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## Cyprus: Euro-Imperialism or Rescue?

The Anglo-American financial press has been at full throttle in portraying the Cypriot banking crisis and the attempts to resolve it as the bludgeoning by Euro bullies of a gallant little island country, intent on destroying its "banking model". Cypriot anti-Imperialist traditions have been invoked. An article in the *Financial Times* appealed to distant historic parallels, calling for an alliance of Britain and Russia in defence of Cyprus against the European "bullyboys". (It didn't however go so far as to propose they come up with the €17bn required). The *Daily Telegraph* (22 March) spelt out the message in more populist terms: "*Southern Europe lies prostrate before the German imperium*"

Down the food chain from the lofty heights of the *Financial Times*, the *Wall Street Journal* and even the *Daily Telegraph*—which have been making the running in this commentary—our own local "anti-fascist" commentators have joined the feeding frenzy. "*The insanity of the Euro-project's dogmas means that all ordinary laws of human conduct may be ignored*", boomed Kevin Myers (*Irish Independent*, 22 March):

"Today Cyprus faces ruin: who knows, tomorrow Poland, as the blundering ideologues of the euro insist on the execution of their great imperial scheme, regardless of the history and the habits of the peoples whom they attempt to bring under their monetary yoke."

And, among the bottom-feeders, we hear a Pat Flanagan in the *Irish Daily Mirror* (22 March) declare: "*German war on Cyprus could spell end for us all*". Germany, he told us, "*almost destroyed Europe twice in the last 100 years. Let's just hope it's not third time lucky.*"

Yet, Cyprus has shown no desire to leave the euro—a brief look at the alternatives seems to have been sufficient for that. If Cyprus is to remain within the eurozone, then it must act in solidarity with it in resolving its unsustainable, collapsed, "banking model".

The Cypriot banking crisis is the latest episode in the eurozone's attempt to resolve the contradictions of a single currency without an adequate monetary and fiscal union. From the outset the *Financial Times* and its eurosceptic acolytes on both the Left and the Right have been calling for a "wall of money" to be thrown at the problem. But, as details of

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## Angela Merkel and the Export of *Industrial Democracy*

*"If this is allowed to happen, we'd soon have private European companies in Germany without any {worker} participation rights."*

—Klaus-Heiner Lehne,  
Christian Democrat MEP

An initiative by EU Commissioner Michel Barnier in August 2012 to establish a new form of company—the "*Europe-Co.Ltd.*"—collapsed after concerted opposition by the German and Swedish Governments because it would undermine industrial democracy structures in their countries. The German Christian Democrats led the charge.

Much commentary on the Euro and the attempts to consolidate the Eurozone is handicapped by a fundamental misunderstanding of what Angela Merkel is. As a Christian Democrat it is assumed that she and her party are "right wing", "conservative", or even "reactionary".

This is a fundamental misinterpretation that explains much of why the commentators on the Euro crisis have continually got it all so wrong.

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## Hokey-Cokey Politics

There are more signs that the SDLP wishes to unravel what it took 28 years to achieve.

Brid Rogers the former SDLP Agricultural Minister has called on the SDLP to give up its single Ministry in the Northern Ireland Executive and take up the position of Opposition in the Stormont parliament. She said: "*I think we would be better to be in real opposition. I know it wouldn't be an official opposition, but it would be an opposition which would give*

*us the freedom to become, in a sense, a real opposition.*"

The *Belfast Telegraph* (10.3.13) reported further:

"The comments by Ms Rodgers come as the debate about establishing an official opposition at Stormont has recently attracted attention. Moves towards an opposition were championed by the Westminster-based Northern Ireland Affairs committee when they visited Stormont this week. It is understood a Private Members Bill seeking the creation of an opposition at Stormont will be presented to MLAs shortly."

It has been suggested for a number of years now that the SDLP should join forces with the UUP and thus constitute an Opposition within Stormont through which a 'normal' political system might develop. The SDLP and UUP are both members of the devolved Government, but they have been partially trying to act as an Opposition within the Executive e.g. voting against their own budget etc. Now there seems to be more desire to put this on a formal basis.

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the crisis in each country emerge, it becomes clear that such a ludicrous policy would have completely undermined the Euro project. In effect, it would have meant printing money to meet financial obligations. Britain and America have pursued this policy, but the financial crisis has shown that the financial markets apply different standards to these two countries, which are the basis of the international financial system, backed by military might. If applied in the Euro-zone, it would have undermined faith in the Euro as a sound currency, with unforeseeable consequences.

The Greek crisis began as a sovereign debt crisis which caused a banking crisis in both Greece and elsewhere. The Irish and Cypriot crises began as a banking crisis. Cyprus is likely to follow the pattern of Ireland, where the banking crisis escalated into a sovereign debt problem. But the Cypriot crisis is nevertheless completely different from the Irish one.

Since each crisis has its specific features, the prescriptions for one country may be completely inappropriate for another.

There is nothing at all irrational in the Eurozone Finance Ministers advocating the "burning" of a portion of Senior Debt, and even bank deposits, in the case of Cyprus while rejecting such a policy in the case of Ireland. The effect of 'burning' the Senior Bondholders is to impose substantial losses on those who have lent to Cyprus banks, or who have lodged very big deposits of cash in them. Senior Debt is lending to Banks, which carries a lower rate of interest on the understanding that, in any crisis, it would have first call on the assets of the bank. Junior Debt brings the lender a higher rate of interest, but at a greater risk.

The elements of the Irish crisis are clear. Billions of euros from surpluses generated in Continental Europe flowed into the Irish economy through the banking system. Some of the money was used for productive purposes. There was an infra-structural deficit and a requirement for house building to cater for a rising population, but the weight of money that flowed into the economy created an enormous property bubble, followed by

massive bad debts when the bubble burst. Since European money was at stake, the eurozone could not countenance the 'burning' of Senior Debt, which could have caused contagion throughout Europe and the collapse of the currency. Irish Governments—both the current and previous one—have taken the view that the national interest was to remain at the heart of Europe and concentrated on winning concessions from their Eurozone partners as compensation for remaining in the game... But Cyprus is different.

In all the acres of newsprint devoted to the Cypriot crisis by the likes of the *Financial Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* there is very little about what caused the crisis. This is no accident. Since the Anglo American financial press is not interested in a solution and seems more concerned to precipitate a deepening political crisis, there is no reason for it to examine the cause. On the contrary, its orientation is to undermine efforts to understand what happened and arrive at a solution.

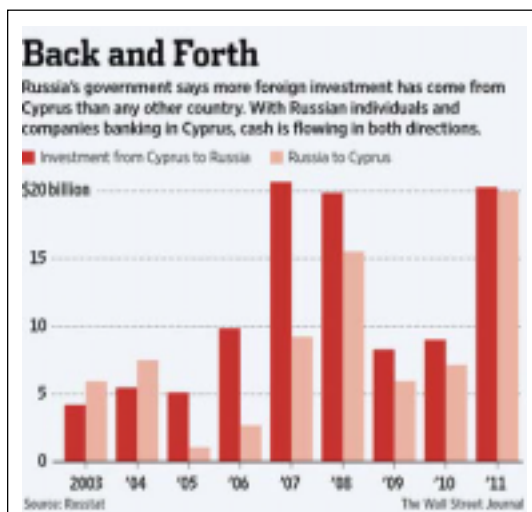
So what is the cause? The cause of the crisis has nothing to do with the domestic economy in so far as there is a domestic economy in Cyprus outside the financial sector. There was no property bubble. None of the Cypriot protestors are in negative equity. There is no anger directed at the Cypriot bankers who presided over the crisis. No Seanie FitzPatrick or Fingers Fingleton has emerged to personify the country's woes. Remarkably no politician has been accused of wrecking the economy either from the current or previous Government. The political reaction gives a clue to the nature of the crisis. The focus of anger is directed against the eurozone. Russia is portrayed as a possible white knight, although the latter perception is likely to change.

The specific nature of the Cypriot crisis necessitated deposit-holders bearing some of the cost. However, President Nicos Anastasiades, whose family law practice has two Russian billionaires on its books, insisted that the "tax" on deposits would not exceed 10%. The low tax meant that the burden would not be confined to depositors over 100k. The Euro finance group, despite expressing its misgivings about this, went along with his proposal, and was foolish to do so. When the scheme was rejected by the Cypriot Parliament, Anastasiades blamed the "bullyboys" in Europe. There was not a hint of scepticism at this accusation from the financial press.

The propagandists in the Anglo American media have attempted to portray the Cypriot banks as innocent victims, who, far from being malevolent, took a 'hit' for Europe in order to bail out Greece. But the Greek crisis cannot explain the Cypriot crisis. According to some reports, Cypriot banks lost about 4 billion as a result of the Greek debt crisis. But the Cyprus banks, along with the other European banks involved, were compensated by means of up to a trillion euros in total of cheap loans from the European Central Bank which were sold on to sovereigns at a massive profit.

But, even if it is accepted that Cypriot banks took a 4 billion hit for Greece, where did the balance of the losses come from? There appears to be a consensus that the cost of the banking crisis will be 17 billion. So what is the explanation for the remaining 13 billion? The lack of curiosity about this is breathtaking. This is an enormous sum when it is considered that the GDP of Cyprus is about 18 billion.

A clue can be found in the pages of the *Wall Street Journal* (see graph below). Billions of Euros have flowed into Cyprus from Russia, but as much—or even more—money has flowed from Cyprus to Russia. In each of the years 2007, 2008 and 2011 a massive 20 billion flowed from Cyprus to Russia. In 2011 a quarter of all foreign investment in Russia came from little Cyprus. It is reasonable to assume that the investment from Cyprus to Russia is nothing much more than recycled Russian money. Why would money leave Russia only to return via Cyprus? The obvious explanation is to hide its source. Money from Russia is laundered or cleaned in the Cyprus banks only to emerge in 'pristine' condition on its way back to Russia. The *Wall Street Journal* estimates that some \$11.8 billion in illicit capital left Russia each year from 1994 to 2011



## Irish Media's Eurosceptic Fantasy Land

In the course of the Cypriot crisis the Irish media showed itself to be an incoherent echo of the Eurosceptic British media. From the *Sunday Independent* to *The Irish Times* to RTE, the line was that the Cypriots were the victims of Euro group bullies. An example was Fintan O'Toole, who claimed that the Euro group Finance Ministers "tried to do something breathtakingly stupid: destroy basic confidence in European banks by tearing up guarantees on deposits of up to €100,000" (*Irish Times*, 26.3.13). A similar assertion was made by Olivia O'Leary on *Drivetime* (RTE, 26.3.13).

Unfortunately for O'Toole, there is absolutely no evidence that this is what happened. Indeed all the evidence is to the contrary. Before the Cypriot parliament proposed that all depositors should be subject to a 10% levy, the Euro zone Finance Ministers called for deposits under 100,000 euros to be protected and a higher 15.6% be applied to deposits over 100,000 (Reuters, 18.3.13). The Cypriot President ignored this recommendation and pretended that his proposal of a 10% levy on all deposits was as a result of pressure from the Euro zone Finance Ministers.

When it was eventually agreed that deposits under 100,000 were to be exempted from the levy, Euro Finance Ministers welcomed this development.

John Martin

There is no doubt that the Russian State is complicit or at least acquiescent in much of this. It has tax treaties with Cyprus which facilitate and reward such practices. For, quite apart from the recycling of money, there is a legitimate reason for such treaties: foreigners don't trust Russian banks, so the Cyprus banks have been used as a conduit for foreign investment in Russia, thus receiving the protection of an outside jurisdiction.

However, it appears that many of the loans by Cyprus to Russian investors have gone bad, whether by weak financial controls, incompetence, or fraud. This has no knock-on effects for the European banking system. Why should the Eurozone underwrite such losses?

Europe must help Cyprus emerge from the crisis, but it is not reasonable for it to tolerate the continuation of a banking sector in Cyprus which, if unchecked, could undermine the financial stability of the eurozone. The 25% haircut imposed on deposits over €100k is the minimum that should be expected from deposit holders.

The Euro Finance Ministers have faced down the sharks of the Anglo world. They have behaved in a highly competent and responsible manner in response to the Cypriot crisis. One more decisive step in the process of consolidating the Euro has been made.

Report

## Meath By-Election

"The outcome of the Election of 25th February, in terms of the traditional parties, is that it gives the Labour Party the opportunity to end 'Civil War politics'. It has been said often enough over the years that this is what it wants to do, because it is held back by the overlay of Civil War politics which obscures class issues. Well, the Election has given it the opportunity to attempt this under very favourable conditions" (*Irish Political Review*, March 2011).

That is what we said in *Must Labour Wait?* after the February 2011 Election left Labour in a very strong position. If Labour had gone into Opposition, it is unlikely that Fianna Fail would have recovered its electoral fortunes and Labour could have become the second party of state. As it is, the party is blamed for breaking its election promises and for the pain resulting from this capitalist financial crisis. Eoin Holmes—whose name has caused some derision in view of the property tax—attempted to retrieve the situation by espousing liberal issues. This did not go down well and he was pushed into fifth place, behind Sinn Fein and even behind the anti-Austerity Direct Democracy, which was running its first candidate.

Fianna Fail achieved second place, but its electoral recovery has not resulted from a return to its core values: the downward slide under its last three leaders continues. It is hard to know what Micheal Martin stands for. If the party had split after the

General Election, and Eamon O Cuiv had made common cause with Sinn Fein, which seemed possible for a while, there would at least be a political alternative in existence.

The media has given little credit to Sinn Fein for its good performance, which brought it third place. It increased its vote to 11%.

Helen McEntee (FG)	9,356	38.5%
Thomas Byrne (FF)	8,002	32.9%
Darren O'Rourke (SF)	3,165	13.0%
Ben Gilroy (DD)	1,568	6.5%
Eoin Holmes (L)	1,112	4.6%
Seán Ó Buachalla (Green)	423	1.7%
Seamus McDonagh (Workers Pty)	263	
Mick Martin (Ind.)	190	
Keddy, Charles (Ind.)	110	
O'Brien, Gearoid (Ind.)	73	
Tallon, Jim (Ind.)	47	

#### Final count

Helen McEntee 11,473  
Thomas Byrne 9,582

## Angela Merkel

continued

The Christian Democratic Party in Germany (CDU) is generally dominated by middle class interests. But it also has substantial bases in constituencies with working class populations, a legacy of the old Christian Trade Union movement. After the Second World War the German Trade Union movement was re-created as a united single structure, combining former Socialist, Christian and other strands. This tradition still plays a significant role in the politics of the CDU, despite the generally Social Democratic inclinations of most Trade Unionists.

Industrial Democracy is the core aspect of the social contract in Germany. The failure of attempts to establish it in the late 1920s is regarded as one of the reasons for the collapse of the Weimar Republic. It has been a core "principle" of the Social Democratic party and the Trade Unions for over a 100 years. Its introduction in the late 1940s was a vital element in securing German Trade Union support for the creation of the Federal Republic. In addition, the 1951 law introducing Parity Boards in the Coal and Steel Industries and the 1953 Works Council Act were major developments ensuring Trade Union cooperation with the Adenauer Government. Adenauer himself later wrote that "The support of the DGB [German Trade Union Congress] would never have been secured for the Schumann Plan if it had not been satisfied on the issue of co-

determination" (quoted in a recent DGB publication referred to in greater detail below).

#### THE EUROPEAN "CORPORATION" AND INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY

A case in point is the issue of European company law and worker involvement in company management and boards, and Merkel's position on these questions. Business interests have sought for decades a unified system of company law across the EU. In 2001 the EU introduced regulations allowing for the formation of EU level corporations (known by the Latin title, *Societas Europaea* or "SE"). This allows a company to change its status to an SE, which must then be treated in every EU member state as if it were a public company formed in accordance with the law of that state (EU Regulation 2157/2001/EC). The regulations technically allowed companies re-organised as SE's to opt in or out of employee participation at management or board level (EU Directive 2001/86/EC).

Following German pressure, the initial proposals for the SE were amended to ensure that, where a company has a two-tier system of Supervisory and Management Boards, and where employees under their domestic law have an entitlement to representation on such Boards, this must be continued in the SE. In Germany the Supervisory Boards of large companies have 50/50 representation of workers' and shareholders' representatives. Smaller companies (Co. Ltd.) have 33% worker participation on their Boards.

There are many business advantages to the European SE structure, including the ability to transfer headquarters abroad for tax reasons, the introduction of a more 'dynamic' UK model of single-board companies, ease of doing cross-continental business, cost reasons, etc. But, as the conservative *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*—not noted for its defence of Trade Union positions—editorialised, the rate at which German corporations were opting to re-form as SE's was greater than in any other country, and the reason was straightforward: to "escape from worker co-determination". Corporations which have taken this step include well known brands such as BASF, Porsche, Eon and Axel Springer ('*Das Geheimnis der "Europa-AG"*', FAZ, 30.01.2013).

But the extent to which they actually escape from industrial democracy requirements is limited. The move enables them have a smaller Supervisory Board, with an accompanying smaller Trade Union presence in the overseeing of the company management. What the law does allow for

is the restructuring of companies into corporations, while retaining the 33% participation formula, and a provision that it remains at this level unless an agreement to expand it is reached. In addition, according to the same commentary in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, companies use the clause which enabling Trade Unionists in the outsourced countries to participate in the company to discourage their participation. This is especially the case where labour movement traditions are hostile to being implicated in company management decisions, or where the use of English as the language of management rather than the 'local' language operates to exclude workers' representatives.

