that as a given. Which is fair enough, but it is still worth pointing out that the Tudor State—which the Elizabethans inherited, refined and extended—was very much a new departure in English life. Because the Norman Conquest was so immediately complete, the more usual Norman practice (as in for example Ireland and Southern Italy) of adaptation and gradual assimilation was not followed. The Norman ruling class was a caste apart from the society which fed and clothed and armed it (the continuing legacy of this can be seen in the two sets of vocabulary, upper class French and lower class German, which, so to speak, enrich the English language). In the Wars of the Roses the military and political elite of that Norman ruling caste wiped itself out and was replaced by something wonderful and strange: a ruling class that was a Gentry rather than an Aristocracy and that almost straightaway set about finding itself a new religion. (More accurately, it established the old religious forms in a new administrative frame as the badge and emblem of its newly discovered nationality.) This was all very new, all very exciting. And just the motor to power an engine of expansion.

Seeley's subject matter is not England particularly, nor the Empire that England's *Expansion* brought it. It is rather "*the simple obvious fact of the extension of the English name into other countries of the globe, the foundation of Greater Britain*"

(page 10).

"Let us consider what this Greater Britain at the present day precisely is. Excluding certain small possessions, which are chiefly of the nature of naval or military stations, it consists besides the United Kingdom of four great groups of territory, inhabited either chiefly or to a large extent by Englishmen and subject to the Crown, and a fifth great territory also subject to the Crown and ruled by English officials, but inhabited by a completely foreign race. The first four are the Dominion of Canada, the West Indian Islands, among which I include some territories on the continent of Central and Southern America, the mass of South African possessions of which Cape Colony is the most considerable, and fourthly the Australian group, to which, simply for convenience, I must here add New Zealand. The dependency is India" (page 11-12).

So, for Seeley, Ireland is part of the territory of Greater Britain by virtue of the Act of Union. But it would be a mistake to assume that he believed the Catholic Irish had anything to do with it, more than being an inconvenience to it. This was before the first Home Rule Bill and before the Boer War, before, that is, the imperial usefulness of Home Rule Ireland had been properly thought through. And Seeley's mantra was kinship in blood and religion. So the Catholic Irish were not part of it.

Even less was India a part of it, and at times Seeley seemed to suggest that it could, perhaps even should, be let go:

"We could subdue the mutiny of 1857, formidable as it was, because it spread through only a part of the army, because the people did not actively sympathise with it, and because it was possible to find native Indian races who would fight on our side. But the moment a mutiny is but threatened which shall be no mere mutiny, but the expression of a universal feeling of nationality, at that moment all hope is at an end, as all desire ought to be at an end, of preserving our Empire. For we are not really conquerors of India, and we cannot rule her as conquerors; if we undertook to do so, it is not necessary to inquire whether we could succeed, for we should assuredly be ruined financially by the mere attempt" (page 271).

But when the matter had finally to be clarified that was not it at all. India could not be part of Greater Britain and need not be because Greater Britain was not the Empire. But Greater Britain was not about to let go of the Empire. And Heaven Forbid that so much moral rectitude should lose so lose so much shiny, glittery, sparkly stuff. All that glitters is not gold; some of it is the Koh-i-noor and other diamonds:

"Thus a review of the history of British India leaves on the mind an impression quite different from that which our Colonial Empire produces. The latter has grown up naturally, out of the operation of the plainest causes; the former seems

to have sprung from a romantic adventure; it is highly interesting, striking, and curious, but difficult to understand or to form an opinion about. We may hope that it will lead to good, but hitherto we have not ourselves reaped directly much good from it.

"I have shown you however that, though it may be called an Oriental Empire, it is much less dangerous to us than that description might seem to imply. It is not an Empire attached to England in the same way as the Roman Empire was attached to Rome; it will not drag us down, or infect us at home with Oriental notions or methods of government. Nor is it an Empire which costs us money or hampers our finances. It is self-supporting, and is held at arm's length in such a way that our destiny is not very closely entangled with its own." (page 353-54; Note: Seeley is pointing to a misconception here, which he means to correct, JK)

"Another thing almost all observers see, and that is that the experiment must go forward, and that we cannot leave it unfinished if we would. For here too the great uniting forces of the age are at work; England and India are drawn every year for good or for evil more closely together. Not indeed that disuniting forces might not easily spring up, not that our rule itself may not possibly be calling out forces which may ultimately tend to disruption, nor yet that the Empire is altogether free from the danger of a sudden catastrophe. But for the present we are driven both by necessity and duty to a closer union" (page 355),

#### HEART OF DARKNESS

Before leaving Seeley alone and going on to the Heart of the Matter Of England at some very slight length I should really point out that, while he was writing to fill in the Ers and Ums of the argot of the Upper Fourth Remove and to fill out its arcane euphemisms, he was very well aware that much of his journey was to and through a Heart of Darkness. Muscular Christianity had no great problem with genocide and the Methodism of the newly enfranchised middle classes was generally Muscular enough to be getting on with lower races and them dwindling, diminishing and disappearing as the English advanced into areas of miraculous vacancy. Nonetheless Seeley was discreet enough when that might be the better part of valour and knew when to draw a line and where to draw a veil.

An earlier prophet of Greater Britain, Sir Charles Wentworth Dilke BART, MP, had little time for lines and veils (he was an also ran, nearly Prime Minister of the Liberal persuasion, adultery being the fence he fell at). In a book first published in 1869 he left lines and veils almost completely undrawn:

"...After all, if the Indian is mentally, morally, and physically inferior to the

white man, it is in every way for the advantage of the world that the next generation that inhabits Colorado should consist of whites instead of reds. That this result should not be brought about by cruelty or fraud upon the now-existing Indians, is all that we need require. The gradual extinction of the inferior races is not only a law of nature, but a blessing to mankind" (*Greater Britain*, page 88).

"The Anglo-Saxon is the only extirpating race on earth." (page 223)

Dilke's plain speaking should be borne in mind as the ruder truth behind Seeley's more reticent formulations of the same position:

"I have indulged in these general reflections upon the nature of modern colonisation in order that we may understand what our Empire is, and how it necessarily came into existence. There might easily have been a great emigration from England which would not in any way have enlarged the English State. For by Greater Britain we mean an enlargement of the English State, and not simply of the English nationality. It is not simply that a population of English blood is now found in Canada and in Australia, as in old time a Greek population was spread over Sicily, South Italy and the Western Coast of Asia Minor. That was an extension of the Nationality but not of the State, an extension which gave no new strength, and did not in any way help the Greek name when it was attacked and conquered from Macedonia. In like manner at present we see a constant stream of emigration from Germany to America, but no Greater Germany comes into existence, because these emigrants, though they carry with them and may perhaps not altogether lose their language and their ideas, do not carry with them their State. This is the case with Germany because its emigration has happened too late, when the New World is already carved into States, into which its emigrants are compelled to enter, as with Greece it was the result of a theory of the State, which identified it with the City. But Greater Britain is a real enlargement of the English State; it carries across the seas not merely the English race, but the authority of the English Government. We call it for want of a better word an Empire. And it does resemble the great Empires of history in this respect, that it is an aggregate of provinces, each of which has a government sent out to it from the political headquarters, which is a kind of delegation from the supreme government. But yet it is wholly unlike the great Empires of the Old World, Persian or Macedonian or Roman or Turkish, because it is not in the main founded on conquest, and because in the main the inhabitants of the distant provinces are of the same nation as those of the dominant country. It resembles them in its vast extent, but it does not resemble them in that violent military character which has made most Empires short-lived and liable to speedy decay" (*The Expansion of England*, page 50-51).

"Austria for instance is divided by the nationality-rivalry of German, Slav, and Magyar; the Swiss Confederation unites three languages, but the English Empire in the main and broadly may be said to be English throughout. Of course, however, considerable abatements are to be made. It is only in one of the four great groups, namely, in the Australian colonies, that the statement is true almost without qualification. The native Australian race is so low in the ethnological scale that it can never give the least trouble, but even here, since we reckon New Zealand in this group, we are to bear in mind that the Maori tribes occupy the Northern island in some force, much as in the last century the Highland Clans gave us trouble in the northern part of our own island, and the Maori is by no means a contemptible type of man. Nevertheless the whole number of Maories is not supposed to exceed forty thousand, and it is rapidly diminishing" (page 55-56).

"In the first place the native tribes of South Africa, instead of disappearing and dwindling before the whites, greatly outnumber them, and show a power of combination and progress such as the Red Indian never showed. Thus in the census of 1875 I find that the Cape Colony had a total population of nearly three quarters of a million, but two out of the three quarters were native and only one European. And behind this native population dwelling among the settlers there is an indefinite native population extending without limit into the interior of the vast continent. But secondly the other difficulty, which arises from the fact that the settlers themselves were at the outset not English but Dutch, does not diminish or tend to disappear, as it has done in Canada. In Canada there took place a rapid immigration of English, who, showing themselves in a marked degree more energetic than the French and increasing much faster, gradually gave the whole community a predominantly English character, so that in fact the rising of the French in 1838 was the convulsion of despair of a sinking nationality. Nothing similar has happened in South Africa, no rapid English immigration has come to give a new character to the community.

"These are the abatements which must be made to the general proposition that Greater Britain is homogeneous in nationality. They need not prevent us from laying down this general proposition as true. If in these islands we feel ourselves for all purposes one nation, though in Wales, in Scotland and in Ireland there is Celtic blood, and Celtic languages utterly unintelligible to us are still spoken, so in the Empire a good many French and Dutch and a good many Caffres and Maories may be admitted without marring the ethnological unity of the whole" (page 58-59).

"The chief forces which hold a community together and cause it to constitute one State are three, common nationality, common religion, and common interest. These may act in various degrees of intensity, and they may also

act singly or in combination. Now when it is argued that Greater Britain is a union which will not last long and will soon fall to pieces, the ground taken is that it wants the third of these binding forces, that it is not held together by community of interest... But, allowing its importance, we may remark that, even if this bond is wanting, the other two bonds which hold states together are not wanting. Many empires in which hostile nationalities and religions have been but artificially united have nevertheless lasted several centuries, but Greater Britain is not a mere empire, though we often call it so. Its union is of the more vital kind. It is united by blood and religion, and though circumstances may be imagined in which these ties might snap, yet they are strong ties, and will only give way before some violent dissolving force" (page 59-60).

"Our colonies do not resemble the colonies which classical students meet with in Greek and Roman history, and our Empire is not an Empire at all in the ordinary sense of the word. It does not consist of a congeries of nations held together by force, but in the main of one nation, as much as if it were no Empire but an ordinary state. This fact is fundamental when we look to the future and inquire whether it is calculated for duration" (page 60).

Much of Seeley's history is special pleading for a political programme to settle the institutional framework of the apotheosis of the English race, which is to say ("*history is not concerned with individuals except in their capacity of members of a State*") of the English State. Two world wars, wars in which Greater Britain embroiled the world, later, with the "mere empire" clearly ripe for dissolution and the White Commonwealth tenuous beyond any prospect of closer political federation, Bevin saw to it that a welfare system was established at the heart of things.

#### NEW DAWN?

This was the first sign that the Expansion of England was to be reversed. Hitherto English pauperism was to be countered by emigration into the expanding universe of Greater Britain. Now it was to be dealt with by social legislation at home. But the English Welfare State was still a State whose instinct was expansionist and whose interest was to despoil the rest of the world of cheap food and raw materials. That instinct in the service of that interest was incapable of managing industrial growth and what was now Lesser Britain was soon the sick man of Western Europe. There was only one internal measure which could be counted on to turn the tide of England's declining industrial productivity and that was industrial democracy.

Carrying the proposals of the Bullock Committee into legislation would have been the second sign of, and the decisive

moment in, the reversal of the Expansion of England. Jack Jones would then have been another Bevin and only the second great internationalist in English political history. England, Scotland and Wales could have relaxed into a comfortable relationship with Europe and rested at last at ease with the World. But none of that was to be.

This is not a theory of the English State. It is just an observation of it.

But that is the trick. English politics (left, right, and marginal) on the face of it all spin on a tale of expanding or reducing the role of the State, as if the English State was an instrument that could be directed to this or that, or administered, or employed for definite ends. As if it was something to do with mere government. When really it is so much more than that. And the trick is just seeing it for what it is, which is everything that is English about social life and political economy in these British Isles.

