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## Ireland On Auto-Pilot

Two months after the Election the state is still without an elected Government. But life goes on as usual. Could there be a more convincing proof of the durability and maturity of Irish democracy?

The Election came close to breaking up the party-system by which the state has been governed for about three-quarters of a century.

The final result meant that Fine Gael, with 50 seats of 158, could not hope to form a Government. Neither could Fianna Fail with 44 seats. All the other TDs together have 64 seats. This meant that, should FF abstain, the other TDs could bring down the Government by 50 votes to 64. However, with the support of 7 TDs from amongst the Independents and smaller alliances, Fine Gael could survive a Vote of No Confidence, so long as FF abstained. Indeed, it is so that FF can have the luxury of abstaining that Kenny had to negotiate for the support of Independents

Fascination with the intricacies of the situation has virtually eclipsed the Northern Ireland Assembly Election of 5th May.

The routine operation of a party system, in which one party gives way to another in response to slight changes in the mood of the electorate, requires that there should be nothing at issue between the major parties that is fundamental to the functioning of the state. It requires substantial consensus, within which the parties denounce each other in extravagant terms but hardly anybody takes it too much in earnest.

That was the case in the Irish state after 1938, when the Fianna Fail Government established *de facto* independence by taking command of the Ports which had been under British sovereignty under the Treaty, and 1939, when Fine Gael supported Irish Neutrality in Britain's latest Great War.

From 1922 to 1938-9 substantial consensus on fundamentals had been lacking. During the 1920s the Party put in power by Britain had tried to exclude the very large body of Republican opinion from representation in the Dail by making the swearing of

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## Britain At The Crossroads!

England is now mulling over its destiny. Is it to become European, or should it remain insular and universal?

The United States has ordered it to become European, and has threatened to damage it economically if it strikes out on its own.

The United States has always been "*exceptionalist*" in its world affairs. President Obama did not invent American *exceptionalism*. He is only the first President who expressed it bluntly.

The USA has, from an early stage in its existence, taken it to be its destiny to dominate the world. Until now it has preferred to state that ambition diplomatically and euphemistically while realising it by direct action at every opportunity. The fact that it now asserts it brazenly possibly indicates a growth of uncertainty about it. It is a sign of desperation rather than confidence. The best way to marginalise the world is not to tell it that its existence is marginal to the existence of the United States.

Sixty years ago the USA broke the British Empire by threatening to wreck

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## Brexit: United States Enters War (of words); *widespread collateral damage feared . . .*

Quite apart from all the indignant spleen he has aroused for venturing an opinion on the subject, President Obama has given the 'Leave' campaign perhaps one of its strongest and most concrete arguments to date: Brexit will exempt the UK from the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP).

As he said during his recent press conference with David Cameron,

"I think it's fair to say that maybe some point down the line there might be a UK-US trade agreement, but it's not going to happen any time soon because our focus is in negotiating with a big bloc, the European Union, to get a trade agreement done. The UK is going to be in the back of the queue."

For Eurosceptics on the Left who are inclined to Leave, this should be rather

welcome news, as it would preclude any Investor/State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) mechanism being imposed on the UK and allow the continuation in the UK of some degree of state sovereignty and therefore regulatory capacity over the corporate world.

The British Labour and Trade Union movement however, while strongly opposed to TTIP, has mostly come down on the side of Remain. But the only certain way of avoiding TTIP at the moment is by leaving the EU before it has a chance to come into effect. This therefore poses something of a conundrum.

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the Imperial Oath a precondition of contesting elections and entering the Dail and, when it lost its Dail majority in 1932, it tried to displace the system of Parliamentary democracy with a Fascist or Corporatist system. It was only when Fine Gael in 1939 accepted the accomplished fact of the independence of the 26 Co. state, and supported the practical assertion of that independence in September 1939, that routine democracy began in Ireland.

But, if consensus is the ground of functional democracy by parties, how could it be that the party system came close to disintegration at a moment when there was hardly any discernible difference between the two major parties, beyond the fact that there were two of them?

Consensus is not identity. There must be some identifiable difference between the parties—other than fine print in Election Manifestoes which hardly anybody reads—for the system of party-conflict to be functional: and a system without party-conflict at its core is not considered to be democratic nowadays.

Civil War origin, which was taken to be indicative of a difference of disposition or sentiment, was the identifier of difference within the consensus for three-quarters of a century. That ground of difference was then frivolously rejected as pre-historic and divisive by Fianna Fail. Under the influence of Micheal Martin and the party intellectual, Martin Mansergh, it disowned its anti-Treaty origins and adopted the Fine Gael position that the imposed 'Treaty', briefly submitted to by the electorate under threat of all-out Imperial reconquest, was the foundation document of legitimate statehood and democracy.

