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Northern Ireland: Identity And Crisis

Denis Bradley is one of the couple of political commentators who have anything to say about the Northern situation that is worth reading. His *Irish News* article on July 3rd was headed *Unity Argument Should Be Sinn Fein's Only Argument*. He argues that Sinn Fein is greatly mistaken in presenting itself as a socialist party in the Free State and condemning Fianna Fail on socialist grounds for its handling of the economic crisis:

"Instead of putting its energy into reminding and challenging each southern party to live up to and work for their own stated aim of a united Ireland, Sinn Fein behaves like any other political party and fights elections on local bread-and-butter issues. Sinn Fein is attempting to be the primary champion of a united Ireland and a normal political party at one and the same time. It can be a champion or it can be a normal political party. It cannot be both. Every time I heard a Sinn Fein spokesman they were attacking Fianna Fail for destroying the economy of the state... This is the same Fianna Fail that is a senior republican body and without whose cooperation and support a united Ireland is impossible. Sinn Fein calls it bad names by day and then snuggles up to it in cross-border committees..."

"Gerry Adams... was arguing not just for a united Ireland but for a socialist republic. I was arguing that any reference to socialism was a big mistake. It was complicating and obscuring the focus on a united country... Nothing wrong with socialist arguments but the south already has a Labour Part and those arguments distract from the one really strong argument that Sinn Fein has. A united country would be good for both economies..."

It is said that Sinn Fein has an "*identity crisis*". Of course it has. Northern Ireland is an identity crisis. It is a structural abnormality in state terms and no party which participates in its sub-government can behave in accordance with what it otherwise takes to be its identity. The Protestants cannot be British and the Nationalists cannot be Irish. To be British or Irish in governmental terms is to take part in the political life of the British or Irish states. Northern Ireland political parties can do neither. But they are required by the systematically abnormal structures within which they must function to go through the motions of being normal political parties.

Professor Keogh of Cork (following Lord Professor Bew of Queen's and Whitehall) says there is a Northern Irish state. His proteges write books with 'Northern Irish State' in their titles, but they never get around to describing it. Professor Keogh himself is academic cock of the walk in the Free State at the moment, and he dominates *History Ireland's* 30 year commemorative issue on the Arms Crisis. But the actual conduct of politics in the North is determined by the fact that Northern Ireland is *not* a state.

One can see the point in Bradley's suggestion that Sinn Fein should not behave as a normal political party in the part of Ireland where normal political parties operate, but should be a single issue United Ireland lobby group. The difficulty with that is that the way the Southern political system behaved towards the North for 20 years after Lynch's betrayal of the Northern Catholic constitutionalists in 1970 brought the present Sinn Fein into being as a substantial political party in the South.

Sinn Fein cannot be silent on political issues within the Free State. But it has difficulty in finding a role for itself—as indeed has the Labour Party, which does not cover the socialist ground, as Bradley supposes. Under Stickie leadership it was busily remaking itself into a middle-class business party when the financial crisis struck.

Fianna Fail as "*the senior republican party*" takes a lot of believing. Cowen has behaved atrociously on the North, and has come close to treating it as Keogh's Northern Irish state which is none of his concern. It is as the competent managerial party of the

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Democracy And Justice

Democracy—*government of the people, for the people, by the people*"—has gone through strange evolution. When Britain invaded Iraq with the object of destroying the state, the opinion of the people was against it as far as one could tell. But the Government said that was OK because Britain was a democracy and its people had the right to be against the Government. There would be an election in a couple of years when the will of the people would prevail. Meanwhile the Government had to govern as it saw fit. But when election-time came, the Government put it to the people that they should vote on bread-and-butter issues at home and forget about that far-away country that was being made a mess of. The Opposition agreed. And that was that. In a democracy, on foreign policy, the people have the right to disagree with the Government and the Government has the right to carry on regardless.

Irish public opinion was even more definitely against the invasion and destruction of Iraq—with Eoghan Harris and Kevin Myers being the chief warmongers—but the Government played its part in the invasion to the extent required of it by the United States. And, when the election came, the Irish electors, like the British, voted on other issues.

Russia was a democracy in the 1990s. It became a democracy when the President, Yeltsin, sent the Army in to destroy the elected Parliament which was asserting the right to play its part in a Constitutional mode of Government. Yeltsin governed by decree. He established free enterprise capitalism by giving public property away to a handful of cronies for a song. The standard of living and the life expectancy of the mass of the people plummeted and actual starvation set in. Things got so bad that there was even talk of impeaching Yeltsin for corruption within his own anarchic, oligarchic democracy. There is only so much of that kind of freedom—

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No Statues For Bill

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Next month: *John Curtin* by Patrick O'Beirne—the start of a series on Australian political leaders

Free State that it has credibility. It has dealt with the financial crisis rather well, but it makes excessive demands on belief (or nostalgia) to be able to think of Brian Lenihan and Micheál Martin as republicans.

The Great War—Britain's bid for Imperial dominance—has now been officially embraced by Fianna Fail as *Our War*. A postage stamp is to be issued celebrating the great ethnic cleansing, and would-be genocide, called the Plantation of Ulster.

Gaelic Ireland was willing to settle down under the Stuart Monarchy, with which it felt a sense of genealogical affinity. The Stuart Monarchy was overthrown by the English Puritan rebellion in the 1640s and Ireland was punished for supporting it. The Stuart monarchy was restored in 1660 when the Cromwellian regime collapsed in on itself due to incompetence. Traditional Ireland became loyal once again. When the Stuart Monarchy introduced freedom of religion in the 1680s. Puritan England rebelled once more, in alliance with an invasion by William of Orange. Another conquest of Ireland followed. Bertie Ahern set the precedent of celebrating the subjugation

of Ireland symbolised by the Battle of the Boyne.

The subordinate Parliament of the English colony in Ireland introduced the Penal Law system on the foundation of the Williamite conquest. We must now be close to the tercentenary of the introduction of some of the major Penal Laws. Another celebratory stamp is called for.

Fianna Fail is making rubbish of the history out of which it emerged. No doubt it is part of a cunning plan of the Baldrick kind. If nationalist Ireland makes complete rubbish of itself the Ulster Unionists will see that it has been born again and there will be unity.

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Meanwhile the Supreme Court has availed of the financial crisis to slip through an over-ruling of the High Court judgement against the Editor of the *Irish Times* for being in contempt of Court by refusing to disclose the source of confidential documents from the Mahon Tribunal which it published.

At the same time another Tribunal is accusing Denis O'Brien and the *Sunday Times* of a breach of law by revealing other confidential documents.

O'Brien is a major finance capitalist.

He won the bidding for a mobile phone licence some years ago. An accusation of corruption was made against Michael Lowry, the Fine Gael Minister in charge at the time. A Tribunal was set up to investigate. Lowry insisted that he acted on the advice of his civil servants and no evidence was produced that he didn't. The charge of corruption then slid towards the civil servants who made the recommendation about the winning bid but there was no evidence against them either. O'Brien discovered that the Tribunal had commissioned a secret report on the affair. He compelled it to make it available. He received a draft copy of the Tribunal findings in which opinion based on hearsay took the place of conclusions based on proofs and he launched a campaign against it.

The *Irish Times* over the years has given free rein to the corruption allegations of its suburban Savanarola, Fintan O'Toole. But recently it has been carrying comment by Sarah Carey, who has obviously lived at the heart of the business world. And she has been drawing out some of the implications for business and for Government of the slipshod conduct of Tribunals.

If the Moriarty Tribunal runs off at the mouth on the mobile phone licence issue in its recommendations—as was done in another Tribunal in a different connection some years ago—the company which did not win the contract is poised to sue the State for astronomical losses due to alleged malpractice. And the fine reputation of Ireland's civil servants will be impugned worldwide on the basis of hearsay and 'evidence' which would be inadmissible in a court of law. It has also been remarked that one of the counsel acting for the Tribunal has acted for a losing company in the mobile phone tender process.

A noticeable change took place in *Sunday Independent* comment on NAMA (National Asset Management Agency) in late August. Earlier Brendan O'Connor said he had done the sums and they showed that NAMA did not work. One Sunday there were half a dozen articles to the same effect. Then there was silence, followed a week later by an article by O'Connor saying that NAMA would work after all because you can't put the shit back in the bull, and you must do *something* with it.

Is it that Tony O'Reilly, after letting the paper go to pot, decided to bring it back to a modicum of financial sense about the actual economic predicament of the country. Or is it that Denis O'Brien has been buying heavily into the share ownership of the Independent Group?

Are we hinting that the fearless journalists have been subjected to undue influence by men with money! Are we hinting at corruption? Surely not! On the other

hand——

We have often pointed out that the system of functional liberalism in England was got going by a century of competent and purposeful corruption by people with the power to exercise influence. And if something like that is beginning to happen in the Free State, it can only be a good thing.

*

Remember Castlereagh! Castlereagh high security Barracks, near Belfast, were broken into in broad daylight by men without guns and not wearing masks, at a moment when the cameras happened to be switched off and security files were stolen. It was said that the Provos did it, and they were punished for it politically. Among those capable of believing that the Provos did it were Fianna Fail and Lord Bew. Only one person was ever charged with the offence, Larry Zaitschek, a cook working in Castlereagh, who was living in America when the charge was laid. He returned and placed himself within the Northern Ireland jurisdiction last year and demanded to be arrested and tried.

The charge has now been dropped on the pretext that evidence of his guilt would damage security if presented in Court.

Editorial Digest

August 12th 1969 began the famous Battle of the Bogside, followed by battles in Belfast and elsewhere. But the rioting had begun earlier by mixed forces of Loyalists, B-Specials and RUC. On August 2nd 1969 there were two attacks on Unity Flats by Loyalists. The absurd situation arose with the RUC defending Unity Flats from the outside while their colleagues joined the Loyalist attackers inside, badly beating many of the residents and killing 61 year-old Patrick Corry. The Loyalists were led by John McKeague. The Scarman Report said that the Loyalists then threw gelignite and petrol bombs at the police. The RUC initially asked for troops but this was refused as the GOC of the military insisted that the request had to come from the British Secretary for Defence. The real delay centred around who would control the troops—the RUC or the military. Downing Street insisted that security responsibility should pass from Stormont if troops were deployed. It was only on the evening of 14th August that the Stormont authorities were forced to accept deployment of the troops on those terms.

Breidge Gadd, in her weekly column in the *Irish News* of August 18th, said that she was present when the shooting started in Belfast, but demanded that reminiscences should not be confused with history. In the same issue of that paper, Jim Allister of the Knights of Malta gave a graphic account of the shootings, bombings and house

burnings on the Falls-Shankill interface in those first days, from a First Aider's point of view. This account was a more informative piece of writing on the period than most of the material that has come out of academia over the last few decades. Gadd is right that academic accounts need to be written also. But who is going to write them? With a few honourable exceptions, like Ruan O'Donnell in Limerick, most academic historians dealing with Irish History have a pro-British and anti-Irish agenda. Leading the pack is Roy Foster in England and David Fitzpatrick in Trinity. The latter, an Australian, gets his students to "research" in a way that supports his point of view. Most famous of these students is Peter Hart from Canada who falsely claimed to have interviewed survivors of the Kilmichael Ambush to prove some point about Republican sectarianism. The dates on which he claimed to have conducted these interviews were after the last of the Kilmichael ambushers were dead or incapacitated. Breidge Gadd is mistaken when she assumes that academic historians are by nature unbiased. So the more first-hand accounts that come out, the better, until we have a more honourable academic set-up in this country. One which doesn't set out with the aim of making Irish people, of whatever stripe, ashamed of their past and by extension ashamed of what they are today.

Matt Baggot, head of the Leicestershire police, has been appointed head of the PSNI/RUC following the imminent retirement of Sir Hugh Orde. Mr. Baggot makes much of being an active practising Christian—or another 'mad Prod' as the say in parts of the North. He is President of the Christian Police Association. He is a Londoner and most of his career, 30 years, was spent in the London Metropolitan Police—a force notorious for its corruption. And he didn't exactly cover himself in glory during the investigation into the murder of Stephen Lawrence. Martin McGuinness praised him to the skies on the radio and most of the other MLAs followed suit. Another point against him was his close association and friendship with former RUC boss, Ronnie Flanagan, during the National Review of Policing. It was on Flanagan's watch that some of the worst sectarian murders took place with institutionalised collusion between Loyalists, the police and the military.

Orange Order membership in Ireland is at an all-time low. Instead of the 100,000 it had been recently claiming, the Order now admits to a membership of 36,000. In 1969 it had 93,447. This had dropped to 47,084 by 1990. The Order has launched a recruiting drive in the US on the back of religious revivals there. But the Order, formed in 1795 to suppress Presbyterian and Catholic radicalism, is substantially made up of members of the Anglican Communion. In Ireland this means the Church of Ireland. In the US Anglicanism is not in the best of shape. (See *Irish News*, 26th June.)

Sectarianism? In the middle of June a number of Roma families had their homes broken into in South Belfast and death threats were made. 20 families, about 100 people, were evacuated to a community centre on the Ravenhill Road. There has been an issue with some Romas begging, selling the *Big Issue* and taking the pitches of locals—mostly alcoholics. But it is hardly likely that the thugs who attacked them were standing up for the local alcoholic community! Racism has rarely been an issue among Protestant paramilitaries with the exception of one UVF group in South Belfast. A rally in support of the Roma was attacked by people giving the Nazi salute. Several UDA and UVF leaders have been black or from the middle East. Blacks, Asians and Chinese in Belfast have usually been labled Protestant.

UDA leader, Jackie McDonald, denied any paramilitary involvement—the police agree with this. McDonald said that the BNP and Combat 18 were involved. Combat 18 was certainly involved in throwing bottles and rocks at Republicans protesting against the recent public parade in Belfast by the Royal Irish Regiment and other British units following their return from Iraq and Afghanistan. McDonald also said that the UDA was actively preventing the BNP and other English fascists from recruiting in Belfast. Some of the Roma have taken to attending Presbyterian church services. The BNP denied involvement but made the following statement: *"The people of Belfast will be getting the blame but these people [the Roma] have only themselves to blame. Everywhere these people go they cause trouble..."* [Irish News, 18th June.]

Esther Rantzen, self-publicist and former TV presenter, had her tuppence-worth to add to the trouble in South Belfast. She described the people of the North as being *"addicted to hatred"*. *"It's as if [violence] gives them a sense of identity because they only know who they are if they know who they hate"*, she said. The lack of self-knowledge among the English is a matter for astonishment among people the world over. If any society is addicted to violence it has to be the English: brawling in every part of their country at weekends and when abroad on holiday and at sporting events. But, above all, state-sanctioned violence is a permanent blot on the international landscape and has been for hundreds of years. More than that, the state never misses an opportunity to commemorate the perpetrators of this violence. The men who started two world wars and raped Asia, the Middle East and Africa are hailed as heroes who fought in defence of their country. Rantzen should look closer to home.

Afghanistan: The *Irish News* on 18th August devoted its editorial to Afghanistan and especially the killing there of Irish mercenary, Stuart Murray, from Ballykelly, Co. Derry. Murray was a former UDR/RIR member. The paper finished: *"There*

are no easy answers in Afghanistan but there will be enormous sympathy for the grieving family of Stuart Murray".

Militarism: The *Irish News* seems to be on some kind of pro-British run at the moment. On 13th August it ran a full colour advertisement for an upcoming British Army Reserve recruiting weekend at a barracks in North Down. It shows a soldier in full warpaint under the slogan "THINK YOU CAN RUN WITH THE BIG BOYS?" Among the other joys in the ad. was: "Immerse yourself in a campaign of interactive virtual missions to find out if you've got what it takes to answer the Call of Duty." Bus shelters and phone boxes in Belfast were festooned with the same ad.

Mountbatten: On the 19th August, the *Irish News* had two full pages commemorating the assassination of Lord Mountbatten and a further two pages crying about the 18 paratroopers killed the same day by the IRA near Warrenpoint. The same issue of the paper had an account of the pro-Sinn Fein activities of the only man convicted in relation to the Mountbatten killing. The paper even mentioned the village where the man was living. Now who would need that information?

McGurk's Bar: 15 people were killed and many others injured in a UVF bomb attack at McGurk's Bar in North Queen Street, Belfast, on 4th December, 1971. The British GOC at the time knew within hours that this was the case, but he permitted his military intelligence service to make a public statement that the bombing was "*an IRA own goal*" which occurred within the pub. This version was put before the House of Commons. The truth has now been admitted by the NIO Minister, Paul Goggins. One of the main disseminators of military intelligence was the West Belfast MP, Gerry Fitt. This was a factor in locals demanding his removal from the area. The outcome was his eventual elevation to the House of Lords and his removal to England.

Claudy: July 31st saw the 37th anniversary of the bombing of Claudy in Co. Derry. This writer knows nothing of that event but was in the area in 1966, staying in the nearby Catholic village of Park. The hatred between the two areas was palpable. Twice a week the B-Specials met at Claudy Orange Hall, got drunk and set up road blocks. Any Catholic, including the local priest, was in for a good hiding. We don't know if the local IRA was behind the bombing but there was no shortage of locals who would have done it—being forced to cross fields on their way home twice a week. The Big House on the edge of Park itself was occupied by a B-man.

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Democracy & Justice

continued

which was recognised by the West as authentic freedom—that human nature will bear. Things got so desperate that Yeltsin made a deal with Putin, who represented all that was left of an actual state in Russia after ten years of Western-approved freedom—the Army.

Putin guaranteed Yeltsin against prosecution for corruption, and he set about restoring an authoritative state and curbing the corruption that was rife within the democracy of the capitalist oligarchs. He stopped the sale of Russian resources to Western commercial interests, and imprisoned the greatest of its oligarchs, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, who refused to see that Russians could no longer bear the torment of his freedom.

The oligarchs had all cut their teeth in the Communist Party. They knew therefore that the economic base determined the political superstructure. One of them, Boris Berezovsky, explained on British television about ten years ago that Putin hadn't a hope of directing events in Russia because the economy determined politics, and he and his fellow-oligarchs owned the economy. But he had the prudence not to test the theory of economic determinism with his own person, and he set up house in England.

Putin restored a state apparatus that was in some degree responsive to the requirements of the populace. He won two Presidential elections, and then won a Parliamentary election. Unlike Yeltsin he had a programme for government, and he has been implementing it. But he is now usually referred to in the Western media as an authoritarian, a dictator, or even a Fascist. He is a Russian national capitalist operating an electoral system which is as democratic as is practical in the structureless anarchy brought about by Yeltsin.

The reason he is described as Fascist is that he has organised a political party which functions throughout the State. In Yeltsin's time there were no political parties—or there were dozens of mushroom parties which did not endure from one election to the next—which is much the same as having no parties. Yeltsin governed as a demagogue supported by the oligarchs on whom he had bestowed immense wealth, and who owned the media.

There was an election in Iran in June. Close Western observers did not tell us it was being conducted fraudulently, and their exit polling told them that Ahmadinejad had won. But some of the losing candidate refused to accept the result, declared it to be rigged, and brought their

supporters out onto the streets with the object of sweeping the regime aside. As far as we can tell the demonstrators belonged to a middle class that had evolved during the thirty years of the Revolution, had developed sophisticated tastes, wanted an opening to the West, and felt oppressed by an electoral system which subordinated them to the ignorant masses.

The West, which from its own sources of information took the election of Ahmadinejad to be valid, has now responded to the appeals of the Iranian minority which feels oppressed by the democracy, and it usually describes the election as rigged.

And then there was Afghanistan, where the evidence of gross election rigging was too blatant to be covered up. For days before the election the Western media reported that it was being rigged openly. But the EU and NATO both said it was OK. All that mattered was that some voting was done. And, even though much of the small percentage of voting that was done was corrupt—with bundles of thousands of voting cards on sale at 6 Euros each—it was nevertheless an exercise in democracy. The people were getting practice at putting bits of paper in boxes.

As we go to print the issue of the Lockerbie bombing is being wound up. Two Libyans were found guilty of it by a Scottish judge in defiance of the evidence but in the interest of justice. The instinct of revenge, which is at the source of justice, must be satisfied, and if the culprit cannot be got a scapegoat will serve.

The famous British 'miscarriages of justice' relating to Northern Ireland were scapegoatings. And, after they had served that purpose—a generation later—they served the second purpose of showing how marvellous the British justice system is. It remedies its mistakes.

Few people doubted twenty years ago that the American airliner that blew up over Lockerbie was an Iranian act of revenge for the Airbus of pilgrims from Iran to Mecca shot down by an American warship in the Gulf, for which the USA never made a word of apology. But it was not expedient to pursue the matter against Iran just then, and Libya was picked on as a suitable scapegoat. Two Libyans were convicted on far-fetched grounds. They appealed against conviction a few years ago. The appeal of one was upheld, but the appeal of the other was denied. The difference between the two cases was hard to see. A second appeal was launched, but before it was heard Abdel Basset al-Megrahi was persuaded to withdraw it and accept compassionate repatriation as part of a multi-faceted deal between Britain and Libya.

America protested—the relatives of the victims, Ted Kennedy and other Senators, the President and the head of the FBI.

Of course it should have been an American case. The bomb was directed as a tit for tat against America. It went off over Scotland because the plane was late taking off.

Libya paid heavy compensation to the victims' relatives, chiefly American, a few years ago. America has not paid compensation to the relatives of its victims.

Libya paid compensation to buy off sanctions but did not admit responsibility. The British relatives took the compensation, but many of them agree that the Libyans were scapegoated.

There is another aspect to all of this. It seems that al-Megrahi's Defence has uncovered new evidence for the Second Appeal, which shows that the original evidence presented in the Trial was manipulated. Furthermore the intention was to force the British authorities to release sensitive information to the Court which would have exonerated al-Megrahi. Britain simply could not afford to have this intelligence come out in Court. With matters reaching a decisive point, action had to be taken quickly. That is why the prisoner's repatriation on 'compassionate grounds' was staged. A condition for that repatriation was that al-Megrahi drop his appeal. But there was no good reason why the sick man could not be returned to Libya, even while the appeal against his conviction was proceeding.

Al-Megrahi went home to a hero's welcome, and that was taken amiss by the media in America and Britain, as Libyan support for terrorism. In fact the man was a hero: knowing themselves to be innocent, he and a colleague had allowed themselves to be extradited and put on trial because Libya was being damaged by intolerable sanctions imposed by America and its allies. However, faith in Scottish justice proved to be misplaced. A 'guilty' verdict was required and supplied.

Prime Minister Gordon Brown has played a nasty trick on the Scottish Nationalist administration of Scotland over the release of al-Megrahi. While the diplomacy was conducted by Whitehall, the release has had the appearance of an action by the Scottish administration, because it was a Scottish Minister who made the announcement of the prisoner's repatriation to Libya on grounds of ill-health. However, al-Megrahi would not have been sent home to serve his sentence in a Libyan prison but for the behind-the-scenes politicking between Brown's Government and the Libyans—a deal was made, the commercial aspects of which are said to be favourable to Britain. The Scots were merely a facade.

This repatriation has unleashed a torrent of abuse from the Americans on Scotland, with the American media stoking up a hate campaign. The Scots Nationalists

are being tarred with the 'terrorist' brush and there is talk of boycotts.

It is clear that the Scottish Nationalists have been used as a lightning conductor against the American backlash by Gordon Brown—who did not want to baulk American policy openly. At the same time as arranging for the release, Brown had a Scottish Labour Party spokesman condemn the Scottish Nationalist administration for releasing a terrorist.

Nationalise the Banks

Since September of last year the Irish Government has attempted to preserve the existing financial system in the belief that it could be preserved. It was not wrong to do so. In a period of uncertainty the State stepped in to provide stability in the form of a guarantee for depositors and certain categories of bondholders. This prevented the sudden flight of capital—both domestic and foreign—which would have resulted in the liquidation of all of the Irish banks with catastrophic consequences for the economy.