The human material which carried the English State into Greater Britain did not cease to be formed within and incorporated into that State when the fortunes of war gave pause to the Greater Britain project. Legislating Bullock would have inaugurated the political interest of a new ruling class and decisively changed the relation of citizen to State. And Greater Britain was truly dead in that moment. But that moment never came.

Too much of the trade union movement was too English at the end to give up that destiny. And so, in the world's only fully functioning Incorporated State, the spectre of an illusory Corporatism was raised against workers' control. Which was the end of all that.

Since then declining industrial productivity has been managed by the simple expedient of industrial devastation; what little remains of British industry may well be productive enough, or not, it doesn't much matter. The British economy no longer bears any relation at all to Britain's economic resources, but never mind, its military might is on the wing. Army and navy, complaining as ever they did of social apathy and government cuts, are back in Greater Britain's old playgrounds doing again there what they always did so well, spreading death and destruction on every hand. Except that so much of the world that once was open is now closed off to its expansion, it might be the good old days and merry tomorrows for Greater Britain.

This has not been a theory of the English State. Just an observation of it.

**Joe Keenan**

## Land Grabbers?

A Russian historian or philosopher of the early 19th century, who was a friend of the Tsar, Peter Chaadeyev, published an article saying that Russia had no history. It was a sequence of interruptions. Not interruptions of some continuity that was trying to develop. Just a sequence of starts and stops. I forget which words he used to describe it, but that was the gist of it as I recall it.

This idea of Russia was held to be treasonable by the Tsarist censorship. Chaadeyev was tried, convicted, and sentenced. But the Tsar could not bear the thought of his friend going to prison, so he declared him insane. How could anybody with such a mad idea not be insane? Chaadeyev was therefore let be as a holy fool, and as an official madman he was free to say what he thought.

My idea of Ireland has some similarity with Chaadeyev's idea of Russia. And, after an initial phase of outrage in 1969 and the early 1970s, I have been likewise treated as a fool by "*the wise men in their counting-houses*"—without the benevolence of the Tsar of course, for what have counting-houses to do with benevolence? But I see things from the opposite vantage point. Chaadeyev, a gentleman and an intellectual, saw that there was no national dimension in the lives of the Russian peasantry, and that what happened at the top of society was therefore a series of fits and starts.

My vantage point is that of a particularly remote and backward part of rural Ireland where, as a labourer, I formed my idea of the world and of Ireland. What I see at the top is what Chaadeyev saw—a radical absence of subjective continuity at the official level of the state, including its Universities and newspapers. The state exists as a distinct entity as a result of the elections of 1918-21, of the activity of the IRA in 1919-21, and of the drastic amendment of the Treaty system by Fianna Fail from 1932 to 1945. But its existence has long been merely objective.

It was often put to me in Belfast during the 1970s and 1980s that Partition was a dead issue because Southern politicians were no longer interested in the Six Counties, and in fact they positively did not want them back. This was particularly the view of some half-reasonable Stickies I used to know. I argued that it did not matter, in that regard, what Southern politicians thought. The state which they aspired to govern, though merely objective, would compel them in government to do things with regard to the North which they would prefer not to do. The objective and irremovable state had

its objective logic.

Dr. Fitzgerald once said that the only thing he wanted to do with regard to the North was help it to get rid of the IRA. But every attempt he made to get rid of the IRA had the opposite effect. He electioneered in two or three Northern elections with the purpose of minimising the vote for Sinn Fein and maximising the vote for the SDLP. He told the voters that a vote for Sinn Fein was a vote for the IRA. The voters responded by increasing their votes for Sinn Fein—whereupon Dr. Fitzgerald immediately denied that this indicated increased support for the IRA.

Even John Bruton, a thorough West Brit, had to act as a nationalist when he unexpectedly became Taoiseach.

Obviously it was not the mere form of the state—its paper existence—that compelled politicians to do what they would rather not do. The compulsion came from the social sub-stratum—from the social force that had brought the state into existence, and that continued in being itself as politicians and academics and journalists lost all sense of purpose connected with the state—aside from the universal one of getting on the gravy train.

That is a great difference between Chaadeyev's Russia and Ireland. There is a continuity of political assumption in the social bulk in Ireland, which exerts itself as a kind of bias in the conduct of politics though it is given no coherent intellectual expression either in politics or academia.

The ruptures in Russian society—two in 1917, another around 1990, and one that is presently in process—were events within a small segment of the population which had far-reaching consequences for the population at large. Lenin's observation that socialism was an alien intrusion into the life of the working class was only a particular expression of a general fact of life in Russia—that political action of any kind was an alien intrusion by an elite into the apolitical life of the general population.

After the rupture of 1990 the visionaries of the free market—Gaidar etc.—had their day. They brought Russia to the verge of becoming a passive subject for American capital. Then, at the eleventh hour, a state was re-established. What now exists seems to me to be the realisation of what was in 1930 Bukharin's unrealisable ideal of the New Economic Policy. The way it is being done suggests that there is finally a kind of continuity in Russian life. It seems to be the work of a remnant of what used to be called the KGB. It is being done through the activity of the state—and society is falling into line with a sense of relief at having a state to fall into line with, in place of a corrupt and drunken

demagogue. And the state is generating an intelligentsia appropriate to its requirements.

### Part 2

The intellectual life of the Irish State—the Universities—has long been disconnected from the requirements of the state. It was not the purpose of Anglo-Irish intellectuals who remained functional in the 1920s to facilitate the impulse of development set in motion in 1918-21. Their natural inclination was to hold things as far as possible within the restrictions of the Treaty. The national academics were all Treatyites—naturally so because of the 'Civil War'—but they mostly lost all coherence through becoming fascist in response to the rise of Fianna Fail. They retained their positions and were naturally concerned later on to cover over their fascist phase. (*The apologia* seems to run that it cannot have been genuine fascism as it did not succeed.) Then, in the late 1940s, T. Desmond Williams came straight from British Intelligence to the Chair of History at UCD, where he squatted for two generations.

Fianna Fail, while governing the State for most of the period since 1932, never acquired a substantial presence in academia. It had a daily newspaper for sixty years, but allowed it to be done away with fifteen years ago. And, long before that, it had given it over to the enemy. Tim Pat Coogan, the Editor from the late 1960s, was an ardent Treatyite, who hated De Valera, and had the outlook on the North of a Catholic-nationalist of the Hibernian variety rather than a Republican. (He started up the 'Civil War' again with books on Collins and De Valera when the time was long overdue to avail of the final rejection of the Treaty by the Treatyites in 1948 in order to supersede it.)

In recent years Fianna Fail has acquired an intellectual, Martin Mansergh. But his view of what happened in 1922 seems to be of a kind with Coogan's, though he covers it over with verbiage. (He recently called me a Nazi because of something in the *North Cork Anthology* which he neglected to specify. I take that to be the result of a sequence of intellectual frustrations, culminating in intellectual bankruptcy. It is in any case the end of civilised discussion. He has uttered the ultimate anathema and opted out.)

In 1970 Fianna Fail lost its bearings completely. Jack Lynch, a weakling under duress, rigged a criminal action for treason against his senior Cabinet Minister, Charles Haughey. The jury returned a Not Guilty verdict strictly in accordance with the evidence presented. The Director of Intelligence, Colonel Hefferon, brought on in the first trial as a Prosecution witness, gave evidence which undermined the charges against Captain Kelly, and by implication implicated the Government

in Captain Kelly's actions. But the Government could not be responsible for illegal importation of arms.

Haughey mounted what might be called a technical defence, apparently relying on the collapse of the Prosecution case against Captain Kelly on the strength of truthful evidence by the chief Prosecution witness, the Director of Intelligence. (Colonel Hefferon was not called by the Prosecution for the second trial, but in an interesting departure from the adversarial system, was brought on by the judge.)

If Haughey had given evidence in accordance with what we now know to be the facts—unless we take some trouble not to know—the consequences for the conduct of the State are incalculable. The Army was instructed by the Government—that is, by Lynch—to make plans for operations within Northern Ireland, and that was the context of the covert (but not illegal) import of arms which was the issue in the Trial.

Lynch, knowing that he had rigged the case which had broken down in court, treated the verdict as perverse, even though it was strictly in accordance with the evidence presented, and the Opposition—both Fine Gael and Labour—went along with that pretence.

I don't know in detail how it was that the writing of Irish history was handed over to Oxbridge soon after that, but it is evident that it was.

The purpose of the rigged treason trial at the heart of government remains obscure. It is said that it warded off civil war, but it is not explained how. If war in the North is meant, it did not ward it off, but aggravated the situation by setting republicans on a lone course, and driving people who wanted to act in conjunction with Dublin towards the Provos out of a sense of betrayal.

Anyhow, Irish history began to be rewritten under Oxbridge influence out of a profoundly mistaken sense that the chaos in the North was caused by the way history had been written.

I had to become my own historian for what I was trying to do in the North. I acquired a contempt for Southern historians in the early seventies, and made little distinction between revisionist and anti-revisionist—regarding only the pre-revisionists as authentic. It wasn't until I came across Terence Dooley's little book on Senator O'Rourke (as a result of Eoghan Harris's outlandish Coolacree programme) that I saw something I could recognise as Irish history being produced in an Irish University.

I showed last month how Dooley, in *Inniskeen*, traced the development of a Monaghan capitalist from a Home Rule to a Sinn Fein position in 1914-16 as a reasonable development at the level of

high politics, without even mentioning the words "*land grab*", which figured so prominently in the RTE programme about Coolacree, to which Dooley contributed.

The titles of two earlier books by Dooley seemed to promise a future blossoming of fully-fledged revisionism: *The Decline Of Unionist Politics In Monaghan 1911-1923* (c1989), and *The Plight Of Monaghan Protestants, 1912-1926* (2000). But this promise was not fulfilled in *Inniskeen*, which is a development from the contents rather than the titles of those books.

The second of those books is an enlarged version of the first. Both of them show the Monaghan Protestants (equally divided into Anglicans and Presbyterians), not as Irish people who happen to be Protestant in religion, but as a privileged collective body constituting a quarter of the population of the county but owning most of the property. This coherent minority had held itself apart from the majority for a couple of centuries, causing resentment among the majority by its aloofness and its near monopoly of property ownership and the professions, and an associated predominance in commerce.

Its privileged position was eroded by the dis-Establishment of the Anglican Church (1869), the Local Government Act (1898), and the Land Act of 1903. The enfranchised majority, acting as a collective within the Home Rule movement, then came to dominate electoral politics in Monaghan, and it made inroads into the professional and commercial predominance of the Protestants/Unionists. The Protestants, having discriminated comprehensively for centuries within the system of Protestant state monopoly, now began to complain of being discriminated against within a market system in a medium of local government democracy:

"Thus by the end of the first decade of the 20th century the old Monaghan ascendancy was becoming nothing more than a nostalgic memory for many Protestants who reminisced on former years when they totally dominated the political, social and economic life of the county. But they were determined not to go down without a fight and with the Ulster Unionist movement now at their back they looked forward in anticipation to regaining the glory of a previous era and a status that seemed in ever-increasing jeopardy from the Catholic majority. As a means to this end the Protestants of all denominations and classes united under the cloak of Unionism" (*Decline* p6).

Five thousand Monaghan Protestants signed the Solemn League and Covenant (1912), committing them to fight devolved government in Ireland. In 1913 they formed two battalions of the Ulster Volunteer Force. And in 1914 they got 1,679 rifles from the Larne gun-running.

At the critical moment, the British war on Germany postponed the British Civil War. The Protestant gentry, the leaders of the Unionist rebellion, went off to the other war—but their followers did not follow them.

The privileged Protestant tenantry were no longer tenants. The great Irish land agitation had made them owners of their land, snapping the economic bond with their gentry.

If Alan Stanley's IRA extermination quota for Protestants is pure invention, there was a kind of extermination quota in being in 1918. The Government was desperately short of cannonfodder and considered Irish conscription, but in the face of a national protest movement negotiated it away in exchange for a quote of "*voluntary recruitment*". Each region was given its quota:

"Monaghan and Armagh constituted one area with a quota of 2,500 men. However, by 4 September 1918, of the 242 recruits from the Monaghan-Armagh area, only 22 were from Monaghan. By then it was obvious that the lower and middle classes of the Protestant community in the county had little interest in recruitment, and furthermore, that the sentiments of the gentry no longer reflected those of the other classes on this issue. A schism which would have detrimental consequences on Unionist politics was developing" (p9).