The process began with Bertie Ahern, who made Fianna Fail the party of managerial astuteness. And so the electorate in 2016 was presented with a choice between Tweedledum and Tweedledee. And, faced with a choice of nondescript parties, it voted heavily for individuals against parties.

The notion that Civil War politics must be rejected because the 'Civil War' happened almost a century ago is not a lesson one learns from British experience. It is a Civil

War that happened over three and a half centuries ago that is the source of the British party system. The Tories are Cavaliers, the Whigs came from the Roundheads. And, insofar as Labour is coherent, it is on the basis of Roundhead sentiment.

We have said repeatedly that the 26 County political system became destructive of itself because it went into denial about Northern Ireland under Jack Lynch. It is therefore appropriate that the only party that emerged with credit from the election is the all-Ireland party from the North, which dealt effectively with the pernicious Northern Ireland structure to the extent that it is now in government there along with Paisleyites.

In the Southern Election it forfeited votes by refusing to take the stand of encouraging people not to pay water charges, and it made the practical proposal of taking the matter out of politics to be dealt with by a State Commission to make recommendations.

Insofar as the Election was about something in particular, it was about the water charges. Half the people have paid them and half the people have refused. It was proposed that, while waiting for a Government to be formed, the Dail should debate the issue. Micheal Martin rejected the proposal. He would have had to say something definite in it. Should those who refused to pay have their debts written off, or should those who have paid be refunded? It is a nice problem for the law-and-order parties—who are very and law-and-orderish about the North—who have reduced themselves to the position that neither can govern and that, in one way or another, they are faced with the necessity of operating a Government together.

## Proportional Representation!

**April 1917—**

"Lloyd Geprge opened fire on me the moment we sat down on the subject of Proportional Representation... Evidently his mind had hardened since he spoke on the subject in the House and said he had 'no opinion' about it. He argued very strongly that it was 'a device for defeatong democracy'(.), the priciples of which was the majority should rule(.) and for bringing faddists of all kinds into Parliament and establishing groups and disintegrating parties"... "I argued the matter and chaffed him with his autocratic tendencies..."

From The Political Diaries of C.P. Scott

We are indebted to Donal Kennedy for drawing our attention to this quotation.

# Corbyn, Livingstone And The Semites

A campaign has erupted in the British Labour Party to label Jeremy Corbyn an Anti-Semite on the eve of local elections in which the anti-Brexit and anti-Socialist majority of the Parliamentary Party need the Party to do badly, so that they can get rid of Corbyn and snuff out the socialist revival which he has brought about amongst the greatly increased Party membership.

The occasion of the campaign seems to be a social media message, posted by a Muslim girl in the North of England a number of years ago, when Israel was engaged on one of its "mowing the lawn" exercises against the Palestinians. She suggested that the Zionist Jewish population imposed on Palestine by Britain, for the purpose of establishing a Jewish State which might be used against the Arab nationalism that Britain had stirred up against Turkey in the Great War, might be transported to the United States so that the Middle East might live in peace. Nothing was made of that comment at the time, or when the Muslim girl, Naz Shah, went on to help Labour defeat George Galloway and become a Labour MP. Her electronic posting all those years ago was dredged up, or had been saved up, for use at an appropriate moment.

She had long since retracted the comment and apologised, and had established friendly relations with the Jewish community of the Bradford Synagogue, whose leader, a refugee from Nazi Germany, has said that she is not an anti-Semite.

But the anti-Corbyn PLP would not let the matter rest and stirred up a big media furore, with front-page stories and copious TV coverage. Corbyn suspended her from Party membership.

But that was not enough. He was condemned by his Party opponents and the BBC for not suspending or expelling her as soon as it was alleged that she was an anti-Semite. *Anti-Semitism* appears to have become one of those things regarding which suspicion is proof of guilt—as was the case under the *Law Of Suspects* in France at the height of the Terror in 1793-4.

The matter would probably have declined into a continuous rumble if Ken Livingstone had not intervened to say that he saw no good reason why Naz Shah should have to apologise for what she said, still less been suspended from Party membership.

We have only heard such snatches of

## Redmondism at Laochra

I purchased 8 tickets for last Sunday at Croke Park on behalf of all the members of my family and a number of members of our extended family. It was a big occasion for us and as GAA fans it was to be the highlight of our centenary year celebrations.

We were deeply disappointed to see the name of John Redmond appear on the big screen along with footage of soldiers fighting in the Great War.

Many of the leaders who contributed to the process of achieving Irish independence considered the Great War to be primarily an unjustifiable war by Britain against its trade rival, Germany. These include: Roger Casement, James Connolly, Patrick Pearse, Bishop Edward Dwyer, Eamon de Valera and Kevin O'Higgins. When Redmondism was swept into the dustbin of history by the Irish electorate in 1918, that view of the war became the accepted view of the Irish democracy.