It then nationalised Anglo-Irish and pumped billions of Euro into the two largest Irish banks.

However, the State discovered that this was not adequate. It found it was necessary to eliminate uncertainty surrounding the value of loans through the setting up of an external agency called the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA). Although NAMA is not exactly being set up from scratch in the sense that its establishment will be assisted by personnel from the highly competent National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA), neither NAMA nor NTMA have experience of collecting debts or managing land banks in the event of loan defaults. In order to overcome this defect the new State Agency will second staff from the Banks to help it perform this fundamental task.

In summary, the State has decided to underwrite the liabilities of the banks; insure their assets; and bring a significant section of the banks' employees under its direct control. And all of this is to present the illusion that it is 'business as usual'. But the facts of the matter are that the banks have no substance apart from the State.

The arcane structure, which is now being envisaged, is in danger of collapsing under the weight of its own contradictions.

It is said that economists know the price of everything and the value of nothing. But, in the absence of a market, then they do not even know the price. There is no market for property and therefore there is not any obvious way of knowing the price. This basic fact has been borne out by the Dutch-owned ACC

It seems that if, while serving a useful purpose for Brown, the Scottish Nationalists are wounded by American retaliation, Prime Minister Brown would reap a double benefit. Labour is under increasing pressure from the Nats. in Scotland, its erstwhile safe heartland.

Such is justice, and such is democracy, in the 21st century.

Bank case against Liam Carroll's property empire.

The economist Karl Whelan has been warning the Green Party that NAMA will pay too much for the development loans that it will acquire from the Banks. The value of the loans depends on the ability of the debtor to repay them. But how can anyone know how much NAMA should pay for the loans it intends to buy from the banks? Unfortunately, the absence of knowledge will not prevent opinions being expressed.

The loans that the banks have made to developers and other lenders are assets in the books of the banks. Normally, the price of an asset in a market economy is calculated on the basis of the discounted (i.e. after adjusting for the rate of interest) future stream of income that the asset will generate. In the case of residential property the future discounted stream of income is rents. Where the buyer is an owner-occupier this rental income is "imputed" or the income is calculated on the basis of what he would earn if he let his property to a tenant. In Ireland it was always assumed that property would 'hold its value' and, indeed, would increase. For this reason the price of property included a capital gain element.

However, these two conditions no longer apply. Rental incomes are falling and it is no longer the case that "*property holds its value*". Property prices have been falling but the real extent of the fall is unknown since property has been withdrawn from the market. There is no reliable method of calculating Irish property prices in the absence of a market. A theoretical model called "*long term economic value*" has been proposed but this depends on a view of the future performance of the Irish economy which may or may not be valid. And since property is where the Banks' loans have been invested, there is no reliable method of valuing these loans or assets of the banks.

The Bord Snip Supremo Colm McCarthy has admitted on RTE radio that it turns out that commentators who have never seen any of the banks' records have been more accurate about the true value of

the banks' assets than those who have poured over every detail.

Liam Carroll, one of the largest property developers in the country, has had his application for a stay of execution for his companies rejected by both the Supreme Court and the High Court. The reason given is that no credible valuations have been furnished. At the time of writing an appeal has been made by Carroll's co-directors on the grounds that Carroll's refusal to give detailed valuations is a sign of mental incompetence. But who can say for certain that Carroll's response is the only sane one under the circumstances.

Another distinguished economist, Patrick Honahan, has expressed the opinion that NAMA should not even attempt to arrive at an accurate valuation of the banks' development loans. Instead, it should pay at the lowest conceivable price (whatever that is). If subsequently the State makes a profit on these loans a dividend should be paid to the banks' shareholders. The problem with this policy is that, if the banks only receive a minimum price for their development loans, their capital ratios will be so reduced that their survival will only be ensured by another massive capital injection from the State.

The attempt to pretend that the Irish banks are independent of the State is now a cause of political instability because of the potential for disputes between the Governing parties on the intractable question of how to value the loans.

The NAMA proposal was an interesting and innovative response to the financial crisis. It has now run aground because the extent of the crisis—both domestic and international—was much deeper than had been first appreciated.

It seems clear that for the foreseeable future the State will be obliged to take control of the financial system. The success of this strategy will depend on how the real economy performs, which will also depend on the policies of the State.

The *Irish Political Review* calls on the Government to abandon NAMA and accept the economic reality that our main banks cannot exist independently of the State. The State must begin the process of nationalising the two major banks with minimal compensation for their shareholders.

Development Banks

Anthony Cronin reminded readers of the *Sunday Independent* (9.8.09) how two banks, the Industrial and the Agricultural Credit Corporations, were established by Fianna Fail in the context of the 1930s Depression to fund national development. These banks were privatised and their function discontinued. Extracts from his article appear below

NAMA: O'Connor Sees The Light

The *Sunday Independent* has undergone a curious metamorphosis over the National Assets Management Agency. Originally it reflected the opposition of developers to the move; later it took up a populist position, culminating in its issue of 9th August in which half a dozen major articles attacked Government policy. Someone—possibly Denis O'Brien who has steadily been increasing his ownership of the paper—must have intervened at that point. The following week the paper was silent on the issue. Meanwhile Labour and Fine Gael have been asking for a public inquiry into the mess, to be conducted by the Public Accounts Committee. On 23rd August, Brendan O'Connor—who had earlier written that the 'sums do not add up' wrote: *We Could Be Angry Over This Mess... Or Get Real*. Extracts from this appear below

[The article summary is: "*Nama is unjust but necessary, and we must now accept the things we cannot change and face the new reality...*"]

"...It has become fashionable to blame a small coterie of Dublin-based developers for what we now know was the overbuilding of the country and over-hocking of the property industry and thus the economy. You tend to forget that they had the fever the length and breadth of the country. You forget that local bank managers all over the place... have been allowed to rubber-stamp all sorts of crazy credit-driven developments in the ass-end of nowhere...

...after a couple of weeks of going around the place and talking to the people, reality starts dawning and you realise that most people, while they are angry, are more concerned now with moving on... as one ex-Wall Street Irish guy, who has consistently called things as well as anyone over the past few years, put it to me: you can't put the shit back in the bull.

We can have all the inquiries and tribunals that we want, but it will only serve to further distract us from the realities of where we are now... Where we are now is that the bull has crapped all over the place, we can't put it back in and it's also too much of a mess for us all to deal with all in one go. Yes, it is terrible that developers and builders were allowed to amass the crazy debts they did...

And yes, it's infuriating that we are now being expected to pay for the really big losses...

...even though they were not incurred by all of us it is the economy at large that is taking the hit from them... Now what matters is that our financial system is paralysed and our economy is being bled dry by these toxic assets ...we cannot move on until we do something about

them. We have to take the hit, as angry as that makes us all... not to bail out the banks or the developers, but to bail out ourselves and our economy...

The hit is too enormous to be taken in one go by the banking system, or indeed even by the economy. The hit, unfortunately, needs to be amortised over the course of the next 20 years or more. And the only institution with the sheer scale to be able to do this is the State. The State needs to suck it all up now and then spit it back slowly to us for the next while. It's not fair, it's not fun and it's not pretty. It's an outrage, in fact. But that seems to be the reality of it.

Nama is wrong and unfair and the rest of it, but it's necessary. In fact, many serious people now suspect that Nama could be a model to be copied elsewhere, that the Europeans and the Yanks are trying it out here because we have in place already an independent treasury management agency that can effectively become Nama.

...let's leave it to the experts to argue out the nitty gritty. On the issue of what price the State will pay for the debts, let's be real, too. Whatever you or I think, the Government will give the banks whatever they have to give the banks to ensure they don't go under...

[Regarding the debate over nationalisation:]...Ultimately, we will probably end up with banks that are partially state-owned for now. Ultimately, we will also end up getting back some of any profits that banks made. As much as it gets up our noses, we probably have to leave some element of the banks private if we want private money to flow in there an private money guys to run them. It's actually not that important in the grand scheme of things. What's important is that we clean up that bull's mess..."

"Whatever happened to the market and to the market forces with which were were so lately browbeaten and shamed into conformity?

'The market' was gifted with a quasi-moral authority... The infallibility of the Pope was as nothing when compared to the infallibility of 'the market' which could be defied only at great cost and almost certainly ruin.

It was therefore a supreme irony that when ruin did come, it came largely

through the unfettered and less and less regulated actions of the market...

...in the midst of calamity, the market was surreptitiously... jettisoned as a guide to what we could or could not do...

...what is Nama but a vast, cumbersome, extremely expensive and horribly risky way of frustrating the market?

In the old days, when the market ruled, the normal course would have been for the banks to take action against the developers and to salvage what they could by putting all these so-

called assets under the hammer. Or if that didn't do any good, the banks themselves would simply go to the wall...

But that could not be allowed to happen. The market is now a malevolent force and so we have Nama which will probably bankrupt us in the not very long run. And yet there remain vestiges of the old free market philosophy. Though he no longer worships at the old shrine, [Finance Minister] Brian Lenihan still draws back in horror from some of the roads opened up before him. Public ownership?

Oh dear no. We mustn't have that.

And yet there was a time in the not so distant memory when the State used to have banks of

its own. Devised by the radical, courageous Fianna Fail government which the electorate had entrusted with the task of getting us out of the depression of the Thirties... the new banks were surprisingly successful...

The banks of that day, like the banks of this, were believed not to be putting sufficient money into circulation, in order words, to be not advancing credit to farmers and small industries. These banks, the Agricultural Credit Company and the Industrial Credit Company, did not require much capitalisation—after all, they had the Government behind them—performed their functions very well and they lasted until the tide of... prejudice... turned against State institutions..."

Note On The Cromwellian Massacres In Drogheda And Wexford

In the last issue of *Irish Political Review* Desmond Fennell made a passing mention of the Cromwellian massacres at Drogheda and Wexford. Lately I came across something relating to this which might interest readers.

There's an idea around, put about by Tom Reilly and others, that the allegations that Cromwell massacred the townspeople of Drogheda and Wexford were invented by 19th century nationalist historians. When you read Reilly's book a bit more closely you find that he's well aware this is not true. He is forced to try to deal with facts which those 19th century historians and others uncovered. They include a letter by Cromwell himself to Lenthall, Speaker of the English Parliament, which the Parliament itself published in 1649, where he said that 'many inhabitants' were killed at Drogheda. Reilly argues, as Carlyle etc. argued before him, that this phrase isn't Cromwell's. Somebody else stuck it in, for some reason or other. The proof? It's inductive: killing civilians would have been against Cromwell's principles, therefore he couldn't have done what he said he did, therefore he couldn't have admitted what he didn't do!

Reilly also dismisses the testimony of an eyewitness, the soldier Thomas Wood (an unprincipled 'mercenary' etc.), who described the killing of civilians; and he dismisses the "bigoted" and "fanatical" Catholic priests who wrote about the massacres later. He appears to think that there are no extant accusations of massacre close to the time of the actual events.

However, John Callaghan's book published in Paris in 1650 (*Vindiciarum Catholicorum Hiberniae Libri Duo*) proves the contrary, and with no room for dispute or argument. Callaghan was a Catholic priest, but it wouldn't be easy to show that he was a bigot or a fanatic. His book includes a strong political and personal defence of the Protestant Duke of Ormond, and an uncompromising criticism of the leader of the militant

Catholics, the Papal Nuncio Rinuccini. The book was put on the Index by the Vatican.

I give first my own translation, which can certainly be improved, but I don't think the essential meaning will be changed. The book has now been put on the Internet and can easily be found by searching for the title as given above.

"On the twelfth day of the siege of Drogheda, which had previously had much of its walls and towers knocked down by cannon fire, Cromwell made a renewed, and then a third assault. Ashton, Waring and Duvally fell, and many others of great energy, whom good men should celebrate forever in speech and writing. Cromwell, in deplorable fashion slaughtering all of the Catholic garrison and townspeople to the number of almost four thousand, subjected the town to his power." (Vol. 1 p.210.)

"Cromwell made for Wexford, an opulent maritime town; it was given up to him easily through the gate by the treachery of one of the commanders, and he sacked it, slaughtering the garrison and almost all the townspeople." (Vol.1 p.223.)

Cromwellus Vadipontum duodecimo obsidionis die deiecta prius per maiora tormenta murorum, ac turrium eius magna parte, renovato, iterum ac tertio assultu, caesisque Asthone, Vvaringo, Duvallio, aliisque pluribus viris strenuissimis, bonorumque omnium linguis, et calamis aeternum celebrandis, nec non universis Catholicis praesidiariis militibus, & civibus ad quattuor fere millia miserum in modum trucidatis, in suam potestatem redegerit. (Vol.1 p.210.)

Wexfordiam petit, quam quidem civitatem maritimam, opulentam, portuque commodam perfidia cuiusdam e ducibus sibi traditam praesidiario milite, ac universis prope civibus trucidatis diripit. (Vol.1 p.223.)

John Minahane

Death Improved

Auschwitz-Birkenau, Treblinka, Belsen, Belzec, Ravensbrück, Buchenwald. More gen?

Mauthausen, Sachsenhausen. Not the end.

Sobibfir, Majdanek. More round the bend.

Flossenbürg, Dachau. Fifty-eight back then.

So many more and never near the end. Remember the Warsaw Ghetto, my friend?

Yet another created by those who learned. Gaza is the name of this new playpen. Guide-bombs, shells, missiles, phosphorus descends.

Starvation, torture, death transcends yesterday's brutal image that offends?

22nd August, 2009

The Wall

Up on that West Bank hill in Palestine, built on the razed olive grove, the dead vine,

there is an Israeli settler wall painted at neighbours eyeball-to-eyeball. Ethnic cleansing as an artful vision. Those pretty pastel shades shouts derision.

You do not exist, no life to defend. No town, no men, no women, no children. On a grey canvas the future takes place. Beyond the wall a whole world is defaced.

Empty, empty hills, empty khaki hills. Such a picture on concrete kills. Tanks, planes, shells, soldiers, follow the artist.

Next, bureaucracy the anaesthetist.

21st August, 2009

Remembering The Children Of Palestine

The blood of children runs faster than ink.

Slaughter, the pen races to keep in sync. Remember Aya al-Astal aged nine, a young girl not even blossom on the vine

shot dead at Israel's Kissufim checkpoint though seen through night-vision lens, lead anoints

Mounadel Abu Alya also dead, ran backwards into more Israeli lead. This thirteen-year-old boy walked the wrong road that settlers out of New York that day strode.

Try at least to remember some children trapped in the Palestinian cauldron. At Yad Vashem each year they remember in sight of Deir Yassin the dismembered.

12th August, 2009

Wilson John Haire

Shorts

from
the Long Fellow

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF VALUE

Last month the *Long Fellow* said that, although property prices had fallen, there had been no loss of "value" in the economy. If Sean Dunne was insolvent, the money to finance the purchase of land in Ballsbridge did not disappear. It went to the seller of the land (in this case the Doyle family). The money that Liam Carroll paid for Greencore shares went to Dermot Desmond. The *Long Fellow* noted that the losses suffered by the likes of Dunne and Carroll are not just personal losses but have become a problem for society. These losses have fed into the banking system and ultimately the State has had to underwrite them.

The crisis has been caused, not by the destruction of wealth, but by the transfer of wealth from one group of people to another. The financial system has not been able to cope with this dramatic adjustment. In order to solve the crisis the State must impose a wealth tax on the winners in this speculative game. It is intolerable that ordinary people should underwrite the losses.

A THEORETICAL OBJECTION

The *Long Fellow* has received a theoretical objection to his analysis of last month. The critic suggested that value can disappear and that a loss for one person does not necessarily result in a gain for another.

This is true in general, but not in the particular case under discussion.

Marx tells us that only socially necessary labour can create value. However, value can disappear if the product produced is no longer socially necessary or the labour expended has ceased to be necessary. But in the case of property speculation there was very little value created in the first place so very little value could disappear.

Firstly, land itself has no value because no labour was expended on it. The labour expended on making the land serviceable has (or had) created value; also the labour expended in building the buildings has value. But this value is only a small proportion of the price.

Secondly, it is arguable that even this proportion of the overall price has been destroyed. While there are buildings that are vacant, they are only vacant because the price exceeds what people are willing or able to pay for them. It does not mean these buildings cease to have a social use. A friend claims that some of the land that Liam Carroll bought has a negative value because the labour expended in making

the land serviceable will now have to be reversed to restore it to agricultural use. But, *The Long Fellow* is sceptical of this. He doubts that in a country with a growing population there will be many or even any instances of this. He remains of the opinion that the losses suffered by the insolvent developers represent a transfer of wealth from one group of people to another group as a consequence of the former paying too much to the latter, rather than a destruction of value.

ANOTHER THEORETICAL OBJECTION

A second theoretical objection has arrived on the by now quite cluttered desk of the *Long Fellow*.

This critic suggests that the *Long Fellow* has failed to take account of the "irrational" element in the operation of the economy. The land component of the price of property may not have any intrinsic value, but in the real world it commands a price. Although the prices of commodities may diverge wildly from their real value, these prices influence economic decisions. The existence of asset bubbles can fuel economic activity which is of long term benefit to the economy and the opposite is also the case. The bursting of asset bubbles can engender fear which prevents even socially useful economic activity and gives rise to unemployment.

This may be true. But it is important to separate the rational from the irrational and not merge the two. Otherwise one is lost in the fantasy world of bourgeois economics.

Marx started from the basis that only socially useful labour can create value. He then looked at how prices deviated from value. Some of the deviations are systematic such as those caused by the average rate of profit. Others are arbitrary such as the occasional tendency of buyers to overpay or underpay sellers for their commodities. These arbitrary deviations balance out in the long term. It is important to distinguish between the deviations and the system itself in order to arrive at a proper understanding of the functioning of the economy.

In the case of land the price is determined by the amount of wealth or accumulated value that is generated in the rest of the economy. It might also be said that another determinant is credit from abroad, but in the long term this must be paid back. This can only be done if there is wealth being generated in the economy.

All of this is not just of theoretical interest. At the present moment in time there is an attempt through the setting up of NAMA to value the development loans of banks in a situation where the market is no longer in operation. This is of critical importance to the Irish taxpayer. At the time of writing the economists are groping towards a concept that they call "*long term economic value*".

Marx, if he were alive, would have allowed himself a baleful smile.

A PRACTICAL OBJECTION

Another critic has said to the *Long Fellow* that the wealth that has accrued to the winners in the speculative game has already left the country and is in Swiss and other bank accounts. Therefore their wealth is lost to the Irish economy.

This is a technical problem which is not confined to Ireland. It is no accident that US and French Governments have been insisting since the beginning of the year on greater oversight over these accounts. In some cases Swiss banks such as UBS have had to accede. Where there is a necessity (economic survival), technical problems can be overcome and alleged property rights must be set aside.

MORE CRITICS

Since the appearance of this column last month the *Long Fellow* has been assailed by critics on all sides with the active encouragement of the Editor! Tim O'Sullivan in his letter to the Editor castigates the *Long Fellow* for not joining Fintan O'Toole, Nell McCafferty and John Crown in denigrating the State.

The *Long Fellow* might take Fintan O'Toole's brief and vague reference to electoral reform seriously if the latter's newspaper, *The Irish Times*, had not opposed every attempt at electoral reform from de Valera to Noel Dempsey's more recent attempt to introduce a list system similar to Germany.

It is true that our politicians and senior civil servants are overpaid, but this fact does not explain our current crisis. The current crisis was caused by the country embracing an Anglo-Saxon economic model.

McCafferty thinks our politicians should be kept in splendid isolation from the populace and just 'think', while Crown thinks that the country should be run by a committee of experts, preferably Nobel Prize winners. Presumably, under this system there would be no requirement for voters 'to grow up' since democratic influence would not prevent 'correct' decisions from being made.

The reality is that O'Toole *et al* have not the slightest interest in reform. Their primary objective is to encourage disillusionment with the State, which fits in with the traditional agenda of *The Irish Times*.

SHEILA CLONEY

The death occurred on 28th June 2009 of Sheila Cloney (nee Kelly). Cloney was the woman at the centre of the Fethard-on-Sea controversy in 1957.

An obituary in *The Irish Times* (11.7.09) was a distortion of the historical record. The headline read:

"Wexford rebel who defied the power of Catholic Church"

And later in the article the impression is given of a pioneering liberal:

"Long before Mary Robinson's celebrated reference to the spirit of 'Mná na hEireann', 30 year old Sheila Cloney displayed a streak of Wexford rebelliousness that incurred the wrath of the Catholic Church at a time when that institution enjoyed almost untrammelled power in the State."

But the real story is a little more complicated. It is indisputable that Sheila, a Protestant married to a Catholic, did not want her two daughters brought up as Catholics. When it came to school going age Sheila took—some would say kidnapped—her two children and brought them to Belfast. *The Irish Times* says she made contact with:

"a Belfast barrister, allegedly an associate of the Rev Ian Paisley, about the terms and conditions for the return of Ms Cloney and the children".

But there is no "allegedly" necessary. The Belfast solicitor was Desmond Boal, who was a co-founder of the *Democratic Unionist Party* with Ian Paisley. He also founded a branch of the Orange Order in TCD. And why the vagueness about the "terms and conditions"?

After Sean Cloney had learned that his wife had brought their children to Northern Ireland he succeeded in obtaining a writ of *habeas-corpus* from the High Court in Belfast for the production of the two children held by the mother whose whereabouts were unknown. Reports at the time indicate that Mr. Cloney swore an affidavit that he was approached on his wife's behalf by Boal who said the "terms and conditions" were:

- both Cloney's children be brought up in the Protestant faith
- he (i.e. Cloney) consider changing his own religion
- he sell his property in Co. Wexford and go to Canada with his wife and children.

The Irish Times obituary makes no mention of this but says that a boycott of Protestant businesses was initiated by a local Catholic curate. This may or may not be true. Certainly, reports at the time indicated that it was lay Catholics who started the boycott. The boycott collapsed after it was condemned by the Taoiseach, Eamon de Valera.

Mr. Cloney travelled to Scotland where he was reunited with his wife and children. Eventually a compromise was found which meant that the children were educated at home and they returned to Wexford the following year.

All the evidence suggests that Sheila Cloney was a devout Protestant who read her bible every night. Attempts by *The Irish Times* to present her as a liberal icon struggling against the "untrammelled power" of the Catholic Church are a distortion of history.

SARAH CAREY

The distortions of *The Irish Times* are calculated and deliberate and it is therefore pointless to write a letter of complaint. But every so often the newspaper descends from its high moral ground and gets down and dirty—but not too dirty—in order to connect with its readers, who grow tired of the arid ideological rants of its tame lefties.

The newspaper employed John Healy in the era of Douglas Gageby, but that was an indulgence of the "white nigger", the newspaper's greatest Editor. These days its Fianna Fáil supporters are strictly of the Dublin 4 variety, but it can afford to be more liberal with the Blueshirts. Sarah Carey may not have dirt under her fingernails but she occasionally writes as if she knows someone who does.

On 22nd July she wrote a fine piece on the economic war of the 1930s. She began by describing it from the perspective of her own family who were large farmers:

"All went well until Éamon de Valera, the most pernicious and malign figure in Irish history, in a fit of ideological insanity implemented a set of policies that cut off our country's only export market—England—for our only product—food—and thus crippled Ireland's economy and in the process permanently ruined that class of people to which the now poor Dr Carey belonged.

"Impoverished and never able to work themselves out of the debt into which de Valera plunged them, the Land Commission finished off what the war started.

"Understocked or unoccupied farms were bought by the State, but in reality seized and paid for in worthless bonds. Landless labourers from the west of Ireland were then brought up and planted on the carved up holdings.

"The targeting of farms and the division of the holdings was widely believed to be a purely political matter. The bitter joke was told that the only difference between a meeting of the Land Commission and the local Fianna Fáil cumann was a five minute recess".