The war that the Monaghan Protestants were geared up for was not fought. They did not follow the gentry in switching their military enthusiasm to the Great War that was fought in its place. And they were thrown to the wolves by the Ulster Unionist Council when it made its Partition settlement. Thus abandoned, the Monaghan Protestants began a process of adaptation to life outside the British cocoon. The process was delayed by the British decision to suppress the elected government of 1919-21 by means of military rule.

One might quibble about turns of phrase used by Dooley with regard to these "*terror years*", but, given the ideology of the academic environment in which he had to make his career—he was 20 in 1984—the remarkable thing is how little of it there is.

He writes of "*a sectarian type feud*", and in illustration of it says:

"In June 1920, there were 17 outrages reported by the County Inspector, 8 of which were directed against Protestants" (p19).

In order for that fact to be evidence of anything, it needs to be said who did what. If all the "*outrages*" were done by Republicans, the fact that half of them were directed against Catholics would be strong *prima facie* evidence that they were *not* sectarian. If the Catholics were done by Protestants, and *vice versa*, further information would be needed.

I spent twenty years at the centre of the battlefield in Belfast, trying to hold onto meaningful language while it was being debased by politicians and academics drawn up on either side. An act directly inspired by religious doctrine would, I thought, be reasonably described as 'sectarian'. I found very little sectarianism in that narrow sense—though it seemed to me that Protestant religious doctrine had a disabling effect on Unionist capacity for political thought. Protestantism is political in connection with a state, but in the North it was disconnected from the state. The Catholic Church—as Macaulay observed—carries politics as an integral part of itself.

If the meaning of 'sectarianism' is broadened to include the indirect consequence of religious doctrine, then the world becomes sectarian, and the English state was for three and a half centuries an immensely powerful sectarian force in Irish affairs which tainted everything it touched.

The English critique of Irish life became ultra-liberal the moment English government itself ceased to be positively sectarian, and Oxbridge has now apparently succeeded in imposing that mindset on Irish academia. It is not a mindset compatible with the writing of history.

The centuries of Protestant Ascendancy, under which Catholicism was made a crime, and a Protestant landlord/professional monopoly of public life was held to be a precondition of civilisation, made it necessary for Catholics to organise themselves as a separate political body. As the Catholics, through political action, achieved something approaching civil equality, they were faced with an entrenched property inequality that outlasted the legal monopoly under which it had been built up.

Dooley does not describe as sectarian the ambition of the Catholic majority, long oppressed on religious grounds by the Protestant British state, to regain secular ground after gaining the opportunity to do so by breaking Protestant political monopoly.

Dooley's biggest book is *The Decline Of The Big House In Ireland, 1860-1960*, published in 2001. He estimates that there were 4,000 Big Houses in the 26 Counties in 1860, and he selects 100 of them on the basis of estate size, but he jumbles these all together and makes random comments on them, and the result is a book that is not very informative.

I looked at a number of Big Houses in England, understanding that Big House, government and society were different aspects of the same thing for long periods of English history. What happened in England after 1688 is hardly comprehen-

sible if it is not understood that the state in its internal functioning was fragmented into a series of Big Houses, whose owners somehow exerted a strong moral influence on the minds of the surrounding populace. I went to see one *Chateau* in France and never felt inclined to see another. It was mere architecture, preserved to be looked at. It was not the owners of *Chateaus* who made France—it was the monarchy first, and then the populace.

In Ireland the owners of the Big Houses were a protected species maintained by the English State, incapable of surviving by virtue of influence over the surrounding populace, and interested only in themselves. This is evident even in the writing of Elizabeth Bowen, who is much drooled over in certain quarters nowadays. The only Irish Big House I ever looked at is Mount Stewart. The Lord Londonderry of 80 years ago, though denounced by fashionable historians, was one of the few Irish aristocrats of any real consequence and the only one with an effective sense of moral obligation.

Dooley does not deny that his hundred aristocrats were socially and politically functionless, and that they had no moral standing. But neither does he deal with the great change in the moral environment in which they lived that was brought about by the 1918 Election. He is not particularly at fault in this. The 1918 Election is obviously taboo in Irish academia. But, because he does not deal with it, his language becomes absurd at a certain point.

The police protected the Big Houses until 1919. The Big Houses did not acknowledge that the Election held at the end of the War for Democracy invalidated the British context of their existence. The police likewise continued to serve the British state in defiance of the Election mandate. The force that was formed to give effect to the Election mandate disabled the police who served an external political power. The police were no longer able to protect the Big Houses, which had always been alien enclaves, and the Big Houses refused to transfer allegiance from British military power to Irish elected authority.

The British Government set out to make Ireland ungovernable by the elected Government in Ireland, and it succeeded to a considerable extent. I do not see how else it can be put.

A recent English writer, Tom Bowden, who has been influential on revisionist writing, explains the rise of an Irish independence movement as a consequence of a cut in the funding of the police force in the 1880s. If Ireland had been sufficiently policed under the RIC espionage system, every local shoot of independent spirit could have been snuffed out in local isolation before it budded. Maybe so.

English policing in Ireland was undoubtedly much more effective than Tsarist policing in Russia. But police funding was cut. The spirit in independence budded and blossomed. And England fought a Great War for Democracy and the Rights of Small Nations—so it said. Then the Irish Democracy voted for independence. And Professor Dooley of Maynooth does not happen to mention these things.

Another book from Maynooth was published in 2006: *The Planters Of Lugacurran: A Protestant Community, 1879-1927* by Leigh-Ann Coffey. Lord Lansdowne (a descendant of Cromwell's surveyor of Ireland, William Petty, and a senior statesman of the British Empire), here described as "a local landlord" (p7), cleared a batch of Catholic tenants off his Laois Estate (the basic Lansdowne Estate in Ireland was in Kerry) and replaced them with Protestants. The religious aspect of the business was blatant and, using the terminology of the revisionists, can only be described as ethnic cleansing. The evicted tenants didn't slink away with their tails between their legs. They formed an association, remained in the area, and kept the issue of their eviction alive. That was possibly an act of attempted sectarian land grabbing in modern RTE parlance? Clarification would be useful.

Leigh-Ann Coffey sets out her methodology, parameters and constraints in an Introduction:

"...the study of the revolution has been influenced by a tendency among historians to operate within a highly structured framework based on divisions of geography and chronology, in which the events of 1919-23 are most often considered in isolation from the broader context of the late 19th and early 20th centuries... It is only as historians have become more distanced from events that significant progress has been made in the study of revolutionary Ireland. In addition to recent comprehensive studies of both the Anglo-Irish conflict and the civil war, influential works by scholars such as Peter Hart further contributed to the understanding of the era by examining the revolutionary experiences of individual men and women. These... provide insight into how the revolution was perceived by local communities. As one considers these contemporary recollections, it becomes evident that although the various leading figures... were somewhat successful in transmitting their political and social agendas to the public, the majority of the Irish population understood the revolution in the context of their own sense of identity and with regards to the interests of their communities. Academics have struggled to account for regional variations in the revolution, to explain why some areas of Ireland experienced more unrest than others and why violence took on a sectarian dimension in certain parts of

the country. The findings of Hart and others serve as an important reminder that the revolution occurred first and foremost at local level, and that to understand the revolution as a national phenomenon, one must take into consideration the experiences of those who were directly affected by events.

"This study follows trends in recent scholarship" (p8-9).

It is not stated what *"the revolution"* was. Was it the 1918 vote for independence, repeated in further elections in 1920 and 1921? Or was it the refusal of those who had voted to allow their votes to be over-ruled by force? One can make little headway in explaining an event if what the event is is not stated.

Professor Fitzpatrick's purpose in going into very local events in fine detail is not to explain the general national event but to lose it. And likewise with his student, Peter Hart, whose particular innovation was to interview participants in the Kilmichael Ambush who were in the grave by the time he reached them. Neither of them addressed the General Election as a national event.

The national development of politics in Ireland was an accomplished fact long before 1918. If one wants to see how the wood was put together from the trees, the relevant period is from the 1830s to the 1870s, and the relevant activities are those of Daniel O'Connell, Charles Gavan Duffy, George Moore and Isaac Butt. After 1880 the national structure of politics in Ireland was indisputably there, and the political parties that governed the State had stopped contesting elections, even in Ulster, after 1886. British policy was to contain Ireland through a Home Rule Party which refused on principle to take part in governing the state, and whose leaders said they only held back from declaring Irish independence for fear of the British Army. The great change in 1919 was that, after 50,000 Irish had died in a British War for Democracy and the Rights of Nations, the Irish electorate voted for independence and faced the consequences.

In discussing why Britain declared war on Germany in August 1914 I know of no historian who began by investigating particular local feuds in a multitude of English parishes and trying to work out how these feuds led to the declaration of war. The English national framework of political life is taken for granted and the connection of all the parishes within it is assumed. The national framework of political life in Ireland is no less evident by this time, so why proceed as if Ireland was inhabited by disconnected bunches of rural idiots whose political conduct could not be explained on similar grounds to English political conduct?

Leigh-Ann Coffey acknowledges

Dooley as *"a wonderful supervisor"*. And Dooley somewhere acknowledges Fitzpatrick, who seems to have been the controlling influence within Irish academia for a generation, and the creator of its many gigantic blind spots, one of which is the 1918 Election, and another is this.

I only notice one mention of William O'Brien by Dooley:

"In 1887 William O'Brien asserted: "The grand army of Irish freemen will march unconquered until they have trampled down in its last ditch alien landlordism and ascendancy and hauled down from the highest pinnacle the last shred of English misrule". Such speeches were highly inflammatory. The fact that they were met by 'loud applause'... suggests that they often had the desired effect of inciting the masses to exact revenge for what is portrayed as years of suffering and hardship at the hands of usurping colonialists" (Big Houses, p211).

That speech was made in the course of the agitation to establish farmer ownership of the land, then held in large estates by landlords who merely drew rents. O'Brien was imprisoned shortly after that by Bloody Balfour. But, as a result of O'Brien's agitation, Balfour concluded that the landlords were not economically effective owners of land in Ireland. He favoured the transfer of land ownership to the tenant farmers. O'Brien kept up his land agitation for the same purpose and in 1903, with Balfour as Prime Minister, a deal was struck under which farmer ownership was established in most of the country, even though the Home Rule leaders discouraged it.

O'Brien then suggested that the former landlords, most of whose landholdings had been reduced to large farms, should be wooed as Protestant country gentlemen to take a place in the national movement. But the Home Rule Party was being sectarianised at that juncture by its merger with the Ancient Order of Hibernians. O'Brien and his colleagues in the land purchase agitation therefore launched a movement against the Home Rule Party on that issue, the All For Ireland League, which won 8 seats from the Home Rule Party in the 1910 Elections and kept up a sustained criticism of Home Rule politics during the Home Rule conflict as being certain to aggravate Catholic/Protestant relations. It was in the region of AFIL influence that the Home Rule Party collapsed utterly in 1918. Sinn Fein candidates were returned unopposed and it was in that area of independent farmers, who had rejected the Home Rule Party as Catholic-sectarian in 1910, that British military rule was most effectively resisted in 1919-21.

These facts do not suit the revisionist scenario, and they do not figure in the immensely detailed local investigations

set in motion by Professor Fitzpatrick. And the revisionist scenario seems to be binding on anyone trying to make an academic career.

I assume that Leigh-Ann Coffey is a novice who knows no better and has to do as she is told. But surely Dooley has acquired sufficient status to make it possible for him to go back to the drawing board and find out why his comment on William O'Brien is so stupid.

**Brendan Clifford**

**PS:** Probably not. I have just seen the rural idiot cartoon from *Dublin Opinion* on the front cover of another book of his: *The Land For The People* (2004), and its opening sentence—*"It is often difficult to appreciate or sympathise with the Irish psyche that attaches an almost obsessive importance to the ownership of land"*. It is a fashionable complaint. The peasants took the land from the landlords, leaving Dublin 4 with no aristocracy to confer value on the *nouveau riche* who have made their packet.