The popularity of the commemorations of 1916 throughout this year shows how little weight has been given to the anti-1916 propaganda of recent years by the majority of Irish people. It is indeed disappointing to see the GAA kow towing to the historical illiterates of Dublin 4.

I would be obliged if you would forward this email to the Aogan O'Fearghail, President of the GAA.

I should add that apart from the genuflection to Redmondism we enjoyed the games and the spectacle.

Dave Alvey

**The above complaint was sent to Ms Hoare, Croke Park, on 26th April. So far, no reply has been received**

what he said as the BBC and Channel 4 chose to broadcast, and we do not know how it came about that he mentioned the fact that Hitler supported Zionism when he came to power and that the Zionist organisation had dealings with him regarding the transporting of Jews to Palestine. But he said it—and the Anti-Corbynites thought they had struck gold. The *Daily Telegraph* led with the story *You Are A Disgusting Nazi Apologist* while the *Independent* headline was *Now Labour Really Does Have A Jewish Problem* (29.4.16). John Mann MP went ballistic, and television gave him ample coverage as he screamed denunciation of Livingstone as a liar and a Nazi apologist.

BBC's *Newsnight*—its late-night programme for calm intellectual consideration of the events of the day—said Livingstone "invoked Adolf Hitler" in his support of Ms Khan, but all it broadcast him as saying was that Hitler collaborated with the Zionist organisation for a while about transporting Jews from Germany to Palestine.

Anthony Beevor—a historian for whom one might have had some respect—was brought on to adjudicate on the facts of the matter. He condemned Livingstone's statement as "preposterous". And then, since he cannot have failed to know that there was Nazi/Zionist collaboration—he mumbled something incoherently to cover himself.

Corbyn then suspended Livingstone's Party membership. But it was suggested that he also considered, for a moment, suspending John Mann's membership too. And it is suggested that that is evidence of the Anti-Semitism which he finds it difficult to overcome, and which is spreading throughout the Party under his leadership.

BBC Radio 4 (Today Programme) came up with a statement by Seamus Milne, Corbyn's adviser, that "*Hamas will not be 'broken'*", and it asked if it wasn't time for Corbyn to distance himself from Islamism. Hamas is the elected Government of Gaza—a region of Palestine under permanent Jewish siege.

Ken Livingstone has over the decades been a political associate of Corbyn, but he is not a political innocent like Corbyn. He has been active in the big, bad world, and has achieved something in it. His basic political outlook may be largely illusory, but he has an aptitude for practical politics, and has had the defensive ideological skill to see off many media campaigns against him. He refused to treat Provo Sinn Fein as criminal, and still got himself elected Mayor of London. And we assume that he defended Naz Khan, who was not defending herself, because he had a basic respect for the truth of history in these matters and would not let it go by default. And so he presented his friend Corbyn with a test that Corbyn,

who had only been engaged in protest politics until he was suddenly elected party leader, could not cope with.

English politics is a combination of finesse and brutality. That combination is taken for granted on the Tory side. Livingstone is the only politician on the Socialist side for a couple of generations who had it. (Blair's successes were not Socialist. He merely took over the Thatcher programme when the Tory Party became stale through having been too long in Office.)

Something not mentioned at all during the hounding of Livingstone is the statement only a few months ago by the extreme Zionist Prime Minister of Israel, Netanyahu, that extermination of the Jews was not Nazi policy in the 1930s. Hitler only wanted them out of Germany.

The Zionist movement wanted Jews transported from Europe into Palestine so that it could build up a population on which to base the Jewish State which Imperial Britain had projected with the *Balfour Declaration* in 1917. The *Balfour Declaration* was adopted by the League of Nations on Britain's behest and the project of establishing a Jewish State in a territory where there were very few Jews was set in motion.

Anti-Semitism is a slippery concept. Before the *Balfour Declaration*, it was Anti-Semitic to assert that Judaism was not just a religion but was a distinct nationality, and that the Jews therefore would not assimilate to the nationality of the various states in which they lived, as they had a separate national purpose of their own. That meaning was reversed in the development that followed the *Balfour Declaration*.

The great Anti-Semite of the period following Hitler was the British Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin. Bevin was a powerful Trade Union boss in the 1930s. He held the Labour Party together, committed it to a war policy, laid the basis of the welfare state as Churchill's Minister of Labour, 1940-45, and was made Foreign Secretary in 1945. He found that Labour policy, adopted at many Conferences, was Zionist, and he saw that implementation of Zionist policy required him to do things which the Nazis had been condemned for doing—clearing the native population out of a country to make way for a colonial population. And the colonial population was a religion, as he understood it.