But then most impressively she has the imagination to see the other side of the story:

"Well, that's how the losers tell the story. A grander narrative might argue that through the Economic War, de Valera succeeded where other post-colonial and post-revolutionary countries failed. He ended the claims of the English to the land they once held here, won back the ports which kept us out of the second World War and, without any violence, he redistributed wealth from the rich to the poor. For a conservative man who embedded property rights into the Constitution, he achieved peacefully what many socialists failed to do violently. Uniquely he also ensured that the losers in our Civil War destroyed the winners."

It is quite rare to read a journalist who

has a memory longer than a week. In this case her family's collective memory and her interpretation of the others side's perspective has the quality of authenticity.

FINTAN O'TOOLE'S MEMORY

Fintan O'Toole's memory is a wonder to behold. And it can be beheld frequently on RTE documentaries about the recent past. Fintan tells us that Sean Lemass was a modern progressive leader. On a recent RTE documentary on the *Riordans* we learn that this rural soap opera of the 1960s and 1970s was groundbreaking (and not just literally). He remembers as if it was just yesterday how shocked his parents were that the subject of contraception was broached on the series.

Nell McCafferty in her autobiography also comments on O'Toole's extraordinary memory in relation to a mildly critical article that she wrote about the Pope's visit in 1979:

"The critic and columnist Fintan O'Toole subsequently wrote that my critical writing on religion broke radically new ground in Ireland. (I have treasured and hoarded such accolades since I was cast out of *The Irish Times* paradise in 1979). The curious thing about my article is that it was not written until 1986 {i.e. 7 years after the visit—*Long Fellow*}. I had not been that acerbic, or outspoken, about the Catholic Church in 1979."

JEAN PAUL SARTRE

A liberal friend's daughter introduced her boyfriend of three months. The daughter announced to her father her boyfriend's first name, which could have been Jean-Paul, but was most likely not. After a brief pause the father asked his daughter for the surname, but she couldn't think of it.

It emerged that the daughter had not forgotten her boyfriend's surname but had never known it in the first place. The father was shocked without quite knowing why when his daughter told him that she did not need to know the surname.

When the *Long Fellow* heard this story he told his friend that she—unlike him—was a genuine liberal. The father wanted to know the surname because he could not accept the boyfriend as an individual. His surname would have given a clue as to what County or even country his people came from. It might have indicated if he knew his father and what business he was in.

The daughter, on the other hand, could accept her boyfriend as an individual with no past or place of origin because for the true liberal there is no past; only a succession of restless presents and maybe the promise of a future which continues to elude us. There are no countries. We are all just individuals in the World. If she wanted to distinguish her Jean-Paul from another Jean-Paul she had recourse to that person's own characteristics as in "Jean-Paul the Stud" or "Jean-Paul the existentialist". Is that not the Liberals' dream whose anthem is John Lennon's *Imagine*?

The end of history?

Famine Figures *it's the way they tell 'em!*

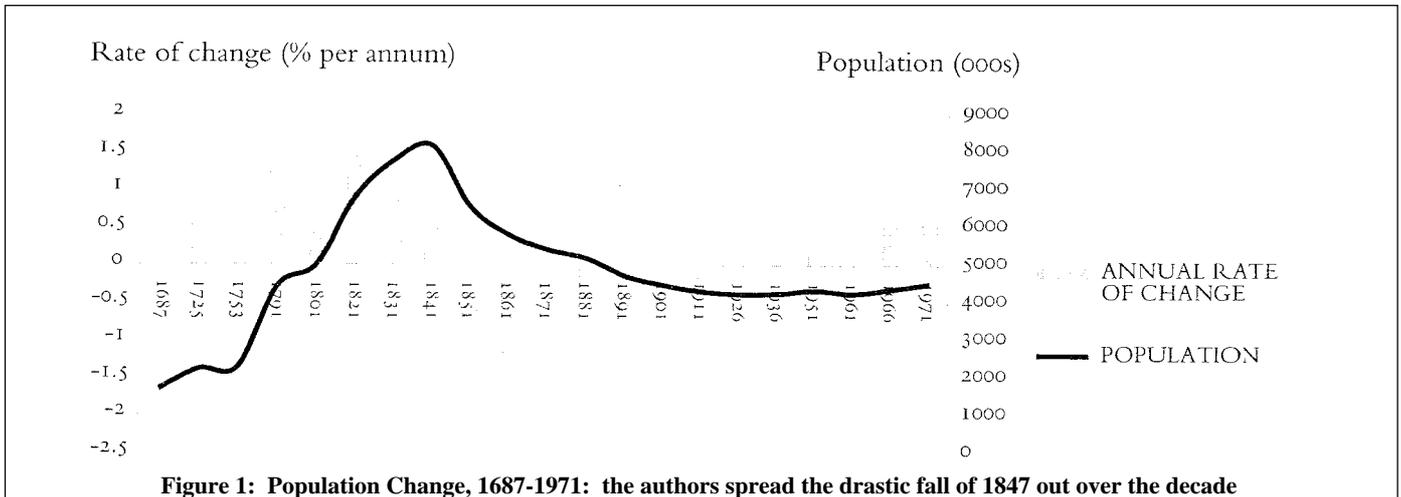
A very authoritative-looking book on statistics concerning the Famine was published in 1999 on the back of the 150th Commemorations and, like so much else to do with those Commemorations, it has

annoyed me ever since I read it. It was called *Mapping The Great Irish Famine—a survey of the Famine decades* by Liam Kennedy, Paul S. Ell, E.M. Crawford and L.A. Clarkson. It had no less than 250 statistical maps and diagrams and innumerable statistics on many subjects relating to the 1840s.

However, as usual, there was one great big hole—what was the actual population of the country at the time of the Famine? As in every book and commentary on the

Famine, this is a non-issue and a non-question. What we are given instead are Census figures for 1841 and 1851—and the accuracy of these is of course taken for granted and accepted as if they were set in stone. This book was no exception.

Mapping The Great Irish Famine begins its numerous diagrams and statistical maps with the following chart which is taken as presenting and introducing the overall essential facts on the population figures:



This diagram is patently absurd. The authors take the ten-yearly census returns and naturally the figures for 1851 are much less than those for 1841 so the population tangent line declines sharply in that period—but for them the decline **begins in 1841!** Diagram 1 shows the annual rate of population growth practically collapsing quite suddenly from 1 1/2% to 1/2% from 1841!

Was there another Big Wind that blew away millions of people in 1841? It did not seem to occur to the authors

that, if the diagram was created on a yearly basis, the population tangent line would look radically different. The decline would begin at the time when the population itself actually 'declined'—in 1847—and not six years earlier.

In other words Diagram 1 is a totally inappropriate representation of the most basic facts. It is like presenting the 1941/1951 population figures for Hiroshima and Nagasaki—cities which suffered a drastic population fall in 1945 after being nuclear bombed—as beginning to decline

in 1941!

But, much more significantly, what this diagram masks is a way to arrive at an estimate of the population for the year 1847—prior to the Famine—on the basis of accepted figures. The gradient line of population growth should continue on a steep tangent after 1841, continuing the previous rate of increase until 1847. Then one could come to an estimate of what the population figures were at the crucial moment. Using the census statistics as given the chart should then look something like this:

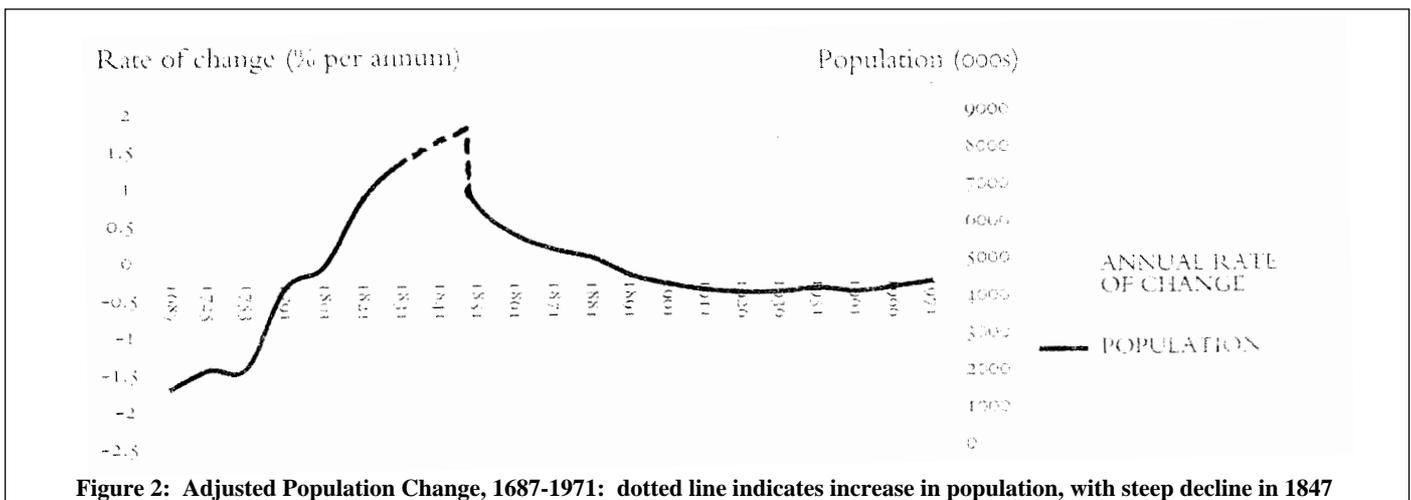


Diagram 2 gives us a radically different picture and a radically different population in 1847. The dotted line shows how the population continued to multiply in the proportion of previous years. This is a more pertinent representation. The

pertinent representation indicates that the population figure in 1847 had grown to about 9 million.

Of course, as pointed out in a previous article, a figure of 9 million was arrived at

by the French statistician, César Moreau, 20 years earlier which gives some indication of how much of an underestimate all these official figures actually are.

Jack Lane

Facts On The Famine

The following is from the June-July 2009 Newsletter of the England Branch, Celtic League

	1841	1847	1848	1867
(a) Holdings not exceeding an acre	571814	62447	44262	
(b) Farms from 1 to 5 acres	306915	125926	101779	
(c) Farms from 5 to 15 acres	251128	253360	225251	
(d) (a) + (b) + (c)	1129857	441733	371291	307000
(e) Farms from 15 to 30 acres	78954	150999	146725	
(f) Farms above 30 acres	48312	137147	140817	
(g) (e) + (f)	127266	288146	287542	300000
(h) GRAND TOTAL (d) + (g)	1257123	729879	658334	607000

Irish Small-holdings
(Journal of the Statistical Society for various years)

Half of Ireland's rural households disappeared between 1841 and 1848. That means half of Ireland's total rural population. Those who vanished were poor, native Irish, Catholic, Irish-speaking and potato-eating. Many of those who survived, and indeed prospered, were well-off, settler-Irish, Protestant, English-speaking, and who enjoyed a more varied diet.

1) Poor native Irish people got into the habit of growing potatoes because that was the only crop that marauding English soldiers could not destroy

2) Potato blight spread remarkably quickly from England to even the smallest and most remote farm in Ireland.

3) England's vicious Gregory Clause of the 1847 Poor Relief (Ireland) Act deprived people who continued to hang on to their land of any form of public relief.

The Famine, or, more accurately, the Starvation, amounted to a deliberate

combination of ethnic cleansing and genocide.

In his address to the Statistical Section of the British Association at Birmingham, in 1849 G.R. Porter said "*It was ascertained, at the census of 1841, that, in Great Britain, 1000 persons engaged, as occupiers and labourers, in raising food, provided for the wants in that respect, of themselves and of 2,984 other persons, while in Ireland, the number of persons, viz, 1000, so engaged provided for no more than 511 persons beyond themselves*". (Journal of the Statistical Society of London Vol.13 No.1 February 1850, pp 25-29). Simple arithmetic shows that the Famine pushed the 511 up to about 2203 in 1848. Poor people producing food only for themselves were problems to be eliminated, like the Tasmanian and Australian aborigines and the native Americans.

Putting Manners On Mesopot

Ireland's 'historical revisionists' can insert their 'spin' into the most unlikely settings. In the *Irish Times* magazine (24.01.09) *Connections* slot there is Conan Kennedy's, *Iraq and the Dublin Belfast Railway*. Sub-headed *An Irishman records the British army's attempts to put manners on Mesopotamia*.

'Put manners on' means 'to civilise'. Let's do a bit of 'context'. Mesopotamia is the site of Babylon / Baghdad the world's oldest city. Abraham, the founder of the Jewish religion was born in Mesopot. Many Biblical sites are there. Christian communities (now dispersed to the four winds) lived and thrived there from the time of Peter and Paul to the time of Blair and Bush.

One of the great Jewish cultures arose

there. From the Babylonian Captivity onwards. (The Captivity can't have been too unpleasant: As many people stayed on in Babylon as left). The community reached the peak of its influence and civilisation during the Muslim Caliphate. Its history comprises three millennia. The community fled into exile within three decades of becoming part of the City of London's Empire in 1918. It's a pity Mesopotamia was not in a position to 'put manners on' The Empire.

There is a large photo illustrating this short article, the main figure is "*Major Bertie Plews*", who is described as a "*Dublin man of English parentage. Aha, a reader might correct, so he wasn't a real Irishman*". Most of us wouldn't. Not everybody loves Michael McDowell. He

Famine attitudes

The following letter by Philip O'Connor failed to be published in the *Irish Times*

In his interesting article on population pressures, John Gibbons commented (July 30): "*Just a few generations ago, Ireland experienced a devastating famine. British misrule undoubtedly increased the misery, but it was, at heart, a classic Malthusian disaster.*" By "misrule" he presumably means the usually accepted interpretation of administrative negligence and the *laissez-faire* economic doctrine of the time.

But there was an added element which allowed the *laissez-faire* doctrine to take its course and consume millions of people in a way that simply would not have been allowed had the catastrophe been taking place on the British "mainland".

The Times of London in the mid-19th century was indisputably the voice of the then British Tory-Whig establishment. Its opinions give us an inkling of what that added element may have been. On 2nd January 1852 it editorialised in relation to depopulation of Ireland as follows:

"The pure Irish Celt is more than 1,000 years behind the civilization of this age. ... The native Irish ... defy all ordinary attempts to tame them into agricultural labourers, such as are the staple of the British agricultural population. ... Hence that miserable and helpless being the Irish cottier ... [Its] condition and character has been so often described ... that we need not prove the existence of such a class incompatible with civilization. ... Calamitous as are the events [the Great Famine] by which it has come to pass, we now thank Heaven that we have lived to speak of the class as a class that has been. ... We resign ourselves without reserve ... to [Ireland's] continued depopulation until only a half or a third of the nine millions claimed for her by [Daniel] O'Connell remain. We may possibly live to see the day when her chief produce will be cattle, and English and Scotch the majority in her population."

This statement speaks volumes and surely should rank among those issues which President McAleese called upon us recently to ponder without rancour so that we might become "*an island comfortable with its uncomfortable past.*"

made genetics, not birth, the badge of Irish identity. Mr. Kennedy chastises his readers in advance: for thinking the thought he wished on us. He suggests that the argument about being "*an Irish soldier*" and an "*Irish soldier in the British army*" is a "*tired old controversy*". It has barely

begun. And is not essentially about 'the British army'. It is about any imperialist army.

Conan Kennedy hasn't much of a problem with the latter matter. He quotes Plews's racist rant about Arabs. They weren't big on hygiene. It leaves the impression that the conquest of Mesopotamia had nothing to do with petroleum. The Empire simply wanted to bring Sunlight soap to the dirty Arabs.

This article occupies page 61. The opposite page is given over to the *IT's travel service*. The destinations are World War battlefields. One is Ypres and the Somme, one Gallipoli. The other two have to do with D-Day. The adverts are couched in careful language. The Ypres advert is bathetic, describing WW1 as a "truly historic era in the world's history". (You don't say). The Gallipoli tour offers more time in "the magical city of Istanbul" than on the battlefields. The ANZACs are mentioned and the "4,000 Irishmen" who "fought and died" there.

Johnny Turk is not mentioned. One of the D-Day ads notes "the many lives lost on both sides".

It also states that Operation Overlord "represented the turning point of WW2 in Western Europe". The other advert brashly offers a 65th Anniversary visit. For "enthusiasts". Commemorating "the Allied invasion when the soldiers fought for liberty". Don't the soldiers of the US / UK always fight 'for liberty'?

Kennedy was back the following Saturday with more of Major Bertie's photographs. *Commuting, and the War of Independence* has two pictures. One is of a goods wagon derailed by the IRA. The caption reads "Despite the best efforts of the security forces, the revolutionaries..." disrupted the railways. The 'revolutionaries' were the IRA, the army of Dáil Éireann, not an independent entity with its own 'agenda'.

The 'security forces' were the large British Army garrison, the Black and Tans and the Auxiliaries. (And the UVF mobilised as the A, B, and C Constabulary). These bodies tried to destroy the rural economy by destroying creameries and other co-operative ventures. They burned down the centre of Cork City, Balbriggan and a number of other towns. The UVF pogromised Catholics in Belfast. Lisburn's Catholics were "evacuated" (i.e., burned out and driven over Divis Mountain into Belfast).

The RIC (Royal Irish Constabulary) was part of this set-up. It's members were largely decent men. By the middle of 1920 they were in an untenable position. Sinn Féin had had overwhelming victories in both rounds of Local Government elections. Some resigned. Some became double agents. Most decided that they would remain. The larger photograph is of "RIC men on platform at an unidentified station, most likely Clontarf...". Apart from the helmets they are indistinguishable from soldiers.

Seán McGouran

Report: Book Launch, Killarney, 7 August 2009 of:

Eoghan Rua Ó Súilleabháin, Dánta/Poems, Imleabhar/Volume 2, 2009, *Collected Writings, Vol. 2*. 230pp. Index. ISBN 1 903497 57 9
Aubane Historical Society €20, £15

Sweet-voiced Eoghan

Eoghan Rua Ó Súilleabháin was the cavalier prince of 18th century Irish poetry. An unexpurgated edition of his verse—published, with English translations, by AHS—was launched in his Munster stomping ground last month.

Eoghan Rua has been out of print for many years; the previous editions by Risteárd Ó Foghludha (1937) and Pádraig Ua Duinnín (1902 and 1923) are hard to get. But, together with Volume 1 (*Aislingí/Vision Poems*, AHS, 2002), the Aubane Historical Society edition is the most comprehensive yet, and with explanations and English translations, it is easily the most accessible.

Pádraig Ó Fiannachta, who was due to chair the launch, was obliged to send his apologies and best wishes for the success of the book from hospital. The launch of Volume 2 in the Malton Hotel, Killarney, attended by a large gathering of well-informed enthusiasts, was chaired by Séamus Ó Domhnaill whose contribution to the book includes interesting new biographical material about Eoghan Rua's involvement in a West Indian naval battle between France and England during the American War of Independence. It appears that Eoghan was press-ganged or shanghai'd into the British Navy, ironically producing some of his most poignant compositions—including a praise-poem in English to the British commander Admiral Rodney, apparently intended to buy Eoghan's release from naval service.

Pat Muldowney, Editor and Translator of the poems, spoke on some of the literary characteristics of Eoghan Rua, especially the musical quality which infused his poetry; and he contrasted Eoghan's style and content with Aodhagán Ó Rathaille and Peadar Ó Doirnín, notable 18th century Gaelic poets who preceded him.

Pádraig Ó Súilleabháin (himself an Ó Súilleabháin Rua, the "Rua" referring to ancestry, not hair colour!), gave an erudite and comprehensive talk on Eoghan's creative and literary influences.

Following a lively discussion, Séamas Ó Domhnaill set the scene for the rest of the evening with a rendition of Eoghan Rua's famous lullaby *Seó Hó a Thoil*, and the songs *Ag Taisteal na Blárnan*, and *Mo Chás Mo Chaoi Mo Cheasna*. He was ably followed by Cristóir Ó Cróinín and Eóiní Madcháí Ó Súilleabháin. Seanchaí Brian Caball told an entertaining folk-story, one of many such stories which give Eoghan Rua almost mythical standing in Munster.

Led by Eóiní Madcháí, the meeting closed with a rousing version of *Mo Ghile Mear*.

Anastasia Lombard



Séamus Ó Domhnaill, Pádraig Ó Súilleabháin, Pat Muldowney, and Jack Lane

IRISH SOCIETY IN CRISIS

As the national and local media survey the crisis that is now gripping Ireland's young people, some of the content seems to overlay the role of alcohol and drugs. A particularly horrible murder amongst Dublin's Trinity College students has got the nation talking. Knife crime is rampant according to some reports but is there another reason for such mindless violence? Take a walk in any of our large cities and towns and just listen and see the hooliganism that passes for ordinary public discourse today. I was walking around Cork on Saturday and went into a big chemist shop. There was a huge 'Security Notice' advising us all that "Any Act of Aggression will be immediately reported to the Gardai". With the fall off in trade due to the recession, a lot of shops have laid off their security men. As I read the notice with disbelief thinking who on earth would be committing acts of aggression in a chemist shop—I mean it is not an offence—my curiosity got the better of me and I asked the lady behind the counter who knew me to see—just who was the object of the notice—and she floored me when she said: "just look around you" indicating the other people in the shop.

As I walked up Patrick Street or Pana as the locals call it, I heard a woman shouting appalling abuse liberally sprinkled with swear words that left me open-mouthed and finally I saw the objects of her hate—two elderly people—one an old man and a slightly younger African Catholic nun standing beside a easel-like structure with rosary beads for sale. By the time I reached them, the woman was stalking away from them so I sympathised with them—they were in shock—and the man said it was par for the course nowadays but still he exclaimed that there was no need for such language. As I walked homewards I saw two men publicly urinating in the street, people freely discarding litter, gum, spits and I passed some frightful graffiti sprayed on walls everywhere, despite the location of several CCTVs. Clearly the public doesn't find any of this too disturbing or something would have been done about it by now. If our public behaviour is anything to go by then clearly we have a huge problem on our hands and it needs addressing now. The liberal commentariat who urged the new dispensation on us are unique in their determination that they free us from any repression. Consumerism is the new Holy Grail. Individuals need to be free and the 'me generation' is now upon us. Wasn't Margaret Thatcher prescient in her belief that there was no such thing as society anymore?

NEAL ASCHERSON ABOUT "WEDGISM"

Sometimes things have a way of coming back and biting one on the bum. In this case, Neal Ascherson is the one whose bum has been well and truly bitten. Readers of the *Irish Political Review* will know Ascherson from an event that occurred in Kilkenny city back in 2000. He was present for the Hubert Butler Centenary Celebrations and actually chaired a session on 22nd October 2000. Other luminaries like Roy Foster, John Banville, and Caroline Walsh etc. were present. Ascherson got quite testy with Brendan Clifford on the matter of Yugoslavia. Ascherson was pretty clueless about the latter's history and turned smarty pants on Clifford—bad move. Ascherson reviews books and believes himself to be something that he is not, but that is not to say that the English state does not have its uses for him.

On 23rd July 2009, Ascherson reviewed a book *Constructing The Monolith: The United States, Great Britain And International Communism 1945-50* by Marc Silverstone. He started the review by revealing that: "Long ago, when I was stumbling through the Malayan jungle in search of 'Communist terrorists' (or 'bandits', as the British colonial authorities quaintly called them) I heard a story from some other marines..." Ascherson is talking about that awful event termed by the British as 'The Malayan Insurgency'. What the British did during that time and also of course Ascherson was pure terrorising of the people by the use of so-called "detention camps and rehabilitation centres". Everything that was done in Malaya was used later for "similar Emergency policies in Kenya for the Mau Mau". The British used a "classification of detainees which gave them "success" in Malaya.