#### BARNIER'S INITIATIVE COLLAPSES

Last year Michel Barnier, EU Commissioner for the Internal Market, sought to extend European company law from corporations to the much greater potential field of limited companies (Co. Ltd.—the EU version to be called "SPE"). He intended to use the process of "enhanced cooperation" allowable under the Lisbon Treaty to circumvent German and Swedish opposition to a new system of European companies that could evade the requirements for worker participation under their national legislation. But German Minister for Labour, Ursula von der Leyen (CDU), prevented this happening on the basis that companies formed in this way operating in Germany would breach German law. A CDU member of the European Parliament declared in outrage, "If this was allowed to happen, we'd soon have private European companies in Germany without any {worker} participation rights" ('*Brüssel will Europa-GmbH auch ohne Deutschland*', *Handelsblatt*, 22.08.2012). The German Unions were the source of their Government stance and Sweden backed that approach too. Barnier's initiative collapsed.

#### MERKEL ON INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY

Recently the German Trade Union Federation—which with 7 million members (a third of them in the engineering union IG Metall) is the largest in the EU—published an online booklet reminding politicians of their commitments on the issue of worker participation or 'co-determination': "*Zitatesammlung Pro Mitbestimmung*" (Hans-Böckler-Stiftung, January 2013). It is important to remember that there is a persistent and robust opposition to co-determination from business circles and the Liberal Party (partners of the CDU in the Merkel coalition Government), and continued

attempts to weaken it. During the coalition negotiations of 2009 the Liberals had sought to have its *anti-Mitbestimmung* line brought into the Government programme. This is what makes Merkel's position on the issue all the more notable.

That German Christian Democrats had anything but a reactionary stance on Industrial Democracy was revealed by John Minahane in the *Irish Political Review* in August 2012 when he reproduced an interview with Angela Merkel from the newspaper *Die Welt* in 2009.

This article was subsequently quoted by Irish Trade Union representative, Manus O'Riordan, at a meeting of the European Economic and Social Committee—the partnership body of the EU—on 28th August 2012 (see 'Clear on Co-Determination but muddled on Middle-East', *Irish Foreign Affairs*, vol. 3, no. 4, Dec. 2012). That interview is also included in the DGB pamphlet. But in the light of that DGB publication, Manus's doubts regarding the sincerity of her remarks given the "fact that she has not since repeated them" needs some correction.

Here are some of the statements attributed by the DGB pamphlet to Angela Merkel, generally regarded as a woman of few words:

"Worker participation—and I want to stress this from the very start—is a substantial component of the social market economy ... I am one of those who do not question it, but regard it as a great achievement .... As a result of it, Germany, compared to the rest of Europe, has the lowest rate of days lost through strikes. I believe I can say without contradiction that this is a result of co-determination."

— Speech at the Trade Union event, "30 years of the Co-Determination Act", 30.08.2006.

"I believe that Germany has an advantage in that we are a country that has learned to be able again and again to resolve even very complex contradictions in a peaceful manner—when I think of {our system of} collective agreements, co-determination or many other things in our country."

—Speech on the 250th Anniversary of MAN AG, 17.10.2008

"Social partnership, the system of collective agreements through company level co-determination and plant level worker participation, are foundations of our economic and social order and an expression of the social ethos of the Christian Churches. Our understanding of the dignity of working people demands participation in the decisions which shape the conditions of their world of work."

— CDU Basic Programme, December 2007.

WELT ONLINE (newspaper):

"Does the German system of co-determination belong among the principles of the social market economy which you want to see adopted worldwide?" ...

Merkel:

"I believe that in the worldwide crisis the special value of a cooperative approach between workers' and employers' representatives has proven itself. It can't be a simple 1:1 {transfer} internationally of the German co-determination system. But I would regard a fair cooperative relationship between workers' representatives and company management, and more participation in company ownership by workers, as interesting elements which could be spread more widely internationally. Trade unionists tell us that even in the ILO, the International Labour Organisation, our trade unions were long greeted with a smile when they proposed that the principles of the social market economy should be established in international convention. Following the global crisis this response has disappeared to a considerable extent. I myself have engaged with this issue for many years. When I took over as chair of the CDU in the year 2000, I established a Working Group on the 'New Social Market Economy' to work out ways in which the social market economy could be complemented with an international dimension. That was why, during the German presidency of the G8, I as German Chancellor put the issue of regulation of the financial markets on the agenda. While at that time this found little resonance, the pressure for action has grown with the crisis. And I won't let go until we have progressed decisively in this matter."

—Welt Online, 27.08.2009

"I am of the opinion that we will not be changing anything in regard to co-determination."

— Statement to Mining Union Conference, 14.10.2009, on her coalition talks with the Liberal Party (which in the election campaign had sought a weakening of co-determination law).

"For this we will need not least a responsible co-operation between workers and employers. The system of collective agreement had proven itself precisely in the crisis, in adapting to sometimes extremely difficult production situations. It is one of the most important social achievements in Germany. Many countries have been looking almost in wonder at our culture of cooperation between employers and workers. So I would like to say here very clearly: we will not change the co-determination system or the system of works councils. We will also not weaken the protective effects of our redundancy law. This creates trust and also contributes to improving the relationship of citizens with the State."

—Government Statement, 10.11.2009

"Co-determination is one currency in which we could speculate, a currency that we have and which is the substance of our social market economy—hence our clear avowal of it."

—Merkel, speech to the DGB congress, 2010

On her own website, Merkel has described the social market economy as an "export winner" ("*Exportschlager*"):

"The social market economy ... has made our country strong and ensured widespread prosperity. And it is our societal model for the future—including beyond Germany. This is because the international financial and economic crisis has shown what happens when the principles of the social market economy are disregarded. This must never be allowed re-occur. The social market economy must become an export winner. And that is why I have been endeavouring to ensure that the principles of the social market economy are brought to bear internationally. This is what will enable us shape globalisation in a human way." ([www.angela-merkel.de/page/117.htm](http://www.angela-merkel.de/page/117.htm)).

These quotations—translated here—show that the German commitment to promoting co-determination at home and abroad cannot be doubted. However, the language barrier will have to be overcome and these views given wider currency. With the world increasingly talking English, the Anglo-Saxon outlook—including its model of industrial relations—tends to spread. Only a determined effort to promote these ideas in other languages can overcome this block on moving forward.

#### EXPORTING THE SOCIAL MARKET ECONOMY

Angela Merkel has clearly indicated that the German model of the "social market economy" could have wider application in the world and could be beneficial in world development. Such sentiments have to be expressed with some caution. This economic model arose as the political and social contract on which Germany recovered after the devastation of World War Two. It involves capitalist energies being enabled to function and develop within a framework that also provides high levels of social security, a uniquely egalitarian pension system, extensive worker participation and co-determination in industry, and an advanced system of vocational training. This was the 'price' German capitalism had to pay for labour to allow it revive at all after its role in the war. All systems thus have their particular contexts in which they develop and emerge.

But, since the Western economic crisis,

and leaving their isolation at the International Labour Organisation behind them, the Germans—and particularly the Christian Democrats—have been suggesting that other countries learn from their "proven" social system. In 2010 Merkel's Minister for Labour, Ursula von der Leyen, told a Conference at the Volkswagen plant: "In the era of globalisation co-determination is a brand that we should export" (quoted in the DGB pamphlet). And in 2012 the same Minister, addressing the issue of the drastic levels of youth unemployment that had emerged in southern European countries as a result of the crisis, called for the development of a common "Euro system of vocational education", adding:

"... the North (of Europe) must help the South in developing a system of vocational education something along the lines of the dual system in the workplace and at vocational school as is common in Germany, said von der Leyen. Several {German} companies with subsidiaries elsewhere in Europe had already expressed an interest in this idea. 7.3bn euro of unused resources from the [European Social] Fund would be made available for this ..." (Welt Online, 22.06.2012)

But, if such aspects of the social market economy are now being regarded by Germany as "export goods" they will also need markets interested in importing them.

One of those who have listened to this message would appear to be Christoph Mueller, who as chief executive of Aer Lingus oversaw the re-introduction last year (after 20 years) of an apprenticeship system for aircraft maintenance technicians and engineers, designed on the German dual system of apprenticeship education. In an interview with the *Irish Independent* he said that, while he admired a lot about the Irish business model, he thought Irish industry should be much more involved in skilling its workers, especially through proper apprenticeship education. He was "also puzzled that Irish industrial relations run along Anglo Saxon lines where unions and management appear trapped by permanent antagonism ... I believe Ireland would be much better off without the Anglo Saxon system" ('Turbulence holds no fears for the king of calm', *Irish Independent*, 9th August 2012).

And another good listener seems to be our own Minister for Social protection, Joan Burton TD. At the biennial "Social Inclusion Forum" on 26th March she laid out her perspective on the Youth Guarantee programme she intends to launch. She said that an essential tool in combating

youth unemployment was a properly developed vocational education system, and for this she would not be looking to Britain but to the dual system that had proven so successful in Germany and Austria.

Philip O'Connor

## Hokey-Cokey Politics

continued

But there is no role for an Opposition in the system introduced in 1998, which the SDLP itself claimed to be the prime architect of.

Patrick Murphy in his *Irish News* column entitled, *Stormont's d'Hondt Setup Haunts SDLP* put forward the fullest case for Opposition yet. He wrote that Brid Rogers—

"has finally recognised that Stormont is just not working. It takes courage on the part of Mrs Rogers, as one of those who helped to design the current Stormont administration, to accept that five party compulsory coalition is not the best form of government. It is not clear if she believes that an opposition is a good idea in principle or if she is merely suggesting that it would be politically advantageous for the SDLP. Either way she has a point" (Saturday March 8),

A few years ago there was a proposal by the then UUP Leader, Sir Reg Empey, for a kind of loser's Executive. He called for the scrapping of the d'Hondt system which distributes Ministries according party strength on the NI Executive: "I would be looking forward to the day when governments could be constructed on a different basis, a coalition of the willing with some cross-community element". He said that at present voters couldn't throw out inept Governments and there was a role for a "real opposition" like that seen in the US and other democracies (*Irish News* 9.8.07).

Of course, this would have involved the disruption of the Agreement 'Constitution' which was in great part the work of the SDLP, and which was carefully designed to prevent the emergence of that kind of politics by providing that every party of any consequence should have a place in Government. So the SDLP has been hesitating between the devil and the dark blue sea.

What seems to have prompted more and more figures from the party to suggest this course is that the SDLP has been pushed to the margins by Sinn Fein—with

its better understanding of constitutional affairs. So it is trying to subvert the system negotiated in 1998 by making moves to undertake the role of an Opposition jointly with the marginalised Unionist Party.

Murphy feels this is worth it:

"The theory supporting power sharing is that democratic elections can never remove a Unionist government in a state designed to have an inbuilt Unionist majority. Its weakness is that it prevents the development of non-sectarian politics but there are no non-sectarian parties to argue that case. So power-sharing is seen as our best option. Here's a thought: how worse off would we be if Stormont had been run by the Unionist majority for the past six years?"

Why are there no non-sectarian parties to argue the case? Perhaps that has to do with the institutionalised communal bloc system that the SDLP insisted on in 1998? Perhaps it is to do with SDLP opposition to non-sectarian politics in the form of Labour organisation in the province? And perhaps it is to do with what 'Northern Ireland' was meant to be in 1920?

As for Murphy's thought: "Here's a thought how worse off would we be if storm at had been run by the Unionist majority for the past six years?" Perhaps that is a thought that should not be committed to paper!

"The SDLP was the architect of the present power-sharing system. The party's weakness was its interpretation of the concept. Does power sharing mean sharing power voluntarily across the two communities or compulsorily across all elected parties?"

"Initially it simply meant the inclusion of non-Unionists in government but the SDLP extended it to mean the inclusion of every major party. It advocated the d'Hondt system, a complex mathematical formula for awarding Cabinet seats for all elected parties. Is that power-sharing or an example of one for everybody in the audience?"

In my recollection John Hume insisted on these provisions when there were some suggestions from his devolutionary colleagues that they did not need to be so robust. But it probably boiled down to Hume's calculation that a Sinn Fein presence was very necessary in the Executive to act as a check on Unionist desire for majority rule. Or perhaps he just did not entirely trust his colleagues in being an effective bulwark against Unionism on their own?

Murphy has an interesting view of how voluntary coalition and opposition would work:

"So a power-sharing executive after

the 2011 Assembly election could have consisted of a voluntary coalition containing, for example, the DUP (38 seats), SDLP (14), Alliance (8) to give a total of 60 seats, which comfortably exceeds the required majority of 55 in a 108 seat Assembly. Alternatively a voluntary coalition could have been made up Sinn Fein (29 seats), UUP (16) and SDLP (14) to give a total of 59 seats. In both cases, power would be shared across the two communities. Parties not included in the voluntary coalition would form the opposition. So you can have an opposition system within power-sharing."

What can be seen straight away is that this would lead to a minority party (the SDLP) representing Nationalism in most voluntary coalitions because this would be Unionism's preferred option every time. Far from being a means of the SDLP becoming an Opposition, it is essentially a way of it getting back into government without Sinn Fein.

Now if Sinn Fein was forced into Opposition by this scheme we can be sure that the Nationalist community would do its damndest to return them to government after it had experienced SDLP/Unionist rule. And that would more than likely marginalise the SDLP even further.

There is also another implication not noticed from the experience of an opportunist amendment to the Criminal Justice Bill launched by the SDLP aimed at preventing private clinics offering abortion services. At the time of writing Sinn Fein appears to have been successful at raising a Petition of Concern against the amendment. A Petition Concern requires 30 members to sign up to turn a vote on a Bill into a cross-community vote, requiring a majority in each communal blocs. With this Sinn Fein can block any business going through the Assembly.

So, in the case of a voluntary coalition being set up excluding Sinn Fein, it is perfectly possible for Sinn Fein to block what it wants of Executive business by mustering up the 1 or 2 extra MLAs needed for this or by increasing its representation at future elections. Surely that is what being a real opposition would entail?

Murphy argues that voluntary coalition /opposition would result in better government:

"We certainly need one because a guaranteed place in government merely guarantees inertia. So should we keep the power-sharing but scrapped d'Hondt? The weakness in the SDLP proposal all those years ago was that it did not see the two most extreme parties rising to the top. Some of us could foresee only that. A

more serious weakness was that they had no plan B. If Stormont did not work which has now come to pass what would happen? The Good Friday Agreement contained a promise of power for all parties but it did not indicate how they might be held accountable when they got it."

What we are to take from this is that an alliance of moderation would give better and more stable government. Now anyone having witnessed the pre-2007 Executive/Assembly of the UUP/SDLP 'moderates' could not say that with a straight face. The DUP/SF 'extremists' have made a much better fist of things in all respects since they took the institutions in hand.

The self-proclaimed 'moderate' or 'centre' parties, who failed to make anything resembling a settlement, also failed at unsettling the Sinn Fein/DUP settlement, and if anything they made it stronger and more secure than anybody ever dreamt it would be.

The SDLP and UUP have criticised Sinn Fein and the DUP for operating an 'Executive within an Executive' and maintaining a hold on the main decision-making. In fact the Good Friday Agreement was constructed to produce weak Government at Stormont by using the STV version of Proportional Representation for elections with 6 member constituents which would favour the election of independents and smaller parties. As in Germany after the Great War, this electoral system, which Britain would never touch itself, envisaged widespread dilution of power constraining the 'extremes' and empowering the 'moderates'.

However, the tendency has been for the two leading parties from the two communities that get the First Minister and Deputy First Minister offices to dominate. This is partly because the leading party in each community has an inbuilt majority within its designation (nationalist or unionist) and can therefore dominate voting within its communal bloc. It is then in its interest to form a good relationship with the dominant party in the other bloc to get policy through. What has tended to happen is that, because elections in Northern Ireland are really contests within each community, the DUP and SF have begun to support each other to maintain a stable and business-like relationship between each other. The UUP and SDLP were unable to accomplish this in the First Executive and have been whingeing about it since after losing their majorities to the DUP and Sinn Fein in their respective communal blocs.

The Good Friday Agreement became

functional only after Paisley agreed to work it. Since he was ousted by his lieutenants in the DUP, Peter Robinson found he had no other realistic option but to work it. At the time of Paisley's displacement it appeared that others in the party were unhappy with the close relationship the Leader had developed with Martin McGuinness and a different relationship with Sinn Fein would be established by a new leader.

This proved not to be do-able and, if anything, a closer working relationship has been developed between the DUP and Sinn Fein. An important event in this was the supportive attitude that Sinn Fein took toward Robinson at the time of the Iris Robinson affair, when Republicans made no attempt to make political capital around the media frenzy that developed. And when Ian Paisley became seriously ill in 2012 Martin McGuinness urged prayers from Catholics for his swift recovery.

At the same time as advocating 'Opposition', Murphy does not hold out much hope of the SDLP coming round to Brid Rogers position:

"Brid Rogers has hopefully shaken the party with her comments but the sad truth appears to be that the SDLP leadership believes that never is much better than late."

Back in 2007 Jim Gibney of Sinn Fein, in his *Irish News* column of October 25th, gave a lesson on the Agreement for the SDLP 'slow learners':

"Another false argument... is the idea that the assembly needs a formal opposition. The assembly cannot have a formal opposition; a formal opposition is based on a parliamentary system which rests on democratic institutions and democratic culture. The current parliamentary arrangements have been carefully structured.

"These are novel arrangements and are needed because the Six County state is not a democratic entity".

It might be said that a pre-requisite of a democracy is a Government and an Opposition. But Northern Ireland is not a democracy and anything resembling democracy is what had to be got away from if a functional settlement was to be made at all. The UUP wanted (or said it wanted) to form a Coalition with the SDLP when they were the top two parties, and to opt for a kind of democratic local government in a weighted majority system. The SDLP flirted with the idea, but it always thought better of it and rejected it, fearing that it would lose out heavily to Sinn Fein if it accepted such an offer to come into the Unionist parlour.