As a Trade Union boss he had stamped on anti-Semitism, taking it to be a reli-

gious matter. And now he was being asked to establish the Jewish religion as a state, and suppress the native population in order to do so. He refused. He was branded an Anti-Semite.

Richard Crossman, a Socialist academic, was appointed by him to a Commission to investigate the matter. In the course of Commission work Crossman became an enthusiastic Zionist and subverted Bevin's policy.

Crossman became closely associated with the Zionist leader, Weizmann. He said it was Weizmann's view that all Gentiles (non-Jews) were anti-Semites, and the best thing they could do was confess it. So Crossman confessed to being an anti-Semite, and was honoured in Israel.

The Zionists in Palestine, a small minority, launched an unrestrained terrorist war against the British administration. Bevin, who would have been treated as the new Hitler if he had seriously fought it, gave way to it. Britain washed its hands of the development it had set in motion. Communist Russia and the USA took up the cause of the Jewish state. Britain allowed the matter to be referred to the UN General Assembly for decision and the USSR and USA whipped their client states into authorising the establishment of a Jewish State (which was ready to go), and an Arab State, for which no preparation had been made.

The Jewish state immediately set about driving Palestinians out of the territory awarded to it and over-ran part of the territory awarded by the UN for an Arab state and annexed it. And then, as opportunities arose, it began encroaching on and colonising the rest of the Palestine, protected by the US Veto at the UN. The work is ongoing, and the Government of Israel refuses to set limits to the territory of the Jewish state which it is still engaged in expanding. (And if it is held to be anti-Semitic to refer to Israel as a Jewish state, as is now suggested, then the Israeli Government is anti-Semitic.

The position with regard to Anti-Semitism and criticism of Israel was officially stated by the British Chief Rabbi about ten years ago: it is theoretically possible to condemn Israel without being anti-Semitic, but it is virtually impossible to do so in practice.

Under bombardment by that position, Livingstone would not maintain a prudent silence—Burke would have called it a *reptile* silence. And he would not let his

friend and colleague, Corbyn, be cravenly silent either.

If the British Labour Party has a conscience today, Livingstone is it. And it is not the first time that the Labour Party expelled its conscience.

Ireland since the Rebellion has had no part in this murky business. But Redmondite Ireland was present in the Commons at the time of the *Balfour Declaration*, and we do not learn from the Redmondite author of the recent two-volume biography of Redmond, that the Home Rule Party dissented from the Imperial award to the Jewish Agency of national rights in Palestine where there was not a sufficient population to sustain a state, while denying national rights to the Irish. And we assume that there is some significance that this author, Dermot Meleady, is himself an active Zionist.

Richard Crossman, who rose high in the Labour Party as it became anti-Bevinite—and who adopted a supercilious attitude towards the Northern Ireland region of his state as a Government Minister in the late 1960s (washing his hands of it as Bevin did of Palestine but with much less reason—was of the opinion that the responsible thing for the British Empire to have done after 1945 was to ethnically cleanse Palestine of Palestinians instead of leaving it to the Jewish colonists to do it messily for themselves. This opinion at least had the realistic merit of acknowledging that the imposition of the Jewish state required extensive ethnic cleansing.

Rosamund Unwin, a journalist on the London *Evening Standard* who says she is half Irish Catholic, wrote on April 28th: "*A Jewish friend, who's also a Labour member, remarked yesterday about Shah's comments; 'Would an MP have said this about any other group?'...*"

Naz Shah did not make the comment about a "*group*", e.g., the Jews in England. She made it about a *state*. And the state she made it about is the only one that was ever established in principle, and given standing internationally, before there was a population in the designated territory to base it on. The transportation of Jews to Palestine was essential to the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. We do not know how many Jews got to Palestine by grace of the Zionist/Nazi collaboration. It was certainly only a fraction of the Jews transported there by the British Empire. And it was Britain, not Nazi Germany, that made war on the Palestinian populace

in the 1930s to break their resistance to the alien population, gathered from Jewish groups around the world, that was being imposed over it. Does Rosamund Unwin not know that?

Depopulation was the British policy for Ireland in the 19th century, and in 1918 statehood was refused to the remaining Irish in Ireland—still the great majority—who had voted for it, while Britain was conferring Jewish statehood on a Palestine that lacked a population to sustain it. On Britain's insistence, Irish elected delegates were refused a hearing at the Versailles Peace Conference, while Zionist representatives participated along with the other Victors.

The Jewish State was not projected on a territory where there was a Jewish population to sustain it. The building of a Jewish State in Palestine required the mass transportation of Jews to Palestine. And it required that the natural resistance of the Palestinian population should be broken. Golda Meir denied that there was any Palestinian population, but Jabotinsky insisted that there was, and that it would be natural for it to resist, and that it must be broken. And that is how it was done.