TO BE CONTINUED

**Does  
it  
up?**

**Stack**

**CORK POPPY** When the Lord Mayor of Cork, Fianna Fail's Cllr. Donal Counihan (South Centre Constituency), laid a wreath at the beautifully newly revamped Great War memorial, wearing a red plastic poppy, one could have expected some outbreak of opprobrium but one had to look very hard for it. Certainly none of the other Councillors in the Corpo. had anything to say. Lord Mayor Counihan paid his tribute to those who have fallen in British Wars from 1914 to the present in the company of the Protestant Bishop of Cork, Paul Colton, and the Chairman of the Cork Branch of British Legion, Mr. John Whittaker, along with a very small crowd. Donal Counihan is successor to Lord Mayors Thomás Mac Curtain—murdered in his home in front of his family by British forces on 19th March 1920—and Terence McSwiney—who died on the 74th day of his hunger strike in Brixton Prison in on the 25th October 1920,—but now publicly pays tribute to those very same oppressive forces that saw to their deaths and those of so many others.

False history creates new conditions which enable public acts like this to happen. When a priest, Rev. Tomás Walsh, remonstrated with the Lord Mayor in a letter in the *Evening Echo* the following day, *"other readers hit back"* according to

the Editor, attacking his very temerity to do so. Judging by the responding letters, they **all** attacked the priest giving the impression that it was the priest who was out of step.

**KILMICHAEL NIGHT** On the 30th November 2007, there was a "night of commemoration and celebration, for the Republicans who fought successfully at Kilmichael, in the year 1920 against a British Terrorist Force". It was held at Nemo Rangers Hurling and Football Club by the General Liam Lynch Cumann (Fianna Fail South Central) in association with the Thomas Francis Meagher Society, Cork. Derek Warfield (founder of the *Wolfe Tones*) and his band provided the music. The keynote speaker was the new young Senator Marc Daly (Fianna Fail, Kerry). The event was opened by the same Lord Mayor Cllr. Donal Counihan—who just remained around for the photo opportunity and greeting of some of his constituents.

But it was the speech made by the Chairman of the Liam Lynch Cumann, Mr. Noel Kenneally, which fired all imaginations and put recent events in their proper contexts. He damned—specifically—Minister Michael Martin for putting up a monument to Admiral Drake at Carrigaline, with the panoply of the State in attendance. Mr. Kenneally described Drake as: this "pirate, plunderer and mass murderer of the inhabitants of Rathlin Island which was without doubt a crime against humanity". (The monument went missing within a week of it being put up and has never been replaced.

Mr. Kenneally went on to speak of "the spectacle of our Lord Mayor conferring all that his noble office endows on the soldiers of the Great War, even on those who killed our fellow countrymen after the 1918 elections which conferred on Sinn Fein a democratic mandate". To much acclaim, Mr. Kenneally went on to excoriate those in Fianna Fail today who ignore the past and toadie to the revisionist pro-British line which is constantly put out by the universities and media—including the national broadcaster RTE (all paid for by the tax payers!). This was a speech met with rapturous applause as it unapologetically put the emphasis on Irish history and not some "shared" President MacAleese version of it.

**The Story of the 7th** (2nd Edition) was launched by Canon Seamus Corkery—whose father Dan Corkery was Commander of the 7th Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade, Irish Republican Army—on 2nd December 2007, at the Castle Hotel, Macroom, Co. Cork. This book was originally privately published in a small edition in 1972; due to great demand this second edition was published by Schull Books (Barbara O'Connell). There was an

attendance of well over a hundred people at the launch and many people were buying several copies of the book to send as Christmas gifts to Macroom people abroad. The new edition has a Foreword written by Nora Browne (former Librarian of the Boole Library, University College, Cork) and who is the daughter of the author Charlie Browne, Adjutant of the 7th and lifelong friend of Dan Corkery. After the launch, copies of the book were signed by Canon Corkery and by Nora Browne.

It was while Dan Corkery and Charlie Browne were in Frongach Camp that "our comrade Dan Corkery received a telegram informing him of the birth of his first born, a bouncing baby boy christened Seamus". This was the same Seamus who was now in front of us in 2007 signing the book. This work is an excellent first-hand account of the War of Independence in the Macroom area and also has 16 pages of appendices giving all the names of the Irish Republican Army in the Battalion area, including members of Cumann na mBan. It is being sold in Liam Ruiseal's shop in Cork where William said it is running out the door. So get your order in early!

**IRISH CULTURE?** But of course the New Ireland intrudes and as a recent *Daily Telegraph* article (27th November 2007) noted that it seems to be following a very "weird process of Anglicisation". Yob culture and self-obsessed celebrity has combined with a very consumerised way of life with drink and drugs rampant. But as the *Telegraph* observed in an unusually thoughtful way, it is "nihilism" that is the new religion with its reliance on British tabloids. However, I consider Irish papers, and in particular the *Sunday Independent*, as the worst offenders, with their emphasis and obsession with drink/sex and shopping excess. There is the much celebrated story—a true one—of a First Communion where the mother, sitting in the parent's pews, watched her daughter progress up the aisle and just as the priest was giving the Holy Communion, the mother activated some technology and the girl's tiara went off, giving ringing sounds and multi-coloured lights, and nearly sending the priest into a fainting fit, such was his astonishment.

But now so everyone is in on the act: there is a new magazine ready to hit the shelves. Titled *Your Child's First Communion*, it tells the prospective "Mums" about the kind of clothes their children should be wearing, where the best false nails technicians are based and where to get that perfect tan. And of course equally important is where to go for the *most stylish hairstyles*—for the boys too. As one parent, Rose Tully of the National Parents Council said in the *Irish Mail* (30th November, 2007):

"I feel we're losing the meaning of the sacraments. The message of the sacrament is important, but it has been reduced to materialism. It's all about appearance and there's an element of competition... Children are getting helicopter rides and limousines and it's ludicrous—it's gone beyond the beyond... It puts very serious financial pressure on parents. It is the first time the child receives the sacrament and that is what we should be emphasising."

**BUDGET** Minister Brian Cowan's budget on the 5th December 2007 does not stack up at all as far as ordinary taxpayers are concerned, although his VAT exemptions will certainly cost the Exchequer money and will please certain property developers. More about this anon!

**LIBERTAS** A former Fianna Fail fundraiser, Mr. Declan Ganley, has founded *Libertas*, which is taking on the Government over the Treaty of Lisbon—which the Taoiseach surreally signed on the 13th December 2007, given that the people of Ireland have yet to have a referendum on the subject. Where the Constitution now? *Libertas* can be contacted at [www.libertas.org](http://www.libertas.org), where it is actively seeking donors, supporters and volunteers to join the 'No to Lisbon Campaign'.

**CATHOLICS ON THRONE?** And now to Buckingham Palace for a recent release which seems to have gone unnoticed in the media. Peter Philips, the son of Anne, the Princess Royal, announced his engagement to a Canadian—Autumn Kelly. The latter is a Catholic and she has two options. She **must** give up her faith and become a Protestant to marry into the Royal Family under Thomas Cromwell's infamous Act of Supremacy (1534) more often incorrectly called the Act of Settlement. Cromwell was known as *malleus monachorum* or *the hammer of the monks*. Or the Queen's Government could pass an Act nullifying the Act of 1534, as an anachronism. In an open European democracy the Head of State should **not** be the Head of the Church. In an unusual move, Queen Elizabeth 11 has let it be known that she would like that change enacted. We watch with interest Prime Minister Gordon Brown's response.

**Michael Stack.**

### Sharon's Scheme

"We'll make a pastrami sandwich of them. We'll insert a strip of Jewish settlements in between the Palestinians, and then another strip of Jewish settlements right across the West Bank, so that in 25 years, neither the United Nations, nor the U.S.A, nobody, will be able to tear it apart." Ariel Sharon to Winston S. Churchill in 1973.

## John Dulanty—High Commissioner For Whom?

*Some Realities of Betjeman, Bowen and Anglo-Irish Relations*

### PART TWO

Elizabeth Bowen was a most impressive and formidable character. But sometimes it is necessary to protect her reputation from the harm that can be inflicted by championing historians or relations who expose her to the dangers that can spring from assuming guilt by association. Brian Girvin has invoked both John Betjeman and John Dulanty on her behalf, while Martin Mansergh has trumpeted Dulanty alone. But here I must stand up for Bowen. She thoroughly abhorred Fascism and never behaved—as both Betjeman and Dulanty had in fact acted—as a co-conspirator with Fascists in seeking to bring about the overthrow of the democratically elected Irish Government. The essence of Bowen's political activity was that of a British patriot who engaged in espionage activity in Ireland. Extensive extracts from her intelligence reports were first published by Robert Fisk in his book *In Time of War* (1983), but readers should particularly read Elizabeth Bowen, *Notes On Éire—Espionage Reports To Winston Churchill*, (Aubane Historical Society, 1999) for a comprehensive collection of those reports that have been released to date.

It proved bitterly ironic that the most pro-British politician in Dáil Éireann—and one who had also been a Fascist—was the one to be most hurt by revelations that Elizabeth Bowen had been a British spy. Robert Fisk recalled springing that news on James Dillon [Vice-President of Fine Gael 1933-42 and Leader of Fine Gael 1959-65]: "Dillon had no idea that Bowen reported to the British Government on their conversation until the author of this book showed him a copy of her secret memorandum in 1979. Now aged 77, Dillon read it carefully; it was typical of him that he expressed no anger at Bowen's unflattering reference to him, only at the way she had abused his hospitality in 1940 by breaking the confidentiality of their meeting".

Now in the case of Bowen we are indeed dealing with a particularly talented spy. Intelligence reports on any political organisation are useless unless they can discerningly grasp the variety and complexity of opinions therein. Elizabeth Bowen was present in Dublin's Mansion House on 10th February 1942 to witness the Fine Gael Árd-Fheis. It was there that its Vice-President James Dillon made such a vehement attack on Irish neutrality that he was forced to resign from that Party. In her report of February 20th Bowen astutely observed:

"I should say that of the people there, one third were strongly with Mr. Dillon,

one third were neutral (temporarily swayed, but due to react against him later)—one third definitely hostile... The most bitter attacks on Mr. Dillon were to come, I was sorry to note, from younger members of the Fine Gael Party, at the back of the room ... Mr. Cosgrave and the rest of those on the platform preserved, during Mr. Dillon's speech, resolutely expressionless faces. Not an eyelid was batted ... *En masse*, I did not care for the looks of the Fine Gael Party ... Their main function appeared to be to carp at the de Valera government and this, as a function, appeared to content them ... Among the younger men—who attacked Mr. Dillon after his speech—there were one or two crypto-fascists; nasty pieces of work. Their complaint that the Party needed younger leaders ... did, however, seem justified."

But it was not only among Dillon's opponents in Fine Gael that Bowen had found crypto-fascists. The great merit of a good intelligence operative is to be able to disengage from the propaganda of one's own side in order to grasp and report on the full complexity of the subject being assessed. In her espionage report of 9th November 1940 detailing "*a long and very interesting talk*" with Dillon, she dismissed accusations of pro-Germanism that had hitherto been made against him as "*wild*". She found that "*in his morbid interest in Hitler's personality he struck me as following a private bent of his own*". But while she found him important, if only as a pro-British "*counterpoise to Mr. de Valera*", it did not at all follow that Dillon was an anti-Fascist. Quite the contrary:

"He is very much disliked, and I must say that, though liking him very much personally, I see why. He holds some views which even I distrust, and which are abhorrent to many Irish people whose integrity I respect ... Superficially, Mr. Dillon would be (from an English point of view) a very much easier man to deal with than Mr. de Valera. I say superficially, because while Mr. de Valera's fanaticism is on the surface, Mr. Dillon's, which exists quite as strongly, is deep-down; it exploded once or twice towards the end of our talk—religious fanaticism of the purest kind I have ever met. This streak in Mr. Dillon might be strongly felt in this country if he ever came into full power ... I could gather Mr. Dillon's own strong feeling for power from his speaking to me of his mistrust of it ... I have heard Mr. Dillon labelled a Fascist—which is I am afraid partly true ... Mr. Dillon said that his fear for the world was, that we should be left, at the bitter end of this war, with the idea ('fallacy', Mr. Dillon called it) that it was the form of government that mattered: Forms of government (said Mr. Dillon) do not matter ... Mr. Dillon then

explained to me what he felt to be the constitutional importance of the spiritual-moral. So far as I could see, Mr. Dillon believes in government by divine inspiration."