## Mid-Ulster By-Election

The *Irish News* tucked away Sinn Fein's election victory in mid-Ulster on page 10. The By-Election, held on 6th March, was caused by Martin McGuinness vacating his House of Commons seat—continuing the Party's policy of ending 'double-jobbing'. The Nationalist vote was divided, whilst Unionism put up a unity candidate, Nigel Lutton—a member of the Orange Order whose father had been killed in the Troubles, allegedly by the Sinn Fein Candidate. Francie Molloy strongly denied the charge, pointing out that the two families had been on neighbourly terms, and that Mr. Lutton senior had often brought him to school on the handlebars of his bike. Backed by the three Unionist Parties, Nigel Lutton won 34% of the vote in what is a strongly Nationalist constituency.

Sinn Fein, with a strong 49% of the total poll, was slightly down on the General Election in a lower turn-out. Both the SDLP and Alliance made very small gains in their proportion of the vote.

Francie Molloy (SF)	17,462	46.9%
Nigel Lutton (Ind.)	12,781	34.4%
Patsy McGlone (SDLP)	6,478	17.4%
Eric Bullick (All.)	487	1.3%

Pat Walsh

If the SDLP and UUP really wanted normal adversarial politics in something that looked a bit more like a democracy, they might possibly have achieved it by refusing to take part in Government, and by acting as an Opposition to the system which they set in motion a decade before.

It is said that the GFA arrangements do not allow for the financing of or provisioning for an Official Opposition, as in Westminster, but that is hardly the reason why it has not been tried. And in the current climate, when Whitehall is increasingly determined to fight the War on the political front against Sinn Fein, it is a possibility for the first time.

But the real reason why the SDLP could not constitute itself into an Opposition is *what would happen then?* The answer would be, Not a lot! The SDLP is as bereft of realisable purpose today as it ever was and its partner in opposition, if that is the word, becomes increasingly uninspiring with every new leader it gets, despite its new found 'media-savvy'.

The old Nationalist Party, of which the SDLP is in substance a continuation, agreed in 1966, under pressure from the Taoiseach, Sean Lemass, to accept the status of Loyal Opposition in the old Stormont. Lemass had not taken the trouble to analyse the 'Northern Ireland state' before exhorting the Nationalist Party to engage in the charade of Loyal Opposition

in it, and the Nationalists did not have the character to refuse, even though they knew from long experience that Northern Ireland was not a state, that Stormont was not its democratic Parliament, and that Opposition was futile within the structures of the sub-government which had been farmed out to the all-class (and in a sense all-Party) alliance of the Protestant community. All that participation did was to bring out the futility of it and ripen conditions for the new departure of 1969.

When the SDLP was formed, and even before, the Young Turks—Hume, Currie, Fitt and Devlin—announced that they would succeed and transform Northern Ireland by . . . going into Opposition just like the people who they said were failures and who they were replacing. All that was needed was youth and vigour.

But youth and vigour was not enough to overcome the system that had been designed to make it all so inconsequential. And there is not much of even that left in the SDLP.

Stormont politics are a continual cycle of hokey-cokeys, where everyone is in out and shaking it all about. And there is the terrible thing that it all seems to lead back where we started. It is a closed system where the only worthwhile thing is a break-out.

## A State Of Chassis!

### BLOODY RED NOSE DAY

Give Gave Give!  
That Third World Hell,  
in Africa,  
one well,  
Dig Dig Dig!  
Here's a billion for munitions  
and oil rights,  
for your acquisitions.  
Collect Collect Collect!  
Buy an elastoplast  
for Iraq.  
Donate Donate Donate!  
A tenner saves a continent  
from its fate,  
while over the border,  
its  
Murder Murder Murder!  
as Nato  
makes the earth  
Shudder Shudder Shudder!

### A MILLION TO ONE CHANCE

Who killed my dad,  
she asks,

he went to Iraq  
on a humanitarian  
task.

Who killed my bride  
he asks,  
when they came to Iraq  
over a million  
died.

24th March, 2013

### WORKER'S CONTROL

What Darwin did was to project humans  
on to the animal and insect world,  
colonialism, union jacks unfurled,  
Victoria, Disraeli his crewman,  
therefore ants had to be ruled by a queen,  
survival of the fittest was Empire,  
it was inferior people who expired.  
Then I read something in a magazine:  
it is worker-ants who will decide  
who are queens, who are workers and  
soldiers,  
measure-feeding the brood to coincide  
with environmental changes. Moulders,  
without hierarchies, they must now collide,  
be out of favour with that humancide.

13th March, 2013

### FRANCIS DRAKE PLAYS BOWLS AGAIN

A new medal has been struck  
called nearly-gold.  
Though they are gorging it  
and Union Jacks are flying  
amuck  
something better than silver is needed,  
we are sold.  
It's good for the sit-down sports  
like nag and boat  
when the Home Counties come out to play  
and gloat.  
Basically it's Olympics between England  
and nations remote.  
But no horse-faced monarchy  
presents  
to the heavy lifting gang  
of pull-up-by-bootstraps athletes  
who might circumvent the social order  
and prang  
England's nationalist harangue.

6th August, 2012

Wilson John Haire



# Shorts

from  
*the Long Fellow*

## VINCENT BROWNE ON THE TAPE

Vincent Browne's TV3 show of 14th March attempted to deal with a tape recording of a conversation between Michael Lowry and Kevin Phelan. The tape recording was leaked to the *Sunday Independent* the previous month by Phelan who, although from Laois, was a land agent based in Northern Ireland. He was a key figure in the Moriarty Tribunal because he acted separately for both Denis O'Brien and Michael Lowry in the purchase of properties in Northern England.

Anyone who watched the show would not have been made much wiser about the significance of the tape. The viewer will have gathered that it related to something very complicated and by implication sinister. One of the guests on the show (the Trinity academic and *Sunday Independent* journalist Elaine Byrne) noted darkly that, at the time of the tape recording (30th September 2004), Denis O'Brien had brought an unsuccessful case against the Tribunal attempting to stop it from investigating the UK property transactions. This was too much for even Vincent Browne who felt it necessary to point out that O'Brien was perfectly entitled to do this.

Before playing the tape Browne warned in his best 'maiden auntish' manner that some viewers might find the language offensive. Nevertheless he thought it important that the tape be heard as it was an interesting reflection on "*Irish men*".

## THE TAPE'S CONTEXT

It is impossible to understand the content of the tape without being aware of the context.

At the time of the tape recording, the Moriarty Tribunal was investigating the circumstances surrounding the awarding of a mobile phone licence to a consortium led by Denis O'Brien. Michael Lowry was the Minister directly responsible. If the licence was awarded corruptly, O'Brien must have somehow conferred a benefit to Lowry. The Tribunal was investigating the possibility that such a benefit might have been conferred by means of property transactions in Northern England.

There were at least two reasonable reasons why O'Brien tried to prevent an investigation of the English property trans-

actions. Kevin Phelan, among other businessmen, was in dispute with O'Brien and was leaking damaging documents to the media and to the Tribunal. However, because these people were not resident in the country, they could not be compelled to appear before the Tribunal and have their 'evidence' tested in cross-examination by O'Brien's lawyers.

A second reason for O'Brien's attempt to curtail the Tribunal's investigation was that by 2004 the Tribunal had been sitting for many years and had spent (squandered?) tens of millions of euros in taxpayers' money. In O'Brien's view it was predisposed to find something damaging in order to justify its existence.

## THE TAPE ITSELF

On a superficial level Phelan's surreptitious recording of his conversation with Lowry is damaging to the Tipperary man. No person in his right mind would want to have a recording of himself under circumstances of extreme pressure complete with "*fuck*" and "*cunt*" expletives. But, if the listener goes beyond the style of the conversation to the substance, the recording gives a partial exoneration of Lowry and a complete exoneration of O'Brien in relation to the Doncaster investment.

In the recording Lowry is trying to prevent the Tribunal investigating a payment of about £250k he made to Kevin Phelan. The transaction is embarrassing to Lowry because he says in the recording that he "*never declared it*".

According to Colm Keena in *The Irish Times* (16.3.13), Lowry told the newspaper that the money came from a Finnish refrigeration company that owed Lowry's company the money. Why would Lowry instruct the Finnish company to pay the £250k directly to Phelan? A possible explanation is that the money would not appear in the books of Lowry's company and thereby enable him to evade tax and/or avoid the matter coming to the attention of the Tribunal. Lowry has claimed that the transaction *was* accounted for in his company's books. However, it is possible that it may not have been at the time the conversation with Phelan occurred.

But, on the key issue of Lowry's involvement with O'Brien in the Doncaster Rovers investment, the tape seems to exonerate both Lowry and O'Brien.

## DONCASTER ROVERS

The £250k which Lowry directed to Phelan ended up in Phelan's Family Trust, which in turn owned a company which had invested in the Doncaster Rovers site and was subsequently sold to Denis

O'Brien. It is clear from the tape that Lowry was completely unaware of Phelan's Family Trust and its involvement in the Doncaster Rovers site.

When Lowry hears that the £250k he gave to Phelan ended up in the latter's Family Trust, he goes ballistic. Here is Lowry's reaction to this information:

"But if you say that, if you say that, that happened... what the 250 is for—is for the sale of Vineacre or Vineacre share, because if you say the opposite, then I'm fucking, looks as if I had a beneficial interest in funding Doncaster, which I hadn't."

Vineacre was a company that owned a site in Wigan, which had nothing to do with O'Brien. It should be always borne in mind that Lowry, unlike Phelan, is blissfully unaware that the conversation is being recorded. So there is no reason for him to assert something that is false. Also, Phelan never had to account for himself before the Tribunal.

Phelan does not directly contradict Lowry's assertion that the £250k related to the Wigan site. However, he does muddy the waters with the following statement.

"Well I don't know where—well you, know, as far as I'm concerned that 250 was my, represented my selling my shares Glebe Trust shares and that, in Westferry up, it was my company, I have all the documentation for that company and it was owned by Glebe Trust, the shares were owned by Glebe Trust".

It is very noticeable that Phelan either doesn't or (more likely) pretends not to understand Lowry's point that any link that the Tribunal could establish between Lowry and Glebe Trust (Phelan's family Trust) would establish a link between Lowry and O'Brien with disastrous consequences for those two individuals.

However, on numerous occasions during the conversation Phelan admits that Lowry had nothing to do with Glebe Trust (Phelan's family Trust).

Any fair analysis of the tape would have to conclude that Lowry had nothing to do with O'Brien's investment in Doncaster. On the evidence of the tape the Moriarty Tribunal's investigation of the Doncaster transaction was an expensive wild goose chase at the end of which it arrived at an incorrect conclusion.

## IRISH JOURNALISM

*The Examiner* and its sister paper the *Sunday Business Post* have each had a dramatic fall in circulation. Both newspapers have had their circulation drop below 40,000. *The Irish Times*' circulation has dropped to 88,000 from a peak of 115,000 and its readership is dying off.

The financial problems of the newspapers have been exacerbated by some disastrous business decisions made during the Celtic Tiger era. The *Examiner* group invested in local newspapers and radio stations and tried to make its flagship newspaper a national title. *The Irish Times* invested massively in printing facilities at a time when there was over-capacity in the industry. At the same time it invested in online technology which undermined its printed product. It bought myhome.ie at the top of the market (*and* overpaid), an investment that could only undermine advertising in its newspaper.

But, even if these bad decisions had not been made, the two newspaper groups would have struggled. The declining circulation figures indicate that Irish people no longer take the country's journalism too seriously. This is not just a view from outside the main stream of journalism; it is acknowledged by some within the business. Following the death of the successful Editor of *The Irish Times* Douglas Gageby, John Waters had this to say about the current malaise. Apparently new recruits to the profession are:

"...vetted for correctness and placed under middle manager apparatchiks for a period of training in appropriate thinking and then sent out to affirm 'truths; we already 'know'..." (John Martin, *Irish Times: Past And Present*, p15).

The reporting in the newspapers of the deliberations of the Tribunals furnishes numerous examples of the journalistic vice of "affirming truths 'we' already know".

#### CYPRUS

The crisis in Cyprus is the latest evidence of the flawed architecture of the Euro. But the architects—Mitterrand, Kohl and Delor—must have known about the defects in the edifice. A single currency with no centralised financial regulation was a recipe for crisis and yet these great Statesmen proceeded with the project.

Mitterrand was always sanguine on the prospect of crises. He told his biographer Jacques Attali that it was sometimes necessary to have a crisis in order to arrive at a political solution. The remedy for the flaw in the architecture was not politically

realisable in Mitterrand's time. The countries in the Eurozone were not prepared to cede control of their banking system to the centre.

Mitterrand would have revelled in the current challenges faced by Europe. To use an expression of another statesman, Charles Haughey, he might have been "*disappointed but never dismayed*".

Alan Dukes suggested on RTE's Prime Time (21.3.13) that the approach of Europe has been too timid. If it had thrown more money at the problem in its initial

phase, the crisis might have been averted. The Long Fellow disagrees. Printing money would have just papered over the cracks and enabled the bailed out countries to carry on regardless with even more disastrous consequences in the future. Europe needed to confront the fact that the Greeks had a fragile tax system; that Ireland's property boom was unsustainable; and that Cyprus's economy was over-dependent on its financial sector.

In spite of all the media hysteria (much of it British-inspired) the Euro zone is consolidating itself.

#### European Union

### Sleeping Gods And Demons!

There must be a big increase in sleeping pills or valium these days. Emeritus Pope Benedict said that at times during his Pontificate "*it seemed that the Lord was sleeping*". This seemed rather odd as the Lord was woken up by his disciples in the original parable and surely a Pope was in the best position possible to wake him up this time and ensure he did not nod off. Benedict, being a theologian, should surely have explained that, if God is otherwise engaged, Satan, who is always on the prowl for such opportunities, is automatically in charge. Old-fashioned theology made it clear that the supernatural world, no less than the natural, abhorred a vacuum. Modern theology seems a bit less scientific than that. Did Satan therefore cause Benedict's departure? We can only leave these problems to Pope Francis.

But a more immediate case of a sleeping sickness was reported recently when:

"Mr. Juncker said in an interview with the magazine *Der Spiegel*: "Anyone who believes that the eternal question of war and peace in Europe is no longer there risks being deeply mistaken. The demons have not gone away—they're only sleeping, as the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo showed. I am chilled by the realisation of how similar circumstances in Europe in 2013 are to those of 100 years ago."

Mr Juncker, a Prime Minister of Luxembourg who chaired the Euro Group of Finance Ministers from 2005 until he was replaced this year by Jeroen Dijsselbloem, is one of the most urbane of people and when he sees demons arising from their sleep it is as well to take note.

He went on:

"In 1913 many believed that there would never again be a war in Europe. The great powers of the continent were

so closely intertwined economically that the view was widespread that they could no longer afford to have military confrontations. "There was a complete sense of complacency based on the assumption that peace had been secured forever."

In other words, there was a case of another kind of sleeping sickness in 1913! An epidemic in fact.

If all these were only figures of speech (or theological speculations), it need not concern us very much but a problem arises when figures of speech pass for thought and analysis in the minds of our leading politicians. As speech is the vehicle of thought there is always a danger that the vehicle shapes the thoughts, or replaces the thought or indeed become the thought. The reasons given here for the cause of WW I are a classic example of this syndrome.

Mr. Juncker's is a common view. Nobody wanted or expected war but it suddenly broke out in 1914 and suddenly dozens of countries which hitherto were 'complacent', or asleep, engaged in mutual slaughter and tens of millions were killed! If this is the way human beings and states act, it defies all common sense and logic. It would be best to head for the deserts or the tops of high mountains. But is it the reality?

This notion is put in different ways, 'war broke out', we 'found ourselves at war', etc. It's as if there was a volcano or an earthquake that millions were helpless to prevent. That it was something outside of all human life. I heard a Trinity history professor explain that it was a movement of 'tectonic plates' in the political landscape that caused this war. And what can one do with such a thing except look on helplessly?

*Irish Times: Past And Present*, a record of the journal since 1859, by John Martin. Index. 264 pp. ISBN 978-1-872078-13-7. Belfast Historical & Educational Society, 2008.

€21, £17.50, postfree

<https://www.atholbooks-sales.org>

Another view is that the Great War resulted from a number of Imperialisms dividing up the world—inevitably fighting each other for the spoils. But that avoids all the particulars of the War—why, how and when it actually started, and continued—rather than happening at another time and in other circumstances. Events in the real world consist of particulars.

Another notion is that the alliances simply unravelled after the shooting of Archduke Ferdinand but that again assumes that a number of states lost the run of themselves over the assassination of a prince.

It is only worth commenting on all this when a leader of Europe cannot make a better sense of WW1 than that it was caused by "*complacency*".

But if Mr Juncker and other leading figures in the EU do not have a better handle on the causes of WW1, then they cannot possibly understand why Europe was destroyed twice in the 20th century. Nor can they appreciate why the whole idea of a European project was initiated. From this position how can they possibly lead it?

The real reasons are no mystery. Britain was the most powerful state in the world and it was so by neutralising Europe with a balance of power strategy over centuries. European states were kept at each others' throats which freed Britain to build an Empire and dominate the world.

WWI was an implementation of that strategy when a new power, Germany, was judged to have become too powerful. A new balance had to be struck—and the Empire again expanded by destroying the Ottoman Empire. New strategic resources were won, Imperial land masses were joined up—and Germany eliminated as an economic competitor. Not a bad outcome for sleep-walkers!