The Jewish State could not have been made without the active support of the British Empire, and then it would not have been viable without the financial and propaganda support of the Jewish "groups" around the world.

Unwin cites an opinion poll which does not support her case, showing:

"the way Israel is entwined with Jewish identity. Not for every British Jew of course... but a 2015 study by the City university... found that 93 per cent felt Israel formed part of their identity and 90 per cent supported its right to exist as a Jewish state".

This means that a foreign policy element is basic to the make-up of the vast majority of Jews in Britain. They are committed to the expansionist construction of a Jewish State a thousand miles away—a state which refuses to lay down territorial limits for itself, and is actively engaged in Jewish colonisation beyond the borders that the United Nations recognises as Israel. And we have often heard Israeli citizens say, without embarrassment or fear of criticism, of the Palestinians in the territory subject to Jewish colonisation: *Why don't they transport themselves somewhere else? If they are Arabs, there are plenty of states for them.*

Jews, *en masse*, became victims of oppression in Europe after Britain and

France broke up the Hapsburg Empire in which they felt at home. Soon after that, they became oppressors in Palestine under the Balfour Declaration. Their oppression in Europe ended in 1945 or soon after, just as their role as oppressors in Palestine increased. The Europeans then decided to make the Palestinians scapegoats for their own crimes against the Jews, supported Zionism against them, and described them as anti-Semites for resisting marginalisation by Jewish colonisation.

Is it reasonable to characterise non-recognition of the Israeli state as anti-Semitic while the Israeli state refuses to lay down borders for itself, and continues to engage in active colonisation far beyond the territory that the UN General Assembly awarded to the Jews for a state 69 years ago?

And is there any serious doubt that it is those activities of the Jewish State that give rise to the views that Corbyn's Labour Party seems to be intent on classifying as anti-Semitic?

*NOTE.* Livingstone's statements, as far as we have heard them, are amply supported by Jewish sources. But of course the Jews who dabble in the factual history of the construction of the Jewish state are self-hating Jews whose morale has been subverted by Gentile influence! ■

#### All postfree in Ireland and Britain:

**Memoirs Of My Jewish Great-Grandfather, Karl Holzer**, with *Reflections On The Fate Of A Jew/Arab Family* by Angela Abukhalil-Clifford. Appendix examines the exodus of Arabs from Palestine in 1947-8, with maps. 144pp. €14, £11.50

**Britain, Zionism And The Holocaust** by John Smith. 32pp. €6, £5

**Serfdom Or Ethnic Cleansing?** *A British Discussion On Palestine.* Churchill's 'Dog in the Manger' Evidence to the Peel Commission (1937). €6, £5

**The British Legion And Hitler**—"Lest we forget". How the British State shaped ex-servicemen's associations into its own instrument by Eamon Dyas. €6, £5

**Union Jackery: the pre-history of Fascism in Britain:** by Brendan Clifford. €8, £6

## Britain At The Crossroads!

continued

the British economy if Britain did not desist from its attempt to control of Egypt by making war on Nasserite nationalism.

The US had the power to wreck the British economy at that time because the post-1945 capitalist world was American. All capitalist money was ultimately the dollar, and capitalist economies functioned on American loans. Britain had bankrupted itself and its Ally across the Channel by its reckless declaration of war on the German state in 1939 after it had spent the preceding five years helping that German state to build itself up into a Great Power.

After it lost the decisive opening battle in France in 1940, it was enabled to keep the War going by putting itself in hock to the United States. By keeping the War going on the margins of Europe with American money and American arms, it succeeded in spreading it to Communist Russia. Russia then defeated Germany, and established its own system in the region of Eastern Europe that it occupied in the course of defeating Germany.

The United States hustled Britain back onto the Continent in 1944, in time to occupy France, Benelux, Italy and the Western part of Germany. Capitalist states were restored in these regions by means of American capital, and money systems that were disguised forms of the dollar. And post-War European Capitalism functioned increasingly on credit-money, controlled by

the USA. And so Washington could stop the British war on Egypt by the stroke of a pen.

The British welfare state, constructed in 1945-50, was a kind of socialism made possible by American capitalism at a moment when the US was preoccupied with the threat posed to world capitalism by the Russian Communism that had defeated Nazi Germany.

America had played a secondary part in destroying Nazi Germany, and it had to allow deviations towards socialism to its capitalist proteges during its Cold War with the Communist Power that had played very much the primary part in defeating Germany.

In those times it did not need to assert a right of possession over its post-1945 capitalist dependencies in Europe. The dependency was obvious.

The Cold War ended 26 years ago. The Communist threat to world capitalism disappeared. Washington become intolerant of socialist deviations on the part of its dependencies.