But to return again to the question of saving Bowen from her friends: I do not here propose to develop my view that during the course of the Second World War Betjeman's association with the Republican Left in Ireland eventually developed an anti-Fascist consciousness in him, while at the same time he may also have been 'turned around' into becoming an agent for Dev. But when he first arrived in Dublin in 1940 as a British spy there was nothing of the anti-Fascist about him. **It should also be pointed out that there had been one previous intervention by Betjeman in Irish politics and that this had in fact been exercised on behalf of Fascism.** Its context is as follows: In a Dáil Debate on April 28, 1938 on the Anglo-Irish Agreement that brought the Economic War to a close and returned the British-occupied ports to the Irish State, it was revealed by the Minister for Agriculture, Dr. Jim Ryan, that in August 1932 the UK Dominions Secretary, J.H. Thomas, had quite unashamedly threatened the elected Irish Government with a Fascist *coup d'état*:

"The British Government wanted to win the economic war just as we wanted to win it ... The party opposite said that if they were in power—and they believed they were coming into power—they could settle things in three days; and these were the men who said not alone that the moneys [land annuities] were due [to Britain], but that this country was bankrupt. Could you imagine the British Government seeing a better position for themselves? ... Yet now we are asked 'why did you not settle it six years ago?' As a matter of fact, I met Mr. J.H. Thomas in Ottawa (in August 1932), and we were asked at that time ... why we did not settle it then. As a matter of fact, I was very anxious to settle it, and I told Mr. Thomas that we wanted to settle it. Well, I won't use his exact words on the occasion, but I shall paraphrase what he said, which was to this effect: '*Do not bother me about the economic war; did you not see where a White Army has been started in Ireland?*' A White Army—the predecessors of the Blueshirts—the White Army that was started to throw this Government out and, I suppose to settle the economic war in three days. After all that, we have these people having the cheek to come along now and say: 'Why did you not settle it six years ago?' I think they ought to forget it".

On 19th April 1933 John Betjeman was to write to a very close friend, the Anglo-Irish peer Michael Parsons, the Earl of Rosse, at his home in Birr Castle, Co. Offaly. This letter was on behalf of another Irish friend, T.F. O'Higgins, who was Eoin O'Duffy's predecessor as President of the

Army Comrades Association, the original name of the Fascist Blueshirts. Betjeman explained:

"I have a friend who is one of the Big Three in the new White Army in Ireland. As you are an Irish Citizen and I expect have opinions about Dev's actions and politics at the moment, I thought that you might be interested in the enclosed pamphlets about the ACA—the White Army.... All people who have property and TREES in Ireland are bound to be a bit anxious now and it looks to me as though their only hope lies in the ACA. Cosgrave's party is full of corruption, though Cosgrave himself is all right, and I shouldn't think Cumann na nGaedheal will ever get in again. The Centre party doesn't count and the IRA is Communist, as we all know ... If you would let the Captain see you either... in Dublin or... in your Gothick Castle, he would tell you all about it, what it has done and what he wants to do ... He merely has you on a list of people who might be interested in the ACA ... I hope your trees are doing nicely. The Captain is a nice man. *Do see him. He is interested in Hindu eroticism as well as the ACA.*"

The Earl of Rosse, however, fought shy of rising to such Blueshirt temptations. Betjeman's daughter Candida related how his lordship had himself recorded the following:

"The President, I think [of the ACA], O'Higgins, called on my agent the other day and was only with difficulty prevented from coming and laying his suit before me! I have no political views myself and though I understand the aims of the ACA are excellent, one is better not involved in any organisation at present."

Candida herself went on to comment: *"The ACA later became the Blueshirts. In their early days... they were encouraged by many, W.B. Yeats among them, before anyone knew how they would turn out."*

Martin Mansergh has rightly concurred with Dev's own assessment that it had been necessary for him to ban the Blueshirt march on Government Buildings in August 1933 for fear that it might provide the pretext for an imminent *coup d'etat*. But the Fascist threat had not abated with that ban. Six months later, on 23rd February 1934, the ever sharpening political crisis had also compelled Dev to introduce the Wearing of Uniforms (Restriction) Bill, which led to some revealing exchanges in the Dáil. On February 28, John A. Costello—formerly Attorney General of the Cumann na nGaedheal Government 1926-32 and future Taoiseach of two Fine Gael-led Inter-Party Governments—issued the following Fascist threat:

"The Minister gave extracts from various laws on the Continent, but he carefully refrained from drawing attention to the fact that the Blackshirts were victorious in Italy and that the

Hitler Shirts were victorious in Germany, as, assuredly, in spite of this Bill and in spite of the Public Safety Act, the Blueshirts will be victorious in the Irish Free State."

The Minister for Industry and Commerce, Seán Lemass, took full note of this threat when replying on behalf of the Government:

"The leader of that organisation [the President of Fine Gael and Blueshirt leader, General Eoin O'Duffy] has made it quite clear that Fascism of some kind is the type of political association he wants to establish in this State. Deputy Costello here today also made the same statement. He said the Blackshirts won in Italy; the Brownshirts won in Germany and the Blueshirts will win here in Ireland. That brings very forcibly before the Dáil another stage in the development of militarism in politics ... The first stage is where political uniforms appear for the first time. The second stage where public disorder takes place; the third where an opposing uniformed force is organised and an attempt at civil war is created; the fourth, when one of these irregular private armies feels strong enough to dictate to the elected government as has taken place in Austria, and there is a fifth stage when one of these private armies succeeds in overthrowing the elected government and establishing itself in the position to dictate to the people of that country. It may be true that democratic institutions ... are open to reform, but ... it must be by the deliberate and clearly expressed will of the people operating through existing institutions ... If Deputies opposite have the same views they can strip themselves of their shirts, disband their military organisation and confine themselves to political activity of the ordinary kind, because that is all that will be necessary."

It was slap-bang in the very middle of that Fascist threat to the State that a highly significant meeting took place on 19th February 1934 between the Irish High Commissioner John W. Dulanty and Sir Edward J. Harding, Permanent Under-Secretary at the UK Dominions Office and, accordingly, the right-hand man of J.H. Thomas—he of the White Army threats to the Irish Government. As previously noted, Emeritus Professor John A. Murphy and Martin Mansergh have both sung the praises of Dulanty's diplomatic role and have cited Volume V of *Documents on Irish Foreign Policy*, dealing with the years 1937-39. It is a pity that both of them have overlooked Volume IV, dealing with the years 1932-36, which contains a record of the above meeting. True, this is not a report that Dulanty ever saw fit to make to his own Government in Dublin. Anomalously, in a Volume of Irish State Papers, this document is in fact taken from the British Public Records Office and consists of Sir Edward Harding's report to J.H. Thomas himself and to the rest of the British Government

on how Dulanty had briefed him. Sir Edward related:

"Mr. Dulanty came to luncheon this afternoon and I had a long talk with him afterwards about the I.F.S. [Irish Free State] situation. The talk began by a reference to Mr. James Dillon, Vice President of the United Ireland Party [the official English-language sub-title of the Fine Gael Blueshirts—MO'R], who had been a speaker at the Institute of International Affairs last week. Mr. Dulanty said that he had had several hours talk with Mr. Dillon on Saturday afternoon and that Mr. Dillon had given him some interesting impressions as to the position of the parties opposing Mr. de Valera. The chief of these impressions were that Mr. Cosgrave was a 'spent force'; that Mr. McDermott had no special aptitude for politics or knowledge of the Irish people so that he (Mr. Dillon) was, in effect, the mainstay of the Independent Party, and that **General O'Duffy**, who had started with a strong position as the idol of the Army and of the Civic Guard, **was now rapidly qualifying to be the only person in the Free State who had a chance against Mr. de Valera**. Indeed, Mr. Dillon had said that the size of attendance at the meetings of the United Ireland Party was becoming almost embarrassing. (Mr. Dillon, it appeared, had originally recommended General O'Duffy to the Cosgrave Party as one of the leaders of the opposition to Mr. De Valera on the ground that it was 'unsafe to leave him outside!')."

"Mr. Dulanty had apparently asked Mr. Dillon whether he shared the general view that if a General Election were held in the near future, Mr. de Valera would be returned to power. Mr. Dillon had replied that, if there were an Election in the next three or four months, the United Ireland Party would, he thought, have quite a good chance. On the other hand, he saw no particular reason why Mr. de Valera should seek an Election before the natural end of the present Irish Free State Parliament, and many reasons why he should not. If, however, he did not, and if the situation continued as at present, it might well be that, when the normal time came for a General Election, no party would be capable of ruling the Irish Free State—the economic position would have deteriorated so much ... The talk then went on to a general survey of the situation and the causes for it, and covered a good deal of familiar ground. The impression which I got was that Mr. Dulanty is very unhappy about the position of the I.F.S., that he sees no really substantial chance of 'replacing' Mr. de Valera during the next few years, and that he feels the time has now gone by when Mr. de Valera could be persuaded to accept the 'Commonwealth' idea. Nevertheless Mr. Dulanty was obviously anxious that the position both here and in the Free State should not be regarded as one of 'stalemate'. **He seemed confident that, if matters were allowed to drift, we should get, in a few years time, to a position when there would be no alternative to the birth of a Republic**, accompanied by

a good deal of unpleasantness and rancour. **Mr. Dulanty urged that the following points in particular were worthy of the consideration by the Government here, if they had a real desire not to allow such a situation to develop**" [My emphases—MOR].

Apart from some suggestions re fat cattle and bacon quotas, and a restatement of the Redmondite goal of a United Ireland firmly locked into the British Commonwealth, Dulanty's points were recorded by Sir Edward as follows:

"Mr. Dulanty reverted to a suggestion (which, he said, he had made to the Secretary of State [J.H. Thomas] at the time of the last exchange of despatches with Mr. de Valera) to the effect that the best course would be to indicate publicly and quite clearly to the I.F.S. that **should they become a Republic, certain consequences (which would be indicated) would inevitably follow as night the day.** Mr. Dulanty said that he was disappointed that the reply of the United Kingdom Government to Mr. de Valera's despatch had not, as he had hoped it would, take this line. He still thought that a public statement to this effect might do considerable good ... Lastly, Mr. Dulanty asked me whether I thought that another 'Round Table' Conference, the object of which would be to review the whole position, would be a possibility ... Mr. Dulanty suggested that it might not be necessary to lay down before hand the basis of a Conference. If such a Conference should, by some means or another, be held, and if unfortunately it should break down by it coming apparent that Mr. de Valera would not accept a 'Commonwealth' basis, **he thought that the effect would certainly be to help the parties in opposition to Mr. de Valera at the next General Election.** I told Mr. Dulanty that I should like to report the gist of our conversation to the Secretary of State [J.H. Thomas], and he made it clear that he had no objection to my doing so. I explained, however, that I was very doubtful whether any progress could be made on any of the lines which he had indicated. He replied that he realised this, but nevertheless he would like the suggestions considered." [My emphases—MOR].

Far more than "simple" espionage had been involved in this particular example of treasonable conspiracy on the part of John Dulanty. In case anybody has forgotten, Dulanty was supposedly representing the duly elected de Valera Government as its High Commissioner in London at a time when de Valera and Irish democracy were head to head in conflict with enemies both without and within—an Economic War imposed by British Imperialism and a Fascist-led Blueshirt Opposition. Dulanty was intensively lobbying Britain not only to act in such a way that it might facilitate the defeat of "his own" Irish Government by that same Fascist-led Opposition, but for Britain yet again to threaten Ireland with dire consequences if de Valera should seek to implement the Republican programme for which he had received such a decisive

democratic mandate in the 1933 General Election. High treason is indeed too polite a term for Dulanty's dirty work.

Martin Mansergh has done Elizabeth Bowen a distinct disservice by boasting that *"Dulanty pressed her case to travel and he was the person who suggested to Bowen that she offer her services to the Ministry of Information"* and that *"she was sponsored by Ireland's chief diplomat in London"* (*Irish Examiner*, September 26; December *Irish Political Review*). The documentary evidence clearly demonstrates that English-born and reared John Dulanty had been a traitor to Ireland, because this was the country to which he had sworn allegiance when entering our diplomatic service in 1926. But Irish-born Elizabeth Bowen had not similarly been traitor to Ireland, but rather was she a British patriot, because England was the country to which she had pledged her own allegiance. And there can be no doubt about which country she would have served if the British Government had felt it necessary to proceed with an invasion of Ireland.