After another round of this strategy in 1939, one which finished off Europe as a political force, presenting the US and the USSR with Europe and the world to dominate, some Europeans decided enough was enough and Europe should now look after its own affairs and not be a plaything for British designs. Hence the attempt at a union..

I suspect that Mr Juncker and his colleagues have a different perspective. That the history of Europe in the 20th century is for them the result of some sort of accidental conjunction of fate, or some other nonsensical view of history. If this is their view, it is no wonder that the EU's future is problematic. It is they who are asleep and look as if they blind and deaf to boot.

**Jack Lane**

**Book Review:** *The McGurk's Bar Bombing: Collusion, Cover-Up and a Campaign for Truth* by **Ciarán MacAirt**, with Foreword by **Colin Wallace**, Frontline Noir Publishing, ISBN 978-1-904684-930

## McGurk Bar Bombing And British Policy

The civilian massacre at McGurk's pub in North Belfast on 4th December 1971 was the largest loss of life in a single incident in the northern conflict. Ciarán MacAirt is the grandson of Kathleen Irvine, one of the 15 fatalities of the pub bombing. His well researched account factually details State collusion after the fact.

Interestingly, although he openly admits that he has no conclusive proof, he makes the case that a UVF unit, run under the auspices of British Military Intelligence, planted the bomb with the intention of provoking tension between Official and Provisional Republicanism, a key Whitehall aim at the time.

The bomb target for the UVF unit was originally the Gem Bar (locally known at the time as Hannigans), which was perceived to have a clientele of Official Republicans. In Belfast parlance, it was a "*Sticky*" bar. When it proved difficult for the bombing team to dispose of the bomb at the Gem, due to people milling about and a constant door security presence, the UVF team drove around to the next corner to McGurk's Bar to deposit the bomb there instead. The bomb, left in the entrance hallway of the building, but outside the downstairs bar, exploded, claiming 15 lives. The car was dumped just a few hundred yards away in a side street behind A1 Taxis, in what was formerly known as the "*Little Italy*" area. From there, the car simply disappeared! Vanished! Never to be recovered. Allegedly.

Subsequently, within the Police Ombudsman's Report on the bombing of McGurk's Bar, there was a record of a vehicle being examined by the RUC. We know from Campbell's statement that the plan for the UVF bombers was that they were meant to be picked up in two separate cars, but in the end walked by foot through the "*HalfBap*" area to St Anne's Cathedral, to be picked up in a single car and returned by to an Orange Hall in the Shankill area for a celebratory drink.

Unfortunately for the authorities, the planting of the bomb was witnessed by an 8 year old, Joseph McCrory, who saw the bomb being planted in the bar entrance hallway, saw the car and noted a "*wee union jack sticker*" in the rear car wind-

screen. He watched as the bomber lit the fuse and then ran back to the waiting car which sped down Great George's Street. He even warned a passing pedestrian not to go into the bar as there was a bomb in it!

MacAirt outlines the considerable tension in Belfast at the time and particularly in the week prior to the bombing. This tension was heightened by the escape of 3 high-profile republicans from nearby Crumlin Road jail. Security across the city was tight and it is barely conceivable that a UVF unit would risk taking a car from the Shankill into predominantly Republican areas. MacAirt makes the case that there was no risk as the operation was a "*wave through*", with security forces given the nod to make themselves scarce for the duration.

He also outlines the political tensions of the time, as well as tensions within the authorities around the targets for the initial internment 'lifts'—which had a considerable impact on how the McGurk' Bar 'narrative' was subsequently twisted.

Two British Army Technical Officers who happened, by coincidence, to be close to the bomb scene accurately assessed that the bomb was planted in the hallway of the premises, but crucially outside the bar (making the authorities storyline that the bomb was an IRA "*own goal*" implausible).

Within hours the story, or "*narrative*" was reversed. Former British Army information officer, Colin Wallace, comments in his Foreword:

"There is no doubt in my mind that the original information we received from Security Force personnel at the scene indicated that the bomb had been planted outside the pub. Furthermore the Army explosive Ordnance Disposal team that went to the site of the explosion were of the opinion that the bomb had detonated outside the bar. By the time I went off duty that night, all the 'evidence' indicated that the attack had been carried out by Loyalists. I was therefore surprised to find out the following morning that the official line taken was that the explosion had been what was commonly referred to as an 'own goal'."

Indeed, in the weeks following the bomb, leaflets were posted by Army

patrols in the locality propagandising the "own goal" theory.

MacAirt places the incident in the context of British policy on information communications and media at the time (which *Irish Political Readers* readers will be familiar with from the Athol Books publication, *The Origins and Organisation of British Propaganda in Ireland, 1920* (Dr Brian Murphy, 2006 ISBN: 1-903497-24-8).

Under Brigadier Frank Kitson, deployed to Northern Ireland in September 1970, an overhaul of the British information and communications operation was undertaken.

"Kitson's significance is that he aligns Information policy to the heart of military operations and he begins to overhaul military information activity in Northern Ireland straight away. In October 1970, Lieutenant Colonel Bernard Renouf 'Johnny' Johnston, the Head of the British Army's Psychological Operations (Psyops) training at the Joint Warfare Establishment (JWE) was sent to Northern Ireland to run the Information Liaison Branch" (p130).

MacAirt records the syllabus taught by Johnston at the JWE and his treatment of this aspect of British policy in Chapter 8 is one of the most interesting parts of the book.

In particular there was a British information policy set out in the document "Outlines of a plan for a Two Year programme on counter propaganda", drafted by Press Liaison Officer Clifford Hill, the first priority of which was to "disrupt and divide the various parts of the IRA and its associated bodies each from the other..."

Colin Wallace, in the book's Foreword, draws out how a SITREP document, dating from January 1972, ensured stories were to be written along certain themes and processed for public consumption by the information agencies

"6. Important Areas of Policy. Our current policy objectives fall into the following areas:

a) Initiatives by Security Forces.

(1) The need to separate the IRA from the Catholic community by discrediting both factions of the IRA, by exposing IRA intimidation and brutality and IRA use of women and children. ..."

The McGurk's Bar bombing took place at a time of sensitive planning for the

continuation of Internment. One major consideration was the tension between the Army perspective and that of local Stormont Unionist politicians. The Army advised against internment but when it was agreed, it put forward lists including Loyalist suspects. However, the policy finally agreed by Whitehall (and lobbied for by the Unionist Stormont regime) focussed solely on Republicans and the Catholic Community.

Again, Colin Wallace sums the position in the Foreword:

"Clearly the bombing of McGurk's bar created a major public relations problem for Whitehall. The bombing resulted in the largest single loss of life in 'The Troubles' and, if the attack had been attributed to the UVF, serious questions would have been raised over why Loyalist paramilitaries were not being interned."

Subsequently, in July 1977, Robert James Campbell, a notorious UVF activist, admitted his part. I understand that Campbell was obliged to plead guilty to the murder of Protestant civilian, John Morrow on 22nd January 1976. For the RUC, Campbell's arrest led to the arrest of the rest of his gang, including his son. The gang broke quickly, leading to the easy and efficient clear-up of a hefty "*back catalogue*" of criminal activity, including dozens of murders. But, for the RUC, the McGurk's Bar murders represented a "*housekeeping*" challenge to be managed with care. Thus Campbell was enabled to be processed with the flimsiest of confessions, slim on detail, the better to protect other 'assets' and higher strategic aims. MacAirt is good at setting the treatment of Campbell in context beside other Loyalist cases where "*case management*" or "*housekeeping*" of confessions was required to hold in place Intelligence "*assets*" or arms-length paramilitary operatives—such as the Kenny McClinton case in respect of the UDA (where McClinton was convicted for the murder of a Protestant bus driver) and the James 'Tonto' Watt case in respect of the UVF. Watt was brought to 'justice' along with Campbell's son for killing a fellow Protestant, John Geddis, a part time UDR soldier and a relative of a senior strike organiser of the Loyalist 1977 Strike. In short, there was political pressure to solve the Geddis murder, so someone had to be held to account—but not without careful handling!

The RUC had known Campbell was one of the McGurk Bar bombers as it had held a list of five people, one of whom was Campbell, for 16 months, without moving

to arrest of question any. None was followed up after the Morrow murder either.

The shoddy and minimalist manner in which Campbell was 'processed' by the RUC, with scant regard for solid leads of inquiry, suggests that the RUC were protecting an agent or agents. The RUC simply ignored all lines that pointed to Loyalists, including very solid witness statements and an admission of guilt from the bombers themselves. Campbell's statement regarding the McGurk's Bar atrocity was rudimentary at best, running to only a page and a half for 15 murders.

MacAirt believes that the operation was ordered by a UVF operative, the late Billy Mitchell, and this is supported by a Loyalist source of Allison Morris of the *Irish News*. I got to know Billy Mitchell towards the end of his life, when he played a part in promoting the Progressive Unionist Party in the post-Ceasefire period. He ran a centre for ex—prisoners, EPIC, and we collaborated to secure funds for a new football pitch and pavilion in Monkstown Estate in Newtownabbey (North Belfast). I had previously read some of Mitchell's prodigious written output whilst in jail, given to me by Gusty Spence to demonstrate the left-wing credentials of the UVF. One paper I recall surveyed the Loyalist prisoner body around 1979, demonstrating the exceptionally high percentage of combatants from skilled trades and active members of Trades Unions. Another set out a proposal for a Prisoners' Rights Unit in the jails.

Billy Mitchell, long steeped in evangelical religion, had a very long career in Loyalist activity—dating back to the mid 1960s with the Ulster Protestant Volunteers and the 'pre-Conflict' 1969 Bombings, (such as those at Silent Valley in April and Ballyshannon Power Station in October) aimed at destabilising the O'Neill regime. Mitchell's involvement at a time when the UVF was engaged in 'retaliatory' pub bombings in 1971-72 under the flag of the "*Empire Loyalists*" suggests British direction. The term "*Empire Loyalists*" is straight out of the annals of the Army "psyops" department.

When serving as an independent Labour councillor in the Newtownabbey area, one of my constituents, Raymond McCord, waged a 15-year campaign to secure justice for the murder of his son, Raymond Jnr at the hands of UVF personnel in 1997. I was able to introduce Raymond to the then leader of the Labour Party, Pat Rabbitte TD, who read out, under Dail Éireann

privilege, the names of Raymond McCord Jnr's murderers, only leaving out the RUC Special Branch handlers involved.

The subsequent "Ballast" report of the Police Ombudsman, Nuala O'Loan makes clear, not only that the RUC colluded with the UVF murder gang led by Mark Haddock in a range of murders, but that the UVF, from the top down, and for many, many years, had been run by agents of the State. The UVF, *de facto*, has been an arm of the state in accordance with Kitson's doctrine.

The McGurk's Bar Bombing connects the re-foundation of the UVF in the 60s with the present in a way that enables us to see the use that the State has had for this group of partisans. Spence had always maintained that military personnel were involved in the setting up (or re-formation) of the UVF. He himself was a former military policeman, as were others within the early, initial cadre.

Use of locally-recruited "*existing organisations*" was historically part and parcel of British policy across the Empire, and was made surprisingly explicit in notes of a briefing of the Chief of General Staff (CGS) by General Officer Commanding (GOC) at meetings in Army HQ Northern Ireland, 9th September 1971. In these General Sir Harry Tuzo (in command in Northern Ireland) tells Marshal Sir Michael Carver:

"We have reached a stage where we must not shrink from adapting some existing organisations."

Despite his extensive research, within a gripping book, Ciaran MacAirt makes clear that he cannot prove beyond reasonable doubt that the McGurk Bombing was British-inspired and -directed (being only operationally botched by the UVF operatives). What he does prove without a shadow of a doubt, though, is that the State conspired and colluded to cover-up for the true culprits after the fact.

Ciarán MacAirt's book adds considerably to our understanding and is a page-turning read.

Finally, a short documentary setting out the case, 'A Loss of Innocence', can be seen on You Tube, see links for McGurk's Bar Bombing:

Loss of Innocence at: <http://m.youtube.com/watch?v=dPqZekBcYd4&feature=plcp>

**Mark Langhammer**

## Professor Fitzpatrick explains.....

Professor David Fitzpatrick gave a talk at the University of London to the London Irish Studies Seminar on 22nd March 2013 titled, *The Spectre of Ethnic Cleansing in Revolutionary Ireland*.

Professor Fitzpatrick never bothered to explain the meaning of the title. A *spectre* is something that does not really exist, a phantom, a ghost or some such thing and it is to be assumed he is not into ghost stories. Neither did he explain what ethnic group he was going to deal with. His talk was all about the demographics of the Methodist community of West Cork, based on a recent source that he had discovered which detailed the size, movements, etc. of Methodists in the early decades of the 20th century. This was a strictly religious grouping that arose from and consisted of Irish, English, Welsh and Cornish people—thereby defying any ethnic categorisation but this mis-use of the term *ethnic* did not seem to concern the Professor.

He specifically explained that he was *not* going to deal with "*ethnic cleansing*". As he explained: *because it was impossible to fully explain the motivations of people which could be very complex. What then was the meeting about?*

Fitzpatrick gave a long rambling account of movements within the Methodist community that in itself proved nothing whatever about anything in particular—beyond the decline of this community that was happening elsewhere in Ireland before and after the War of Independence. I daresay this was not much different to what was happening to Methodism everywhere in the world. It has been a declining religion for quite some time.

But the Professor's non-discussion of the ethnic cleansing of a non-ethnic group was not adhered to and the matter kept intruding by much innuendo and inference in his talk.

Just as Fitzpatrick was not going to talk about ethnic cleansing, neither was he going to talk about the "*murder*" of any Methodist. Nevertheless, he then proceeded to give a graphic description of the killing of Tom Bradfield, involving Tom Barry and other IRA people.

While he wasn't going to deal with the killings of any other Methodists, the Professor promptly went ahead and did so in graphic detail. No context was provided but that they were Methodists 'murdered'

by the IRA.

Tom Barry explained the killing of Bradfield, and that of 14 others, as executions of spies, self-admitted in Bradfield's case. But there is only "*murder*" in Fitzpatrick's vocabulary when dealing with the independence struggle. Anything else is apparently too 'complex' to explain.

Despite what appeared to be a detailed account of the Methodist community in West Cork there was no mention of the most prominent and representative member of that community in the first half of the 20th century, Jasper Wolfe. The Professor could have provided blood-curdling description of three attempts by the IRA to kill him and burn down his house during the War of Independence. The speaker could then have gone on to explain why Wolfe made a name for himself in defending IRA men in the courts during the 1920s and how he was elected to the Dáil from 1927-32—and became best of friends with those who had tried to execute him. The motivation (s) involved in this seemed to be much too complex for the Professor to explain. But in fact it is very simple.

Methodists are renowned for being law-abiding people in whatever state they find themselves. Wolfe was loyal to the British state to the point of being state prosecutor for Cork during the War of Independence. That is why, after the military, he was public enemy number one for the IRA. When the new state was established, he served that just as well. However, he saw it was being unreasonable in its treatment of some IRA people and was thereby discrediting itself, so he defended them. His honesty and ability were admired and hence he was elected a TD for some years. When these facts were brought to his attention after his talk, Professor Fitzpatrick said he was quite aware of all this and admitted it was "*interesting*".

In the discussion, it was pointed out that the late Peter Hart—who had put the issue of 'ethnic cleansing' on the agenda as the explanation for the violence in West Cork—had changed his mind in 2003 and was to write in an *Irish Times* letter: "*I have never argued that 'ethnic cleansing' took place in Cork or elsewhere in the 1920s—in fact quite the opposite*" (28.6.2006). Quite the opposite!

Fitzpatrick agreed that Peter Hart and

changed his mind and *rightly so*, as he had "*exaggerated*" and there were "*inconsistencies*" in his work. He elaborated this at some length. Hart had read newspaper accounts of the time that suggested ethnic cleansing and he had been one of the first to utilise the Loyalist Compensation Claims which could not be fully trusted. Hart, he explained, had got "*carried away*". But this type of thing happened to many historians who have to change their minds.

Had Fitzpatrick changed his mind as well? Oh no, he explained, because he had already studied the period (in his work on Clare) before Hart came along and had concluded that there was "*No ethnic cleansing to speak of*". But this poses a problem. Hart did his research under Fitzpatrick's supervision, so why did he not advise against such '*exaggerations*', '*inconsistencies*' and other mistakes that he now publicly admits were wrong? Why did Fitzpatrick knowingly let him pursue this approach? But, more to the point, why did Professor Fitzpatrick promote Hart's view that there was ethnic cleansing long after Hart abandoned it, in 2011 and 2012? (see Niall Meehan review of Fitzpatrick's Editorship of *Terror in Ireland 1916-1923*, at academia.edu).

He was asked why he was so involved in this issue at all. Was it not a case of historians dissipating their talents by being so concerned with such a small issue in a small period in a small place, when so many other issues needed their attention? Surely a "*public intellectual*" like himself had better things to do? Instead of dealing with important issues, he and others were concerned with "*who killed who in a ditch in West Cork*". He declared he fully agreed with this criticism, but said he got involved when his students were attacked, especially Peter Hart after he died and was accused of fabricating evidence.

This defence is of course nonsense as the first critique of Hart's work was published by Brian Murphy in 1998, the year Hart's book was published. It detailed one obvious distortion of a British source, which Hart manipulated to bolster his conclusion that killings in April 1922 were sectarian. This clear distortion was apparent to Murphy who was familiar with the sources Hart used. It should have been obvious to Fitzpatrick who used the same source in his 1977 book on Clare. How did the supervisor miss Hart's distortion in his PhD thesis of this source?