In 1965 Indonesia was finely balanced between the two world systems. President Sukarno, the liberator, and constructor, of the Indonesian state, was inclined towards Communist China. A military coup backed by the West was launched against him by General Suharto, in which a million of Sukarno's supporters were killed by direct action. But Suharto could not establish a

stable regime in a medium of *laissez-faire* Capitalism and Washington allowed a substantial degree of Socialist deviation. But, when the Cold War ended, it overthrew Suharto in a campaign organised against 'corruption'—corruption meaning anything that interferes with free market activity.

The ending of the Cold War set off many local developments around the world. Ultimate dependence on the dollar, in all its metamorphoses, began to be lost sight of. The world began to think that it was free to do as it pleased. And so President Obama was obliged to tell it the facts of life—it was an offspring of the USA and it remained a US possession insofar as it was capitalist, and it was not allowed not to be capitalist.

The first blunt assertion of this fact that we noticed was directed at FIFA. FIFA used the Dollar and therefore it was under US sovereignty. Most of the world was happy with the way FIFA had made football a world sport, but Obama told I that it must change in the way demanded by England or he would crush it financially.

And he now tells England that he will damage it seriously if it does not remain a member of the European Union—possibly an idle threat, as he won't be in power for much longer, and there is a Joker in the pack of Presidential hopefuls.

The world is now a substantially different place from what it was 26 years ago. The Soviet Union has gone. Russia has become a capitalist state. For ten years it operated a free-enterprise capitalism of 'oligarchs'—billionaires who had not made their billions in the capitalist jungle, but had got them through the privatisation of State enterprises, and who offered no resistance to the take-over of the economy by US capital. The life expectancy, and the standard of living, of the mass of the people plummeted under this system of oligarchic anarchy, until an effective political movement to restore a national interest in the direction of the economy was brought to power by Vladimir Putin.

The United States was displeased by the restrictions placed on its economic penetration of Russia. It decided to destroy that new national capitalist regime in Russia by use of the financial sanctions by which it had brought Britain to heel over Suez sixty years ago. And it appears to have failed.

It seems that, for the first time since 1945, there is a capitalist state in the world which is not a dependency of the USA.

The excuse for the sanctions was the active Russian response to the anti-Russian *coup* in the Ukraine, that was brought

about in large part by European Union subversive activity in Kiev, directed by Washington. When some members of the EU were having second thoughts, Obama's Minister said ``*fuck the EU*''—such language for a lady—and the EU got the message.

Lest it be forgotten, the reason for the *coup* was that the Ukrainian Government negotiated a trade deal with Russia which would have provided a market for its industry in preference to an Association Agreement with the EU which would have destroyed it. This decision threatened the eastward expansion of NATO.

The *coup* was enacted on the ground by a revival of the Fascist movement which had acted with Nazi Germany against Russia in 1941—a fact which the EU has done its best to hush up. Putin responded by indicating that he would accept the return of the Crimea to Russia. The population of the Crimea voted for unity with Russia. The EU took the view that a valid referendum in the Crimea could only have been held with the approval of the anti-Russian *coup* Government in Kiev, and that the decision of the Crimean populace to rejoin Russia was therefore a conquest of the Crimea by Russia, and a breach of the 1945 settlement of Europe.

The settlement of Europe following the defeat of Germany in May 1945 was presented, for the propaganda purpose of demonising Putin, in idealised terms, which bore little resemblance to the reality of the settlement, which was carried out by means of ethnic cleansing and genocide on the authority of the United Nations.

The main Russian Fleet was based in the Crimea by agreement with the Ukrainian Government when Russia was recognising Ukrainian independence. If the anti-Russian *coup* had been accepted without response by Moscow, the presence of the Russian Fleet would have been a flashpoint between NATO (i.e. the USA) and Russia.

Russian action with regard to the Crimea triggered the US/EU attempt to break Russia economically— but it is probable that such a thing would have been attempted anyway because the existence of a strong capitalist state which acts independently spoils the world for the US.

Obama's assertion of US *Exceptionalism* came after Russia had acted independently, and when it seemed likely that it would not be broken by US financial instruments.

Under the UN structure of the world, there are actually five states which are recognised as being *Exceptionalist*—as not being subject to UN Rules. The five Veto states are exempted from UN law—and UN

law only applies to any of the hundred and sixty other states if the five Veto states agree that it should. But that nominal position did not reflect the reality in 1945. The UN was set up by the two indisputably Exceptionalist states, the USSR and the USA. France did not exist at the time and China was a US client state run by warlords.

Britain thought it was one of three, but in 1956 it was made to understand that it wasn't, not quite.