"Police Interrogation Units labelled detainees "black" or "grey" depending on their level of communist indoctrination. "Blacks" were hard-core Reds who could not be redeemed and who were therefore deported. "Greys" had weaker communist sympathies and thus were put through a series of rehabilitation centres. Everything that was established in Malaya was to have repercussions for what was to follow in Kenya."

In 1953, Hugh Fraser, Conservative MP (and former husband of Lady Antonio Fraser who went on to marry the left-wing playwright Harold Pinter now deceased) visited Kenya and after visiting the growing detention camps thought HE Governor Baring needed to start thinking more about "Rehabilitation" and the "machinery" that was being established "for this purpose".

"Of all the British hearts-and-minds precedents, the one undertaken in colonial Malaya ultimately most influenced Kenyan policy. The federation of Malaya, under the leadership of its governor,

General Sir Gerald Templer, had already provided Baring and his ministers with a blueprint for Emergency Regulations. Malaya had been under a state of emergency since 1948, and its British colonial officials had exported to Kenya much of their legal work in drafting all-empowering Emergency legislation."

Templer agreed to "host one of Kenya's colonial officers in Malaya and tutor him in the ways of rehabilitation". Confinement within what were effectively concentration camps, aided with "psychological operations" were used against both Malaysians and the Kikuyu people. Starvation, mass hangings and other punishments were how Britain determined to solve both problems and they used the phrase "low intensity warfare" which they tried to get the Americans to use in Vietnam and elsewhere instead of the "high intensity warfare" that they ended up using. The British used to call their camps "Reception Pens" in one of those awful abuses of language that was thought to have ended with WW2.

Besides the military, there were the missionaries—people like Mary Beecher, wife of Archbishop Leonard Beecher, and Nancy Shepherd who tried to militate the more savage policies but they and the settler-dominated East African Women's League still "strictly enforced a loyalist-first policy. Even with the effects of famine devastating the Mau Mau population, the well-fed loyalist... got the relief efforts as they had remained faithful servants to the British Crown throughout the Emergency." As the children died in their hundreds, their mothers were accused of not feeding them properly and also of lacking in hygiene. By 1957 the Mau Mau were devastated and through—

"the cumulative effects of forced labour and torture they had been compelled to confess and cooperate, with the ultimate hope that life would improve once they were released to their wives and families or those that were left".

In a letter written to the *London Review of Books*, 6th August 2009, David Campbell—who also confessed to "blundering about in the Malayan jungle myself"—accused Neal Ascherson of being "unduly modest about his own service, both in the Malayan Emergency—a term which he oddly declines to use—and in attempting to save the life of the convicted terrorist Lee Mang. Ascherson served in a crack unit and commanded a successful ambush". Campbell goes on to attack Ascherson of being "too didactic in his analysis of Communism" and tells us that when he (Campbell) joined the Foreign Office in 1960 he inherited "an intellectual tradition" which was much broader and therefore more correct, especially about the Soviet Union. The word which Ascherson used to write his review under is "Wedgism", which he claims was what

the British were never able to sell to the Americans who went for the more propaganda-like theory of the "*Communist Monolith*" when really it was "*seamed with cracks into which 'wedges' could be driven*". Though even Ascherson admits: "*Wedgism, in any case, achieved little*" (LRB 23rd July 2009.)

(Most of the quotations I have used in the above came from Caroline Elkins's formidable book critiquing *Britain's Gulag: the brutal end of Empire in Kenya*. Jonathan Cape. London. 2005.) Compare it to the absolutely appalling *Ireland's Gulag* by Bruce Arnold, OBE. How stands the comparison now?

CENSORSHIP AND THE BRITISH

Reading the likes of *The Irish Times*, and indeed listening to RTE, one would be absolutely forgiven for thinking that the Irish invented censorship—well the Irish Catholic Church and Dev that is. But it is a matter of fact that there was a confidential Home Office Blue Book of titles to be suppressed and this was in the late 1950s. Books included anything by Jean-Paul Sartre, Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* and Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*. Local Authorities had censorship powers too and magistrates in Swindon banned Boccaccio's *Decameron*. Meanwhile the public was much more aware of the likes of Mary Whitehouse, and Lord Longford who in 1972 published his famous report on pornography which revealed that some members of the Scotland Yard Vice Squad were taking big bribes from Soho pornographers.

There were voices of dissent who wanted a broader access to a whole range of things that covered the human experience, including sex and violence. These included the Barrister and writer John Mortimer who over the years defended numerous publishers against obscenity charges. Roy Jenkins helped draft the 1959 Obscene Publications Act and the philosopher Bernard Williams, whose 1976 Government-sponsored Commission developed the concept of the licensed sex shop with its "restricted" category of videos as being rather better than under the counter sales of hard porn. Much of the above is a "secret history" because much of it is based on previously locked Home Office files. The original Obscene Publications Act passed in 1857 defined pornography as writing intended to "*deprave and corrupt*". James Joyce's *Ulysses* was banned and indeed custom officers continued seizing copies throughout the 30s. Confiscated books were *burnt* but then books were sent to a machine—a guillotine in the printing department in New Scotland Yard which had a blade capable of destroying many books. Henry Miller was a banned author and Radclyffe Hall's pioneering lesbian novel *The Well Of Loneliness* was banned. In 1949 Norman

Mailer's *The Naked And The Dead* fell to the censors in the courts of the customs officers. Obscene 'postcards' were culled too.

The British Board of Film Censors had a busy time, as had the BBC which had a habit of censoring or banning its own programmes, including many plays by Dennis Potter. Political censorship included such outrages as the jailing of British Communist Party leaders before the General Strike. So the idea that is widespread in our academic centres that it was

only Ireland that *ever* censored books, films, plays is arrant nonsense but oh—how convenient it is for the narrow scholarship of today. I remember Roy Foster in a lecture in Bath Spa University, consoling the audience about Ireland's predilection for Censorship and Professor Patricia Coughlan doing likewise in UCC. My thanks to Humphrey Carpenter whose review of *Bound And Gagged: A secret history of obscenity in Britain* by Alan Travis is to be recommended.

Julianne Herlihy. ©

The Taboo of Racism

There can hardly be a more a terrible political accusation than that of racism. In a political debate the charge of racism trumps all other issues. In the prevailing ideology of liberalism anti-racism has pride of place.

The victims of racism are considered to be the Jews and the Blacks. Of course, it is not considered to be politically correct to say: "I hate the East Europeans" or "I hate the "Paddys" or "Pakis" or "towel heads" etc, but such statements don't have quite the same resonances as I hate the Jews or niggers.

I suspect some readers will be shocked by the preceding paragraph.

Last year I was invited to discuss my book on *The Irish Times* on *Newstalk* radio's History Programme. A controversial aspect of the book is the description of a letter dated 2/10/1969 by the British Ambassador to Ireland in which he says that one of the directors of *The Irish Times* expressed the view that the Editor of the newspaper, Douglas Gageby, was a "renegade or white nigger" on Northern matters. The handling of this important aspect of the book presented a significant difficulty for the Producer of the programme because apparently the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland severely constrains the use of such a term.

It was decided that the presenter, Tommy Graham, would read out the relevant extract from the letter, including the term "white nigger". But Graham found it necessary to make it very clear from the outset that this was a direct quotation as distinct from an opinion or term that he might use. Also, I was instructed not to mention the term during the interview. I was happy to comply with this constraint since I was grateful that *Newstalk* had given me an opportunity to promote my book. Unfortunately I unintentionally mentioned the word "nigger" by accident while discussing the letter, which elicited a wince from Graham.

It is not enough to be against racism, which I am, but a description of racism using the terms of the alleged racist is

taboo. A taboo is the characteristic of evil or social unacceptability that an object, idea or place might have. The quality of evil is so great that the mere discussion of it is forbidden.

The controversy over the "white nigger" letter is an interesting illustration of how liberal values work. When the letter was brought to public attention the person who the British Ambassador said used the "white nigger" term, Major McDowell—the current President for Life of *The Irish Times* Group—felt it necessary to deny that he had ever used that term about anyone. But he did not feel it was necessary to deny that he thought that that the Irish race (or to be more precise the Catholic section of it) was an inferior race and that anyone from the superior Protestant or Anglo-Irish race who was in sympathy with the former was betraying his racial category. He did not deny this even though this was the meaning of the term "white nigger" in the context in which the Ambassador was describing. The racist taboo only applies to the Black and Jewish races. Also, the word "nigger" is a kind of totem which stands for the worst form of racism. It is forbidden regardless of context.

It could be argued that the taboo cannot apply to the Irish because the Irish are not a separate race. That may or not be true but it is a fact that elements within the Anglo-Irish and the British (including the likes of Malthus and Darwin) believed that they were.

The racist view of the indigenous Irish as attributed by the British Ambassador to Major McDowell is not a unique case. In the 1955 local elections Hubert Butler made the following election address:

"We live in a democracy, but the democratic principles which we obey were not developed in Ireland by the Roman Catholic majority, except under Protestant leadership... The point is that most of our free institutions in Ireland were evolved by Protestants or men of Anglo-Irish or English stock, and it would be very strange indeed if we had not a particular gift for making them work.

Take Irish local government, the county councils, for example... If these institutions work badly it is because the heirs of the men who invented them and have a sort of hereditary understanding of how they work play no part in them. Most of us can act independently because we have independence in our blood (cited in *Church & State*, No. 69, Spring 2002).

This is a very clear racial conception of politics. Our county councils don't run well because the Protestants who have a hereditary understanding of them and who have independence in their "blood" are not involved.

The above extract is taken from Butler's collected writing which was published by Lilliput Press in 1996. At a centenary celebration of Butler's life sponsored jointly by *The Irish Times* and the *British Council* in 2000 this was drawn to the attention of the dignitaries present, but was greeted with obfuscation and denial.

Butler couldn't be a "racist" (in the liberal sense) because his racism was not directed at the Black or Jewish races. And unlike Major McDowell it was never suggested that he had used the word "nigger". So no taboo had been violated.

The taboo of racism is so strong that it can prevent criticism. It could be said that embracing the official anti-racist ideology acts as a talisman or charm which wards off evil spirits. Anyone who criticizes the State of Israel must negotiate the charge of anti-Semitism. He will be asked why he is so concerned about the alleged injustices perpetrated against the Palestinians when there are so many other injustices in the world. The implication being that his concern for the Palestinians is a cover for anti-Semitism.

However, the talisman of anti-racism does not protect African States from criticism. A couple of years ago I heard John O'Shea, the head of the Third World charity *Goal*, say that all African States with the exception of Mandela's South Africa were corrupt. This might not be a racist statement because the alleged corruption might have a cause other than the States being run by Black Africans. It could be as a result of neo-colonial manipulation. But the point is that O'Shea felt no need to explain himself. The talisman which inhibits criticism of Israel does not apply to African States.

It was perfectly acceptable to criticise Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe. The taboo of racism does not extend to a taboo against imperialism. The white settlers who had stolen land from the natives were perfectly entitled to hold on to it. The liberal view was that if the natives occupied the land in Zimbabwe, farming would be less efficient and the supply of agricultural commodities to the rest of the world would diminish.

The taboo of racism only applies when it is not incompatible with Globalisation.

Israel has been a proxy for Western interests in the Middle East, whereas Robert Mugabe most certainly was not in Africa.

The taboo of racism was invoked to suppress discussion of immigration when it was raised at the recent European Elections by Raymond O'Malley of *Libertas*. O'Malley was immediately accused of playing the "race card" by John Paul Phelan of Fine Gael. But O'Malley said that legal immigrants who had arrived should have the same rights as any Irish citizen. But that is not good enough. Liberal ideology insists on the free movement of labour across national boundaries. The taboo of racism is invoked against those who dissent from that view (Incidentally, the O'Malley-Phelan exchange shows why *Libertas* was doomed to failure. It could never decide whether it was a Globalist Party or in favour of defending national rights).

The middle classes tend to be the most indignant when the racist taboo is challenged. After all, what is there not to like about Agnieszka the au pair girl, who saves us a fortune in childcare costs? Who could possibly dislike Jacek the Polish painter who paints our house for less than half what the Irish painter will do it for?

Language and education barriers means that Jacek and Conchita are not in general competing against our Sean and Eileen for jobs in the Legal Profession or Teaching. Up until now the Irish economy has benefited from immigration but as unemployment rises competition for skilled and

unskilled manual work is likely to intensify.

I was in France during the European Constitutional referendum a few years ago. The Socialist Party urged a "Yes" vote, but the Communist Party and Left wing dissidents from the Socialist Party such as Lauren Fabius and Henri Emmanuelli campaigned for a "No". The Communist Party knows that Globalisation or the free movement of capital and labour across national boundaries has undermined working conditions and pay. Globalisation has led to what the French call "*de-localisation*": the export of jobs from France to low cost countries as well as the import of cheap contract labour which has displaced French jobs. The French Communist Party is all too aware that the *National Front* has been one of the main beneficiaries of the CP's long term decline.

The National Front itself has been in decline in recent years because the Gaullist Party under Nicholas Sarkozy has had the sense to take on board working class concerns about immigration.

In conclusion, the taboo of racism disables rational political thought. It prevents people from seeing genuine manifestations of racism. And it also enables people to see racism where none exists in the interests of advancing a Globalisation agenda. This taboo of racism is an element in American liberal ideology. It should have no place along side Republican or Socialist values.

John Martin

Some Perspectives On The 'N' Word

In my childhood days of the 1950s, living off Dublin's South Circular Road, I had never known the Jewish or Protestant minority communities in our midst to be the victims of any intolerance. Indeed, each summer our Saturday afternoons would see a weekly Protestant band parade loudly going up the road. That, however, was not in any sense a provocative, coat-trailing Empire loyalist demonstration, but a trumpet-playing Boys' Brigade Church Parade. There was, nonetheless, one form of Protestant musical activity which, while tolerated by all, I know used to leave some of my Jewish neighbours feeling slightly uneasy. On Sunday mornings a Salvation Army band would parade to a corner of Lennox Street and, only a few doors away from the local synagogue, and proceed to preach Christ Jesus Our Saviour. That said, I am certain that there was absolutely no intention to cause offence. That particular Protestant Army was well thought of in the neighbourhood for its charitable work, and Catholics donated generously to its collections, as

did Jewish neighbours to my teenage collections for the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

At about 8 years of age I became particularly race conscious (in the sense of having a keen childhood curiosity) when the first African came to live on our street. I had known only one coal-black neighbour before. He, however, was actually racially white, but his face was almost permanently covered in soot. This was the local chimney sweep, a Protestant (perhaps it would be a cheap shot to refer to him as a black Protestant!) by the name of Alfred Hempton. Toothless, but with a rather grand accent, he delighted in proclaiming they "*they call me Alfred the Grate!*" Mr. Hempton was not, however, the creature to whom another neighbour, Mrs. Heaney, was referring when she would regularly roar out at the top of her voice "*Nigger!*" My childhood reasoning nonetheless did lead me to conclude that there was something not quite right when she roared it out once again as our new African neighbour

was coming up the street. So, was she a racist? More on that anon.

I have recently had to address the use of such language on a more political level, in my introduction to *Irish Solidarity with Cuba Libre*—a book primarily consisting of edited chapters from the 1874 book on the first Cuban War of Independence written by the Fenian leader and subsequent Parnellite/Redmondite MP, James J. O'Kelly. And, while there can be no denying that historical Redmondism was wholly within its rights to claim him as one of its most loyal adherents up to the very point of his death, we must nonetheless question the right of neo-Redmondism to now go on and misleadingly portray O'Kelly as having amounted to little more than some sort of rustic racist.

In his very much hero-worshipping biography, *Redmond The Parnellite* (2008), Dermot Meleady writes quite grudgingly at the point where he was obliged to give due credit to James J. O'Kelly and Tim Harrington as the only two Parnellite MPs willing to break ranks with their own colleagues in April 1899 and meet in conference with the anti-Parnellite majority of Home Rule MPs. In taking such an initiative, O'Kelly not alone paved the way for organisational unity among Home Rulers the following year, but he also successfully brought about acceptance of the Parnellite John Redmond as leader of a reunited Irish Parliamentary Party. Given that O'Kelly would remain a loyal Redmondite until his death in December 1916, including the provision of further service to Redmond as his Vice-President in the United Irish League, it is a pity that the latter's biographer provides no other quotation of substance from O'Kelly's lengthy political career beyond the following:

"At a mainly Parnellite meeting at Elphin on 23 January 1899 to prepare for the coming elections, he (in language typifying the acceptance by many nationalists of contemporary notions of racial superiority) called upon the manhood of North Roscommon to stand to their guns and to vote for no man in these elections who had not a record of patriotism behind him (*cheers*) ... Some people were advising them to vote for landlordism and landlord's agents (*cries of 'never'*). He could tell them that if they did so they would sacrifice everything that was won for Ireland in the struggle of the last twenty years. The landlords were trying to regain their position in the country, and they were trying to do it in two ways. First of all, they were preaching toleration. What toleration did the landlords show them or their fathers? He was old enough to remember the famine graves of '47 and '48 ... His advice to the people was not to elect one of these men on any pretext whatsoever (*cheers*) ... When the South Carolina niggers were set free they had

sense enough to elect men of their own class. He did not want to insult them by comparing them with niggers, but he would say that if the men of Roscommon were going to cast their votes for landlordism in the coming elections, they would be worse than the South Carolina niggers (*cheers*)."

I regard the use of all such racist epithets as totally unacceptable and objectionable. But had he known little else of O'Kelly beyond that speech—including what, even then, ought to have been long since regarded as politically incorrect language—Meleady should have at least realised that there was far more to O'Kelly's use of the "n" word than at first meets the eye. It was certainly not a case of O'Kelly himself adhering to a nationalist belief in "*notions of racial superiority*". Quite the contrary. O'Kelly recognised that such British imperialist notions had for a long time been quite successful in contaminating Irish political discourse among the electorate at large. But what to do about it?

The Ascendancy *Irish Times* was to display absolutely no inhibitions whatsoever in continuing to freely use such language into a new century. Its issue of 12th November 1908 reported that—

"in the House of Commons yesterday, Colonel Seely, answering Mr. Armitage, said gin was still used as a medium of exchange in some parts of the delta of the Niger ... The Government had recently introduced a subsidiary coinage into these districts, but the extraordinary conservatism of the inhabitants—(*Opposition cheers and Ministerial laughter*)—rendered the task of securing its general use a difficult one".

This racist exchange in the British Parliament was bad enough, but it was the *Irish Times* itself which gratuitously headlined its report as follows: "NIGGERS PREFER GIN TO METAL FOR COINAGE PURPOSES". In its issue of 21st July 1911 the *Irish Times* further reported on a meeting of the Unionist Clubs of County Longford, presided over by Lord Longford himself, in which Mr. T.H.F. Battersby KC carried to acclaim a resolution in which the Longford Unionists urged the House of Lords to veto the Home Rule Bill, accompanied by the following rabble-rousing rhetoric:

"Separation was, as they knew, the ultimate end of Home Rule... Mr. Redmond said he would be satisfied with the control which England exercised over Canada and the Cape. It was laughable. England had not control over a native Indian or an African nigger ... The King's enemies would be in power, and did they think an hour would pass before they tore up the paper Constitution. (*Applause*)."

In such circumstances O'Kelly, by his use of the 'n' word in an 1899 speech, appeared at first to take for granted a

similar acceptance by an Irish nationalist audience of British racist notions. But he then very effectively proceeded to undermine all such notions of racial superiority, by presenting those self-same 'ns' as role models who should be emulated by Irish nationalists themselves! While this may explain O'Kelly's language, it does not, of course, make it any more acceptable. But, to mix one's metaphors, Meleady is so mesmerised by detecting the 'n' word in the wood pile that he cannot see the wood for the trees. And in the case of a man of O'Kelly's stature, he deserved to have the whole wood researched far more deeply.

For, as SIPTU's *Cuba Libre* book shows, every international involvement of O'Kelly in support of black liberation struggles—from Cuba to South Africa and then to the Sudan—bears out my contention that, until the advent of Roger Casement, it is none other than James J. O'Kelly who must be credited with having been the Irishman who did most to wage war on white racism throughout what subsequently became known as the Third World.

It was a struggle which O'Kelly also pursued as an MP. He would ask Prime Minister Arthur Balfour on 10th April 1905—

"whether, having regard to the recent allegations with reference to the ill-treatment of native races in Australia, in India, in Nigeria, in South Africa, as well as in the Philippines, and in French, German, Congo State, Portuguese territories, and elsewhere, His Majesty's Government will take steps to secure the appointment of an International Commission to inquire into all these matters, and to bring forward recommendations to alleviate the condition of the native races generally."

On 28th June 1905, O'Kelly focused on deaths arising from British misrule in Nigeria, when he asked—

"the Secretary of State for the Colonies whether his attention has been called to the death rate in the Old Calabar Gaol, where there are always from 400 to 500 prisoners, the majority of whom are crowded into cells at the rate of twenty-six per cell, and where some cells contain no fewer than thirty-five prisoners; and whether, seeing that out of 200 prisoners sent from Asaba in the beginning of last year only five are now alive, and in view of the number of cases of suicides among the prisoners, he will say whether he proposes to take any, and, if so, what, steps in the matter."

A year later, on 1st March 1906, his focus was on Winston Churchill, as the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, when he asked him—

"what has been the number of punitive expeditions against the natives of Southern Nigeria during 1904–5; what number of natives have been killed and wounded in these expeditions; what

number of villages destroyed; what quantity of cattle and other goods seized and carried away; whether the increase in trade referred to by the Governor is looked upon as a satisfactory outcome of these expeditions; whether nearly all the revenue of Nigeria and Lagos is derived from the alcohol traffic; and whether he will consider the advisability of instituting an inquiry into the state of affairs in this territory".

A week later, on 8th March 1906, his focus was once again on Churchill, when he asked "*whether the population of Uganda has decreased in recent years from some 6,000,000 to about 2,500,000, and to what causes this depopulation is to be attributed*". To which came Churchill's chillingly indifferent reply:

"There are no statistics at the disposal of His Majesty's Government to prove to what extent the native population of Uganda has increased or decreased in recent years, but it is known that the sleeping sickness epidemic has been the cause of a very heavy mortality in certain districts."

And yet Dermot Meleady holds Churchill in such high esteem while besmirching O'Kelly's good name.

As I have already said, I do not defend O'Kelly's "nigger" language of 1899, but I do place it in context. It is language that several decades later was still regarded as perfectly acceptable in polite society. When Oscar Hammerstein first wrote the words for "*Old Man River*", the hit song of the 1927 Jerome Kern musical *Showboat*, its opening lines were:

"Niggers all work on de Mississippi,
Niggers all work while de white folks play."

Even the great African-American singer Paul Robeson sang those lyrics before the 1936 film version changed the word to "*darkies*". A 1946 version further changed the language to "*coloured folks*" and, later still, "*Here we all work*" took over. In the meantime, having broken free from his *Showboat* contractual obligations, Robeson himself had begun to revolutionise the song still further, from 1938 onwards, with his "*Instead of cryin', I must keep fightin'*" ending. But the very fact that Robeson had initially felt obliged to sing the original "*nigger*" lyrics shows us how all pervasive that word once was in the very heart of liberal civilisation.

Which brings me back to the very loud use of it on my own street during the 1950s. The first African who came to live in Victoria Street was a medical student. He responded warmly to my curiosity about where he came from—to the extent of buying me a present of the equivalent of a Ladybird book telling the story of an African boy. He could see that the substance of the book for the benefit of my

childhood education was to present me with the normality of an African boy being the lead character in a story, even if he had to overlook the linguistic fact that the name given to the boy was actually a racist one—"Sambo". This African student was also capable of seeing through the surface of offensive language to get to the substance of the matter in concluding that Mrs. Heaney was no racist. Years before he ever arrived on the scene, she had given the name "*Nigger*" to her coal-black black semi-Persian cat. The cat regularly went missing, resulting in Mrs. Heaney's head out the upstairs window, yelling "*Here,*

Nigger, Nigger, Nigger!" But I do remember being conscious, even at the age of 8, of the "*inappropriateness*" of one occasion when she yelled out "*Nigger!*" at the precise moment when the African student was approaching her house. Perhaps he himself turned his eyes up to heaven at the bitter irony of it all, while knowing in his heart and soul that she was no racist. For he was on his way home to her very house to be fed his dinner! Mrs. Heaney was the first resident of Victoria Street to take in an African lodger.