But there is good news to report. We were spared the Professor's earlier singing at the 19th Parnell Lecture in Cambridge

(11.2.2013) of his sectarian ballad that began '*We took it out on the Protestants, We could only catch a few...*'. (see below).

He assured the audience that after his current work on the Methodists was finished he would have no more to say on the issue. *Deo gratias!*

**Jack Lane**

### **Fitzpatrick's Sectarian Song**

(Sung to the tune of  
*The Galtee Mountain Boy*)

Twas in the month of April in the year of '22

We took it out on the Protestants, we could only catch a few

In Bandon and Dunmanway, Kinsale, and Skibbereen

Their colour it was Orange and they trampled on the Green

Old Buttimer came down quaking

'What do you want', says he  
'Come out or we'll make ye, we want your drapery'.

The missus tried to argue  
'Go to bed old women', says we  
We sprayed his brains with bullets that  
Ireland might be free.

We visited Tom Bradfield, we dressed up  
in Khaki

Says he, 'You're welcome officers'  
A fine snug farm had he.

We gave him a grand court martial  
And sentenced Tom for to die

We tried a note around his neck  
It read 'convicted spy'.

Farewell to all ye Protestants, so prim and  
dry and tight

Ye thought ye owned old Ireland  
Yet ye fled without a fight.

From Bandon and Dunmanway, Kinsale  
and Skibbereen

Ye scuttled out of the County Cork and  
never since was seen

Twat's revenge for Skibbereen.

## **Did Britain Fight A Proxy War Against Itself In The North?**

### **Review Of An Unseen Thesis**

In the times before there was *Freedom of Information* I used to stroll up to the Queen's University in Belfast occasionally and read a Thesis. We have Freedom of Information now, but it is no longer possible to do that. I went up there during the month to have a look at Anthony McIntyre's PhD Thesis, which is so widely referred to, but found access to it obstructed by a bureaucratic obstacle of electronic defence-in-depth which I have no hope of overcoming. At the same time I cannot reasonably ignore the fact that it exists when commenting on the course of events in Northern Ireland. MacIntyre is the Provo Blanketman who became a Doctor of Philosophy under the tutelage of Official IRA man, Professor the Lord Bew. And he seems to have been the chief interviewer for the Confessional taping of Anti-Adams dissidents for the Confession Box at Boston College organised by Lord Bew and Ed Moloney. He is clearly a significant person, whose views should not be passed over. But I am obliged to pass them over as I cannot gain access to them beyond their title. So I give the title: *Modern Irish Republicanism—the Product Of British Strategy*.

It is an intriguing title you will admit. It cannot just be cited and let lie there. The mind, having been informed of it, cannot let it rest.

In notice, however, that Professor Henry

Patterson gives it a different title: *A Structural Analysis Of Modern Irish Republicanism 1969-1973*. This is in Professor Patterson's *Ireland Since 1939: The Persistence Of Conflict*, published by Penguin Books in 2007. Patterson is, or was for many years, a member of the Official Republican Organisation. He was an important member of the Sinn Fein wing of it, being as I recall on the editorial staff of its magazine. Whether, like Lord Bew, he was also in the military wing, I cannot say. But I don't suppose it matters much, as the political wing was understood to be subject to the military wing.

Patterson gives some personal details in an Introduction, but he does not mention his political background as a Stickie.

He writes:

"Much of what has been termed "revisionism" in the writing of Irish history has consisted of an attempt to purge it of political partisanship in the service of a nationalist or unionist project ..." (p xiii).

It seemed to me that the object of revisionist methodological mystification was to undermine the nationalist partisanship of history teaching and writing in the academic institutions of nationalist Ireland and shift them to a British view of the conflict through which nationalist Ireland established an independent state in most of the country. I did not notice any

revisionist subversion of the Unionist view. And I did not see how both could be subverted simultaneously. Revisionist subversion of Nationalism is Unionist.

Bew and Patterson have constituted a pair for a very long time—more than forty years. (They began as two of three but the third, Peter Gibbon, hived off.) And, as a pair, their line of movement has been towards fundamentalist Unionism. About 20 years ago Bew hinted at legal action against a newspaper which described him as Unionist. I imagine that such a threat would be laughed at today.

About 35 years ago Bew and Patterson were invited to attend a meeting of the Campaign for Labour Representation and tell it where it was wrong. The CLR was a movement whose aim was to exert pressure on the British Labour Party to include Northern Ireland within its sphere of operations, so that the North might begin to find a place within the democracy of the state, and there might be a party which Protestant and Catholic workers could both join.

I would have been happy if they had refuted the reasoning which had led to the formation of the CLR. I had been analysing Soviet political economy in the late 1960s when the North blew up—*gorm se suas*: an irresistible pun for which I am indebted to Niall Cusack—and I thought I saw some aspect of the Northern situation that nobody else was drawing attention to. So I put Soviet political economy aside for a moment in order to explain what I saw, expecting to return to it after a brief digression.

I would have been very happy if Bew and Patterson showed that what I saw was a delusion. But they did not address the CLR position at all. They spent the time lambasting BICO, which they had been on the fringes of five or six years earlier. And they described me as an arse-licker of Unionism. A dozen years later I might have returned the compliment. And, twenty years later, they were official advisers to the Unionist Party—and so I suppose they were the licked rather than the lickers.

Much of this depends on what one means by Unionism. Incorporation of the 6 Counties into the democracy of the state—the state in the 6 Counties never having been anything other than a segment of the British state—might be described as Unionist. But it was something that Ulster Unionism utterly rejected. This was established by the popular response to a series of pamphlets which I published

in 1985-6 on the issue of the 1985 Agreement. These pamphlets sparked off a movement called the Campaign For Equal Citizenship, which made the issue of state democracy a matter of debate on Radio Ulster for about a year.

It was demonstrated that Whitehall was determined that the 6 Counties should not be admitted to the democratic politics of the state, and that Ulster Unionism did not want to have the possibility of entering the democratic politics of the state opened up to the Northern Ireland electorate. If Unionism is taken to be what the Ulster Unionist Parties do, then it is an Ulsterish phenomenon which values separation from the political life of the state.

The practical meaning of Unionism is Ulsterism—is the Unionist Family—a term which came very much into play against the electoral integrationism of the CEC.

Revisionism made great play with the word 'democracy'. If it had addressed the question of how there could be something properly called democracy in Northern Ireland while it excluded the actual democracy by which the state of which Northern Ireland was part was governed, one might be inclined to overlook much of what it was doing in the South. But it didn't.

It wouldn't have been deluged with patronage by the State if it had done, and it knew it.

If my reasoning about democracy was essentially mistaken, somebody would surely have discovered the mistake, pointed it out, and let me remove myself as an irritant by returning to Soviet political economy. I'm sure either Bew or Patterson must have applied his mind to the question. I knew both of them fairly well for a couple of years in the early 1970s. Patterson had a marvellously doctrinaire ability to write fluently in Althusserianism—he put me in mind of Webern in serial music. He was a very serious intellectual of working class origin who made his way by sheer brainpower. Bew came from an upper social stratum which seemed to be a kind of Ascendancy remnant. He had practical options and possibilities that were not available to Patterson, and his mind wandered about more easily than Patterson's. He was of the gentry, and though he seemed to be seriously intent on sealing up his mind in the involuted tautologies of Althusserian Marxism-Leninism he didn't quite succeed.

I was sure that he saw that my account of British policy in setting up Northern

Ireland was damning of Britain, and that Britain did not take kindly to being damned. My purpose in raising that issue was not to damn Britain but to open up democratic possibilities in Northern Ireland. I got movements going in both British parties on a purely persuasive mode.

Of course, when Britain obstinately refused to be persuaded and resorted to dirty tricks to dissuade the persuaders, it was damned. I assume that Bew, with his gentry contacts, knew at the outset that Whitehall was intransigent on the issue and would have its way, and therefore he kept offside on the issue from the start. I, from my much more lowly position, had sufficient contact with Whitehall to know that its heels were dug in. But such things, to have a political effect, must be demonstrated through practical effort. So we persisted to the bitter end. And we failed.

But, by failing in that way, we did not leave the situation as we had found it. We demonstrated that Ulster Unionism was determined not to be British in the political dimension of life—it was as determined as Whitehall that Northern Ireland should not become part of the political life by which the state was governed. And we demonstrated that Whitehall was determined to keep Northern Ireland at arm's length from the actual body politic of the British state. It used a combination of patronage and dirty tricks to end the brief discussion of the issue in the public sphere in Northern Ireland in the late 1980s.

There was virtually no patronage of literature—political or literary—during the two generations when the British regime took the form of the Ulster Unionist facade. Lord Craigavon, followed by Lord Brookeborough, knew that he was not the Prime Minister of a state, and that there was no scope for politics in Northern Ireland beyond the routine of ensuring that Protestants heads were adequately counted at each election.

There were twice as many Protestants as Catholics at the start, in 1921. To prevent that superiority from being eroded, it was necessary that the Protestant breeding rate should be kept up. Catholic was more child-friendly and tended to produce a higher breeding-rate quite independently of political concerns. This could be compensated for by a higher rate of emigration. And that was Northern Ireland politics for two generations. The Catholic community was curbed but was otherwise left to its own devices.

The Unionist regime in the pseudo-

state knew that the Catholic third of the population was beyond its reach and it did not bother trying to reach them. There was no common ground of politics on which propaganda might be effective in altering the balance of forces. The *status quo* maintained itself without political patronage of academia or publishing. The result was that during those two generations only a trickle of books was published in or about Northern Ireland.

That changed drastically when Whitehall set aside its Northern Ireland facade and took direct control of things. Westminster politicians in the Northern Ireland Office could not simply accept the state of affairs that Westminster had established in Northern Ireland. They were habituated to party politics and to incessant propaganda with a view to influencing the uncertain middle ground between the parties, on whose mood swings the winning and losing of elections depended.

There was no party-politics in Northern Ireland. The first time I went to the Labour Club in Belfast (RIP), the first thing I saw was the big notices saying that Party Songs were forbidden. It was a perfectly sensible injunction. The things called parties in Northern Ireland were not parties as understood in Britain or the Republic. And the Northern Ireland Labour Party was not a political party but an attempt to establish a refuge from Northern Ireland politics.

The Westminster politician given the job of running the Six Counties for a couple of years had to discover that he had no electoral connection—or political connection of any kind—with that region of the democratic British state. He had to find it out for himself because it was a well-kept secret of the state—even though it was at the same time something that should be obvious at a casual glance.

He had to be doing things. Ambitious politicians got nowhere by not doing things. And he had to believe that the populace was impressionable—or at least that there was an impressionable stratum in the populace—which in this case was two populaces. So he set propaganda schemes in motion for shifting Unionist opinion one way and Nationalist opinion in the other. Anybody who came up with a cock-eyed idea about how this might be done would soon be in the money.

It all came to nothing of course—except for the influence it exerted on the immediate circle of the recipients of the patronage. Unionists remained Unionist and Nationalists Nationalist, and all the

expensive 'spinning' was instantly unravelled and discounted in the process of being heard.

I had heard about Unionist patronage before I went to Belfast. There was scarcely any British interest in Northern Ireland in the mid-1960s. The Communist Party (through its Connolly Association) put a lot of effort into sustaining a small propaganda group. I wasn't a member of either but I read the publications and believed in heavy Unionist propaganda manipulation of public opinion. Then I found there wasn't any.

Joe Deighan was one of those CP propagandists. About twenty years into the War, I ran into him at a Robert Lynd Conference at the Ulster People's College in Belfast. I had heard that the Communist Party had recently got a million pounds from the Northern Ireland Office to develop it. He didn't deny it. I congratulated him on their success in making the world believe that there was a totalitarian Unionist patronage system when in fact there was none at all. He looked smug. I said they had described me as a Unionist stooge, but I had never got a penny, while they were rolling in it. He replied, in the most heartfelt way: "*But you write pamphlets!*"

I made one application for patronage. I did it reluctantly because I have a disabling sense of reality about these things. But I was assured that there was money for the asking, and I had to apply for it to show that the patronage system was purposeful and discriminatory. The application was for a subsidy to help with the publication of a selection of Thomas Moore's writings. There was nothing of Moore in print—not even the songs—not to mention his pamphlet supporting the restriction of Roman influence on the Church in Ireland during the Veto Controversy, or his writing about Captain Rock. The response was of course a refusal, accompanied by a comment that Ireland had had too much of Moore. The bureaucrat who refused the subsidy and wrote the note was Seamus Heaney's poetic colleague, Michael Longley.

Another application was made to another authority about ten years later. The reply was that, since Athol Books had published many books without a Government subsidy, it was clearly a commercial business and therefore did not qualify for a subsidy.

I do not complain about this. It might be said that my class view of things is rather primitive. Those revolutionaries who elected to make revolutionary careers

in the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) certainly regard it so. But at least it saved me from disappointment. The State gets what it pays for. It did not want what I had, and therefore did not pay for it. It got what it wanted from the revolutionaries in the ISAs and paid for it with Professorships, raised one of them to its nobility, and ensured they were amply but not too critically reviewed in the most important journals. That is how government works in Belfast. It is somewhat different in London, where the State has been scarcely distinguishable at times from the two great Parties that constitute its political life. But the two Parties that make up the political life of the State cohere into a single force when it comes to dealing with the region of the state which they have conspired to exclude from its democracy.

British Government plays both sides against each other in Northern Ireland in the hope of creating a middle. It does things which are left to the operation of party politics in Britain.

Edmund Burke was of the view that the vigour of the British State resulted from the great variety of things, often contradicting each other, that went on in it. He was the philosopher of party-politics as the motor force of representative government of an Imperial society. That variety was not sustained by the subordinate government of Belfast outside the democracy of the state. When Westminster had to resort to "*direct rule*"—still outside the democracy of the state—it sought to create the illusion of that variety by multifarious patronage: hoping, no doubt, that this illusory variety would eventually become real and manipulable. But it hasn't happened. And I could never see how, outside the arrangements that made things buzz in England, it might happen.

The point I am trying to make is that the title of McIntyre's Thesis is not self-evidently absurd.

I can say nothing about the case he makes for it as I have not seen it. But I can see how the notion that Britain arranged the War might occur to somebody. It would be just one more unaccountable thing in its conduct. It undoubtedly arranged the situation from which the War arose, and not one of its apologists—from Nicholas Mansergh down to Professor the Lord Bew—has ever attempted to account for it.

The statesmen who set up the Northern Ireland facade on the British State could not conceivably have imagined that they were doing it for the purpose of bringing about 'good government'. (One of them



was an Editor of Bagehot and he would have known by reflex that he was breaking the basic rules of 'good government' by which the English Constitution functions.) It might have served the immediate purpose of gulling the gullible, bravado, element of Sinn Fein that formed itself around Collins. But that purpose was soon served. Collins himself was broken when Whitehall ordered him to launch 'civil war'. The Republican Treatyite element in the Free State Army was faced down by the Treaty Loyalists in 1924. The Treaty Government was happy to be allowed to throw in the towel and accept the Boundary Commission's consolidation of Northern Ireland in 1925.

What was the point of maintaining the mischievous Northern Ireland facade after that? There is no reasonable doubt that it had a point. The British State is not a force of Absolute Evil in the world. (I thought the notion of Absolute Evil had been discarded in our enlightened times which have abolished Satan, but I noticed its appearance in the *Dictionary Of Irish Biography*, published recently by Cambridge University Press and the Royal Irish Academy.) The dreadful things done by Britain have always had a purpose. I can only see its long-term purpose in maintaining Northern Ireland after 1925 as being leverage on politics in the South.

So I do not dismiss as patently absurd the notion that Whitehall, which imposed the mischievous Northern Ireland system in defiance of the rules of good government, might also have arranged to have a war within it.

Back in 1970 I did not see how a war effort—as distinct from an occasional terrorist incident—might be sustained in Belfast. What I knew of guerilla war came largely from growing up in North Cork, which had fought a war in the generation before me. But that was a small-farming area which, though engaged in market activity, was still capable of being self-sufficient. The British tried economic demolition but it didn't work. Creameries might be wrecked, but they were a comparatively new institution and life was possible without them.

Then in the 1930s Britain tried to break Fianna Fail by Economic War—closing its markets to Irish goods—and failed again, because of the potential for self-sufficiency.

But cities cannot be self-sufficient. And war in Northern Ireland had to be urban. Safe havens might be established in the country, but this was not a case in which rural war would encircle the cities.

The unfortunate Professor Fitzpatrick of Trinity College wrote that there were two revolutions in Ireland around 1921 and each established a state dominated by a conservative ruling class which resisted social reform. But Northern Ireland in 1970 was a welfare state.

Bew, or Patterson, or both, wrote in some book that the Northern Ireland State was established in 1921 and was destroyed in 1972. When a modern State is destroyed, everybody who lives in it is made acutely aware of the fact. If Northern Ireland was a State, it was undoubtedly a modern State. What could be more modern than a welfare state? But it was possible that somebody who was completely uninterested in politics might have lived through 1972 and never suspected that a State had been destroyed.

A facade was removed, but the welfare system, and every other function of the modern State, carried on operating as if nothing had happened.

There were Unionist calls for the rebel areas to be squeezed economically as well as being patrolled militarily. The State did not heed the call. The war was fought on welfare.

The State was beyond the reach of Unionist power. This was the case even when the Unionists were apparently in power. The State proper never subordinated itself to its facade.

British Governments have an extraordinary aptitude for pretending that they intend to do something they have no intention of doing. Witness the game the Government played with Europe over joining the Euro. It goes to the edge, but never goes over.