China became effectively Exceptionalist when it became Communist. After a period of delay imposed by the USA, it inherited the Veto from the Kuomintang because it made itself an unbeatable military Power, but it has been more concerned with its own politics than with international affairs.

The Exceptionalism asserted by Obama—an Exceptionalism of universal dominance—was on the agenda of the USA since about the 1820s. It seemed to have been realised in 1990. It now seems to be in imminent danger of being lost. And that is possibly the source of the revival of the British sense of destiny that has forced the referendum on membership of the EU.

If the world is becoming multi-polar, should Britain be one of its poles, or should it accept that it is its fate to be a mere tinge within a wobbly European melange which is only capable of acting as a destructive instrument of the United States?

That is choice that has to be made now by the residue of the old British ruling class that built an Empire and that still has a tenuous existence within the Tory Party. That residue is divided and therefore the British populace is divided. And the Irish Establishment, horror-stricken at the prospect of finding itself alone in the world—of being alone in the EU without Britain—is urging the Irish in England to vote against Brexit.

The British Labour Party has played no real part in the matter.

Forty years ago, in the era of Harold Wilson, it had the illusion that it had become "*the natural party of power*" in Britain. It certainly had the opportunity to become so. But it threw that opportunity away. It showed in the late 1970s that it is in essence a protest party.

It opposed British entry to Europe on national and socialist grounds, seeing the two to be interconnected. British national independence had to be preserved in order to protect British socialism from European capitalism. But in the late seventies it

balked at the further development of socialism proposed by the Royal Commission on Workers' Control. After that it did not know what it stood for. Margaret Thatcher did not know what she stood for: she stood for the freeing of capitalism from the petty restraints of the Socialists. She dominated the 1980s, broke the political power of the Trade Unions which had refused Workers' Control, and played havoc with Europe.

The Labour Party returned to Office by adapting to Thatcherism so as to become indistinguishable from it. The Blair Government had a Minister for the Capitalist Development of Europe. It had some other name—something like Ministry for the Development of Competition in Europe—but that is what it was. And the Minister was Kim Howells, who in the late 1970s had been a radical Socialist opposing Europe because it was too capitalist.

The present Labour leadership has attached itself to the Tory group which is against Brexit. The isolated Party Leader, Jeremy Corbyn, a lifelong opponent of the EU, has made an anti-Brexit speech because otherwise the Parliamentary Party would probably have repudiated him, but it is the Blairite Alan Johnson who usually appears for Labour in arguments with the Brexit lobby.

Johnson is the only Trade Union survivor in the Labour leadership. He was leader of the Post Office Union when the first measures of privatisation were being implemented and he made little effort to resist them. He then joined the post-Socialist Blair Government. And he now argues desperately for remaining in Europe as the only means of warding off unrestrained capitalism. He has gone as far as comparing a vote to remain in the EU with the 1945 vote to establish a socialist system.

The message is that the British working class is helpless and can only be saved by the Christian Democracy of Europe which British Labour once despised as capitalist.

But the "*social market*" of Christian Democracy is no longer quite what it was when British Labour despised it as capitalist. It has been greatly weakened by the unrelenting pressure applied against it by British Governments since 1979, both Labour and Tory.

And what force brought about the drastic decline of the British working class movement, which leaves the only working class figure in the Party leadership desperately hoping for salvation by the remnants of the Christian Democracy which Britain has not yet succeeded in wiping out completely? ■

## Brexit: United States Enters War

continued

The geopolitical effect of TTIP is to lock the EU into the United States' maritime trading empire and its sister agreement, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), performs the same function for the Pacific Rim. The rising continental Eurasian powers of Russia, China and India are excluded from both, and an arc of geopolitical instability has been created from Ukraine in the West, right through the Middle East to Central Asia in order to constrain the continental trading development of China and Russia in particular.

But the US has not had things all its own way. The effective Russian interventions in Ukraine and Syria have stymied the project to some extent, and the growing interdependence of Russia and China has led the US and its allies to embark on a massive propaganda war, particularly against Russia, which has shattered the credibility of much of the tame mainstream media. The somewhat surprising, and for the US highly irritating, breaking of ranks by the UK in becoming a founder member of the Chinese-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank in March 2015 led to a rush of other European states, and normally docile US clients like Australia and South Korea, doing the same. The 'special relationship' seems to be not quite so special when the fundamental interests of the City of London are in conflict with it.

There seems to be a view, albeit a minority one, within the City that Brexit is survivable and that it would free the UK to make trade deals on its own with the rising powers in the East. This is at odds with the Establishment view in both the UK and US that the UK's fundamental role is to continue to be part of the straitjacket that binds the EU into being an arm of US foreign policy even when, as the sanctions against Russia demonstrate, this is against the interests of the EU as a whole.