Manus O'Riordan

The Bad Lands of Afghanistan

The British Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, has said that it is essential to fight in the "*bad lands of Afghanistan*" lest the Taliban have to be fought on the streets of London: "*This is about the future of Britain because we know that the borderlands of Afghanistan and Pakistan have been used to launch terrible attacks, not just on the US but on Britain as well*" (11 Sept. 08).

Britain should know a lot about the bad lands of Afghanistan since it did so much to create them in the Great Game.

The present border between Afghanistan and Pakistan was established in a Treaty signed on 12th November 1893, in Kabul by Sir Mortimer Durand, representing British India, and Abd al-Rahman, Amir of Afghanistan. Durand had been sent by Lord Lansdowne, the Viceroy of British India, to pursue Britain's 'Forward Policy' which was designed to pacify tribal activity along the northwest hinterland of British India. It was a treaty in the British sense of the term, whereby a weaker party signed a piece of paper under duress because the stronger party wanted it and because not to do so would have resulted in worse consequences for the weaker party.

The Durand Line came about as a result of the 'Great Game'. The 'Great Game' was the British term for Anglo-Russian rivalry in Central Asia. It stemmed from the British fear that the Russian civilizing mission in Central Asia would extend into Afghanistan and ultimately India. Throughout the 19th century the British were gradually moving North, and the Russians were slowly moving South in Asia. Britain took over the entire Indian sub-continent and, during the same period of time, the forces of the Czar of Russia were taking over Turkic speaking areas, such as Samarkand and Bukhara.

The Imperial ruling class in London viewed the Russian civilizing, particularly of the Moslem regions of Asia, as having great dangers for the Indian Empire and

they determined that it should be prevented from entering Afghanistan.

England was also determined to prevent any foreign power from obtaining ports that would gain them access to the Persian Gulf or Indian Ocean, thus facilitating trade routes out of the sphere of influence of the Royal Navy. Peter the Great of Russia had decreed that Russia must find a warm-water port. Having blocked the Czars in Constantinople through the Crimean War, the British feared that Russia would try to establish that warm water port in Karachi.

The Afghan Wars resulted from the British desire to maintain Afghanistan as a buffer state between Russian influence and India, and to install puppet regimes in Kabul. When Afghan rulers refused to accept English missions to Kabul, armies were sent from India to change their minds.

The First Afghan War (1838-42) had ended in disaster for Britain as an army of 16,000 perished to a man retreating from Kabul. But in the 1870s the New vigorous British Imperialism favoured a 'Forward Policy' towards Afghanistan, holding that the 'defence of India' required pushing its frontiers to the natural barrier of the Hindu Kush, so that Afghanistan, or at least parts of it, would be brought entirely under British control. In 1876 Disraeli sent the new Indian Viceroy, Lord Lytton, to Delhi with orders to institute the Forward Policy. Shir Ali, the Amir, rejected a demand for a British mission in Kabul in 1876, arguing that if he agreed the Russians might demand the same right and his country would become a battleground of the Great Powers.

After Britain blocked the Russian advance in the Balkans (to Constantinople, it was feared) at the Congress of Berlin, the Czar turned his attention to Central Asia. In 1878 Russia sent an uninvited diplomatic mission to Kabul. The British demanded that Shir Ali accept a British mission. Shir Ali had not responded by August 17th when his heir died, throwing

the court at Kabul into mourning.

When no reply was received, the British dispatched an envoy, Sir Neville Chamberlain, with a military force. When he was refused permission to cross the Khyber Pass by Afghan troops, the British viewed this as a handy pretext for implementing the Forward Policy and grabbing most of Afghanistan. An ultimatum was delivered to Shir Ali, demanding an explanation of his actions and, when the Afghan response was viewed as unsatisfactory, three British armies entered Afghanistan. Shir Ali died on a mission to plead with the Czar for help and with British forces occupying much of the country, his son, Yaqub, signed the Treaty of Gandamak to prevent British invasion of the rest of Afghanistan.

According to this agreement, and in return for an annual subsidy and an assurance of assistance in case of Russian aggression, Yaqub agreed to British control of Afghan foreign affairs, the presence of British representatives in Kabul and Kandahar, British control of the Khyber passes, and the cession of various frontier areas to the Indian Empire. Then the head of the British Mission, Sir Louis Cavagnari, was assassinated, just after he arrived in Kabul. A British army went through the passes and reoccupied Kabul, deposing Yaqub.

But, despite the initial success of the military expedition, Britain was unable to control the country outside the capital and it withdrew. Britain would have preferred to incorporate Afghanistan into the Indian Empire. But the British were forced to use the negotiating table and draw up the Durand Line.

The Russians and the British made a deal. Under the Treaty everything North and West of Durand's line was Afghanistan. Everything South and East of the line was British India, an area which is now in Pakistan. The Russians would stay North of the Oxus River. The British would stay south of the crest of the Himalayas. In order to make sure that neither country would come into conflict with the other, a sort of giant no-man's land was set up. A buffer state was created which would be in between the Russian and the British Empires. The name of that Buffer State was Afghanistan, a state which had not existed previously.

This is the reason why a part of Afghanistan reaches out and touches as far as China. The arm is called the Wakhan Corridor. There, the northern border of Afghanistan is the Oxus River. The southern border is the crest of the Himalayas and Hindu Kush mountains, which converge at that point. It was important to the British that Russia never came to acquire territory adjacent to India. For this reason, the Wakhan Corridor, which is only eight miles wide at its narrowest point, was made part of Afghanistan and was

extended to touch China.

The 'State' of Afghanistan was split in two by the second highest mountain range in the world, the Hindu Kush. The people north of the Hindu Kush had little in common with those south of the Hindu Kush. Their language was different as well as their religion. South of the Hindu Kush, the speakers were primarily Pashtun. North of the Hindu Kush, mostly Turkic languages are spoken, as well as Farsi.

The Durand Line, whilst constructing a State of distinct peoples in a territory whose geography was not conducive to a state, also split the lands of its major ethnic group in two. The border bisected the Pashtun tribal area, leaving more than half the Pashtun tribes in Pakistan. The Durand Line ran through the middle of the lands of the most important eastern Afghan Pashtun tribes and as a result millions of Pashtuns now inhabit the Pakistani provinces of Punjab and Sindh, the cities of Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad. The Pashtun are divided into more than 60 clans, all speaking the common Pashtun language. They number about 12½ million in Afghanistan and 14 million in Pakistan. In Pakistan, Pashtun speakers number less than 10 percent of the population of 145 million, which is dominated by Punjabis and other ethnic groups. In Afghanistan, however, a population of 26 million, contains the Pashtun, which constitute nearly half the population of the country, and have, more than often, dominated Afghan affairs.

The Eastern Pashtuns never regarded the Durand Line through their homeland as an international border and refused to recognize it. No Afghan regime, including the Taliban when they were in power, has accepted the validity of the Durand Line. Afghans have never accepted this border since it was imposed by Imperial Powers with the intention of marking out their spheres of influence rather than an international frontier.

After the communist takeover of Afghanistan in 1978, the Government actively challenged the legitimacy of the Durand Line and formally repudiated the Durand Agreement in 1979. In 1993, 100 years after the signing of the Agreement, the Durand Agreement lapsed. Afghanistan refused to renew the Treaty, leaving Afghanistan and Pakistan with no official border.

The period between 1907 and 1919 revealed that Britain, even though it had concluded a Treaty with Russia establishing the Line, regarded it as a mere 'scrap of paper' (in the supposed manner of the Kaiser with regard to Belgium) and a temporary situation. It took the attitude it has with all treaties—they are there to be broken when the time is right and a suitable reason or cause found to break them. They

are there to support the interests of the time but never to cater for the interests of the future.

As part of its agreement with Russia in 1907, to clear the decks for war on Germany, England had secured the Czar's agreement that Afghanistan should become a British protectorate—thus ending the Great Game. The Czar presumably agreed to this because he got what he had wanted all along—the green light to conquer a warm water port. Edward Grey had overturned the main plank of British foreign policy of the nineteenth century (known in music hall parlance as 'The Russians shall not have Constantinople'). His object was to engage the Russian Steamroller to flatten Germany on its eastern flank, after securing the French in 1904 on the Kaiser's west.

Of course, the Afghans had no say in the matter. Their country had been the battleground in the Great Game and, now that the Game was over, the winner took the board.

But in 1919 the Czar was gone and Britain felt that all deals were off with regard to Russia with the regime change—except with regard to Afghanistan, where the agreement of 1907 with the Czar was deemed to stand. And the idea of Protectorate started to appear old-hat to the victor.

Afghanistan had remained neutral in the Great War and the new Amir, Amanullah, thought that, since the Czar had gone and Britain was free of the Great Game and had fought a war for small nations, Afghanistan might be one of those nations that might enjoy the new world of the victors. So he wrote to the Governor General of India declaring his accession to the free and independent state of Afghanistan and his intention of asserting this status through an independent foreign policy. But, as with Ireland, he found there were small nations and small nations.

On 3rd June 1919 *The Irish News* revealed that the situation had developed into the Third Afghan War:

"An Amir was murdered recently—by no means an unusual fate for Amirs—and the Afghans soon afterwards delivered attacks on England's Indian outposts. Therefore 'the Afghans are lawless, ignorant, rapacious, and almost incurably vain; they are a race of desperate fanatics.' ... For long years the Afghans were England's allies; they held the pathway between Russian territory in Central Asia and the Indian Peninsula, and the Russians should fight the Amir's forces if they tried to get to the Punjab. In those days the Afghans were a brave and martial race—fearless mountaineers who loved liberty so well that no Muscovite dared trifle with their territory. Now they are 'lawless, ignorant' etcetera...

"Afghanistan is a large country—as big, we learn, as France, Belgium, Holland and Switzerland put together. But its

population is only between 5,000,000 and 6,000,000. So recently as 1907—when relations between the Czar's Government and the British Government were becoming cordial—Russia declared that Afghan territory was without the Russian 'sphere of influence' and undertook to act in all its political relations with Afghanistan through the British Ministry. Russia exists no longer as an Imperial State; and Turkey's downfall leaves Afghanistan the largest and most formidable of the Moslem Powers. The headship of the Moslem World has practically reverted to the Amir: and this fact must be borne in mind when the new Anglo-Afghan war is considered... Fomenters of strife have an immense area of operations... Asia must be reconquered from the eastern borders of China to the Mediterranean Sea. The latest Afghan War—the third waged against the mountain tribes of the old 'buffer state' within 42 years—is only one piece of a gigantic movement that may soon reach the dimensions and be marked by the ferocity of a 'Holy War.' Afghanistan cannot cope with the English power in India but it is doubtful whether England will deem it advisable to march troops through the Himalayan Passes again and occupy Kabul, Kandahar and Herat. The cost of conquering the whole country would be serious—in blood and treasure. The cost of holding it would mean a huge annual addition to the burden of taxation. But if the Moslems of Afghanistan are not completely subdued they will be perennially dangerous to the British Empire in India. It is an awkward dilemma: it would be difficult if Afghanistan alone were conquered; but the Afghans are only a small section of the vast Mahomedan population in Western and Central Asia, and in India, the prospects of peace in a continent where war under the 'banner of the Prophet' is considered a solemn duty and where death in battle is looked upon as the opening of the gate to external bliss—the variety of supreme happiness that commends itself to the Oriental imagination—are not particularly hopeful."

In April 1919 the Amir moved troops to the frontier with British India in response to the administrative massacre of 400 Indians by General Edward Dyer at Amritsar. In Britain this was called an 'invasion' since it threatened the Durand Line that England was, itself, about to ignore.

But it could hardly be seen as an 'invasion' to the locals, since the area was inhabited by the Pashtun, who moved across both territories, and hardly recognised the existence of a border at all.

Fighting broke out in the Hindu Kush and, when this proved costly to Britain, the RAF bombed Kabul and Jalalabad and the Amir sued for peace.

This was the great opportunity to drive the lesson home to the Afghans that they

were to be 'protected' by Britain whether they liked it or not. But, when it came to the bit, the thought of occupying Kabul, Kandahar and Herat made the Indian administration think again and the Third Afghan War was ended with the Treaty of Rawalpindi. In this Treaty England conceded the Afghan demands for independence and control of foreign relations and almost immediately the Amir made an agreement with the Bolsheviks for the establishment of a Soviet consulate in Kabul.

Here is the explanation of Colonel Repington, *The Times'* military correspondent and a man 'in the know':

"In 1917 and 1919 two very important events occurred. In the former year Imperial Russia collapsed, and in the latter our good friend the Amir Habibullah was murdered in his bed. His son Amanullah, immediately after his accession, declared Afghanistan to be a free and independent kingdom. It was his right, for our arrangements with each Amir were personal and not dynastic. He went to war with us, and was let off lightly owing to his youth and inexperience. Our control over his external relations ceased, and also our liability to defend his country from attack.

"A third event happened in 1920, namely a decision to send a strong Anglo-Indian force, eventually 45,000 strong into Waziristan—for the ninth time, so far as I can recall—to chastise its people, especially the Mahsuds, who had thoroughly deserved punishment...

"We accepted the declaration of independence with calm... But then the unexpected happened again. We gradually discovered that the Government of India had not only sent an army into Waziristan, but meant to occupy it. A complete occupation was apparently found to be too great and costly a business, but our public have not been informed how matters passed at this particular stage... Then we saw that the Government of India had shied at the cost of the complete occupation and had invented a new school of frontier political strategy, namely the 'half-forward' school, and was endeavouring to prove to us what a wonderful invention it was" (Policy And Arms, pp254-5).

What happened in Afghanistan was one of the first signs that Britain's power, which seemed to have increased with its victory in the Great War and its territorial extensions in the Middle East, was not all it appeared to be. Things began to be done that were always done and then undone, and then done again in a half-hearted fashion, on the cheap. In other words, Britain first acted imperiously in the traditional manner; encountering obstacles, it retreated and contented itself with half-measures. And it was all rather clever but ultimately purposeless. No more British armies marched up the Khyber Pass to

Kabul.

The Durand Line and the Afghan State survived because in the moment of victory, when the Afghans were ripe for the taking (if not for the keeping), Britain had exhausted itself in the war to see off Germany.

In the 1980s the Great Game resumed in another form and the Durand Line became a supply route for men and material, encouraged by the state agencies of America and Britain. During the Soviet occupation of Western and Northern Afghanistan, some portions of Eastern and Southern Afghanistan inhabited by the Pashtun became part of a 'free' Afghanistan, a kind of satellite of Pakistan. Six million Afghans came to Pakistan during this period and more than one million Afghan children were born within Pakistan.

Pakistan has always upheld the legitimacy of the Line and desired to make it permanent because it does not want to lose any more territory (as it did with Bangladesh in 1971) and because it wishes to preserve influence within Afghanistan. Pakistan would prefer an Afghan Government dominated by ethnic Pashtuns that would provide it with strategic influence both in its conflict with India and in maintaining access to the Central Asian resources. This is why Pakistan trained and armed the Taliban, and continued to do so even after joining the US in the 'war on terror'. But an unstable Pakistan-Afghanistan border is not a trouble-free proposition for Pakistan and the more the West has interfered in Afghanistan, the more it has pushed the problem into Pakistan territory.

However, Pakistan is aware of the difficulties of governing a section of people who straddle the Line and it administers the Pashtun area through the Federally Administered Tribal Agency (FATA), under the direct control of its central Government. Frontier regulations stipulated that the Pashtun clans retain their own legal order through tribal Elders' Councils and local *Jirgas* (courts). It also permitted the practice of going to war to resolve tribal disputes over land and livestock.

Regulations have allowed smuggling to go on—from weapons to consumer goods. The Pakistan-Afghanistan Agreement on Shipping (costing Pakistan about US\$4-5 billion each year in lost duties) maintains the border as a kind of legal fiction. The Agreement guarantees free movement of goods. Travelling from Pakistan to Afghanistan, one would become aware of the border only after it had been crossed, through encountering an on-coming truck which in Afghanistan, unlike in Pakistan, drives on the right-hand side of the road.

The Durand Line poses a problem for Afghanistan in maintaining its sovereignty. It weakens the Pashtuns, the majority

ethnic group in Afghanistan, preventing them from functioning as a coherent political entity. Some Americans have suggested that the only solution to the problem is to push the Durand Line eastward to the River Indus to bring all the Pashtuns under Afghanistan.

Such a proposal would meet with strong resistance from Pakistan. And perhaps that is the reason the Pakistan Army moved against the Taliban earlier in the year, as this idea was being floated.

What is Britain doing back in Afghanistan? I doubt it if Britain knows itself, let alone the son of a famous Marxist who has found himself in the position of Lord Curzon. About 95 years ago in the course of waging its Great War on Germany a fundamental thing happened in the British State. It established a propaganda department called Wellington House to flood the world with ideas about the benevolent war England waged on its behalf, and on behalf of civilization. The problem is, a lot of the world began to take this in earnest. Worse than that, England began to take it in earnest.

The British State, up to the Great War, acted purposefully in the world. During that War, in deluging the world with propaganda, it confused itself into incoherence. That incoherence began to have disastrous effects on the world, which England found itself master of, from 1919 onwards.

Propaganda has always been a weapon of the British State but it had never been the basis of policy of that State. From the Great War onwards, policy became infected by propaganda until the relationship has become unclear. The war in Afghanistan is now presented in propaganda terms by Miliband. But what lies under the propaganda, in the policy? Nothing it appears.

The result, after the Great War, and ever since, has been incoherence at the heart of the British State—beginning and ending in the bad lands of Afghanistan.

Perhaps Britain's army is there just to help the US. But the US has had to bail out the British in Helmand because the British evidently thought they could pursue the strategy they have deluded themselves into believing won the war in Northern Ireland. It was noticed in Washington that Britain was intent on repeating its Basra tactic in Helmand—bribe a few elders, make a great show of walking about without helmets on occasional forays into local towns for the journalists, then scurrying back to barracks. As John Reid put it, the remnants of the Taliban would be subdued "*without a shot being fired*". That tactic did not work—and was not acceptable to the Americans, who have illusions about the efficacy of military might.

England created "*the bad lands of Afghanistan*" and it seems not to know what it's doing there now. The hope is that the US can find a solution. The rest of the world watches and waits while America learns the Vietnam lesson all over again.

Pat Walsh

Editorial Note: In the Presidential Election Barack Obama campaigned on winning the war in Afghanistan while cutting American losses in Iraq. He also has the strategic objective of bringing

about a reconciliation with the Muslim world by forcing Israel to allow a token, demilitarised Palestinian State to be established. While this policy is contradictory, it might have improved America's standing in the world if Obama had the force to carry it through. But it is clear that he does not have the will or the political clout to curb Israeli expansionism—let alone push it back to the *de facto* 1967 borders. And he has not the military resources to suppress the fierce and independent tribesmen of Afghanistan.

Reply to Desmond Fennell and Joe Keenan

Desmond Fennell is right to pick me up on my careless sentence attributing to him the idea that the dropping of the atomic bombs contributed to the end of Western civilisation. In mitigation I plead that in the previous paragraph of my article (*Irish Political Review*, July 2009) it is clear that what was at issue was the taboo of genocide rather than act of genocide itself.

It is interesting to note that it is often the case that how events are interpreted, explained or rationalised can be as significant as the events themselves. Fennell says the West said "yes" to Hiroshima and "no" to Auschwitz.

However, I remain of the opinion that Fennell overstates the significance of the "yes" to Hiroshima. The West also said "yes" to Dresden, which was arguably more significant since the Germans were closer to the Anglo-Saxon race than the Japanese and Fennell concedes that the taboo against genocide did not apply to what were perceived as the lesser races. Admittedly Japan had attained the same level of development as the West, but that did not prevent the latter from retaining racist ideas about the former.

In my view if a taboo had existed against the killing of innocent Japanese civilians the American political elite would have made some attempt to lay the ideological groundwork for breaking the taboo. It did not because in my view it was not necessary. If such a taboo had existed, in the absence of this softening up process, one would have expected the reaction in the West to have been outrage and shock that innocent civilians had been killed. There was shock but it was not because of the killing of the innocents. The shock was caused from the realisation that the technology of war had reached such a level that if there was a third world war, it could lead to the destruction of the human race. The real debate was whether or not the West (i.e. the USA) should make a pre-emptive strike on the Soviet Union before that country had the technical ability to manufacture its own atomic bomb. There were many respectable liberal

intellectuals such as Bertrand Russell, later a leading light in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, who thought that it should.

In my opinion the taboo against genocide, if it ever existed, was broken long before 1945. Fennell says that Cromwell's 1649 massacre of 3,000 men, women and children in Drogheda was condemned at the time. This is true. On his death, even before the restoration of the monarchy, Cromwell was the most reviled man in Britain. But I think it is significant that he was rehabilitated in the 19th century and a statue was erected in his honour at Westminster.

The ideologists of British Imperialism boasted that the Anglo-Saxon was "*the only extirpating race on earth*" (Sir Charles Dilke in 1869). In most cases the "*extirpating*" applied to the so-called lesser races. But with the outbreak of World War 1 the destruction of the "*evil Hun*" was presented as a war objective. This war was not merely about achieving limited foreign policy objectives but it was predicted that the war could only lead to the destruction of one race and the survival of the other. Tom Kettle, of Redmond's Irish Parliamentary Party, helped to lay the ideological groundwork for this "*total war*". After the war officially ended in November 1918 the Royal Navy maintained an economic blockade of Germany up until 1919 causing starvation and more fatalities among civilians.

Joe Keenan is right to point out that stating that the Liberal Party was not formed in the middle of the nineteenth century is "*pedantic*". Unfortunately the pedantry of his point does not prevent him from questioning my "*procedures*". If the Liberal Party was not founded "*in the middle of the nineteenth century*", when was it founded? By Joe's reckoning it was founded following a merger between Peelite Tories and Whigs in June 1859 (i.e. the end of the nineteenth century?!).

But it is very arguable whether the

Liberal Party was founded in 1859. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* says that the British Liberal Party in the nineteenth century was the lineal successor of the historic Whig Party. In the early years of the nineteenth century the word "liberal" was associated with the revolutionary movements of France and Spain. After Waterloo it was often used as a term of abuse in mainstream British political discourse and given the Spanish or French designation to adherents as in *Liberales* or *Liberaux*. By the 1820s the word liberal had a neutral connotation but a party had not formed around the idea. Thus in 1827 Macaulay referred to the "*Liberal Parties on both sides of the House*". However, as the decade wore on the term "*Whig*" ceased to be an adequate description of the radical tendency within British politics. The term liberal began to denote an alliance between the old Whig aristocracy; Non-Conformists (emancipated by the Test Act in 1828 a year before Catholic Emancipation), the bourgeoisie or advocates of free trade; adherents of the Benthamite school of philosophy; the teachings of economists who developed the ideas of Adam Smith; and radicals who wanted to extend the franchise.

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* says that by 1839 the Liberal Party existed in name and that its leader Lord John Russell referred to the above alliance as the Liberal Party in his letters to Queen Victoria. However the *Encyclopaedia* thinks that the real origins of the Liberal Party can be set at an earlier date. Rather arbitrarily it traces the Party's origin to the 1832 Reform Act and the influx into Parliament of the various constituent elements referred to above who ranged behind the Whig Ministers in Government. But a case can be made that the origins of the Liberal Party can be traced to the agitation around the Reform Bill of 1830 when the radicals joined forces with the Whigs. Also, 1834 when the Whigs became more dependent on the new forces in British political life following the defection of Stanley, Graham and others.