Martin Mansergh makes light (November 6) of Jack Lane's statement that *"a British invasion was expected daily in 1940, as my father and many others could testify because they trained in the LDF to counter it"* (*Irish Examiner*, October 8; December *Irish Political Review*). But, while a German invasion might have been the greater threat in June 1940, thereafter it was in fact the threat of a British invasion that loomed larger. But here it is indeed possible to end on a happier note, arising from the superb quality of Bowen's intelligence work that enabled British policy makers to come to clear conclusions on what course of action was in fact in Britain's own best interests. Here Robert Fisk's narrative is particularly enlightening:

"The threat of German invasion receded but U-boat attacks on British shipping in the Atlantic did not. Between July and October [1940], 245 British vessels were lost and in November—the worst month of the year—a further 73 merchant ships ... In the House of Commons on November 5, Churchill suggested that Irish neutrality was partly responsible for this carnage ... Churchill's statement touched off another violent press campaign in London in favour of a seizure of the ports. Replying to Churchill, de Valera told the Dail that 'there can be no question of the handing over of these ports so long as this State remains neutral. There can be no question of leasing these ports. They are ours. They are within our sovereignty, and there can be no question, as long as we remain neutral, of handing them over on any condition whatsoever.' But the damage had been done. In Éire, public opinion, which had been alive to the dangers of German invasion, suddenly swung against Britain."

"[Dominions Secretary] Cranborne received word of this from Elizabeth Bowen, the Anglo-Irish novelist, who

during the war sent secret reports from Éire to the British Ministry of Information. Irish reaction to Churchill's remarks, she wrote (November 9), had been very unfavourable ... 'The flare-up of resentment and suspicion on this side ... is all the more to be regretted because, since August, pro-British feeling and sympathy for the British cause had been steadily on the increase here. I was struck by this, and impressed by the change of atmosphere, when I arrived in Éire in the middle of last month ... The childishness and obtuseness of this country cannot fail to be irritating to the English mind. In a war of this size and this desperate gravity Britain may well feel that Irish susceptibilities should go to the wall. But it must be seen (and no doubt is seen) that any hint of a violation of Éire may well be used to implement enemy propaganda and weaken the British case. Also, the aggravation of feeling in this country makes one more problem to settle after the war—or rather, is likely to make the settlement of an outstanding problem more difficult' ... "

"So astute was a report she wrote for the British Government in November of 1940—just after Churchill had spoken in the House of Commons about the 'grievous burden' which the loss of the Treaty ports had imposed upon Britain—that Lord Cranborne immediately sent it to the Foreign Office for Halifax's personal attention, commending Bowen's 'shrewd appreciation' of the situation in Ireland. 'It may be felt in England,' she wrote 'that Éire is making a fetish of her neutrality. But this assertion of her neutrality is Éire's first *free* self-assertion [Bowen's own italics]: as such alone it would mean a great deal to her. Éire (and I think rightly) sees her neutrality as positive, not merely negative. She has invested her self-respect in it. It is typical of her intense and narrow view of herself that she cannot see that her attitude must appear to England an affair of blindness, egotism, escapism or sheer funk.' It would be 'sheer disaster' for Éire, in its growing stages and with its uncertain morale, to be involved in war, wrote Bowen ... 'One air raid on an Irish city would produce a chaos with which, in the long run, England would have to cope'."

Bowen's conclusion, therefore, was that ending Ireland's neutrality would bring Britain more trouble than it was worth. De Valera had both publicly and privately declared on several occasions that if either Britain or Germany ever invaded Ireland he would resist any such invasion to the hilt and in the process be forced to enter into an alliance with the other party. If the intelligence reports from Britain's Elizabeth Bowen and Germany's Helmut Clissmann convinced their respective superiors in London and Berlin of the resolute determination of the Irish people—not only to support de Valera's neutrality policy, but also of the Irish readiness to fight to defend it if necessary—then Irish history can indeed acknowledge the role of such intelligence activity in compelling both Churchill and Hitler to settle for a "hands off" policy in respect of Ireland.

**Manus O'Riordan**

# Palestine

continued

strange gestures towards a thuggish looking man behind him.

Otherwise I have had no problem speaking to Palestinians in East Jerusalem or the West Bank—except for many previously politically overt people. Some have a physical fear of the Abbas regime, but mostly their problem is money. Most of them are employed directly or indirectly (through Committees for tourism, aid, culture, etc.) by the Palestinian Authority. Their livelihoods are on the line. And for a few mercenaries in government and police positions there are bank accounts opened and well filled for them by the Americans.

The newspapers are now slavishly behind Abbas. Closing down the *Times* was a warning to them. It is to the credit of the *Times* workers that they told Abbas to get lost. But for the most part journalists behave like journalists the world over and do what they are told for fees much greater than their pedestrian product deserves.

Hamas is not very greatly affected by all this. It has always been a fish in the Palestinian political and social waters. It continues to be so. It never depended on the PA or whoever was currently backing it for its subsistence, let alone its existence.

But the Abbas/American regime is having an effect. Many people I spoke to believed the main propaganda line of the regime. That is that Hamas and Israel co-operated to undermine Yasser Arafat and destroy his army. And then Hamas started to take over things. There are bits of truth here which help make the big lie believable. But the chronology is distorted and the chronology is every bit as important as the story of particular events that happened in recent years.

For most of its existence Israel saw the Palestine Liberation Organisation as the enemy that had to be destroyed. For that reason it invaded Lebanon and carried out bombing raids and assassinations in Tunisia and elsewhere. When Hamas began as a self-help organisation for Palestinians, the Israelis supported it in the hope that it would be a malleable counter to PLO influence.

In the same way it encouraged Shia political organisation in Lebanon and for the same reason. (Before that the Lebanese Shias were largely indifferent to the political storms around them.) This is more or less known and lends credence to Abbas' propaganda. It is also useful to the politically cowardly and others who want a reason to support Abbas. And for the many who want a bit of peace and quiet.

But things did not work out as the Israelis wished in either Lebanon or Palestine. In the former the Shias became

highly politicised and highly nationalist and drove the Israelis out of their country. When, last year, Israel again attempted to interfere in Lebanon, the main Shia organisation, Hezbollah—now with Druze, Christian, Communist, and other supporters—defeated the Zionists on the battlefield.

In Palestine Hamas began to replace some of the influence that the militarily defeated PLO had once wielded. More important, like Hezbollah, it politicised large sections of Palestinian society previously unpolitical. It became the main internal focus for Palestinian nationalism. It also became Israel's number one enemy.

When the PLO returned after the Oslo Agreements it was understood that one of its first objects was the destruction of Hamas. For this reason Arafat was allowed to bring with him a well-trained, if lightly-armed, military force. I don't know whether Arafat understood this part of the deal or whether he chose to ignore it. In any case he refused to implement it.

So the Israelis decided to go for Hamas themselves. They were confronted by Arafat's soldiers (referred to at the time, I remember, as gunmen in *The Guardian*) and were militarily defeated on the streets of Ramallah. After that they came only with tanks, helicopters and warplanes. Arafat did not like Hamas one little bit but he knew what side he was on when it came down to it.

This was not the case with many of those around him. And it was especially not the case with his Prime Minister, Abbas. Abbas was a slave to the trappings of power and was the one who conspired against Arafat. Hamas did not conspire against Arafat. Israel began a campaign of assassination against Hamas and a military campaign against the PLO.

Warplanes bombed the buildings where Arafat's soldiers were based, causing large casualties. Tanks invaded West Bank Towns and Cities targeting PLO soldiers and these also became daily target practice for Israeli snipers. That is how things actually happened.

Meanwhile Arafat got scant support from Abbas. Abbas was supported by the Americans and their allies as the most important man in Palestinian politics—the Prime Minister. Now that he is President, the Presidency is declared the most important post in Palestine. But the collaborator, now as always, was Abbas, never Hamas. And so back to the present.

Ramallah has been sanitised as far as politics go. Posters, only recently competing with each other as they expressed Palestine's political diversity, have been replaced by adverts for real estate, cars, and the fripperies of American life, decorated with pictures of celebrities from God know's where. The only

demonstration a meaningless one by scouts and guides, shepherded by middle-aged "policemen" and newly besuited dignitaries.

I don't know how long there have been hordes of Muslim beggar-women in Ramallah. I have never seen any before this visit and I have been there plenty of times.

This is the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. It held a noisy cavalcade around Bethlehem—escorted by the police. The PFLP is still part of the PLO and has been its most secular section after the Communist Party.

I listened in to a discussion about the desecularisation of Palestine in recent years. The common view of those speaking was that it was caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union as something for secularists to have behind them. There is truth in this. But the PLO always emphasised its secular and Christian elements when it showed its face to the world.

The really important change has been the politicisation of the majority of Palestinians by Hamas. In recent years the PLO has been wrapping itself in the flag of Islam as a means of countering the influence of Hamas.

On 7th of December police in Bethlehem gave chase to a suspicious van. Too late they discovered that it contained Israeli Special Forces on an assassination mission. The Israelis opened fire and killed one of the policemen.

The Abbas regime gave no indication that they were very bothered by this killing. Three days later an unauthorised but peaceful demonstration against the regime took place in Hebron. The Palestinian Authority police attacked the protesters, killing one and injuring twelve.

I got talking to a group of Abbas' mercenaries and they agreed to have their picture taken. Their uniforms and weapons were immaculate. But they were local men with no interest in soldiering and certainly no desire to confront anyone. Their officer tried to stop the photo being taken and then hid in their Israeli-provided armoured jeep. One of the men muttered something about Jordanians. This is the Palestine of Abbas.

Meanwhile the Israelis nightly continue to shoot up towns, harass Arabs, confiscate homes and land, and build settlements at an ever increasing rate. So what is Abbas all about? Even admirers, or at least supporters, have been unable to convince me that there is anything else but money involved, nor have they tried very hard. Money in one shape or another accounts for the behaviour of people at the top of the Palestinian Authority and the many

people who depend for their livelihoods on approval from the PA. But there is a widespread confusion in the West Bank which makes people fed up with the whole thing, or makes them accept or even support Abbas.

There are several serious divisions within Palestinian society which lead to a lack of understanding between areas and social groups. "Educated" Muslims tend to look down on "uneducated" Muslims, and to exclude them from their calculations. Groups such as Fatah and the PFLP have traditionally been of the elite or have seen themselves as such. Hamas was the group that began to address this problem. But the PLO still thinks it knows best for everyone.

Then there is the tendency of Christians to see Muslims as backward. They are often appalled by the lower orders as represented by Hamas. They are the ones that speak of preferring an American peace to an Iranian peace.

Then there are the territorial and clan differences. I was astounded how an ordinary Palestinian in Nablus could tell me in accurate detail about events in America, Europe and elsewhere and not have a clue about what is going on in Ramallah or Hebron.

People who I know voted Hamas, though they were not part of that movement, and who celebrated the purge of the gangster Dahlan by Hamas in Gaza, are now prepared to accept the *coup* by Abbas and much of his propaganda against Hamas. The most extreme version is a statement by Abbas that Hamas want to create an Iraqi type state of chaos in the West Bank and Gaza.

People I met in Nablus expressed outrage at the recent attack by Israel on the local refugee camp—some of the same people who have in the past blamed the refugees for outbreaks of hooliganism in the city—and welcomed the arrival of 500 Abbas troops as necessary to bring order. They will admit, when pressed, that these troops concentrate on Hamas who were anything but hooligans, but then return to their comfort zone where they can support the troops.

Most Palestinians are unaware of the extent of US control of things in the Capital, Ramallah. They had to be shown. Ramallah is awash with USaid money and posters and hoardings boasting about it. These show smiling US nurses caring for the people, smiling US builders in hard hats showing the natives how to build, smiling US farmers demonstrating the art of planting crops to agog local farmers.

Every major town in the West Bank had a very special memorial to Israeli aggression. This was the ruins of the local military and police and government compound destroyed by Israeli bomber planes in the Arafat era. The first thing to

happen under the new American influence was the clearing and levelling of these sites. In Ramallah there is a sign boasting that this is the work of USaid. In Nablus the sign accepts local responsibility. This is similar to something that happened in Lebanon. There was a prison there run by the Israelis, and their allies the South Lebanon Army, where Resistance prisoners were maltreated. Like the Barracks-ruins in Palestine it had become a central attraction for visitors. When Israel attacked Lebanon last year, this prison was their first bombing target.