An earlier Government persuaded Collins that Northern Ireland would be whittled away territorially and made unviable economically, and then ensured that neither happened. British Governments subsidized Northern Ireland from the start, and when Labour came to Office in 1924, full of anti-Unionist rhetoric, the Tories and the Liberal remnant made it understand that things were not as they seemed.

So much was not as it seemed in British Northern Ireland—there was so much on the British side that was make-believe that others believed—so why could it not be that the War was mere role-playing? With real casualties, of course. That's a necessary part of the game.

Bew and Patterson set out to establish a rigorous theory of Leninist Imperialism.

I don't know if they ever achieved it—or thought they had. But I noticed in their first book that they seemed to take Lenin's and Bukharin's theories to be identical although they were very different and Lenin rejected Bukharin's theory.

British Imperialism involved much role-playing for purposes of manipulation. Britain created the capitalist world market and set about compelling others to submit to it—to make their living in it. Since the "others" were of many different kinds, it had to devise many different ways of handling them. And it had to devise many different ways of dealing with each, applying whichever met the needs of the moment.

Its Great War of 1793-1815 prevented the consolidation of a Continental market under French hegemony. Its Great War of 1914-19 prevented the consolidation of a Central European/Middle Eastern market fuelled by the German economy. There were blueprints for many constructions which it was never found opportune to build. Seton-Watson was the creator of Czechoslovakia. He was given the job of doing it. If Austria had responded to certain overtures, Czechoslovakia would probably never have been heard of. But, since Austria remained loyal to its Treaty obligations, Seton-Watson's entirely unrepresentative group of Czechoslovaks found themselves becoming a power in European affairs.

There was no semblance of a Czechoslovak nation. There were Czechs and Slovaks. Neither had raised a national rebellion against the Hapsburg Empire, let alone the two together. There was not even a Home Rule movement. In Ireland there had been an unchallengeable Home Rule movement in electoral dominance for thirty years. There had been a military insurrection. And there had been a democratic election which mandated the establishment of independent government. But Ireland was judged at Versailles not to merit consideration as a nation-state. But the mythical Czechoslovakia was made an independent state. And it was given a vast number of Hungarians to govern, while the Irish national movement could not be allowed to govern about the same proportion of Protestants, even on Home Rule terms.

Then, since the Czechoslovak state seemed shaky from the start, a major British newspaper took up the cause of the oppressed Hungarians, covering the possibility that it might become expedient to dismantle Czechoslovakia. And Hungarian oppression by the Czechs was made a sacred cause by being made the subject of

a 'Scarlet Pimpernel' novel.

This kind of thing was replicated all over the world—except, I suppose the American Continent, where the Monroe Doctrine was not challenged—by the British world State.

It was not because I thought the British State was good that I spent twenty years trying to get the Six Counties integrated into its politics. It was because it was the state.

When I was young in Slieve Luacra—which had not subjected to the British war propaganda—I read Nietzsche, who had been the great demon of the anti-German culture of two World Wars. The demonisation had been pioneered in "*Our War*" by Home Rule fanatic Tom Kettle in the London press in August 1914. But Slieve Luacra had lived its own life during all that time. So I could read Nietzsche unproblematically and agree with him that "*the state is the coldest of all cold monsters*". No doubt what he had in mind was the new German State of 1871, which absorbed the petty kingdoms, but the observation certainly applied no less to the British Empire.

But the State, monstrous though it is in human terms, had established an irresistible supremacy over life. One had had to adapt to its requirements in order to live. The obvious problem about Northern Ireland was that it was *in* but not *of* the British state, and it was therefore not possible for the populace to submit to the requirements of the state.

A Unionist intellectual wrote in the 1980s that the philosophy of Unionism was superior to the philosophy of Nationalism because it was a philosophy of state. The state was a unifying influence between individuals while nationalism was divisive. The argument was remarkable in its appreciative quoting of Hegel on the virtues of the State. The writer aspired to be British in outlook. But, in British political culture, from the moment that Britain replaced France with Germany as its great, enduring enemy, Hegel was very much in disfavour. He was presented as a major source of "*Prussianism*", and then of course as a major source of Nazism.

Britain, the most calculating and aggressive State in the world for a couple of hundred years, presented itself, when making war on Germany, as scarcely being a State at all. It could do this because in the course of its long, pseudo-religious, Reformation, it had destroyed the traditional culture of England, had atomised society, and had reconstructed it

around the State. It then simply took the State for granted as the framework of life, while other societies following in its wake were laboriously forming themselves into States.

But that Unionist writer, whose experience of British life was Northern Ireland, appreciated Hegel's praise of the State as the culminating achievement of History because Northern Ireland bore some resemblance to a German petty kingdom of Hegel's time, yearning for the security of existence in a well-formed State.

Back in 1969-70 I had a somewhat similar notion. When Jack Lynch dogmatically rejected the suggestion that the Ulster Protestant community should be recognised as a distinct national community, as a basis for opening civilised communication with it, I thought the UK was a more suitable framework for achieving a settlement of the Northern conflict than the Republic. It was a state which included a number of nationalities with a form of politics that was not based on these nationalities. It had an effective form of party-politics based on things other than nationality, and members of the various nationalities participated in the political life of the state in terms of the issues presented by the party-politics.

But then I asked why intense national conflict constituted political life in Northern Ireland, if it was part of a multinational state which operated by means of a form of politics beyond nationality. (Scottish and Welsh nationalism were fringe movements forty years ago.) The answer was obvious: Because Northern Ireland was excluded from the party-politics that made Britain viable as a multinational state.

The argument about the superior merit of Unionism as a general principle therefore had no practical bearing on the conflict between Ulster Unionism and Irish Nationalism.

The very fact that the "*connection with Britain*" was sustained by an Ulster Unionist movement meant that Ulster in its political life was not part of the Union. The union of England, Scotland and Wales was not maintained by Unionist movements. It was maintained incidentally, without Loyalist manifestations, by participation in the party politics of the state.

To argue the thesis of McIntyre's title, it would be necessary to go into the mode of existence of the British state in general,

and its relation to the anomalous Northern Ireland part of it in particular. I don't know he does that, and focuses on the manipulative operations of the Whitehall spider.

It seems that Lord Bew and Professor Patterson were in some degree his mentors. They certainly do not do that. They are very protective indeed of the innocence of Whitehall with regard to the Six County part of its state.

\*

Patterson, in his *Ireland Since 1939*, acknowledges "*helpful suggestions*" from McIntyre. And, when quoting him about the first Provo Convention, he says "*Dr. McIntyre provided me with access to a copy of his thesis*" (p389). But the title he gives is different from the intriguing one McIntyre is credited with elsewhere.

Patterson writes about "*the Northern Ireland state*"—which is a clear case of false consciousness. It is the name of a thing that did not, and does not, exist. The name carries meanings which do not fit what did exist, and as an element in the understanding it prevents what did exist from being thought about realistically.

Patterson, as a Stickie, is committed to the view that the Provos arose as a sectarian nationalist force. But with the fall of Stickiedom, the collapse of the Unionist Party which it advised, the decline of the SDLP under the pressure of peace, and the emergence of the Provo gunmen as competent administrators and capable politicians in a difficult situation, and their success in establishing a *modus vivendi* with Unionists such as no 'Constitutional Nationalists' ever achieved, he seems to have modified his view of them somewhat:

"Although the Provisionals had a less nakedly sectarian agenda than that of loyalist groups, their campaign was also tainted by sectarianism. Until the onset of the 'Ulsterisation' of security policy in the mid 1970s, the Provisionals had a large and easily identifiable non-Protestant target in the British Army" (p228).

Whitehall lent the Provos a Republican appearance for a few years by presenting them with a non-sectarian target in the form of its own Army. I suppose that fits in with the view that the whole thing was the product of Whitehall manipulation.

But, if there was a 'Northern Ireland state', why would the targeting of Protestants necessarily be sectarian? If such a State existed, then it was a Protestant state, run in the interests of Protestants,

and staffed by Protestants, especially so in its coercive apparatus. Why would it have been sectarian to make war on it?

The Provos went to war against the British State—or against the State, which was British. Patterson's reference for their lapse into sectarianism prior to 1974 is Alvin Jackson. I don't think I'll bother to look it up.

He seems to suggest that "*Ulsterisation*" made the Republican War sectarian from then on. He does not explain what *Ulsterisation* was.

It was a Whitehall attempt to work up a Protestant/Catholic war in place of the Republican/British War. The Secretary of State, Merlyn Rees, in a fit of pique over failing to break the Protestant Strike against the Council of Ireland dimension of the Sunningdale Agreement in May 1974, decided to construct an Ulster Nationalist movement. *Times* correspondent Robert Fisk was briefed to write about "*the Strike that broke the British in Ulster*". Loyalist paramilitary leaders were taken to high-powered conferences abroad and persuaded that "*British withdrawal*" was imminent and that they should prepare themselves to take Northern Ireland in hand as a State. It was their business henceforth to crush their enemies.

This was a State programme to work up a sectarian civil war in its Six County region. The State was in a stalemate in its war with the Provos. It tried to change the structure of the conflict and bring about generalised Protestant/Catholic mayhem. The forensic moralism which is an important part of the apparatus of the British State would have been able to make good use of that mayhem if it had come about.

I got to know of the scheme right at the start. In such a situation theory is of no use, and the more pseudo-scientific it is, the more useless it is. It's a matter of judgment, for which there are no rules. I didn't think there was the remotest possibility of British withdrawal. I treated the thing as a ploy, a gambit. I dashed off a pamphlet, *Against Ulster Nationalism*, directed at the Protestant community. That is not why the gambit failed. It failed because the Provo leadership held to its course against the State, while doing what was necessary to ward off the Ulsterising.

Was that in the British script?

**Brendan Clifford**

Unpublished Letter, submitted to *Irish Times*, 22nd March

## Tall Stories in the name of history

Part II of TV3's publicly funded *In the Name of the Republic* airs on March 25. It is set to feature tall stories from the late Fianna Fáil TD Martin Corry, who served in the IRA during the War of Independence.

Part I on March 18 aired with egg on its face. It promised much with dramatic re-enactments and photographs of a JCB, archaeologists in tow, digging up a field in Laois. They searched for three 'disappeared' bodies, allegedly interred by the IRA. The presenter, Professor Eunan O'Halpin of TCD, named two as those of JJ Fitzsimons and Joseph Cooney from Tipperary.

No bodies emerged. 'Naturally, we are disappointed', said Professor O'Halpin. However, good news followed. The presenter appeared before the credits rolled to inform us that, actually, the two gentlemen he named were not executed. This explains why they were not unearthed by the JCB. Cooney and Fitzsimons lived on oblivious of the excitement and subsequent deflation they would one day generate.

Professor O'Halpin then announced Part II. The programme will feature the sometimes-fantastic claims of Martin Corry. It will be interesting if these include Corry's reported sighting of a supernatural hell hound 'the size of a suckling calf' that 'moved mysteriously through a locked door'. His story of a Black & Tan overpowering him, only for Corry's patriotic mother to appear and whack the Crown Forces miscreant over the head with a shovel, will make for equally riveting re-enactment.

**Niall Meehan**

## How fares 'Ulster'?

About 10 years ago a dispatch of Oliver Wright was found in the archives. Wright was the representative in the North of the UK Government, sent over by Jim Callaghan in August 1969 after the deployment of troops. Wright's role was to explain British policy to Chichester-Clark, get a Westminster input into Stormont, and "*put some stiffening into the administration*".

Another dispatch of Wright's was discovered by the Pat Finucane Centre in the archives this month. It was his leaving assessment of 'Ulster', written on 6<sup>th</sup> March 1970.

Wright's first dispatch to Whitehall set out '*Political Guidelines for the Pacification of the Province*'. In it he referred to fears of the member of the "*Protestant settler majority*", not only for—

"The loss of political power within his own community, but his absorption into the larger society of Southern Ireland—alien in smell, backward in development and inferior in politics. What was the Reformation about, if not to liberate political man from the tyranny of priests? ...so little credit is given to these fears... Our central purpose should be to support the N.I. government, both to keep the problem of Ulster at arm's length and because they alone can accomplish our joint aims by reasonably peaceful means... This might entail the use of

force against Catholics... but... would be the only way of ensuring that Catholic grievances were eventually addressed, H.M.G. might have to be cruel to be kind. And it would be better than the use of force against the Protestant extremists, however repulsive their attitudes and behaviour, since they are the majority community and confrontation with them would fulfil Lord Craigavon's prophecy that the eventual resolution of the Ulster problem would come when the Protestants fought the British army. And that, I should think, H.M.G. would wish to avoid at all costs."

Wright's dispatch corresponds with the account of Cabinet business published by Tony Benn, in which he described the basis of British policy as "*getting Ulstermen to carry the can*". Interestingly, this same phrase was used in Wright's dispatch, when he says of the Ulster Unionist Party—

"with the possible exception of Mr. Brian Faulkner, none of the present N.I. government is so fond of power for its own sake that they will cling to office; on the contrary, altogether too many of them would be only too pleased to return to their offices and their farms and leave it to H.M. government to carry the can."

When the dispatch was released, Ronan Fanning commented in the *Irish Times* (26.2.00) that, "*Wright's advice provided the blueprint for British policy in Northern*

*Ireland in 1969-70*". In fact, Wright's dispatches were merely a reiteration of the British policy of arm's-length pacification of the North from Partition to the present.

The British arm's-length policy towards the North began in 1921 and has continued more or less ever since. The Stormont Parliament was imposed on the province largely against the wishes of the Unionists as a price to pay for the continued British connection. There was a trade-off made—Britain would continue to support Unionist power in Ireland politically, financially, and militarily, as long as the Protestants would take responsibility for the pacification of the Northern Catholics.

Because it suited her interests, Britain would turn a blind eye to the injustices of the system they established, as long as the Ulster Unionist Party maintained control of the fiefdom allotted to it to govern on Britain's behalf. In late 1969 the British Government's priority was to maintain the semi-detachment they had established in 1920 and to maintain this at all costs, despite the fact that this would preserve the system that was generating conflict. If it were a choice between maintaining the arms-length position of 'Northern Ireland' and attempting to solve the problem through involvement, the former primary policy over-rode the latter secondary concern.

The communal system of politics established by Britain in the North took the only form it could—Protestant pacification of Catholic. The operable means of politics was that originated by the Ulster Unionist Party in conjunction with the Unionist Party and the British military establishment at the time of the Home Rule crisis—the use of force or the threat of force. For forty years the Ulster Unionist Party successfully managed this system by minimising the use of the devolved parliament, thereby pacifying the Catholic masses through the beneficial qualities of the British welfare state—and by maximizing the powers of police, thereby pacifying those croppies who still wouldn't lie down.

The fundamental weakness of this system was exposed by the Catholic Civil Rights movement. When what Britain, the advanced liberal democracy run by a socialist Government, was turning a blind eye to was put on TV screens, pressure built on O'Neill to manage change in the system. However, the Civil Rights agitation and the adverse publicity created in the world did not bring the British to address the situation. British policy remained; supporting Unionist power and

pacifying Catholics—albeit more effectively by establishing control through minimal reform.

But in August 1969 the Unionist sub-Government endangered the cosy arrangement and very nearly threw it all away when their private army, after being repulsed in Derry, attacked West Belfast and began a conflict that led to war. Unionism failed to fulfil its side of the bargain with the British—it lost control of its policing function of the Catholics, or rather its police lost control of their ability to police the Catholics.

So the British concluded that the administration "*needed stiffening*". Hence the arrival of Oliver Wright—who Wilson termed "*rather less than a governor, rather more than an Ambassador*".

The latest dispatch of Wright's was discovered by the Pat Finucane Centre in the archives in March 2013. It was his leaving assessment of 'Ulster', written on 6<sup>th</sup> March 1970 and some extracts from which appear below

In the first part of the 10 page *Confidential* report Wright acknowledges that Britain created the problem of 'Northern Ireland' after failing to hold the entire island through a scheme for unitary Home Rule:

"For 700 years the English in their folly sought to govern the Irish and employed every method including, alas, the plantation of colonists to achieve their aim. When they grew weary of ill-doing and decided towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to leave the Irish to their own devices their Scots-Calvinist colonists shouted, 'Hey, what about us?' The inevitable non-solution was partition, with two Irish governments, an independent native Catholic one in Dublin and a subordinate, colonial Protestant one in Belfast. The main thing at the time was to wish the problem away. It is hardly surprising that, until mid-1969, Ulster was, and felt, remote, neglected and unhappy"

It is interesting to note that Wright was aware of the negative effect of Britain's detachment of the province on its citizens. The "*non-solution*" (temporary expedient?) of partition then created 'Northern Ireland' which produced the following:

"A land inhabited by two minorities, each with the defensive/aggressive mentality of a minority. It is a tribal society and the two tribes, the colonists who do not want to be absorbed by the natives and the natives stranded by partition on the wrong side of the border... In fear of domination by the South, Unionists took care to dominate the North. Orange-Protestant ascendancy is what Ulster has been for the fifty years of its

existence; ironically enough, it has been the existence of British-style democracy based on universal adult suffrage which has guaranteed and perpetuated a most un-British style injustice towards the Catholic minority."

Wright writes as if this has little to do with Whitehall although the whole thing came from that source. The idea of 'two minorities' looks a strange observation. In fact, if Britain had simply partitioned the island and had not created 'Northern Ireland' it would have had the 'two minorities' within the UK State. But it chose not to do this.

There is no disputing that the Northern Catholics represented a minority so the only sense that can be made of the idea that the Ulster Protestants were one was in their own perception as a stranded 'minority' on the island, detached from the British body politic and left to do the needful in the territory left to them. And through this act of British policy they developed the same fears and behaviours as the real minority.