The Party was strengthened by the triumphs of the Anti-Corn Law League (1839-1846) and the defection of the Peelite Tories which Joe refers to.

The version of the *Encyclopaedia*, which I have used is the 1948 edition. This was published with the "*editorial advice and consultation of the faculties of the University of Chicago*". Desmond Fennell might be interested to know that the definition of liberalism it gives begins along fairly conventional lines. So, for example, liberalism is the belief:

"...in the value of human personality, and a conviction that the source of all progress lies in the free exercise of individual energy; it produces an eagerness to emancipate all individuals or groups so that they may freely exercise their powers,

so far as this can be done without injury to others ...".

However it concludes with the following:

"it {i.e. liberalism—JM} therefore involves a readiness to use the power of the State for the purposes of creating the conditions within which individual energy can thrive, of preventing all abuses of power, of affording to every citizen the means of acquiring mastery of his own capacities, and of establishing a real equality of opportunity for all. These aims are compatible with a very active policy of social reorganisation, involving a great enlargement of the functions of the State. They are not compatible with Socialism, which, strictly interpreted, would banish free individual initiative and responsibility from the economic sphere."

It would be interesting to know if earlier versions of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* included such a role for the State in their definition of liberalism.

I'm not quite sure what Joe means when he says in relation to Richard Cobden that we're talking about ideology rather than run of the mill politics. He appears to mean that Cobden's influence was not confined to the Liberal Party (assuming it existed in the 1840s) but extended to all political parties. If that is what he means, I can only agree with him. However, the anti-Corn Law League was a problem for the Tory Party in a way that it wasn't for the Liberals. As Joe points out, it led to the defection of the Peelite Tories to the Liberals. Cobden had a more profound influence on the Liberals and in my opinion his ideas were absorbed into the mainstream of Liberal Party thinking.

In particular, my impression is that he had a profound influence on Gladstone. And many of the militaristic British imperialists who were shocked at Gladstone's policy of Irish Home Rule put the Liberal Prime Minister in the same category as Cobden and Bright (see Brendan Clifford's pamphlet *Union Jackery*, page 60).

This tendency within the Liberal Party remained strong at the beginning of the twentieth century. Perhaps Prime Minister Campbell Bannerman could also be described as a Gladstonian Liberal. The reference that Joe makes to the resignation of John Morley (biographer of both Cobden and Gladstone) from the Liberal Cabinet of 1914 on the Cobdenite grounds that Free Trade made the imperialist war unnecessary rings true.

I will have to concede to Joe that my assertion that Tony Blair was the first liberal leader of the Labour Party is not correct. I could argue that Tony Blair was completely different from, say, Neil

Kinnock, in that the latter would have adapted to liberalism because his own politics were not functional in the real world whereas Blair was a liberal by conviction. However, Joe has made a convincing case in the *Irish Political Review* and elsewhere that the liberals nurtured and retained their influence on the Labour Party from its birth as Tony Blair was all too aware. Blair was diplomatic when he said that the historical division between radicals had been healed. The division had healed because of the triumph of the liberals and the marginalisation of other tendencies within the Party.

It might also be said, but only with the benefit of hindsight, that the tendency within the Labour Party represented by Bevin and Attlee was an aberration, which obscured the real nature of the party even though it did not appear that way at the time.

I am more reluctant to concede that Thatcher was not the first liberal leader of the Tories. Joe gives the example of Churchill, who flip flopped between the Tories and Liberals. It is difficult to say what Churchill was beyond being an imperialist warmonger. It is likely that he would have remained in the wilderness if Chamberlain's strategy of engineering a war between Germany and the Soviet Union had not collapsed. He was a great showman and, when he was too drunk to do his BBC broadcasts, an actor was put in his place and nobody knew the difference. If he was a liberal, his period in power did not lead to a liberal line of development of the Party in the way that Thatcher's period did.

Whatever about how Britain arrived at her current state, we can agree that the ideology of liberalism is all pervasive and dominant within the British body politic. Joe thinks:

"...the next British General Election will be followed by a period of National Government, with all three of the Liberal parties together in coalition. Liberal Dictatorship as far as the eye can see or the mind can speculate.

"The end of history?"

He may well be right. But I have long ceased to care.

John Martin

**Union Jackery:
the pre-history of Fascism in Britain:**

by *Brendan Clifford*.

ISBN 0 85034 112 X. 84pp. ABM No. 25,
October 2005.

£7.50

Coolacrease

Eoghan Harris launched a broadside against the *Aubane Historical Society* book on Coolacrease in the *Sunday Independent*. Under a 'Right of Reply', the Editor of the book, Philip O'Connor, submitted a response. It appeared, but was edited. The full version is given below. Harris returned to his theme the following week, but this time the paper did not grant a right of reply: O'Connor's second letter did not appear. Jack Lane also responded to the diatribes on behalf of the publisher, *Aubane Historical Society*, but neither of his letters below appeared

Just back from holiday, I read with astonishment the vitriolic slur directed by Senator Eoghan Harris against *Aubane Historical Society* (*Sunday Independent*, August 2). In relation to the history of industrial schools and orphanages in Ireland, and specifically to the alleged burning of a Protestant orphanage in Clifden in the Civil War, Senator Harris writes that "Most Roman Catholics and real republicans want to make amends. Not so the *Aubane Society*, an ultra-nationalist group of provocateurs based in north Cork. *Aubane* has challenged accounts of IRA atrocities against Protestants in that period. Last week it launched a second book trying to justify the 'executions' of two young Cooneyites at Coolacrease in 1921. Should the *Aubane Society* decide to publish a book challenging the *Irish Times* account of the Clifden Affair let me suggest a working title: 'The West Brat Spy Ring at Clifden.'"

The book published by *Aubane Historical Society*—*Coolacrease: The True Story of the Pearson Executions. An Incident in the Irish War of Independence*—which I edited, was published last September, not "last week". I totally reject the slur that either I or any of the people in the AHS form "an ultra-nationalist group of provocateurs". Senator's Harris's insult in relation to the Clifden orphanage is beneath contempt.

The book, *Coolacrease*, was thoroughly researched and published to counter the distortion of evidence and the straight lies that characterized an RTE Hidden History film "The Killings at Coolacrease" in which the Senator appeared as the major witness. Originally AHS had no intention of producing a book and instead made copious archival evidence available to the film makers to help them establish just what had happened at Coolacrease in June 1921. The film makers refused to use that evidence which, *inter alia*, disproved beyond reasonable doubt the RTE thesis that the Pearson brothers were the victims of a sectarian killing in pursuance of a land grab by local Republicans.

To give just one example: in the film, Senator Harris claimed that the Pearson brothers had been shot "very deliberately in the genitals, in their sexual parts, in their sexual organs; what it really says is you are The Other, you are an outsider, we hate you, go away and die." This emotional description

by Senator Harris is simply not true. And surely he will agree that in a case like *Coolacrease* what is most important is to establish the truth of what happened. We had supplied the film makers with the sworn evidence of British military doctors to the British Military Court of Enquiry of the time into the events. This detailed the wounds the men received, multiple wounds to all parts of the body, with not a single one to the genital area. The film makers knew of this evidence but recklessly chose instead to deliver this outrageous account of deliberate genital mutilation. The makers of the RTE film also claimed to have evidence from Land Commission records that showed that the Pearsons' farm had been squatted and occupied in a sectarian land grab and that this was the real cause of the executions. Again, the book exclusively published Land Commission and other records relating to the farm and, if anything, they prove the precise opposite of what was claimed in the film. We also produced evidence from both Irish and British military sources, as well as from the Pearson family itself, which proves that the execution of the two Pearson brothers had nothing to do with their religion but was ordered by the senior IRA command because, at a time of war, they had mounted an armed attack on an IRA roadblock which resulted in the wounding of four men, one very seriously, and also because they were suspected of passing information to the British forces which resulted in the arrest of most of the local IRA leaders.

The Senator's discomfort at the book is undoubtedly due not only to its unexpected success with the interested public, but also to the fact that recent reviews in *History Ireland*, *Books Ireland*, *Dublin Review of Books* and elsewhere which, despite any other criticisms they have of it, accept that the evidence put forward in the book in relation to the executions and the subsequent purchase of the farm by the Land Commission is pretty conclusive and that RTE have a case to answer.

Philip O'Connor

Senator Harris's latest attack on me in relation to the *Coolacrease* issue seems designed to disguise his disgraceful role in the whole sorry business. Here are the basic facts which the Senator has hidden from your readers. Eoghan Harris was involved and appeared in an ill-judged and poorly researched Hidden History programme on RTE on the killing of the Pearson brothers at Coolacrease during the War of Independence. The programme made wild allegations about people living and dead and asserted that the killings were the work of local republicans who wanted to get their hands on the Pearson land.

The problem is that a dispassionate examination of the evidence points in the opposite direction. "*Coolacrease—The True Story of the Pearson Executions*", which I edited, assembles the genuine evidence available

and reveals the shabby standards of the Hidden History programme. Reviewers of the book in *History Ireland*, *Books Ireland* and *The Dublin Review of Books* all accept the validity of the evidence presented in the *Coolacrease* book. In the review in *Dublin Review of Books* referred to by the Senator, Tom Wall wrote of the case argued by the book: "The case against land being a direct cause of the incident is persuasive. It seems that the Pearsons were executed for reasons that had no direct bearing on land ownership." He also accepts that "there seems little doubt that the immediate cause of the execution" was the Pearsons' firing upon and injuring members of an IRA roadblock party in a time of war.

As the facts surrounding the sad and unfortunate death of the Pearson brothers have come to light, Senator Harris has become ever more histrionic in his adamant refusal to accept them, even calling those who have the temerity to disagree with him as akin to "holocaust deniers"

It is past time for the Senator to finally accept that he was wrong on this one.

Philip O'Connor (19.8.09)

Senator Harris denounces the *Aubane Historical Society* as "ultra-nationalist provocateurs" (2nd August). He used to denounce us as ultra-Unionist provocateurs. The change lies not in us but in himself and we have no need of selective denunciation of either

Unionists or Nationalists. Senator Harris has undoubtedly travestied one or the other of them. That is his forte. His earlier denunciation of us is incompatible with his present one. Let him make amends according as his mood of the moment tells him.

Aubane's refutation of Senator Harris's television programme about the Republican executions at Coolacrease during the War of Independence was not launched "last week" but last year. "*Coolacrease, The True Story Of The Pearson Executions*" is in large part a collection of the documentary evidence about the incident. It has been widely reviewed, and no reviewer has found against *Aubane* or for Senator Harris—who himself neglected to review it. But, if he still thinks he was right, and can produce a refutation of the case we made, *Aubane* will be happy to publish it.

Jack Lane

Aubane Historical Society (4.8.09)

I was pleased to read that Eoghan Harris was ready to give a "rational response," as he put it, to the *Aubane* book on the execution of the Pearson brothers at Coolacrease (16 August 2009).

But it was disappointing that the response was confined to a brief review of the reviews of the book.

Surely we need an authoritative review of the book itself from him as he feels so strongly about it and as he played such a prominent role in the RTE Programme that gave rise to the book in the first place.

Jack Lane

Aubane Historical Society (16.8.09)

'Civil War' Time Again

"They had spent two years on the run fighting the might of the British army... The vast majority of the Volunteers were young men plucked from working on the land or from employment as clerks in offices or shops. Some of the officers had second-level education, few had third-level qualifications, and the education of most of the Volunteers would have ended at primary-school level. Their understanding of national freedom was narrow; in essence it meant the ejection from the country of British troops and the British system of government, and its replacement with a form of government that they believed was free and fundamentally Irish. Consequently, the vast majority of the Volunteers did not have the opportunity to consider the concept of republicanism in any depth, let alone the implications of democracy.

"Republicanism for the Volunteers was shorthand for anti-British nationalism, combined with traditional insurrectionism. Republicanism was an expression of Irish identity, and the cry of "Up the Republic" was hurled provocatively at the hated occupying forces. It did not have any philosophical basis. Nor did it imply any future structure of government beyond a native Irish government based on self-determination."

These were the preconditions of the 'Civil War' according to a book called *The Munster Republic: The Civil War In North Cork* by Michael Harrington just published by the Mercier Press, formerly of Cork but now apparently of Dublin.

The book "started out as a thesis". It is the "third level qualification" view of the War of Independence: it was fought by ignoramuses who did not know what they were fighting for, did not know what republicanism was, or what democracy was, and who therefore did not know when to stop fighting.

But who "plucked" them from their labour in the farms and the offices, gave them a few war-cries to utter, and put them fighting without a "philosophical basis"? Surely it was in England that was done, with virtual conscription followed by actual conscription! Or in Redmondite Ireland, which siphoned people into the British Army with crude shibboleths.

But never mind the facts. Learn to feel the feelings of our new quality education which aspires to comprehensive thought control.

What did the plucking is not material. The story is that the ignorant lower classes were plucked from useful labour in farms and shops—what, no tradesmen! were they Poles even then?—and put fighting

in the IRA without knowing what they were fighting about.

"In post-First World War Ireland, democracy was sometimes interpreted in different ways. Universal suffrage among males was in its infancy, women did not have the right to vote [!!!], and the implications of full civil rights for all had not been addressed. Some people believed that a democratic government based on the will of all the people... was appropriate. But many others believed that government decisions should be based on general collective will demonstrated over several generations of Irish people, and that doctrines embedded in this general will should influence decision-making in government, even if the expressed will of the majority of the people at a certain point was otherwise. Hence the view that the majority did not have the right to do wrong... In this way republicans could justify taking up arms against the majority of the country because the will of earlier generations had been a complete break from, not the reaching of an accommodation with, Britain..."

(p137).

Now this is puzzling. The ignorant Volunteers plucked from the farms and shops had an understanding of things drawn from the most philosophical of all modern political theorists, Edmund Burke, who held that the present generation had no right to do as they pleased, but were bound to preserve the inheritance of past generations and transmit it to future generations. And C.C. O'Brien told us we should revere Burke, did he not?

Harrington's quite short Bibliography includes two books by Peter Hart (who of course interviews the dead) and three by Tom Garvin. He seems to have been much influenced by the view of things expounded in Garvin's 1922: *The Birth Of Irish Democracy*.

Garvin in 1922 puts one in mind of Nietzsche on the immoral history of morality and the taming by violence of human impulse in the cause of civilisation. The 'Civil War' brought us to our senses—or it tortured our senses into the bourgeois/capitalist mould. The 'Civil War' was about forcing a wild society—a society made wild by its newly established independence gained in a surge of unrealistic expectations—into the narrow constraints of bourgeois life under capitalism.

Garvin does not accept that a genuine will to independence was expressed in 1918. He says that the Election, though policed by the British apparatus of state, was rigged by a small minority of Repub-

lican intimidators. (He says that in some places and says something else in other places, but that is the sense of his account of the 'Civil war'.)

By means of skilfully directed terrorism the small, active minority, obliged the populace to behave as if they had willed independence and fought for it against the Imperialistic intransigence of the British Democracy. Because the people had not willed what they fought for they did not know when they had gained it. Britain conceded independence with the Treaty, but it did not live up to the unrealistic expectations of those who had been excited by the fighting. Therefore they did not want what they had won, and it had to be imposed on them by superior force by an active authoritarian element which knew what freedom meant if it was to be functional. Viable democracy emerged from the purposeful infliction of pain on the idealists by the authoritarians.

Garvin etc. make a point of seeing Ireland post-1918 in what they think is an international context. They mean that what happened in Ireland was of a kind with what was happening elsewhere.

It is not at all impossible that a people should fight for independence with anarchic assumptions about what independence would be like, and should then be hammered into shape by purposeful authoritarians. Something like that happened even in Italy, which disrupted itself through its Irredentist war on Austria (egged on by Britain and the Redmondites). It emerged from the War in the "exalted" condition attributed to the Irish by Garvin, Foster etc., and then had to be battered back into shape by Mussolini.

That is not what happened in Ireland. Some of the Treatyites, who did not feel it was appropriate to defend the Treaty as a submission to irresistible Imperialist force with a view to fighting another day, believed or pretended that it was what happened. The difference between pretence and belief is not easy to pin down in a case like this. One easily becomes the other. (See Pascal.) And some of the Treatyites lived out that pretence/belief very earnestly in the 1930s when they became Fascists for the purpose of suppressing the anarchy within which Irish Bolshevism was lurking.

But the Irish disorder of 1922 was not the disorder of independence won with anarchist expectations. Nationalist Ireland was well adapted to the bourgeois/capitalist order of things long before 1918. The land agitation parted company with anarchic Utopianism, or Millinarianism (which revisionists love to find in nooks and crannies) about 1850 when Gavan Duffy launched the Tenant Leagues on the assumptions of bourgeois political economy—and on that ground made

common cause with the Ulster Protestant farmers. And, half a century later, Canon Sheehan and William O'Brien, in active alliance with the Orangemen, got rid of the landlord system strictly within the order of bourgeois political economy. And then Sheehan and O'Brien made a serious bid to consolidate the gains of 1903 within a coherent capitalist order of things, and to sweep aside the sectarian grievance-mongering being peddled by the Redmondites. And they succeeded in County Cork and adjacent areas—which is where the War of Independence was fought in the main.

The Dail Government policed the country in 1919-21 in accordance with the bourgeois-capitalist order of things. The capitalist order of property was held sacred by it, as well as by the society which elected it, leaving aside a residue of problematic forms of landed property in the Midlands. The country did not need to be tortured into capitalist ways in 1922. That torturing had been done generations earlier. And what had been sought by the great agitations launched by Duffy and completed by Sheehan and O'Brien was not some unrealisable Utopia, but access to the capitalist way.

There were elements of Utopian phrasemongering in Redmondism to the end. But Sinn Fein was bourgeois from the start. (Griffith's guide in these matters was the political economist of national-capitalist development, Frederick List.) And the Sinn Fein Party as reconstructed after 1916 was the bourgeois party of a society which had settled down into bourgeois ways. Garvin prefers to ignore that development, as does Harrington.

If the British Democracy had recognised Irish independence when it was asserted in January 1919, I can see no reason to think that anything but bourgeois social order would have followed. Such disorder as occurred in 1919-21 was the result of the British military attempt to prevent the elected Irish Government from governing. And the disorder of 1922 resulted from the success of the British Democracy in breaking up the Irish Democracy and obliging it to make war on itself.

According to Harrington: "*The Civil War did not happen overnight—it was at least one full year in gestation...*" (p15). This accords with the academic view of recent decades, often asserted but never demonstrated, that it was the outcome of basic differences within the Sinn Fein party of 1918-21.

"When the Civil War finally began, it seemed that the republicans had the advantage... Yet within two months Provisional Government forces controlled the towns and cities..." (p16).

I doubt if it seemed to De Valera in late June 1922 that the anti-Treatyites had the advantage.

About 40 years ago I read the papers for the first six months of 1922. It seemed to me that the Treatyite leaders had prepared for war from the moment they became the Provisional Government on Whitehall authority. They strong along the Anti-Treatyites while they built up a heavily armed mercenary (paid) army with British support. When they struck, they did so with organised force against a disorganised enemy that had made no real preparation for war.

The Anti-Treatyites were strung along by means of juggling with the Dail Government, with its Sinn Fein party and Volunteer Army, and the Provisional Government and its professional Army. Griffith and Collins played a double act, with Griffith running the Dail and Collins the Provisional Government. But it was Griffith who pressed for war and Collins who delayed. Then Collins struck from a position of strength, and in a little over a month it was all over but for the mopping up of pockets of guerilla resistance in Munster.

When I was satisfied that I knew what was the case in January-June 1922 I thought no more about it for over twenty years. I was trying to deal with the Northern situation, and Northern nationalism tended to be pro-Treaty. When I was asked to give a talk at Newmarket about the Civil War, I merely said it was fought over Crown sovereignty and created the party system of the 26 Counties. It was fortunate that I had not gone into the matter any further as I was told at the end of the meeting that it was the first public discussion of the Civil War in North Cork since it ended, and people were on tenterhooks about it.

Anyhow, forty years ago I thought I knew what had gone on between the Treaty and the War but suspended judgment on it until I was finished with Belfast politics.

Harrington says: "*The delegates, unsurprisingly believed themselves to be full plenipotentiaries*". They made a Treaty, as they were entitled to do. The Dail ratified the Treaty. De Valera, who used to be a democrat, rejected the Treaty, either out of pique at not being obeyed, as some suggest, or out of rivalry with Collins for the leadership as Ryle Dwyer suggests. He became ambivalent about democracy and made speeches which can only be understood as incitement against the democracy. The democracy acted to defend itself. That seems to be more or less his story.

I remember much talk about "*plenipotentiaries*" from when I was very young and was surprised to see it being recycled. A plenipotentiary is a diplomat on whom the power of state is conferred for the purpose of making arrangements with another state. He is a creature of a bygone era when travel was slow and there were no telephones.

Whatever the Dail delegates were, they were not in fact plenipotentiaries. They did not present their credentials as authorised representatives of a foreign state at the Court of St. James and have them accepted. The Dail was not recognised by Britain as having any legitimate authority. It was a bunch of rebels. Britain would be willing to make a deal with some of these rebels and set them up in subordinate authority. After much haggling it put its final offer on the table and demanded that it be signed at once by the rebels. The Prime Minister had two letters in his hands. One of them meant peace, the other war. If the rebels signed it would be peace, and they would be set up in authority. If they did not all sign immediately it would be war. Mr. Shakespeare was waiting to see which of the letters he would rush off to Belfast with. The rebels signed and made themselves the Provisional Government of Southern Ireland.

The delegates were rebels in London but, until that moment, they had taken themselves to be representatives of the sovereign authority in Ireland. They were under instruction to sign nothing without the approval of the Dail Government. But they could not consult their Government because Mr. Shakespeare was waiting. And anyway weren't they plenipotentiaries?

Argument about Mr. Shakespeare was part of my childhood. Later on I thought of looking him up. He turned out to be a member of an influential Baptist family at a time when Nonconformists were entering the ruling elite as a matter of course. In 1921 he became a member of Lloyd George's Secretariat. About 30 years later he published his memoirs, and described the 'Treaty' signing:

"About seven-thirty Lloyd George delivered his famous ultimatum. The Irish delegates, he said, were plenipotentiaries and they must sign now. If they refused to sign, war would follow immediately..."

I have sometimes wondered since whether Lloyd George was right in presenting that ultimatum. I am convinced on mature reflection that but for the ultimatum we might have had no treaty. Supposing the Irish delegates had not signed that night; that the negotiations had terminated inconclusively; that the final decision was left over to the Republican atmosphere in Dublin, which had a few days previously rejected Dominion status. Would the treaty have emerged intact? I doubt it. As it was, here were the five Irish delegates committed before the world by their signatures to the approval of the treaty and going before the Irish Cabinet and the Dail to recommend its acceptance. Even so, the treaty survived only by the narrow margin of seven votes in the Dail...

"If, then, Lloyd George was right in attaching the utmost importance to the *fait accompli* and to the Irish signing that night, he was entitled to use the most

potent weapon in his armoury. The delegates to whom the ultimatum was delivered had been in prison, had been hunted, had seen their comrades executed or shot, their homesteads razed to the ground. Savage guerilla warfare had ravaged their homeland. The ultimatum conjured up before their eyes further years of bloodshed and reprisals on a vaster scale.

"I have, however, never understood why the Irish accepted the ultimatum at its face value. Why did they not call the bluff? Lloyd George stated over and over again that he had promised to let Sir James Craig know next day (Tuesday, December 6) one way or the other. Supposing Arthur Griffith had said: "What is sacrosanct about Tuesday? We have waited hundreds of years for a settlement ... Are you really going to break the truce and plunge Ireland again into war without giving the Irish Cabinet the chance of discussing your latest proposals?" How could Lloyd George have persisted with the ultimatum if Arthur Griffith had argued like this.