There are three reasons why Palestinians are wilting under Abbas's pressure. First are the internal divisions which most of the movements see as operating in their favour. Second there is no overall directing movement which can prepare the people for either war or peace, like Sinn Fein in Ireland for example. Thirdly, there is a huge over-estimation of the power of the Israelis. For example, it is not understood that at the moment the Israelis and the Americans are barely on speaking terms as the US is determined to impose its settlement regardless of what anyone else thinks.

Conor Lynch

## Cork Heroes?

The Cork Holly Bough is an annual Cork institution that is difficult to fully describe to non-Corkonians so I won't try. It is usually a very readable miscellaneous collection of items about Cork, past, present and some items that bear no clear relationship to any definite time (or place) at all.

A standard fare for many years were items on Cork Fenians, usually inspired by a very knowledgeable journalist/historian Walter McGrath and these were its most substantial items.

This year (2007) has a change of tone. It has a 7-page supplement on *Cork's VC Heroes* by Gerry White and Brendan O'Shea. And we are invited to "...*marvel; at their astonishing feats of courage, carried out in times of appalling danger. They are awe-inspiring true stories that should never be forgotten*".

The headline for each story gives a feel for the content. Mick O'Leary from Macroom— *He Could Have Retreated, But O'Leary Fought Like A Lion*; William Cosgrove's *Incredible Deed Amid Carnage Of Gallipoli*; Con O'Sullivan was the *Heroic Captain Who Died As He Led From The Front*; and of Frederick Edwards we read *The Dashing Private's Solo Run As Western Front Battle Raged*. There must be a special military thesaurus for writing these types of stories up at Collins Barracks where the authors serve.

Any reader who is not mesmerised by

WWI is likely to ask what was all this derring do for? Why did these, and 12,000 more, from Cork act like this back in 1914-18?

What did they get out of it? There is a sad description of the VC's lives after the war and it is not pleasant to read because it bears no relation to what such heroes should have had and no doubt expected.

At least, we are spared the usual nonsense about them fighting for "*the freedom of small nations*", saving civilisation from barbarism, etc etc. And we should be grateful for small mercies in this area. It would be difficult indeed for any Cork historians especially two whose recent book is *The Burning Of Cork*, to give a totally rose-tinted view of soldiers who served in WWI. As this piece of vandalism was carried out by the comrades-in-arms of these very VCs it would be difficult indeed to be ignorant of this connection.. Our authors do the next best thing by ignoring all this and presenting their heroes without any context whatever. And we have some lovely euphemisms. For example Mick O'Leary's VC recruiting poster is reproduced. In it our "*Irish hero defeats 10 Germans*". Defeats! What a darling word for killing.

There is some excuse for soldiers like our authors being in awe of other soldiers who do best what soldiers are trained to do—kill people. This can be the only explanation for this 'Boys Own' view of WWI by White and O'Shea.

Every true soldier is in awe of that war because of the sheer scale and methodology of the killing. It was a lovely war in that sense. The military mind remains mesmerised by it like no other war

What is of more concern is that our civilian leaders, such as the current Lord Mayor, sports a poppy and is clearly just as much in awe of the killing of WWI—but what excuse has he? A Lord Mayor of Cork sporting a poppy!

But what was it all for?

Our soldier authors, knowing Cork's history with their mothers' milk and taking into account the obvious parameters that they must therefore think within, do their best at a justification. They conclude: "*However, we should never forget that but for their sacrifice, and that of all the other Irishmen who fought and died in World War I, the world today would in all probability be an entirely different place*".

That is most certainly true but it only begs the question—could the world of the 20th century have possibly been worse if that war and the way it was conducted concluded was avoided? For a start, and it's only a small start, it gave rise to practically every war since and the deaths of at least 60 million people—and counting.....

Let's hope that history is never, ever, viewed through the eyes of the simple soldier—including the history of Cork.

Jack Lane

## FAT CATS continued

public sector jobs, with the Civil Service accounting for 17% of jobs outside the reserved functions. The size of the Civil Service has of course been influenced by the creation of the NI Executive and the insistence on expanding to 11 Departments including the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister, specifically to accommodate an overblown Assembly and Executive and to satisfy the expansive state funding of communal political capacity deemed to be required within the current political process.

In demographic terms Northern Ireland is expected to follow the trend of most industrialised countries with the population of those aged 18 and under falling, while the proportion of those aged 65 and over will rise. As a consequence of this and the levels of deprivation, there will be an increased need for health professionals and a decline in teacher numbers.

The reality is that the Public Sector in Northern Ireland has provided the underpinning of the economy and to some extent has had a progressive influence on other employers in its commitment to civilised industrial relations processes and the training and development of its staff.

Finally, I would like to say a bit about one area where I think there is ground for the labour and trade Union movement to punch back beyond our weight—within the **Skills Agenda**.

**7. The Skills Agenda:** We should take issue with one critical policy driver—the policy aimed at achieving a target of 50% of young people entering Higher Education. The retention of the "50% access" policy *mantra* flows in the face of significant and mounting evidence questioning its logic.

There is growing evidence that the supply of graduates massively outstrips the demand in the economy for graduate labour. This picture runs across the country but is especially pronounced in some regions, including Northern Ireland.

In some sectors, such as steel and computer services, employers are making good use of the skills of graduates. In others, particularly in service sector and retailing, graduates appear to occupy jobs that do not require their skills

The second Work Skills in Britain Survey (2002) indicated that only 13.4% sampled from the UK Labour Force felt they were using a degree level qualification in their current job (ie they needed it to get the job and it was essential or fairly essential to carry out the work competently.

Like many New Labour policies, the "50% access" policy has been drawn largely from the USA, but even in the USA, projections are that only 21.8% of jobs by 2010 will require a basic or higher degree. The economic case for further expansion of Higher Education is, at best, patchy. With graduates progressively filling jobs that do not require high skill levels, it would be safer to say that traditional notions of a graduate job have been rendered fairly meaningless.

The "50% access" mantra is also likely to have unintended negative consequences for vocational education, and for the "bottom 50%". If the 50% access to Higher Education target is to be met, it can only be from inducing those currently capable of achieving a Level 3 qualification to go on to Higher Education. How then are the substantial number of craft, technician and associate professional jobs requiring Level 3 qualifications to be filled? **Relative to our European competitors, our main 'gap' or 'weakness' is at Level 3, not in Higher Education.** The sort of apprenticeship route that delivers technicians, craftspeople and associate professional workers across Europe has atrophied to a remarkable degree in Northern Ireland and the UK. The potential dearth of appropriately qualified young people to fill craft, technician and associate professional posts has begun to alarm employers.

The consequences of the growth of Higher Education for the vocational route would appear, to us, to be seriously damaging to the economy. The social consequences, where it is estimated that the expansion of higher education will disproportionately benefit the higher social classes, are equally alarming.

The effects of "50% access" has on the "bottom 50%" are also concerning. People with Level 3 qualifications will be crowded out of craft and technician jobs. And recruitment to large swathes of the service sector place little weight on qualifications *per se*, with greater emphasis on personal characteristics and work discipline skills. Nonetheless, even in low status service jobs, personal characteristics and social capital will tend to favour the middle class.

Our movement should make two particular recommendations on these matters.

**i) Higher Education compact:** First, that the Minister for Employment and Learning review the policy of 50% access to Higher Education. We should ask Sir Reg Empey to note that the "50% access"

policy is a cost free option for employers. Employers currently make very limited direct contributions to the cost of Higher Education. We would ask the Minister to implement the "compact" suggested by Lord Dearing whereby the costs of Higher Education should be shared between the state, individuals and the employers of graduates. No other measure would provide a better test for the efficacy of Higher Education in meeting the needs that the Northern Ireland Skills Strategy professes to espouse.

**ii) Excellence in Apprenticeships:** Secondly, that the current Priority Sectors approach adopted be built upon by developing a rigorous, quality, apprenticeship system for only priority sectors with productive or manufacturing functions. Such apprenticeship frameworks should be developed within tripartite structures involving the State, the Employers (perhaps through the relevant Sector Skills Council) and the Employees representatives (Unions). There should be a move away from a 'voluntaristic' model of apprenticeships—which has largely failed—to a front-loaded, and long-term planned and rigorous programme of study and work experience.

All other apprenticeship frameworks, notably those in the services sector, should be scrapped (with each of these sectors relying on the National Vocational Qualification system, employer training and 'on the job' training). A high quality apprenticeship programme should also be built-in as an integral part of the £16 billion capital and infrastructure programme.

**8. Regional Autonomy?:** A final difficulty with the PfG and the Budget Priorities is that these were dominated by political imperatives on which Northern Ireland can only be a bystander. Public sector efficiency became a key battleground several years ago when then Conservative Party Shadow Chancellor Oliver Letwin suggested a range of efficiency savings which the Conservatives would wish to make. New Labour, in its accustomed tactic of "*triangulation*"—ie moving onto the political ground of its opponents—appointed Peter Gershon to undertake a quick Efficiency Review and implemented serious 'efficiency' cuts on the civil service and public service generally. This efficiency saving was the sub text of the Budget Priorities 2005-08 and remains so for the 2008-11 round.

There is very little evidence that the local Executive political parties have brought any new thinking to the game!

[www.labour.ie/nireland](http://www.labour.ie/nireland)

## FAT CATS continued

for fair taxation, and name and shame the tax dodging rich. We should set resources aside for this work. As we're on the side of the angels on this one, we'd get widespread public support.

We even have the spectacle of all Stormont parties campaigning to lower Corporation Tax when over one third of British companies pay no tax at all, that is something to behold! We should campaign for more company tax inspectors.

We also tend to frame this debate in terms like *"growing inequality"* and the *"gap between rich and poor"*. We need to be more direct and connect with the public—the debate should target *"greedy bastards"* and *"tax avoiding spongers"*.

**ii) Company Law:** Second, and in the light of the Seagate debacle—the company which moved on after availing of start-up capital—there is a need to do more to legislate for a more broadly-based, civilised, conception of company law. Traditionally, companies were invented by "companions" who banded together to share risk to perform a vital economic or other function from which they would profit. They would petition the state for a licence to practice and accept reciprocal societal obligations in return. This classic conception of company has been debased by the narrow notion of short term shareholder return, a notion which will consider quicker routes to shareholder return than investing in people to develop a great organisation. Merger and acquisition to extend market share, tying senior management to stock market performance through share options, increased managerial opportunism, and the use of performance related pay for middle and junior managers to effect cost minimisation: all serve to reinforce the short term view of the company, rather than the need to invest in skills development.

We, as a Union movement, need to develop a narrative around what a broadly defined and progressive company, with environmental and societal obligations, should look like.

**iii) Socialist work organisation:** I will speak later on about the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela. One of the striking things about that development is the explosion in co-operative development, worker shareholding, mutual associations and so on. We are not nearly interested enough, as a movement, in developing and supporting our own forms of socialist work organisation.

**iv) Political & Financial Muscle:** We need to use our political and financial

muscle to better effect. In the case of the TWGU and its relationship with the British Labour Party, it would appear that the Warwick Accord is a poor return on the many thousands of pounds of members' money. The relationship appears to be that the Unions hand their money over and bend over, whilst New Labour takes its pleasure. You need to ensure that every penny of members' political contributions help the rights and welfare of working people—you need to get more *'bang for your buck'*, or—in language that New Labour would understand—to get your "RoI"—Return of Investment.

The notion of Union members paying a Government party to bring in below inflation pay settlements of 2% in a context where inflation is running at 3.8 to 4.8% and when average Directors pay is rising by 37% is no longer acceptable.

Locally, we should have a united campaign aimed at the Minister for Enterprise, Nigel Dodds to ensure that public funds can never again go to Union busting operations like Seagate and that civilised industrial relations should be an essential requirement in receiving economic development state aid in Northern Ireland. A focussed campaign on the standards required to receive state aid could be effective.

Equally, outside the political sphere, we are not nearly sophisticated enough—within the financial instruments where we do have influence (pension funds, for instance). I recently listened to a fascinating lecture from representatives from the American Union, the SEUI who have set up a sizeable Department to promote *"Active Shareholding"* where the Union uses its financial strength on Pension Funds and Investment Trusts on which their money is invested to promote wider worker aims.