Wright notes that British-style democracy did not produce democratic outcomes in 'Northern Ireland'. But he failed to go any further into this question. But later on in his report what he means becomes clear in his view that "*the existence of British-style democracy based on universal adult suffrage... has guaranteed and perpetuated a most un-British style injustice towards the Catholic minority*". He calls this "*undiluted democracy*"—presumably meaning that the imposition of what normally constitutes democracy i.e. majority rule in 'Northern Ireland' has been responsible for the character of the regime. But there seems to be only two ways out of this problem—either by designing a system that 'diluted' democracy and over-rode the majority-rule principle of democracy or else finding a way of dissolving the communal blocs. And Britain attempted neither in the crucial times between 1970 and 1973.

In his analysis of *'The Present'*, Wright noted in his report (in March 1970):

"Although gloom tends to be the prevalent physical and moral climate of Ulster, things are immeasurably better to-day than they were six months ago. When the Army moved in Ulster was on the brink of civil war; to-day, a tolerable calm prevails on the streets, Catholics sleep without intolerable fear in the beds... Then, Ulster was a land of discrimination and injustice: to-day the symptoms of discrimination are being

treated by law and the causes of discrimination—too few houses and too few jobs—are being tackled by a substantial injection of finance from Westminster. Then the Unionist Government was disorientated and the Opposition in a state of near-hysteria; to-day, the Government is slowly recovering its confidence and the Opposition is pretty relaxed.

"The politics of the streets are in consequence giving way to the politics of the ballot-box and the centre of interest and concern is moving from the Catholic to the Protestant community. In 1969 the Civil Rights movement could get the Catholic masses on to the streets to demand the redressal of Catholic grievances and make the reputation of John Hume in the process. Nominated bodies—the Police Authority, the Central Housing Authority, the Community Relations Commission—representative of the whole community, are now being set up to redress the built in injustice of undiluted democracy as it works out in practice in this province. In early 1970, therefore, the steam is going out of the Civil Rights movement and men like Hume are enhancing their reputation by cooling the situation. Civil Rights demonstrations throughout the province on the 7th of February against the Public Order Act, and on subsequent week-ends in Armagh and Enniskillen, lacked real popular backing and were virtually flops. The Opposition has returned to Stormont. But in winning its cause it now seeks a new role. In trying to form a united opposition party out of the present medley of nationalists, republicans, Labour and independents it is attempting fusion with some pretty fissionable material. But it is encouraging that the attempt is being made: a non-nationalist opposition with an economic and social programme could give a lead in breaking down the sectarian divisions of Ulster politics. It deserves support. The decision of the Northern Ireland Labour Party to seek affiliation with the British Labour Party is rather at variance with this trend."

Oliver Wright is under the impression here that, because the grievances raised by the Civil Rights movement were being addressed, the province could be put back in the box and the order could be given to 'Carry on!' or 'As you were!' The Catholics could be put to bed again and would not be disturbing Whitehall any more.

Wright noted that the 'constitutionalists' who were in the process of forming the SDLP were returning, to replace the Nationalist Party, as the Opposition in Stormont: "*But in winning its cause it now seeks a new role*". But that was just the problem: What would this "*new role*" consist of now that its objectives were being met and there was nothing to politic about?

Wright envisaged the construction of a new "*non-nationalist opposition with an economic and social programme could give a lead in breaking down the sectarian divisions of Ulster politics*". That was impossible when 'Northern Ireland' was not a State and the scheme was soon proved to be a fantasy.

By contrast, the NILP's decision "*to seek affiliation with the British Labour Party*" was dismissed by Wright as "*rather at variance with this trend*"—when it had much more substantial possibilities about it in creating something different than the old communal routine.

And yet it was the old routine that Britain substantially wanted to re-create, with slight modifications, so that Whitehall could return to its own concerns without the botheration of 'Ulster.

Wright believed that the main problem, now that the Catholics had been sorted, was the Protestant Unionists. They were bound to be put out by the concessions made to Catholics, the reform of their security apparatus, and the equality agenda that would prevent discrimination in their favour. The 'Protestant backlash' was anticipated and it was fortunate that "*the electorate... does not have to be consulted for another four years, and in four years massive aid from Westminster ought to have improved the quality of life and therefore the mood of the province*". And so the Protestants would be bought off.

Wright also thought Chichester-Clark was the right sort of chap for the job of minimizing British involvement:

"My own view is that Major Chichester-Clark, faced with a choice of personal preference or public duty, will opt for public duty... His Army background of service to the State, will, I think, encourage him to continue, but he will need all the stiffening we can give him... But even with our full financial and moral support it will be a close run thing; without it, we will have a constitutional crisis on our hands."

Presumably by "*a constitutional crisis*" Wright meant the problem which greater Westminster involvement might mean.

Wright concluded to his boss, James Callaghan, with congratulations on a successful policy and a job well done:

"As I pack my bags, therefore, I am cautiously optimistic. Provided it is clear what I am being optimistic about. I am not forecasting a final solution to the Irish question, nor the merging of the two tribes of Ulster into one nation. I am setting my sights rather lower, on a containment, on the management of the Ulster problem. For things are immeasurably

better here than when I unpacked six months ago... Your policy has already been right: to offer help, to insist on reform, but, to allow and insist on Stormont being the instrument of reform. Indeed there is no alternative except direct rule and no-one in their right mind wants that if it can be avoided."

And so Whitehall did everything to support the Unionist regime at Stormont, as it was losing control during 1970-1, in order to continue to keep the Province at arm's length. Catholic civilians were gassed, curfewed, interned without trial and shot on the streets (Derry's Bloody Sunday was merely the highest death toll. A similar massacre occurred in Ballymurphy, where eleven died at the hands of soldiers.)

Direct Rule was finally forced on a reluctant British Government when all this failed to stem the tide and the Sunningdale initiative was in essence a British attempt to end British commitment as quickly as possible. The Power-Sharing Executive/Council of Ireland initiative saw the conflict of the two elements of British policy—the Unionist prop and the arm's length objective. When the Unionist prop refused to support the arm's-length objective on the terms agreed, Westminster had to settle for Direct Rule again.

Oliver Wright's dispatches were significant because of the influence they had on his chief, James Callaghan, the Home Secretary, who was responsible for statecraft in 'Northern Ireland' during the Autumn and Winter of 1969-70, after Stormont had lost control of the situation.

Briefly he took his responsibility in earnest, rejecting the Unionist explanation of the breakdown that it was all the work of the IRA. He took the correct view that the IRA was a negligible force in the August breakdown but made the mistake of concluding from that that it would remain so. From the feel of the situation he got in the Catholic areas he visited he concluded that they would welcome incorporation into British politics and the Labour Party. So he proposed the Labour Party should extend its organisation and operation to 'Northern Ireland'.

If the British Government had acted decisively on his insights that Autumn by dismantling the Stormont system and launching a new departure within British policy, it is likely that events would have turned out very differently than they did. However, Callaghan did not act on the understandings he formed. He made a proposal to the Labour Party Executive

that the party should become involved in the 'Northern Ireland' region of the State but he did not push the issue and made nothing of it when the Executive rejected his proposal in January 1970. He believed, acting on Oliver Wright's dispatches, that things were settling down and it should be business as usual with regard to 'Northern Ireland'. And that was a fatal mistake.

It might have seemed that the Catholic population was lost irretrievably to Republicanism anyway and the activity of the Labour Party would have been inconsequential in the situation. But at this point the Provos had not been born—they were but a nucleus of potential development. It was possible to have aborted them before they took the form of life and began to grow.

And the great weapon that they had in relation to other possible developments was the continued existence of the Unionist system that Callaghan and Wright were determined to preserve, and the communal conflict it generated.

On the basis of the belief that things had settled, particularly within the Catholic community, Callaghan withdrew the apparatus of State from the nationalist areas of Belfast and Derry while neglecting to give any political leadership to them. And he left the Stormont regime in being as a facade in the hope that the Westminster intervention of August 1969 could be reversed. In leaving the Catholic areas of 'Northern Ireland' to their own devices immediately following the trauma of August, and with Stormont still functioning as a symbol of Unionist domination and a provocation to Catholics, Callaghan set up a situation in which the Provisional IRA was generated.

So, in a crucial period between September 1969 and June 1970, the British Government abandoned West Belfast to its own development. And it determined to remain aloof from the problem as much as possible. Thus, it left the Catholics of West Belfast to decide between the Provisionals and the Unionists, with no other alternative course.

When the British Government, which was a Tory one after June 1970, began to reassert its authority, after nine or so months a state of war had begun to take root with the forces which had developed during the time its authority had been suspended.

In 1969-70 in parts of 'Northern Ireland', the State abdicated what had always been regarded as a basic function of

States—effective government and a monopoly of force. Naturally both of these functions began to be taken up by groups of individuals who organised themselves in order to fulfil the role that a State usually performs in protecting communities both from external threat and internal anarchy.

The State could not suspend its activity for nine months and then take back the reins as if nothing had happened. The routine of government was disrupted; other forces established a new legitimacy and the consequences of this lasted decades.

The political predicament of the Cath-

olic community in this situation gave rise to the Provisional IRA when the situation was thrown into flux by the wild Unionist assault of August 1969. It began as quite an ambiguous movement during the Winter of 1969-70—a product of 'Northern Ireland', not of Anti-Treaty Republicanism. Within this development some old Anti-Treaty Republicans gained a new lease of life. But they were really incidental attachments to it, that provided some continuity to the past, an organizational structure to replace that which the State had withdrawn, and an all-Ireland network for the provision of the arms needed for defence.

Pat Walsh

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## Brutality From Bantry To Ballycastle

This brick of a book is subtitled "a full reprint of the official newspaper of Dáil Éireann giving news and war reports". It is also "Volume 1" and dated "12th July 1919 - 1st May 1920". The book 'does what it says on the lid/cover'. It is a record of sometimes astonishing brutality not just by the 'Black and Tans' and Auxiliaries (the latter all former officers in the Empire's armed forces), but also by the regular British Army and the RIC. The RIC (Royal Irish Constabulary) behaved ever more brutally as time went on. There is a substantial amount of information about what went on in the North / 'Northern Ireland' (or 'Carsonia' as it is occasionally called).

All the information the IB published was gleaned from official reports from Dublin Castle (centre of Crown authority for half a millennium), the Army (which ran the RIC), and from the heavily censored press in Ireland. There is some material from British and American journals. (The Daily Mail, despite being the object of derision in a famous 'Rebel' song seems to have taken a fairly rational attitude to what was going on and wanted the reign of terror ended). That there was a terror is made quite clear in the Irish Bulletin, and the editors make it equally clear that it did not start with the setting up of Dáil Éireann, in January 1919, or the election of Sinn Féin, the previous November. It started in very early 1917, shortly after the Volunteers were allowed out of internment (December 1916). The British armed forces were no respecters of persons. Teenage boys and girls were brutalised even shot and killed, as were persons in their sixties and seventies.

There is a long catalogue of property (shops, workshops and dwellings) being trashed and in a large number of cases, burned to the ground with all the family's property still in them. Not even personal effects of various sorts, personal, family, religious, or legal were

safe. Persons of every class and income were affected some unfortunate working men were killed by a mob of 'Tans, using bayonets. The Bulletin mentions attacks on Protestant people and property. Organisations, no matter how worthy or moderate, with the words 'National' or 'Irish' in their titles were given a hard time, one was the Irish Drapers' Assistants Association another was the National Land Bank. The latter was 'Sinn Féin' in ethos but an entirely non-violent organisation. Irish Language classes, teachers, journals and books were the objects of particular attention. Reading such material may get tedious after a while, but it is useful to have it all available.

Kevin Myers deserves his own copy.

An interesting aspect of this publication, designed to be given to interested journalists, of any nationality, but especially British and American, and - especially—to MPs, is the 'tone' of the writing. It is patently that of English Public School products. It was edited by Erskine Childers, and by Desmond Fitz Gerald (Garrett's father). Reading it must have been a very odd experience for (particularly working class) Labour MPs. The IRA, especially from 1919 onwards were—of course—criminal desperadoes murdering policemen from behind walls and bushes. But here it is depicted as Ireland's army engaging in, often victorious 'conflicts' with the RIC, 'Tans, and British (always carefully named 'English') army.

A further interesting aspect is that probably every townland in Ireland is mentioned, and towns from Bantry (Kerry) to Ballycastle (Co Antrim). Childers notes that no matter how intense the terror nobody reneged in their commitment to Irish independence. (The Castle placed great hopes on the local elections, but Sinn Féin, and its Labour allies swept the board in both. Labour even did well in 'Carsonia', but the ambiguities in the labour movement there are lost on the IB). For a publication made 'on the run' Kathleen McKenna (sneered at by Myers as a 'termagant' some time ago in his Belfast Telegraph column) doing most of the 'legwork', typing, printing and presumably posting it out, the Irish Bulletin is a remarkable achievement, and remarkably thoroughgoing.

Seán McGouran

Does  
It  
Up

Stack  
?

#### CHEMICAL WARFARE

The British commonly allege that Germany was the first Power to use chemical warfare. But now we *know* through the publication of *The Admiral's Secret Weapon—Lord Dundonald and the Origins of Chemical Warfare* by Charles Stephenson (The Boydell Press, UK) that it was the British themselves who as far back as 1814 had already considered using these, through the Secret War Plans of Admiral Cochrane—the core of whose plans was the use of chemical warfare.

I came across the original propagandist claim that, although British Admiral Thomas Cochrane had invented his 'Secret War Plans' for Chemical Warfare, the plans were not used by the British because the idea of using sulphur gas, sulphur dioxide and hydrogen sulphide was "*too revolutionary*". Churchill had no such reservations and, in October 1914, he was in touch with his officers on the subject, even though one of them noted that the use of gas or fumes would be contrary to the Hague Convention of 29th July 1899.

Stephenson's book states that the Plans of Lord Dundonald were stolen by an agent and passed to Germany, and were then adopted for use by the Imperial German armies, which went on to use gas at Ypres on 22nd April 1915 (pp130-131). Churchill got the plans at his own request on 16th October 1914.

In the 19th century discussions were held between Dundonald and the authorities: for example, a Memorial dated 2nd March 1812 was sent to HRH Prince Regent. He canvassed the Government in 1834, 1838, and 1840, wrote a long letter to *The Times* on 29th November 1845. On 10th September 1846 he presented what he called his Secret War Plan to the Admiralty in which he stated: "*To the Imperial Mind one sentence will suffice: All fortifications, especially marine fortifications, can under cover of dense smoke be irresistibly subdued by forms of sulphur kindled in masses to windward of their ramparts*" for "*ensuring at one blow the maritime superiority of England...*"

Lord Dundonald wasn't shy about publicising his Secret War Plan. He was a Scottish Lord and so had no automatic right to sit in the English House of Lords. As he was debarred under the 1707 Act of Union from election to the House of Commons, he had to get his Plan across

from outside the Parliament.

In fact, there was no need for the Germans to steal his Plan, because they could read *The Times* in 1846—even though the German State did not exist as such before 1871. Several copies of the Plan had been given to various English government agencies in the course of Lord Dundonald's long life, but they were mislaid or lost due to incompetence. In at least one case, that of Sir Al Alison who was Deputy Quartermaster General 1879-1882, the papers were taken. Alison "*took all his papers with him when he retired*". (! Perhaps this was routine—after all Winston Churchill had quite a trove of state papers in his 'history factory' which his estate later sold back to the State for millions of pounds.)

Arthur Conan Doyle may have got his idea for a Sherlock Holmes story from a 1914 episode in which the 12th Earl Dundonald told his family that the butler who—was of German extraction—had stolen the Plans from his safe and passed them on to the German Government. What was stolen appears to have been a copy of the 1846 Plans, as given at that time to the English Admiralty. At a Sotheby's Sale on 2nd June 1924 of the "Melvin Papers" (lot No. 70) was Earl of Dundonald's "*famous Secret War Plans .... Addressed to HRH The Prince Regent, March 1812, signed by Cochrane in five places*".

And so there had been widespread bureaucratic incompetence and, not only that, but in 1908 *The Panmure Papers* were published, giving a comprehensive account and description of the Secret War Plan. It seems that 'the Panmure Papers' book was unknown to the then Lord Dundonald and to the Admiralty. (Lord Panmure was blamed for the disastrous execution of the Crimean War. He was prepared to use chemical warfare in the Siege of Sevastopol but it was over before he could deploy the gas.)

In an appendix to Stephenson's book is given a list of twenty-one people who studied or were appraised of Dundonald's Secret War Plans. This is a useful list of names and short biographies, although not everyone mentioned in the book is on the list. Churchill is not on the list, although heavily involved in the Secret War Plans story. The book is very well-researched and chapters deal with chemical warfare back to biblical times—including an interesting reference to the use of naphtha which is "*... a light, tenacious and inflammable oil, which springs from the earth...*" and is easily obtainable no doubt in the areas of Mesopotamia, Arabia and Egypt.

Michael Stack ©

## TRADE UNION NOTES

**The Labour Court** has recommended that global eye-health company Bausch & Lomb award its 900 SIPTU workers a phased 6% pay increase.

The US multinational employs 1,100 at its Waterford base, and the Labour Court has recommended that the payment of the 6% through three separate pay increases be made on condition of co-operation from the workforce on normal ongoing change at the plant.

A pay freeze at the plant has been in place since 2010.

The Labour Court has recommended that the workers' pay increase should increase as follows: A 2% increase with effect from Mar 1, 2012; a 2% increase from Jan 1, 2013, and a 2% increase from Jan 1, 2014.