"But the Irish delegation did not counter the ultimatum with logic. They bowed to it and signed.

"I am nevertheless puzzled to find the reason. Was it that Arthur Griffith, having won the substance of Irish independence, signed because he, too, thought it would be more difficult for the Dail to repudiate it?

"Perhaps, as so often is the case, the simplest explanation is the true one. In the debate in the Dail on the treaty Barton said: "The English Prime Minister, with all the solemnity and the power of conviction he alone of all men I have ever met can impart by word and gesture, declared that unless the delegation signed war would follow immediately." Lloyd George had reached the limit of his patience. He threatened war, he looked war, and he intended war, unless they signed. No one could doubt his sincerity when his words "imparted conviction", his eyes flashed lightning. How dare they question the ultimatum? They were awed and they signed...

"I dined with Lloyd George that night alone. He was in a mood of suppressed excitement. "I have delivered my ultimatum", he said. I am not giving his exact words, but this was the effect of them: "We have offered full Dominion status. Either they sign now or negotiations are off. If there is a break we will put into Ireland a large force and restore order. I told them as much and it is now up to them to choose between peace and war." Estimates of the size of the force needed to hold down Southern Ireland varied, but the highest figure mentioned was 250,000 men.

"One significant remark made by Lloyd George as he was leaving I shall always remember: "If only Michael Collins", he said, "has as much moral courage as he has physical courage, we shall get a settlement. But moral courage is a much

higher quality than physical courage, and it is a quality that brave men often lack" ... (Sir Geoffrey Shakespeare. *Let Candles Be Brought In*, 1949, p87-9).

So the Irish delegates were hustled, bluffed, intimidated, and over-awed. They forgot what they were and became rebels.

Collins denied in the Dail that he had signed under the impact of the threat of immediate war, and there is evidence that his decision was made beforehand. In that case the persuading was not all done by Lloyd George. Collins and Griffith were party to the final hustling of the other delegates. But Griffith seems to have had little talent for negotiation or for the handling of power. His mind ran on a short-circuit and he had little influence. It was Collins who counted. And it was Collins who took the crucial decision to make a settlement without consulting the Dail Government.

What matters is not whether the British position was final, but Collins's decision not to make the Dail Government deal with his conclusion that it was final and that it must either settle for it or prepare for war. He pre-empted the Dail Government, knowing that the immense British propaganda apparatus would be immediately activated in support of him, and that the situation when he came back to Dublin after signing would be utterly different from what it would have been if he had come back before signing to put it to the Dail Government that the final position had been reached, and obliging it to deal with his own ultimatum within the structure of confidence of Dail legitimacy.

In the *realpolitik* of the situation, Collins took the game into his own hands with that decision and he acted as if he knew it. He became the Provisional Government on British authority and built a new army with British support. The obvious purpose of his new army was to make war on the IRA, and he must have had that in mind if he said that by signing the Treaty he also signed his own death warrant. But he also seems to have thought that he could handle not only the IRA and the Dail, but also Whitehall. And that was where it all broke down. In the event he was Whitehall's man. Whitehall was jubilant when it got him fighting the IRA.

*

It now seems to be agreed in official circles that the Anti-Treaty position in 1922 was undemocratic. I have learned to be careful about using the word 'democracy'. In 1969 I made myself widely hated by pointing out that Partition was socially based. Then, around 1970, I wrote something about the Northern Ireland state being democratically valid. That was nonsense. Northern Ireland was not a state and it had always been excluded from the democracy of the State of which it was part. But, hated though I was,

nobody refuted me by pointing this out. I had to refute myself. And that taught me to be careful about democracy.

In January 1922 a Provisional Government was set up by Collins on British authority. Those who set it up might have had a small majority in the Dail for what they did, but it was not the Dail that set it up. Britain did not recognise the Dail as a sovereign authority after the Treaty any more than before it. The Provisional Government was established on British authority both *de jure* and *de facto*. And those in the Dail who supported it had to meet as the Parliament of Southern Ireland under the 1920 Act in order to set it up.

That Dail had been returned without a vote in the Summer of 1921. The Home Rule movement had withered away after its defeat in 1918, and no other party or individual contested the independence issue with Sinn Fein.

After the Treaty it was agreed that another election should be held quickly. In May 1922 an agreement was made that the election should not be contested between the Treaty and Anti-Treaty faction of Sinn Fein. The aim was to reproduce the existing balance of forces in the new Dail and establish a Coalition Government with a Treatyite majority. The Dail ratified this Agreement. Collins was summoned to London and ordered to break it, which he did in ambiguous terms two days before the election.

The election had been delayed so that a Constitution for the Free State should be published for the information of the electorate. Collins tried to nudge it towards republicanism but this was vetoed by Whitehall. The draft Constitution acceptable to Whitehall was published on the morning of the election.

The Election Agreement ratified by the Dail was broken by Collins, sort of, but not quite. A substantial part of the voting was done on the assumption that it held. The Agreement provided for a Treatyite majority in any case, so the Treatyite majority was no surprise.

The voting was not on a referendum proposal. It was the election of a Parliament to form a Government.

The Civil War was launched a few days after the Election. It was not launched on the authority of the Dail that had just been elected. If that Dail had met and the matter had been put to it, it is very unlikely that there would have been war.

The war was launched by the Provisional Government in response to yet another Whitehall ultimatum, threatening that the British Army would go into action if the Treatyite Army did not act promptly. The newly elected Dail did not meet until September, by which time the Free State Army was in command, the war was won,

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Does
It
Up

Stack
?

THE NETHERLANDS. This is what the state is called in the English 'Times Atlas' although the Dutch call it Nederland and at other times, it is called 'Holland and the Low Countries'.

The population is about 16 million and the area 41,526 square kilometres. So there are 385 persons per square kilometre. Compare this with 54 persons per square kilometre in Ireland. The Netherlands have seven times Ireland's population on about one-half the area. All these people are housed and houses and gardens take up a lot of space. Much of the Netherlands is taken up by water in canals, lakes and inland seas, and yet to judge from the range of products in our shops, they produce mountains of vegetables, fruits, flowers, hardware and furnishings. Dutch shipbuilders are famous for steel yachts worldwide for multi-millionaires. They also build wooden boats using "oak from the Dutch forests". What forests? A German shipwright told me the Dutch use German oak. The Germans have extensive forests. The Dutch have extensive shipyards building ships, barges, tugs, oil rigs and everything possibly needed for the sea made of steel. They are significant producers of agricultural machinery. The fields seem to be covered in flower production. The Dutch seem to recycle the waste from most of Europe in huge vast recycling plants. And their pig production is enormous and takes up a lot of space too. The Dutch are a truly marvellous people.

But in our shops when we see onions, potatoes, cabbages, strawberries, blueberries and blackberries labelled 'Holland'—does it really stack up? Blackberries grow on blackberry bushes—briars—which are not an intensive use of land. You may travel all over Holland and not see a blackberry bush. What you will see in the limited amount of countryside they have is onions and tulips. They are experts at bulb growing and it seems to suit their soil. Admittedly, the Dutch are proverbially industrious but the levels of production emanating from 'Holland' seem beyond belief. Are a lot of the goods labelled 'Holland' originating from somewhere else? Like Israel? This is produce stolen from the Palestinian people and should be boycotted in Ireland. But if it is labelled 'Holland'—we really don't know and that is not good enough. What are our farmers doing anyway besides drawing their REPS and Set Aside payments?

Much of the 'South Africa' fruit in Irish shops comes from Israel apparently as a result of the arms deals under which Israel supplied arms to South Africa. Is Israel an arms manufacturer? And if so, why does Israel need to import arms from USA, UK and France?

WAR IMPOSSIBLE? And talking about arms, war was declared to be impossible by Ivan Bloch. Bloch wrote a six-volume work published in Russia in 1898 called *The Future Of War*. An edition in English was published in New York in 1899 in an abridged translation by W.T. Stead—*The War Of The Future In Its Technical, Economic And Political Relations*. In this scholarly work Bloch used his business experience (he was not a soldier) to show that the rise of the industrialised nation-state had made war between such states impossible owing to the huge and virtually unlimited resources that could be available for war. The immense industrialisation and population increases had made it possible to raise and deploy and equip armies of previously unimaginable size and power. Bloch argued that these new enormous armies would be unable to win a decisive victory over each other in the battlefield. The outcome would be a war of attrition with both sides fighting until both were exhausted and ruined.

Economies, businesses, finance and trade of warring countries would be ruined by the drain of resources and by the mutual destruction. Famine and social disorder would follow, Bloch said. He concluded that engaging in war would be tantamount to national and industrial suicide.

Therefore war was impossible.

Bloch reckoned without regard for the power wielded in national politics by the arms industry. The arms industry needs war and the longer the better. The arms industry wants to get rich while the rest of us starve. The Great War and the Second World War showed that Bloch was right. These wars destroyed the British Empire—led down the Primrose Path by Winston Churchill. And impoverished Germany, the USA, Russia and Japan—all of which countries massively increased their borrowings to cover up their immense losses. Every war is a permanent and irretrievable waste of resources. The biggest aggressor in human history was the British Empire and they were demonstrably the greatest wasters. Today, they are being followed down the same path by the USA. The USA has exhausted its own resources and is now heavily dependent on its creditors of which China is the largest. Arguably, therefore, China is helping to fuel the USA in its worldwide aggression in the same way as the USA in the past century fuelled the UK aggression. So it is predictable that if China continues to supply resources to USA, China in turn will become exhausted.

Can we hope that the Chinese rulers will save us all by telling the USA to go home and stay there in peace?

It would be a good thing if Ivan Bloch's six-volumes were translated and published in Chinese. That would stack up.

SHELL AND VILLAGE.

I haven't bought *Village* for a long time

but when it featured Shell and Rossport on its cover, I bought the magazine thinking there might be a well-researched article to read. Alas it was not to be. It was the usual regurgitation of spin, some facts and a general feeling that, as this was happening outside the Pale, then it really didn't matter all that much.

There was no local journalist asked about the truly appalling tale of events that has been occurring now for a few years. We were told that *The Irish Times'* Peter Murtagh has wielded his journalistic skills—such as they are—against the locals involved in this highly dangerous stand-off against one of the biggest oil corporations in the world. What is much worse is that they have been targeted by their own Government as well—citing of all things—"interests of national security"—but whose security is our Government protecting because it sure as hell is not the local community. We have no knowledge about the benefits to our country when—not if—Shell starts piping gas/oil out of our Corrib gas fields. The Greens are in Government and Dan Boyle (who got nowhere in his recent run for MEP in Munster) is a Senator only because Bertie put him in there as a sweetener in the deal between them and Fianna Fail for government. Where now their touted action about *green issues*? Where indeed?

BRENDAN HALLIGAN AND VILLAGE. I mention this because if any aspiring journalist wants to see how *not* to interview the great and the good—then this is what you must read. Utterly appalling. And poor *Village* was made to feel so unwanted—how my heart bleeds—not—that, before being shown the door of this eejit, *Village* we were told: "got an important question in before he makes us leave: is the State body chairman and company director still a socialist?" The answer: "I don't know what that means" he replies after a lengthy pause. "It's a very big word, many definitions of it. Which one do you want?" And this from the Labour politician who tells us in the same interview that his party had to go into power with Fine Gael after the "Arms Crisis of 1970 was dropped into our lap. There is no question but that to get rid of Fianna Fail was good for democracy". Imagine that!

AND FINALLY...

But I am thankful for small mercies. For there in *The Irish Times* today was the former President Mary Robinson giving—of all things—the annual speech at Beal na mBlath in commemoration of Michael Collins. How one forgets. Do any of you remember that spun pink candy floss that we got as children—so sticky and sweet—and nothing more than sugar and water—well that's the content of a Robinson speech. Apparently we are now in a bad way as a result of an "Absence of vision" which is at the heart of all our problems. Indeed.

© Michael Stack.

'Civil War'

continued

and all that remained to be done was the atrocities designed to burn the spirit of defeat into the souls of the defeated.

The most interesting book I know of about the war is by another Harrington, Niall C., the son of a Redmondite MP, who qualified as a chemist, joined the IRA, then joined the Medical Corps of the Treatyite Army and was present with it in Kerry in the Autumn of 1922. The book is *Kerry Landing*, published in 1992, and it tells how the Munster Republic was taken in the rear by means of a naval landing in Kerry. Harrington then had a long career in the Army before becoming the Organiser of the Federated Union of Employers in 1959. He died in 1981.

Leaving aside ideology about democracy, the book confirms the conclusions I came to forty years ago, so how could I not think it good! : e.g—

"The Provisional Government had been in existence for almost six months... In that time, despite the toing and froing of opposing political and military heads, it was able to build resources and make emergency plans. It could keep its 'front' busy in talks, arguments and disagreements about maintaining the IRA as the nation's volunteer army, while building and strengthening the new regular army. It had the means of doing what it wished to do, while observing very closely the growing aggressiveness of an opposition which spent its time thinking and talking, without agreeing on what was to be done or how to go about doing it. That was where the line of demarcation lay..." (p33)

On the constitutional situation brought about by the Treaty:

"Two Irish governments now functioned side by side... : the Dail Eireann Government... and the Provisional Government..."

"In that confused and emotive period... not only were there two national governments...; there were also two national armies..., each giving allegiance to a republic, one to the "existing republic" proclaimed on Easter Monday 1916 and ratified by Dail Eireann..., the other to a republic to be achieved in time by the "stepping stone" of the Treaty..." (p7).

"Richard Mulcahy... was insisting that enlistment in the new army being formed by the Provisional Government was an engagement to serve in the "Regular Forces of the Republican Army". This was illusory, of course; de facto it was the army of the Provisional Government that was being recruited; in other words, it was the Free State Army. The IRA who were against the Treaty... could claim that theirs was the true Republican Army, and so they did claim..." (p10).

In an Appendix, from "*unpublished documents*", Harrington gives a document by the "Chief of the General Staff", appar-

O'BRIEN continued

prison with de Valera, Collins and Cosgrave; a founder and General Secretary of the ITGWU for 22 years; President of Irish Trade Union Congress on four occasions; served as a Labour TD in the Dail for three terms; President of Dublin Trades Council 1914; Financial Secretary of the Labour Party 1931-1939; Chairman Administration Council of the Labour Party 1939-1941.

Bill O'Brien could rightly claim to be one of the founders of the ITGWU and the Labour Party. He had a leading role in the 1913 Lock-Out. Yet, he did not become a member until 1917.

Nor was he a member of the Citizen Army or the Irish Republican Brotherhood, unlike his comrade, James Connolly.

He didn't participate in the 1916 Rising but was a trusted ally of both the nationalist and socialist participants and was to have a key role in the proposed Civil Provisional Government to follow the Rising. He ended up in prison where he formed very definite relations with de Valera, Collins and Cosgrave.

If Jim Larkin lifted the worker off his knees—Bill O'Brien most certainly ensured that they remained standing.

According to Maureen MacPartlin, a daughter of another great Trade Union warrior, O'Brien had: "*a beautiful speaking voice ...and was very clear minded. He was serious, but he had a sense of humour.*" He was "*very methodical, hard-working, single-minded, ambitious man*", who could be "*vain and egotistical—liking to talk about his achievements*". Although "*his animosity towards Larkin and P.T. Daly were constant factors for most of his life, he scarcely ever spoke against either of them in a personal defamatory manner*". As regards Larkin and himself, in "*temperament and outlook they were so different that conflict between them was almost inevitable*". O'Brien was "*calculating, foreseeing every consequence before acting, able to play on other men's envy and anger, and genuinely committed to building up the Labour movement.*" He always appeared "*cool and very controlled, and was a great intriguer—able to arrange*

ently drawn up in early August 1922, which makes the following comment on the war and the Constitution:

"It is too early to say yet whether we could so establish ourselves [in "certain principal points" in Munster, BC] in time to have Parliament meet on 12th (August). I feel that we shall have to have another postponement..."

"I consider that if Parliament did not meet until 24th our military position would be very favourable; we would have occupied sufficient additional posts

and swing the votes in his favour". "*He hated dishonesty, had a puritanical streak of moral rectitude, and, as his whole life was devoted to union affairs, without the responsibility of a wife and family, he found Daly's more self-indulgent ways particularly offensive.*" Even of Tom Foran, he ventured the criticism that "*he attended horse races. O'Brien neither betted, smoked nor drank.*" (p234).

Come to think of it, Bill might have made a damn good Jesuit himself.

THOMAS J. MORRISSEY

Thomas J. Morrissey SJ took a doctorate in history at the National University of Ireland. He is a former headmaster of Crescent College Comprehensive, Limerick, and Director of the National College of Industrial Relations. He has written twelve books, mainly biographies of people prominent in the labour movement, of bishops and of celebrated Jesuits.

In his introduction in 1991 to the reprinted *The Social Teachings Of James Connolly* by Lambert McKenna SJ, Morrissey stated that the brand of Marxist-Socialism adopted by James Connolly posed no threat to religion—Connolly firmly believed one could be a good Catholic and a good Socialist.

Father Morrissey has written a scholarly biography. Of course, it is written from the perspective of Catholic Social teaching but he doesn't claim otherwise. And he thoroughly dissects Bill O'Brien's contribution to the Labour movement.

Yes, there are aspects of it which somebody born and bred in the Labour movement might have approached in a different manner. Ernie Bevin, the British labour leader doesn't get a mention, even though there was correspondence between O'Brien and himself.

Ironically, Ernie was born six weeks after Bill, 9th March 1881.

(William O'Brien 1881, 1968, Socialist, Republican, Dail Deputy, Editor and Trade Union Leader, Thomas J. Morrissey, S.J., Four Courts Press, 454 pp, 2007).

(Though published by Four Courts Press, financial aid from the Trade Union SIPTU made the publication possible.)

in the South to dominate entirely the position there, and would be able to indicate so definitely our ability to deal with the military problem there that no parliamentary criticism of any kind could seriously interfere with our ability" (p164).

This was the parliament elected in June, that constituted the foundation of 'democracy' in 1922, but which had never met while democratic order was being imposed.

Brendan Clifford

O'BRIEN continued

working conditions to 'less self-regarding social functions' that would lead to 'the uplifting of the nation—materially and spiritually'. He went on to speak of the extensive unemployment problem and the poverty it generated, and he posed the question:

"'Shall the aim be honestly to remove poverty and its attendant fears ...or are we to agitate and organise with the object of waging the "class war" more relentlessly, and use "the unemployed" and the "poverty of the workers" as propagandist cries to justify our actions?' Thomas Johnson, Labour Party Secretary" (p236).

Morrissey proceeds:

"The latter policy was that of the enthusiastic left wing of the labour movement in Europe, but, he declared, 'I do not think this view of the mission of the labour movement has any promise of ultimate usefulness in Ireland...' Endeavouring to explain why he [Johnson] held this position, he added:

"I am a "community-ist", a "nation-ist", before I am a "trade-union-ist". Trade-unionists must learn that the trade union is not the last word. But the beginning only of the workers' responsibility to the wider movement for social and economic emancipation'..."(p237).

"Desmond gives prominence to the two men who built the labour movement, Tom Johnson, on the political side and William O'Brien, on the trade union side. Desmond recalls the passionate support O'Brien generated among labour activists in Cork.

"Before he came to Dublin Desmond was a committed O'Brienite ITGWU man and an opponent of James Larkin snr and jnr. However, he quickly warmed to Larkin jnr and felt the internal feud had to be ended.

"The book explores the internecine warfare at both trade union and political level in the 1940s and 1950s and if anything the author is too hard on the more conservative O'Brien side of the argument, given the struggles that the movement faced to retain its independence without falling into the grip of communist 'entryists'.

"The author, an inveterate collector of documents and memorabilia is planning a second volume from 1967 to the present day. That should make some of his former colleagues in the party a little nervous."

No Workers' Republic! Reflections on Labour and Ireland, 1913 – 1967 By Barry Desmond Watchword, 352pp, €20 reviewed Stephen Collins, Political Editor of *The Irish Times* 23.7.2009.

LABOUR CONFERENCE ADDRESS, 1938

"'We have passed through another year of crisis and alarms", O'Brien began, "Probably at no other period since the conclusion of the Great War has the whole

world been kept in such a state of tension. The filibustering methods of the European dictators—so markedly resembling in the sphere of international politics the tactics of the Chicago gangsters of yesterday—have frayed the nerves and on many occasions have brought Europe to the verge of war."

These methods had changed the map of Europe. Moreover, they had shattered the ideal "*of collective security and the comity of Europe*" and disregarded international law.

"The League of Nations failed because it was accepted by the principal powers only as another instrument of power politics, an additional manifestation that in the 20th century, and after the greatest war in the world's history, the ideal of European civilization is still based upon the Machiavellian standard of ethical conduct ...The fact that invasions can now be made, and annexations accepted, without international disapprobation, is one of the most disturbing facts of our time. All that is needed, apparently, is power and will—all else is conceded passively by a supine world."

"He then entered on a part of his speech that was ambiguous and that would later be used against him. He appeared to dismiss the 'Red Peril', though he was mainly concerned to criticise those endeavouring to tarnish the whole Labour movement as 'communist'. "For their own vested interests, and for the preservation of outworn privilege", he explained, "people of power and authority profess to see in every movement for the liberty of humanity a manifestation of the 'Red Peril'. It is extraordinary how masses of people are lulled and gulled by such propagandist nonsense. Forty or fifty years ago the word 'socialist' was enough to make the gentle ladies of the Victorian era call for their smelling salts. Today the word 'Bolshevik' is supposed to make the flesh creep. A century ago it was the terrible Chartists who menaced society, as a little earlier the dreadful Daniel O'Connell kept the rich and the powerful from their slumbers. What we have to realise is that any movement which has for its object the improvement of the lot of the poor, the lowly, the oppressed and the weak, will be attacked with all the venom of the strong and tyrannical. We must, therefore, be on our guard against insidious misuse of catchwords and phrases ...When we are aware of the misuse of these words and movements we shall know how to interpret the tendentious propaganda of our own day.". "Nowadays", he added, "freedom itself is suspect and we must be careful to remember that [preserving] liberty is an unending struggle, a march and a bivouac rather than a pitched battle with a decisive end."

"Continuing that line of thinking, he emphasized that in "the reconstruction of the economic and social systems, which

is inevitable everywhere, the individuality and humanity of each and all must be respected, and given freedom to develop and flourish". And, in a world of assertive dictatorships, it was important to assert that "everything in the material way which can be done by the dictatorial systems can be done equally well by a democracy". Then, with words more 'liberal' than 'socialist' he added: "We are individuals—and we must take care to express and impress that individuality everywhere and on all occasions. What we demand from the economic system is the wherewithal to express and impress that individuality." A clear reaction, it would seem, to the corporate engulfment of the individual in Fascism and Soviet Communism. In the same vein, he observed: "We must remember that economics is the study of man in relation to goods, not the study of wealth in relation to men. If you look at economics from that angle we shall see at once that the production of goods must be undertaken for the greater welfare of humanity, rather than for the accumulation of wealth." It was obviously to the advantage of every community that the work of its members enriches their lives, improves their surroundings, "and gives them all the material means towards a fuller and better life".

"'That", he emphasized, "is the work which we in the Labour Party have undertaken, and no matter how much our words may be misinterpreted, and our actions misconstrued, we must march strongly and straightly towards that goal. Work and production are not ends in themselves, they are but the means to the full life.'"

"'This subject of leisure", O'Brien observed in peroration, "brings me back again to the cloud which now menaces democracy everywhere ...Democracy has had glamour given to it by the sacrifices of generations of selfless individuals; it will persist as long as people are willing to make sacrifices for its maintenance and in its service. What must be remembered is that democracy is not merely a political creed—it is an extension of the individual spirit into the realms of politics. It is the full life at its best.'" (p292-3).