**v) Infrastructure:** Political pressure also needs to be exerted locally too in terms of infrastructure. The PFG correctly points out the need for Northern Ireland to develop a world class infrastructure. Whilst telecommunications can be considered to be doing well, and the implementation of a ubiquitous access to broadband technologies is welcome, other parts of the infrastructure are woeful, having suffered from years of underinvestment. The Water and Sewage infrastructure has been underfunded for years and is antiquated. In railways, the current network has insufficient critical mass to resist an unkind political environment for public transport. The train from London/Derry to Belfast is reputed to have been quicker in the 1880's than it is today! The private car is the dominant form of transport.

The solutions proposed in the Programme for Government, and in the 2004 Economic Vision, and elsewhere throughout the administration, are ideological in conception and are inappropriate to the needs of Northern Ireland. In particular, the Government obsession with use of Private Finance mechanisms for public capital procurement represents poor value for money, both in the short term and long term. The Reinvestment and Reform Initiative (agreed by all parties), driven by the Strategic Investment Board, proposes to improve public infrastructure, but only at the significant cost of taking public services out of the public and democratic realm. **Sucking scarce resources from public utilities and services to service the profit imperatives and shareholder expectations of the private interest is a scandalous waste of public resources.**

Both the DUP and Sinn Fein are vulnerable on this—as, in economic terms alone, it is very risky, dangerous and poor value for money. The 'sore thumb' example of the PFI scheme at Belfast's Balmoral High School (where a school built under PFI a few years ago will close this year, but be paid for from revenue budgets until 2025/26!! PFI is now well understood as the private sector *'having a laugh'* at public expense. And the Executive parties are content that the Strategic Investment Board—a voracious and ideologically charged private sector 'advisory' body—is leading the charge for a rapacious and self-interested private sector interest. The local parties which are 'catch all' communal parties with no real social or ideological bearings, need help (and pressure) for them to resist the privatisers.

**vi) Over Reliant on an overblown Public Sector?** The Programme for Government repeats the contention within the 2004 Economic Vision and within Strategy 2010 that Northern Ireland is over-reliant on an overblown and bloated public sector. **We need to take issue with this contention.** In most progressive countries in Europe, the extent of public provision of services is regarded as a positive indicator of social and economic health. The argument that is advanced that the Public Sector is 'crowding' out the private sector and preventing commerce and entrepreneurship, is simply bogus. The relative size of the public sector is clearly not the cause of the lower employment rate in Northern Ireland, which is due largely to the decline in large-scale manufacturing and heavy engineering.

The major employment groups are Health and Social Services and Education, which jointly account for around 70% of

continued on page 29

### 3. POST WAR BRITAIN

In essence we have had two distinct periods of political development in post war Britain including—to a greater or lesser degree—Northern Ireland. From 1940 onwards, a former leader of this Union, Ernest Bevin, was to the fore in establishing a social and welfare consensus. It was a consensus that **put people first**. It decided that people needed to be housed and fed, that proper arrangements be put in place for a national health service, for free universal education, and proper social welfare arrangements. This was decided as political policy, with the means to be found thereafter.

By the late 1960s and early 1970s this consensus needed to be renewed. Capital and Management no longer had the capacity to run affairs faced with a strong labour and Union movement. Equally, our side needed to take the step change from a strong, adversarial, bloc, to a movement with the instincts to take over control and management of the economy. We weren't up to the task. From Barbara Castle's *"In Place of Strife"* to Ted Heath's *"Tri-partite"* proposals to Bullock's proposals for industrial democracy and worker management, we as a labour and trade Union movement, did not come up to the mark. We declined to take responsibility, and the electorate, accordingly, decided that Unions needed their wings clipped! This allowed Thatcher to break from Bevin's social and welfare consensus.

The Thatcherite consensus, of which New Labour is an adaptation, has resulted in a society where rampant individualism is the order of the day—a greedy country of extreme individualism, consumed by consumption.

Ireland today, North and South rewards gushing, brash, manipulative, speculative and vulgar wealth. And this flaunting of ostentatious wealth strikes at the very basis of responsible and inclusive citizenship. An economy propped up by easy credit, consumer acquisitiveness and a housing speculation 'bubble'. We have low levels of social protection, whether measured by company regulation, labour market protections or by expenditure of health, childcare, youth services, care for the elderly or the provision of well-tended public spaces. The very concept of public service is being destroyed, the ethos of public service eroded. Those who work in public service, far from being appreciated for work they do with fellow citizens, are reviled and abused. The rail network and

bus services are inadequate; postal service is being 'salami-sliced' to the margins; privately-cleaned hospitals are dirty; public house building has slowed to a trickle; the squalor of the public realm has been improved under New Labour, but does not compare favourably with the derided economies of 'Old Europe'—Scandinavia, Holland, Germany or France. Away from the glitzy downtown finance and shiny glass fronted corporate blocks, our public realm is sub-standard.

This neo-liberal model stands for an extended and stressful 'long hours' working life from which basic guarantees won by generations of struggle have been stripped. In the name of labour market flexibility, new forms of exploitation emerge, often directed at the most vulnerable of employees—the low paid and migrant workers.

The invitation of the Right is for an existence as an insatiable, isolated, individual consumer. Our response on the Left has been disjointed—but if it is to become anything, it must be grounded on the values of solidarity, equality, co-operation, collectivism and justice.

### 4. A HIGH SKILL EQUILIBRIUM— 'moving up the value chain'

The political background I've set out does not obviate the need to address that the Northern Ireland economy is relatively insular, lower skilled, risk averse. Despite the rhetoric of a *"knowledge based economy"* made up of high skill, highly autonomous workers, current evidence confirms that the UK in general remains locked into hierarchical management systems, with strong control on workforces, few opportunities for meaningful employee consultation or influence over their workplace or working practices. The recent Work Skills in Britain Survey, 1986-2007, demonstrated that task discretion has been in sharp decline across the whole economy, particularly pronounced for professional knowledge workers.

And there are significant macro political constraints that lock Northern Ireland (and the UK as a whole) into the current *"low skill equilibrium"*. It is important that we understand the extent of these constraints.

### 5. MACRO POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS

**Company Law:** The Anglo American, free enterprise, model of capitalism adopted within the United Kingdom in the past twenty years tends to emphasise shareholder returns above all else. The drive for short term shareholder gain overrides the development of the company as a productive entity. Institutional investors are unlikely to get to know the company, or help grow it. I'll say more about this later on.

**i) Tax:** The prevailing political mainstream for some twenty five years

has favoured a low tax consensus. Labour, for instance, is widely seen as having lost the 1992 election on Tax. Even now that there is an increase in the overall tax burden, New Labour feels inhibited about arguing for increases in mainstream income taxes preferring collecting 'stealth' taxes. The recent debacle which saw New Labour cave in to a 'give away' to the rich on inheritance tax showed how atrophied within the political realm are the arguments in favour of taxing unearned income.

**ii) Culture of Cost Minimisation:** The consequences, particularly in Northern Ireland there is heavy reliance on the public sector, is that public services are run increasingly on private sector lines, with cost minimisation, CCT, "best value", outsourcing and efficiency gains, the public sector equivalent of *shareholder value*. And there is no more dedicated advocate of this free market rhetorical dogma that our Executive Minister for Finance, Peter Robinson. A culture of cost minimisation, whatever its merits, is not likely to be a friend of developing workforce skills.

**iii) Few Regulatory Levers:** These factors are exacerbated by the absence of regulatory pressures to encourage employers to train or develop staff. Within our de-regulated labour market, with fewer employment rights, fewer trade Union organisational rights, with no statutory levy on employers (as in France) or statutory framework for co-determination (as in Germany), it is inevitable, indeed rational, that employers will not risk investing in in-depth front-loaded skills formation, or on generic skills development—but provide only narrow, non-transferable training of a type and level below what is socially optimal.

### 6. SO, WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE!

I hope what I've said has not been a counsel of despair, because there are things that we can do—and things that we should do.

**i) Greedy Bastards:** First, there is what I would call the **Greedy Bastard agenda**. There is an instinctive majority against the failure to act to contain the super-rich. My Union, the GMB, with only a few people researching out of a back office has run a very effective campaign against the anti-social Private Equity merchants. We need to do more of that.

Equally, we need to re-educate and restate the progressive nature of Taxation. The ease with which large sections of the very privileged and well-off avoid tax is seen throughout Ireland, culturally, in a Robin Hood-ish way. That needs tackling. As a movement we need to propagandise



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# Comment

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## From Fat Cats To Compacts

Speech by Labour Party NEC Member *Mark Langhammer* to the UNITE/GWU Race and Equality Conference at Ballymascanlon Hotel on Thursday 8th November 2007

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Brothers and Sisters, thank you for your invitation today.

The draft Budget and Programme for Government (PfG) announced two weeks ago by the Northern Ireland Executive was welcomed by the Confederation of British Industry, the Institute of Directors, the Financial Services Board and by all and sundry in the media. It was agreed unanimously by all 4 parties in the Executive Committee—the DUP and Sinn Fein of course, but also the UUP and SDLP more grudgingly (on grounds that they did the "heavy lifting" in the last administration). There is nothing in the budget that could not and would not have been undertaken by New Labour, and nothing in it to worry Prime Minister Gordon Brown or Chancellor of Exchequer Alastair Darling. It is written within a free market, neo-liberal orthodoxy. It talks of year on year "efficiency savings", talks down the public sector as oversized, sets out 23 Public Service Agreements, proposes the sale of significant public assets, and hitches a vast capital expenditure to an aggressive privatisation and marketisation programme.

### 2. CONTEXT

The Budget is poor in providing either political or macro economic context. The macro economic context for Northern Ireland is largely set by the political, and particularly the foreign, policy choices of the United Kingdom Government.

The current British state is over three hundred years old. It has, for several centuries, adopted an adventurous foreign policy and has developed—at the core of the state—an instinctive understanding that there is a symbiotic relationship between the development of free trade on one hand and pro-active engagement in warfare on the other. This is as true of the Labour and Socialist movement as it is of the Conservative tradition.

Aside from an historically brief period when the invention of the industrial

revolution saw Britain lead the world as a productive economy, it's "balancing powers" instinct in foreign policy (what Churchill called the "instinctive tradition") has reaped rewards. Britain has been largely successful, to the present, in "living off the world".

In today's economy, the United Kingdom as a whole lives a lifestyle well beyond its visible means. The UK is, allegedly, the 4th largest economy in the world, yet it is remarkably unproductive. We make very little, manufacture very little; we grow very little, we extract or mine very little. A £7 billion balance of payments deficit is, apparently, to made up from "invisibles"—the result of a vibrant financial services sector! The health of the City of London as a financial centre is of paramount importance to this, and previous, UK Governments.

The general outlook of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions in regard to the northern economy is set out within the document "Old Wine in New Bottles". I think that Mike Morrissey led our thinking on this and it is a good general vision which seeks a high skill, added value,

productive economy with high quality public services, consciously looking towards the Scandinavian model. It is not one, however, that is realisable within the current UK paradigm.

The requirements for an economy driven by an active, adventurist foreign policy, and by the needs of financial and tradeable services and the home based service sector, differ greatly from the needs of a productive economy driven by manufacturing and research and development. Accountants, actuaries, lawyers and a decent Army in the field are more to the point than a high skilled, high productivity workforce.

Since the end of the Cold War, Britain (having shown signs in the 1970's under Heath and Wilson successively of adopting a role in the world more in keeping with its more modest post Empire and Post World War position) is now actively engaged in military and political interventions across the globe. **Settling down to peace and productivity in the manner of a Scandinavian country, for instance, is unlikely to be on the agenda in the near future.**

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It was Mr. Blair who noted after 9/11 that the "kaleidoscope" of world affairs had been shaken, and that "now was the time" to remake the world in our image. Several wars later, and with a new adventure under active consideration in regard to Iran, the approach of the Brown Government is unlikely to change in anything other than tone. Indeed, the Brown approach is likely to see more 'humanitarian intervention' in Africa, in particular. Brown, a son of the manse, is less gung-ho in rhetoric, but nonetheless is comfortable with the civilizing mission of empire—the white man's burden.

Within this macro political and foreign policy environment, the alleged aim of "moving up the value chain" is, at best, politically problematic.

continued on page 31