Bausch & Lamb's Irish subsidiary is unlimited and is not required to complete annual accounts disclosing revenues and profits.

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**Trade Unions** have branded a call by Superquinn founder Senator Feargal Quinn for the abolition of the minimum wage as "*nonsense*".

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) reacted angrily after Mr. Quinn said the €8.65-an-hour rate should be scrapped to allow people to work for whatever they can get.

Mr. Quinn said the minimum-wage rate, which is amongst the highest in the EU, was stopping firms from hiring.

But ICTU's chief economist, Paul Sweeney, said the comments were "*nonsense economics*", further commenting:

"Senator Quinn's claim that the minimum wage acts as some sort of mythical barrier to job creation is utter nonsense and has no basis in economic reality" (*Irish Independent*, 14.3.2013)

Mr. Sweeney said recession, endless austerity, and a huge bank-debt burden were the real barriers to job creation.

The economist added:

"Germany—which was cited by Senator Quinn—operates legal minimum-pay rates across a number of sectors, covering most of the workforce."

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#### **Wills—No 'Minimum' Worries Here:**

\* Cummins, Michael, *farmer*, Rathdowney, Laois, died December 16, 2011, left €3,237,681.

\* Bird, John, *farmer*, Ballyconnell, Longwood, Meath, died April 3, 2009, left €2,439,478.

\* Cronin, Patrick, *farmer*, Clashmorgan, Mourneabbey, Mallow, Cork, died December 3, 2011, €2,326,539.

\* Murphy, James, *farmer*, Clongriffin Lodge, Enfield, Meath, died October 7, 2000, left €1,788,782.

\* McGrath, William, *farmer*, Modeshill, Mullinahone, Tipperary, died January 25, 2012, left €1,399,881. (*Sun. Bus. Post*, 3.2.13)

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## Guilds continued

was initially based on a steady social order but inevitably the Calvinists there did not see the consequences of their errant doctrine.

"The Reformation, though entailing colossal social and economic consequences, was not in itself a social or economic, but a religious movement. In this it resembled Christianity, which was primarily—we might say exclusively—a religious movement, but which was so far-reaching in its implications, and entered so deeply into the life of man, that it entailed social and economic consequences of the first magnitude. As we said above, the great fabric of mediaeval civilization rested on a religious basis; and it was in virtue of its destruction of that basis that the Reformation possessed its great social and economic importance" (O'Brien, p.22-23).

"The Reformation was in essence and origin not a social but a religious movement, although, of course, the social and political struggles and aspirations of the time contributed in no small degree to its establishment and progress. Social re-organisation of any importance were only desired by the small Anabaptist groups... The Protestantism of the great confessions was essentially conservative, and scarcely recognized the existence of social problems as such. Even the Christian socialism of Geneva was only charitable and within the existing social framework. Apart from this, Protestantism in the main left things to take their course, after breaking down the forms—for the most part elastic and prudently designed enough—in which the mediaeval Church had endeavoured to confine them" (Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress*, p.23).

### MAX WEBER

"Max Weber warns us against the error of assuming that the reformers had any economic programme. The economic consequences of their activities were the result—often a result they would have deplored had they foreseen it—of their religious teaching" (George O'Brien, *An Essay on the Economic Effects of the Reformation*, London, 1923, p.23).

"We must not lose sight of the fact that the influence exerted by the Reformation on European life and thought was not confined to Protestant countries alone. The sneers of Morris and Bax at what they call 'modern jesuitical Catholicism' are not wholly without a shadow of foundation. To say, as these authors say, that modern Catholicism is but the reverse of the shield of which Protestantism is the obverse, is going too far; but it is true in so far as it points to the undoubted historical fact that the power for good of Catholicism as a social and civilizing

force was seriously weakened by the Reformation. So long as the whole Christian world was in unison on matters of faith and doctrine, the whole activity of the Church could be concentrated on the fulfilment of its spiritual and ethical ideals, and the Middle Ages did, in fact, witness the building up of a beautiful and harmonious civilization; but, when its authority had been attacked and its position challenged, the Church was perforce driven to adopt a defensive attitude and, necessarily, to devote to controversy a great part of the energy which it would otherwise have devoted to social progress" (O'Brien, p.34).

### RICHARD HENRY TAWNEY

R.H. Tawney, author of *The Acquisitive Society* (1921) states:

"The mediaeval Church, with all its extravagances and abuses, had asserted the whole compass of human interests to be the province of religion. The disposition to idealize it in the interests of some contemporary ecclesiastical or social propaganda is properly regarded with suspicion. But though the practice of its offices was often odious, it cannot be denied that the essence of its moral teaching had been the attempt to uphold a rule of right, by which all aspects of human conduct were to be judged, and which was not merely to be preached as an ideal, but to be enforced as a practical obligation upon members of the Christian community. It had claimed, however grossly the claim might be degraded by political intrigues and ambitions, to judge the actions of rulers by a standard superior to political expediency. It had tried to impact some moral significance to the ferocity of the warrior by enlisting him in the service of God. It had even sought, with a self-confidence which was noble, if perhaps over-sanguine, to bring the contracts of business and the transactions of economic life within the scope of a body of Christian casuistry" (p.44).

"The whole of history teaches the necessity of institutions. The unguided, unaided, individual action of man can never attain the same harmony and purpose as the action of a society enrolled in a conscious institution; and the gains won by all great human revolutions can only be consolidated by means of corporate effort" (O'Brien, p.48).

### WILLIAM CUNNINGHAM

"The Reformation attacked the unity and integrity of the Church, and, in so far as it succeeded in that attack, it undermined the foundations of the only power which was strong enough to keep in check the unbounded avarice and selfishness of man, and thus opened the way to the conception of a society of individuals, all guided simply by their own self-interest, indifferent alike to the welfare of the community and to the dictates of the

moral law. 'The full results of this change', according to Dr. Cunningham, 'did not appear at first, and there is so much evidence of gross corruption in the decadent Church of the fifteenth century, that it seems almost paradoxical to regard the papacy as moralizing influence in any department of life; but when papal authority was once set aside, there was no power that was strong enough to offer effective opposition to the advances of the commercial spirit, or to suggest suitable correctives. In this, as in other matters, it is necessary to distinguish the aims of the reformers from the changes which occurred in consequence of their action. Luther and Calvin paved the way for a thorough-going individualism both in Church and state, but neither of them set it consciously before him as an ideal.'..." (O'Brien, p.49, citing William Cunningham, *Christianity and Economic Science*, p.58).

### FRANCIS AIDAN GASQUET

"The momentous social results of sweeping away the monastic houses may be summed up in a few words. The creation of a large class of poor to whose poverty was attached the stigma of crime; the division of class from class, the rich mounting up to place and power, the poor sinking to the lower depths, destruction of custom as a check upon the exactions of the landlords; the loss of the poor of their foundations of schools and universities; and the passing away of ecclesiastical riches into the hands of lay owners" (Gasquet, *Henry VIII and the English Monasteries*-p.476-7).

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*Troeltsch, Ernst* (1865-1923), German Protestant theologian.

*Weber, Max* (1864-1920), German sociologist, philosopher and political economist.

*Tawney, Richard Henry* (1880-1962), British economic historian. London School of Economics. "An ardent socialist", he helped formulate the economic and moral viewpoint of the Labour Party in the 1920s and '30s. Author of "*The Acquisitive Society*" 1920.

*Gasquet, Francis Aidan* (1846-1929), British cardinal and scholar; Benedictine priest; librarian of the Vatican and archivist of the Vatican Archives; Catholic historian of the English Reformation.

*Cunningham, William* (1849-1919), born in Scotland, economic historian, a proponent of the historical method in economics, and an opponent of Free Trade. He became vicar of Great St Mary's, Cambridge, in 1887; he supported Joseph Chamberlain from 1903 onwards in criticizing the English free-trade policies and advocating tariff reform.

*Cobbett, William* (1763-1835) was an English pamphleteer, farmer and journalist; he believed that reforming Parliament and abolishing the rotten boroughs would help to end the poverty of farm labourers; opposed to the Corn Laws; not a Catholic, he became a fiery advocate of Catholic Emancipation in Britain. ●



## Guilds continued

such, but would have simply understood it as a branch of ethics which was dealt with by ecclesiastics, and so all moral life was governed by ecclesiastical legislation enforced by spiritual sanctions. Religious and economic life were thus entwined. A prime example of this was the mediaeval law of the Just Price that clearly shows the altruistic spirit that permeated the economic and social life of the time. The principle of the Just Price, that no one can arbitrarily raise the prices of a commodity, had to be observed in wages, buying and selling, and every contract of exchange. If this was not followed, the contract was adjudged to be unjust and invalid in conscience, and the aggrieved party had a claim to restitution.

"The same is true of political economy. The latter indeed is immediately concerned with man's social activity in-as-much as it treats of the production, distribution, and consumption of material commodities, but activity is not independent of ethics, industrial life must develop in accordance with the moral law and must be dominated by justice, equality, and love. Political economy was wholly wrong in trying to emancipate itself from the requirements of ethics" (*The Catholic Encyclopaedia*, 1910, p556).

"It follows that a society penetrated throughout, as mediaeval society was, by the ideas and teaching of dogmatic religion will continue essentially unchanged so long as no change occurs in the religion on which it is based. In order, therefore, to effect any far-reaching social change in such a society, it is necessary to attack the religion in which it is rooted... When in the extreme case the attack on the old religion is directed against its very foundations, and when the old faith is shaken from top to bottom, the social and economic consequences are bound to be correspondingly deep and revolutionary" (George O'Brien, *The Economic Effects of the Reformation* (1923).

The older Church sought to permeate political and social institutions with the religious spirit, but the trend of Protestant teaching was in the direction of the complete independence of the secular state.

In William Cobbett's (1763-1835) *History of the Protestant Reformation in England and Ireland*, we see something of the effects of the Reformation and its consequences on the lives of the average working man:

"The Reformation, as it is called, was engendered in lust, brought forth in hypocrisy and perfidy, and cherished and

fed by devastation, plunder, and by rivers of innocent blood; and, as to its more remote consequences, they are some of them now before us in that misery, that beggary, that nakedness, that hunger, that everlasting wrangling and spite, which now stare us in the face, and stun our ears at every turn, and which the Reformation has given us in exchange for the ease and happiness and harmony Christian charity enjoyed so abundantly and for so many ages by our Catholic forefathers" (William Cobbett, *A History of the Protestant Reformation in England and Ireland*, London, 1896, p.3).

### CHRISTIAN ETHICS

"In order to fully realize the essential changes which the Reformation wrought in the attitude of Christians towards ethical—and hence towards economic—affairs, we must remember that side by side with the appearance of the doctrine of justification by faith alone, and partly in consequence of it, there grew up the new conception of the Church as an institution concerned exclusively with the religious life of its members. The mediaeval Church had claimed to dogmatize on moral as well as on purely theological matters, and its teaching therefore penetrated into every department of private and public life. Anything resembling the modern notion that religion should be confined to Sundays, and should not be allowed to interfere with a man's business or pleasure on the other days of the week, was utterly foreign to the mediaeval mind. Every activity of man, on the contrary, was seen to be capable of being regarded from an ethical standpoint and of being followed by ethical consequences; and every department of ethics was conceived as being intimately bound up with man's spiritual life and, therefore, liable to be reviewed and regulated by the supreme spiritual authority" (O'Brien, p.42).

"In a society so conceived there could be no rigid division between the spiritual and temporal authority, between Church and state, such as is common in modern times. While, on the one hand, the Church was political and social as much as religious, the state, on the other hand, was at least as much religious as it was political and social" (O'Brien, p.43).

### PRIVATE JUDGEMENT

This was also reflected in the sphere of the individual for whom private judgement became a dogma. Thus Man became his own master and a self-centred approach to society was adopted. After all, one only needed a simple act of faith to save one's soul, and good works were no longer required for salvation, and the great charitable institutions of the Church were gone in many countries. Poverty became a disgrace rather than a mark of holiness as it had been previously.

Probably the most characteristic feature of this new point of view, which we may call the capitalistic spirit, is that accumulation of wealth is looked on as a good in itself... In other words, business for business' sake has become the watchword for the modern capitalist. His wealth is not designed for himself or for his enjoyment; it has ceased to be a means and has become an end.

This developed further with the Calvinistic idea of predestination. A successful business would be a clear sign of a predestined soul truly living out his "vocation". When this rupture from the old order and the idea of making money for its own sake was established, the inevitable consequence was an increasingly large gap between the rich and poor. This was echoed by the words of Pope Leo XIII in *Rerum Novarum* when he said that the workers "bore a yoke little better than that of slavery".

This capitalistic type of economy must also be able to operate unfettered by any restraint. These restraints that were considered bounden duties in the Middle Ages disappeared in the pursuit of money-making.

Gain being admittedly the only aim of the capitalist, profit becomes the sole standard of measurement of success or failure in life. In the Middle Ages, a transaction would have been judged on the basis of its moral worth and public service, but with the new order, the only standard of judgment was the profit which it promised.

"The Middle Age was not humanitarian; it had no shrieking philanthropies, for in its relentless logic the things of the flesh were of no moment; yet it developed a system of sick and poor relief which, in efficiency, has never been equalled, and which, in its union of ideal with practical ministry, puts to shame the modern palliatives of pauperism" (Elizabeth Speakman, *Rule of Saint Augustine*, Tout & Tait's Historical Studies, p.68).

### LUTHER AND CALVIN

The individualistic nature of the Protestants is indubitable, so why not apply the same principle to economic social life? This is seen especially in the countries that wholeheartedly embraced Protestantism. Although Luther's preference for the rural life led to a more conservative and reactionary view, it was nevertheless a break with the past, but not as profound as Calvin's. His ideas were a clear, unremitting rupture with the economic life of the Middle Ages, and very much geared towards town and city life. Life in Geneva

continued on page 24



# Guilds and the Reformation

"The craft guilds were the dominating feature of English industrial life between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries; by the time of Elizabeth I (1533-1603) they change in character and become something essentially different from the old craft guilds of medieval England. They have become associations of capitalists acting under the orders of the central Government" (Professor Lilian Knowles, *Labour Comment*, December, 2012).

Before considering the impact of the Reformation on the Guilds, it is important to note that legislation to control or 'nationalise' the Guilds came in 1437 when the Guilds were ordered to submit their rules to the Justices of the Peace or the chief governors of the cities. Further legislation on prices was introduced in 1503 by Henry VI. Following the Reformation and during the reign of Elizabeth I, the Statute of Artificers (1558-1563) was introduced to regulate the supply and conduct of labour.

## MEDIAEVAL WORLD

The following material on the Reformation stems from a Catholic perspective, indeed, from a "Mediaeval conception of the world". George O'Brien was the author of *An Essay on the Economic Effects of the Reformation* (1923).

In most quarters today, O'Brien would be regarded as a rank reactionary. He was no eccentric as some of today's academics claim. Up to the 1960s, he was a man regarded as very representative of his class.

## WHO IS GEORGE O'BRIEN?

The *Economics Of Partition* summarised O'Brien's ideas as follows—

"Even George O'Brien, the flower of Nationalist political economy, had grafted modern bourgeois economic theory onto a mediaeval conception of the world. He expressed his general world outlook in *An Essay on the Economic Effects of the Reformation* (1923). In his view, the great

catastrophe in history was the Reformation. But for the Reformation, the Catholic Church would have achieved the general industrial development of society, while keeping society (at least European society) together as a great, harmonious, whole. It would have achieved all that was good in the achievements of capitalism, while avoiding all that was evil, and would have thereby prevented the development of socialism.

"The source of all economic evil was the Protestant heresy. The characteristics of the earlier heretical sects "had been world-renunciation and asceticism, while those of the new sects in Protestant countries were extreme individualism" (O'Brien, p.27).

"The Catholic Church was making provision for the freeing of individual initiative, within certain limits, under the guidance and control of the Church. But the Reformation broke the power of the Church at the critical moment, and opened the way for the development of unrestrained individualism, which led in turn to the development of a socialist movement. Therefore, "both capitalism and socialism alike can be shown to have their common origin in the Protestant Reformation" (O'Brien, p.67)..."

(Or, as he expressed it in another work, Ricardo and Marx were "two Jews tugging at the same rotten rope", *The Phantom of Plenty*, p.50.)

"Capitalism found its roots in the intensely individualistic spirit of Protestantism, in the spread of anti-authoritative ideas from the realm of religion into the realm of political and social thought, and above all, in the distinctive Calvinist doctrine of a successful and prosperous career being the outward and visible sign by which the regenerated might be known. Socialism, on the other hand, derived encouragement from the violations of established and prescriptive rights of which the Reformation afforded so many examples, from the growth of heretical sects tainted with Communism, and from the overthrow of the orthodox doctrine of original sin, which opened the way to the idea of perfectibility of men through institutions" (O'Brien, p.171).

"He laments the disruption of Catholic mediaevalism, and looks to the future, only for its restoration.

"There is one institution and one institution alone which is capable of supplying and enforcing the social ethic that is needed to revivify the world. It is an institution at once intranational and international—an institution that can claim to pronounce infallibly on moral matters, and to enforce the observance of its moral decrees by direct sanctions on the individual conscience of men—an institution which, while respecting and supporting the civil government of nations, can claim to exist independently of them, and can insist that they shall not intrude upon the moral life of their citizens." (O'Brien, p.179) (Brendan Clifford, *The Economics of Partition, A Historical Survey of Ireland in Terms of Political Economy*, Athol Books, 1992)

## ECONOMICS AND ETHICS

The study of economics in mediaeval times was not a branch of learning on its own. St. Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274) would not have known anything of it as

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