"CALCULATING AND RUTHLESS"

"He had shown himself calculating and ruthless in his campaign against P.T. Daly and in his removal of Seamus Hughes; and his anti-Larkin publicity campaign, in defence of the ITGWU and his own career, was harsh and relentless." (p403).

Very frequently, it wasn't the Communists who were the threat, it was fellow travellers and others, who were neither one thing or the other or in plain English didn't have a clue as to what they really wanted—Street Communists and House Reformers!

A comrade of Connolly and Larkin; served two terms in British prisons; shared

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O'BRIEN continued

and the Transport Union was not party to the agreement. A few days prior to the agreement, forty-five of Larkin's supporters occupied Liberty Hall. O'Brien and Foran appealed to the government, and government troops, accompanied by an armoured car, surrounded the building and arrested the occupants. The same Sunday afternoon, Larkin defiantly spoke from the window of Liberty Hall; and next morning, in protest at the arrests, called a lightening strike that paralyzed the port of Dublin. He called it off only when the forty-five men were released on bail that evening. The Transport Union repudiated the strike, but the stoppage was effective.

"Larkin's popular appeal to the masses was emphasized. Rumours of a 'new Larkin union' began to circulate, especially when a section of the men were induced to withhold their membership contributions to the union under its present executive. O'Brien felt it necessary to deny that there was any truth in the rumour 'that 18,000 members of the ITGWU have declared themselves in favour of Mr. Larkin...'. He was to be proved largely wrong. A form of guerilla warfare was about to break out, in which industrial disputes were based not on wages or conditions of employment but on which group would have control over a particular job." (p226).

On Sunday 15th June 1924 the Workers' Union of Ireland was formally launched. *"By the end of the month, two-thirds of the ITGWU in Dublin, some 16,000 men, had transferred to the new union"* (ibid.).

In the same month, Bill O'Brien was appointed to replace James Larkin as General Secretary of the Irish Transport & General Workers' Union. On the 18th of August 1924 Bill, along with Tom Johnson and Luke Duffy, travelled to Oxford to attend a Trades Union summer school.

THE COUNTRY BOY

"Larkin had a far greater appeal to Dublin workers than Connolly. In the country generally, O'Brien could play the Connolly/national martyr theme to great effect, but in Dublin if it clashed with devotion to Larkin there was no contest." (p172).

"In the final months of 1919, union business continued to bring O'Brien to different parts of the country. The constant movement out of Dublin to the provinces had a threefold effect. It got him away from the pressures of administration at head office, and the local opposition within the trades union movement. It also made him conscious of the nation-wide spread of the union and of the problems that generated; and it brought him into touch with the organizers around the country and with many of the work force,

and this was to prove of great importance in future years when a split came in the union" (p182).

"Those years had been spent in rural areas, mainly in Munster, and this non-Dublin background assisted his expansion of the union, and helped to save the organisation when it was all but overwhelmed in Dublin by the WUI" (p402).

"The ITGWU... numbers had dropped from 120,000 in 1920 to a mere 15,453 in 1929" (p254).

On January 22, 1924, the Cumann na nGaedheal cabinet approved the draft Old Age Pensions Bill, which, on the recommendation of the Minister for Finance, Ernest Blythe, provided for an 'immediate all-round reduction... by one shilling per week (from ten shillings to nine shillings) and also the end of the Dole payment.

In April, 1934, the Fianna Fail Government introduced the Unemployment Assistance Act (1933) giving the Dole to all unemployed men, insured or not.

VOCATIONALISM

Bill O'Brien speaking at the Irish Trade Union Congress in 1942:

"Vocationalism, as Miss Bennett has pointed out, does not necessarily mean Fascism, Socialism or Communism. It can stand upon its own. We have it here to a certain extent. The various unions and professional organisations and so forth are all based on the vocational idea. What have we to consider? The development of Vocational Organisation, such as trade unions, or are we to consider it as a rival to the parliamentary system? That is the real crux of the matter" (p338).

BRITISH TRADE UNIONS

The Council of Irish Unions was established on the 23rd May 1939. On 25th April 1945, the Congress of Irish Unions was established: *"composed of unions with headquarters in Ireland and free from the control of British trade unions"* (p359). The fourteen unions broke away from the Irish Trade Union Congress.

By 1959, they amalgamated with their old foes to create the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

COMMUNISM

In 1943, five of the eight Irish Transport members of the Dail seceded from the Labour Party. They formed the National Labour Party. The five were: J.P. Pattison, Kilkenny; Dan Spring, Tralee; J. O'Leary, Enniscorthy; James Everett, Wicklow and Jim Hickey of Cork *"stating that they were doing so because of the communist influence in the party"*. All were from outside Dublin. The other three ITGWU

TDs who remained in the party were: T.J. Murphy, West Cork; Dick Corish, Wexford; and Paddy Hogan of Clare, all from outside Dublin, also! By June, 1950, National Labour returned to the Labour Party.

On 15th January 1944, Bill O'Brien sent out a circular to each ITGWU Branch Secretary informing them that the union had disaffiliated from the Labour Party.

RETIREMENT

Bill retired on Saturday 23rd February 1946. Four years later, National Labour were back in the official Labour Party fold. Nine years following, the Congress of Irish Unions had helped to form the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

And of course, the eventual merger of Larkin's Workers' Union of Ireland and the ITGWU came in 1990.

Bill passed away on 30th October 1968, aged 89 years.

"O'Brien's sister, Mary, had always been ambitious for him; and in his final years she persuaded him, though his powers were declining, to dictate his memoirs to Edward MacLysaght. The result was the disjointed *Forth the Banners Go*, which, in Maureen MacPartlin's estimation, did not reflect the style of the O'Brien she knew. In fact, it never went beyond 1922 and the first Dail, avoiding the union split and all the personality differences thereafter" (p399).

Forth the Banners Go is a wee bit disjointed, editorially it is a shambles but it still provides a real insight to how Bill O'Brien ticked. Don't knock it—we should cherish any Labour books we have—there are so few!

DEMOCRACY

Though written by Thomas Johnson, the views expressed hereunder would aptly sum up Bill O'Brien's own philosophical and political outlook.

"On 6 July, 1925, O'Brien chaired a special meeting of the national executive {Labour Party} to consider Johnson's letter to them. It was an important document that outlined his concept of the Labour Party and how he visualized the trades unions. He had acted in the belief, he explained, 'that a democratic government'; should 'preserve the fundamental rights which had been won' and strive to retain 'the social obligations which they had inherited', and in this belief he had helped 'to create a public opinion favourable to the political institutions' by which the will of the people could be exercised. He was opposed to the (syndicalist) theory that 'only by organizing their strength in the field of industry and using it to bring the economic machinery to a full stop can workers' ideals be realized'. No, the trade union movement must look beyond its primary aim of achieving just rates of pay and congenial

O'BRIEN continued

The death of Dan meant the loss of an older brother, who had been also mentor and friend" (p112).

Dan O'Brien, Bill's brother was one of Connolly's backroom men in the days before the Rising, yet his name is not mentioned in the list of "*Citizen Army Garrisons, Easter Week, 1916*" in the book by R.M. Fox, *The History Of The Irish Citizen Army* (1944).

In early 1917, the Citizen Army resumed their drilling in Liberty Hall—

"and introduced material into concerts there which government authorities regarded as seditious. This development was unwelcome to Folan and O'Brien, who feared for the future of the union if Liberty Hall were closed down by the government. They argued with little success that the situation had changed since 1916, that the republican forces had merged in 1916 and should not now be separated, and that since the Sligo congress they way forward was through a political organisation such as the Socialist Party of Ireland" (p118).

On 15th May 1917, the hall was closed by court order. Foran appealed to the Lord Mayor, the building was re-opened "*subject to certain conditions. Thereafter, the Citizen Army no longer drilled on the premises*" (p118).

THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT

"It was important to Plunkett and the nationalists on his committee to have a successor to Connolly working with them. O'Brien was the obvious successor, as a friend and colleague of Connolly, and as a man who had a reputation for sound judgement, and, most important, who had been imprisoned" (p118).

"Another divisive issue was the question of elected representatives taking their seats at Westminster. O'Brien commented that he 'did not think that the country would be rallied on a programme of withdrawal from Westminster', and to his 'great surprise' Griffith agreed with him."

On the Mansion House Conference 19th April 1917—

"O'Brien was deputed to attend the conference to state labour's case. But labour had no case so far as the terms of reference of the conference were concerned, namely to seek a policy for national independence. Almost inevitably, O'Brien found himself drawn into the national movement in a personal capacity, while the official labour movement stood aloof" (p119).

"A further indication of O'Brien's ambivalence was his continued involvement in Plunkett's committee on by-elections." Here was a labour leader on a

Sinn Fein by-election committee, even helping to select the candidates.

"O'Brien's very public connection with the middle-class and nationalist Mansion House Committee, however, did not pass unremarked in labour ranks. At the first sign of danger to his reputation in the labour movement, he retreated" (p122). After a warning from Tom MacPartlin, a carpenter and President of the Dublin Trades Council, he resigned from the Mansion House Committee on 28th May 1917, "*but, by remaining active in the Prisoners' Aid Society, he kept in touch with his nationalist friends*" (p122).

By September 1918, Bill was the outgoing President, and new Secretary of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and Labour Party, a leading executive member of the ITGWU, and President of the revived Socialist Party of Ireland, and, at a wider national level, he was an influential member of the Mansion House Committee.

"Unlike Connolly, however, he had no desire to be a national labour leader of rebellion" (p153).

"He was very much to the fore in linking the entire labour movement to the campaign for national freedom. In 1916, he was imprisoned for four months, even though he had no direct affiliation to the forces involved in the Rising.

"His own imprisonment in 1916 and his association with Connolly established him as the natural link between the leaders of Sinn Fein and those of Labour. During 1917-1918, de Valera, Griffith, Brugha and Collins featured in his career.

On 2nd March 1920, Bill was arrested a second time and sent to Wormwood Scrubs Prison before receiving unconditional release on 12th May 1920. In that time he participated in a hunger strike and stood at a by-election in Stockport in which he received 2,336 votes.

Lady Astor in agitating for his release claimed Bill "*was no ordinary trade unionist*".

"The sustained and successful campaign against conscription was accredited to Sinn Fein. The key roles played by Labour members were swallowed up in the cleverly orchestrated propaganda of the Sinn Fein electoral machine, and public opinion followed its lead" (p156).

"The Labour movement's close involvement with Sinn Fein in the struggle for independence from 1917 to 1921 is often overshadowed by Connolly's role in 1916. But O'Brien and Johnson as leaders of Labour played a vital role in those years, and of them O'Brien was the key person because Sinn Fein trusted him and never quite trusted Johnson because he was English..." (p165).

THE TREATY

Bill O'Brien's position on the Treaty was:

"...short of complete defeat of the

British the most I could conceive would be got by negotiation was dominion-status" (p199).

"Seeing the cherished unity of four years in imminent danger, O'Brien and other member of the national executive of congress refused to take a public stand for or against the treaty, and together with the labour paper, the *Voice of Labour*, urged workers to remain neutral on the issue" (p201).

Jim Larkin wasn't neutral, from his prison cell in the U.S. he cabled:

"We stand for the dead. We entered into a compact with them when living. We will not fail them. Clarke, Pearse, Connolly, and our other comrades did not die for a phrase. They did not die that unscrupulous, ambitious, creatures that have climbed to power over the dead bodies of our comrades should be permitted to seal, sign and deliver in a written hand the soul of our race" (p204).

The Treaty which split Sinn Fein now divided the ITGWU executive and its General Secretary, James Larkin.

Collins died in August 1922. Morrissey writes that in Bill's eyes, "*Collins remained something of a 'wonder man'...*"

THE RETURN OF THE 'PROPHET'

On 30th April 1923 James Larkin arrived at Dun Laoghaire by mail boat. He had been away for over eight years. A party of about fifty waited to greet him. On his arrival at Westland Row station, he was welcomed by 5,000 people. "*Among them was Tom Foran, but not Bill O'Brien, as Larkin noted*" (p214).

"Two days later, when both men met at the union's new offices in Parnell Square, exchanges were barely civil. When O'Brien entered, Larkin was sitting down and made no effort to rise or shake hands. He said: 'Hello, Bill. You've got grey.' To which O'Brien replied tartly: 'Yes, Jim, and you've got white'..." (ibid.).

By February 1924, Larkin and Bill were in the courts which proved:

"a vindication and triumph for Foran, O'Brien and the executive, but, in many ways, it was to prove a pyrrhic victory.

"The executive committee, nevertheless, voted unanimously, on 14 March, 1924, to take the ultimate step of expelling Larkin from membership of the union that he had helped to found."

By May 1924 a strike occurred in the Dublin Alliance and Gas Consumer Company:

"The gas worker section of the ITGWU, by a very large majority, invited Larkin to their meeting in the Mansion House. O'Brien refused their appeal for strike benefit because, against the advice of the union, they had placed 'control of the dispute in the hands of a non-member of the union'. Larkin organized the strikers, the company gave way to their demands,

O'BRIEN continued

To *The Young* (Kropotkin was a Russian revolutionary and leading theorist of Anarchism). He later supported Britain in the First World War against Germany.

With Connolly, Dan and Tom were members of the Irish Socialist Republican Party in 1896. Bill could not understand the influence Connolly was having on his older brothers: "*I could not understand how a labourer should be so important as all that*" (p6.).

Connolly's words struck O'Brien:

"The interests of labour all over the world are identical, it is true, but it is also true that each country had better work out its own salvation on lines congenial to its own people" (p9).

In June, 1899, at the age of eighteen years, Bill O'Brien joined the Irish Socialist Republican Party: James Connolly was then 29; "*...he looked a man from 40 to 45 years old, and I was greatly surprised when I later discovered his real age. He was a low-sized, sturdily-built man, speaking with a pronounced Scottish accent*" (p10).

James Larkin was five years senior to Bill O'Brien.

In 1901, the final year of his apprenticeship, Bill joined the Amalgamated Society of Tailors and Tailoresses.

In 1902, Connolly went to give lectures in the United States on the invitation of Daniel de Leon's Socialist Labour Party of America.

On his return, Connolly in a conflict over payments was defeated in a counter-motion put forward by O'Brien. He restated his case and overturned the decision which led to the resignation from the ISRP in February, 1903 of Bill O'Brien amongst others.

Bill was later "*to be described, to his annoyance, as 'the man who drove James Connolly out of Ireland'*". An accusation vehemently denied by him.

Connolly made his second departure for the United States in September, 1903.

Bill O'Brien and his comrades then formed the Socialist Labour Party. "*One of the points of difference was the ISRP's policy of debarring trade union officials from membership. O'Brien was a strong advocate of including the trade unions*" (p19).

On O'Brien's proposal, both groups merged into a new party, the Socialist Party of Ireland in March, 1904.

In July, 1907, he first saw James Larkin: "*I was favourably impressed*", O'Brien recalled. "*It struck me that he was the kind of man to rouse up the workers in a way that had not been done before*" (p20).

O'Brien attached himself to Larkin and

worked at "*efforts to change the S.P.I. policy towards trade unions*" (p20).

In 1908, he joined the Workers' Union of Great Britain and Ireland and was appointed unanimously as delegate to the Dublin Trades Council. However, by the end of the year, he had resigned from the WUGB&I.

In the summer of 1908, he also left the Socialist Party of Ireland. In August of that year he helped found a new body: the Irish Socialist Society. The object was stated to be:

"The abolition of the present capitalist system by the recognition on the part of the workers of the class struggle and the substitution of an Irish Co-operative Commonwealth in which the land and the instruments of production and distribution shall be held and controlled by a democratic state in the interests of the entire community" (p27).

By 1918, Bill was president of the revived Socialist Party of Ireland. By October, 1921, he was expelled from the party on grounds of "reformism, consecutive non-attendance at the party meetings ... and ... consistent attempts to render futile all efforts to build up a Communist Party in Ireland". At the beginning of November, 1920, the SPI was re-named the Communist Party of Ireland.

THE ITGWU

The Irish Transport & General Workers' Union was founded officially on 4th January 1909. Bill O'Brien "*was to remain active in supporting the new union, though he was not to become a member until 1917. Thereafter it became his life*" (p31).

Bill was secretary of the 1913 Strike Committee. When the police issued a proclamation barring meetings in O'Connell St. and around Liberty Hall, it was Bill who wrote to the papers cancelling the meetings, Larkin counter-manded that instruction and proceeded with his famous appearance in Martin Murphy's Imperial Hotel following which two men died and hundreds were injured when the police over-reacted.

Though President of the Irish Trade Union Congress and Vice-President of the Dublin Trades Council, Bill failed to convince the latter body to call a General Strike in support of the ITGWU:

"For O'Brien, the great strike gave him an expanded profile as a man committed to workers' rights and as prepared to lead and take difficult decisions in tight situations. In addition, it deepened his experience of negotiations and brought him into contact with many leading British trade unionists whose goodwill he cultivated" (p88).

"On 30 December 1916, William O'Brien applied for membership of the

Transport Union, and shortly, after his acceptance on 6 January, 1917, his standing was such in the union that he was elected vice-chairman of the No. 1 branch" (p115).

1916 RISING

"From that day", O'Brien claimed with some exaggeration, in his "*Forth the Banners Go*", "I spent all my spare time with Connolly in Liberty Hall, discussing plans and making arrangements ... O'Brien did not mention in his published reminiscences, however, that he was not part of Connolly's inner circle when it came to planning the insurrection." (p101).

Ironically, his brother, Dan was a close confidant of Connolly and directly involved in the Rising.

Bill was not a member of the Citizen Army, in truth, he probably disapproved of it, nor was he a member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, like Connolly, who never revealed that fact to Bill. "*Connolly, however, showed no desire or need to inform O'Brien, to the latter's dismay and chagrin.*" He mentioned to Bill that the Post Office was to be the headquarters "*but he didn't convey to me at the time that he was going to be the commander in Dublin*" (p102).

A couple of months later, August, 1916, the 22nd Congress of the ITUC took place in Sligo: Tom Johnson was the President. In his far-reaching address "he mourned the death of Connolly and the deaths of all Irishmen who died for their country's good both at home and abroad", but O'Brien soon made his presence felt.

"At Sligo he received 'a great ovation' on entering the assembly hall."

"The absence of Larkin in the United States and of Daly in prison, and the death of Connolly, left a void which O'Brien, assisted by his identification with the increasingly revered Connolly, patriot and trade unionist was poised to occupy with the assistance of his friend and colleague, Tom Foran, president of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. He could never fully occupy Connolly's shoes. Leadership of the Irish Labour party would go to Johnson, and he lacked Connolly's command of philosophy and theory, but he was to make himself the custodian of Connolly's papers and teaching, was to operate with a smoothness and graciousness that Connolly could not muster, and in terms of trade union business and power, and of strong nationalist influence and connections, much of the real power in the labour movement, as in the trade union movement, was to reside in him and his close friends" (p112).

In August, 1916, he suffered the loss of his brother, Dan. Fr. Morrissey makes an interesting comment here: "*The loss of Connolly had been the loss of a friend, but not of a friend with whom one felt close.*"



LABOUR

Comment

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Review: *William O'Brien 1881-1968 - Socialist, Republican, Dail Deputy, Editor and Trade Union Leader*, by Thomas J. Morrissey, SJ

NB: The reviewer of this book chooses to adhere to "Bill O'Brien" rather than "William O'Brien" to avoid confusion with the other great leader, M.P. and land reformer from Co. Cork William O'Brien from Mallow.

No Statues for Bill!

It is amazing considering the power wielded by Bill O'Brien ("*...a man who was arguably the most important figure in the Irish labour movement during the War of Independence and the formative years of the Irish state*", Padraig Yeates, "*Saothar*", No. 32) that none of the battalions of left academics have ever contemplated a biography of Bill O'Brien in all that time, that it has been left to a Catholic priest to finally produce a substantial biography of the man who in terms of power and influence was a giant of Irish Labour in his day.

O'Brien died in 1968. *Saothar*, the yearly publication of the Irish Labour History Society commenced in 1975: in that time only one serious and substantial article was published by the journal titled *The Rake's Progress of a Syndicalist: The Political Career of William O'Brien, Irish Labour Leader* in No. 9, 1983 by D.R. O'Connor Lysaght. That is extraordinary, indeed!

William O'Brien 1881-1968: Socialist, Republican, Dail Deputy, Editor, And Trade Union Leader by Thomas J. Morrissey, S.J. was reviewed in *Saothar* No. 32, 2007 by Padraig Yeates.

Padraig berates Morrissey:

"When he does, his choice of other sources can be perverse. A good example is his depiction of the divisions in the Labour Party and the Irish Trade Union Congress in the 1940s. His version of events is very different from those provided by Emmet O'Connor, Charles Mc Carthy or Niamh Puirseil. While O'Brien was clearly not the monster depicted by Larkinites, calling contemporary witnesses in his defence such as Professor O'Rahilly, Fianna Fail ministers playing the red menace card and the *Standard* newspaper, has the opposite effect to that intended. The last third of the book is little more than a recapitulation of old polemics" (*Saothar*, No.32, p102-3).

Yeates contends that Bill O'Brien and his biographer, Father Morrissey shared "*a world view, with Ireland, parochial, nationalist and Catholic as its centre*".

That is hardly a surprise, Morrissey has a very strong 'world view', it is a Catholic world view, and in the period covered in the Bill O'Brien biography, it was substantial and well-founded.

"O'Brien eventually embraced Catholicism in its spiritual as well as its social dimensions at the end of his life when, to quote Morrissey, 'he could no longer evade questions about after-life and God.'. He received the sacrament of Extreme Unction on his death bed" (*Saothar*, p102).

Morrissey writes that O'Brien's father, Daniel—

"appears to have been a devout Catholic": "His sons appear to have abandoned external religious practice; they became socialist in adherence, an allegiance often associated with hostility to religion and to clergy. It has to be said, however, that the O'Briens, like their friend James Connolly, and a number of other colleagues, proclaimed socialism as an entirely political and economic outlook and, therefore, not incompatible with religion. William, though he refused to enter a Catholic church for most of his life, was careful to avoid criticism of religion" (p3).

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"Although long a private atheist, Connolly had also long ago decided to adopt "the Catholic pose", as he put it himself" (*Researching Connolly*, Manus O'Riordan, 2001).

If James Connolly could be a "Catholic by your leave"—why could Bill O'Brien not be excused by the Left for doing nothing more!

"As a child I recall Bill O'Brien and Billy McMullen from the One Big Union in Dublin coming to our house to offer my father a full-time Irish Transport and General Workers' Union job at Connolly Hall. As children we were fascinated by O'Brien's physical disability and his goatee beard. Even then he was to me a fearsome figure." (*Finally and in Conclusion*, Barry Desmond, 2000, p16.).

Bill's father, Daniel, was born on a tenant farm near Ardfinan, south-west Tipperary in 1839. In 1850, the family were evicted. Daniel joined the Royal Irish Constabulary and was eventually promoted to Head Constable. His mother, Mary Butler, a Kilkenny primary school teacher married Daniel in 1875.

Bill himself was born at Ballygurteen, Clonakilty in 1881: "*he was born with a deformed foot*". He had two older brothers, Dan and Tom, who themselves became active in the Irish working-class movement. He had an older sister, Mary.

Bill O'Brien never married.

Though the father was an RIC man, he had strong Nationalist views, met O' Donovan Rossa and "*was one of the first members of the Gaelic League*".

The family moved from Carrick-on-Suir, Co. Tipperary to Drumcondra in Dublin in 1896. In 1898, Bill was apprenticed to a tailor.

Bill "*learned that much could be achieved by methodical hard work, and self-discipline*". It was through his brothers, Dan and Tom that he was drawn to Socialism. He was given a copy of Prince Kropotkin's pamphlet *An Appeal*