Many European states are already chaffing under this sanctions regime which has led to depressed economic activity throughout the bloc in consequence of reduced trade and the counter-sanctions imposed by Russia. The carefully orchestrated migrant crisis, which began when Turkey allowed refugees to move *en masse* towards the coast rather than restricting them as before, has driven support for the European far right, much of which is pro-Russian. The Dutch have just rejected the EU-Ukraine Association agreement and there is an approaching train wreck in the

form of the EU/Turkey visa waiver scheme which will give millions of Turks, including the oppressed Kurds, visa-free travel to the Schengen area. Once in the Schengen area they will be able to claim, with considerable justification, asylum from Erdogan's increasingly authoritarian rule. The deadline for a decision on this is 30th June 2016, conveniently after the Brexit referendum on 23 June.

A vote for Brexit in these circumstances will have an electrifying effect in Europe and will necessarily lead to a reordering of relations within it. A decisive long-term shift towards Eurasia, which would be very much in Europe's interests cannot be ruled out in such a case, so it is no wonder the US has felt obliged to intervene so strongly.

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Just prior to Obama's intervention in the debate, another front had already been opened by an article in the *Times* (April 20) signed by eight former US Treasury Secretaries, ranging from George Schulz (1972-74) to Timothy Geithner (2009-13), and including all surviving Treasury Secretaries from the years in between, with the exception of James Baker (1985-88).

Their arguments are a mostly a repetition of the already well-worn Remain talking points, but they include the following curiosity:

"Europe has more work to do to complete its economic and financial union, but it is more likely to be successful with Britain inside rather than out."

It is hard to imagine that they could actually mean this seriously, and even more difficult to imagine that anyone will take them seriously. After all, collectively, they have been responsible for growing the US national Debt from just over 20% of GDP in 1972 to something like 104% today and overseen a massive off-shoring of its industrial base with the disappearance of tens of millions of well-paid jobs. The influence they can expect to have on a British electorate fed up with US-inspired endless war and endless immigration caused by the combination of EU membership and endless war, is minimal.

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HM Treasury's report was released in the same week as Obama's visit and was somewhat overshadowed by it. As might be expected, it came down heavily against Brexit, but was criticised by Open Europe

continued on page 8, column 1



# Shorts

from  
*the Long Fellow*

## 1916 AND THE CULT OF EQUALITY

In politics there are very few words that are more powerful than the word "equality". No practising politician can be seen to be against that word. And yet its meaning can be elusive. Some people think income equality is important, while others place greater emphasis on equality of opportunity. In general, "equality" in some shape or form is considered to be a good thing.

But what about values and political beliefs? Have all political beliefs and values equal validity? It would appear not. Societies tend to have a hierarchy of values and political beliefs. They have ideas about right and wrong as well as political preferences. The State (whether reflecting the society or not) openly discriminates between one set of values as against another. While some societies appear more diverse than others, even liberal societies have a tendency to converge around a core set of values. If this were not the case, society would cease to exist.

## 1916 VALUES

If the 1916 celebrations are anything to go by, most Irish people do not feel the need to cherish equally two mutually exclusive political positions. When presented with a choice between the might of the British Empire and the Irish Republican garrisons in 1916, their sympathies are with the latter.

The State, in some of its manifestations, is more ambivalent. The Taoiseach Enda Kenny laid a wreath in Glasnevin Cemetery at a "Remembrance Wall". The wall displays

## Brexit

continued

among others for not giving sufficient weight to possible upsides for the British economy following Brexit. These upsides would follow increased deregulation, and the freedom to make trade deals without the EU. The problem is that the countries that it would be most advantageous to do trade deals with, China and Russia spring to mind, are politically impossible to advocate in favour of at the moment. Brexit opens the possibility of a change in that dynamic.

Sean Owens

"chronologically" the names of all who died during the 1916 Rising "without distinction between the various categories" (RTE News, 3.4.16). So, British Soldiers, civilians and Irish Republicans are lumped in together. The private, self selecting Glasnevin Trust "has insisted that the memorial is an attempt to present the historical facts, without hierarchy or judgement".

So, it appears that anyone who thinks that the oppressed should be valued differently to the oppressor is in favour of "hierarchy" and against "equality"! The "Remembrance Wall" is not, as the Glasnevin Trust claims, a presentation of "historical facts"; it is a presentation of "historical data" (data being information in its raw or unorganised form). It is an attempt to rob the 1916 Rising of all its meaning.

Now whose interests does that serve!

## 1916 CELEBRATIONS

But, overall, the State conducted the celebrations in an appropriate manner. The Army (*Óglaigh na hÉireann*) was to the fore in distributing the 1916 Proclamation at Schools and giving talks. At the main ceremony there was an impressive display of the Army carrying the colours of the different Irish garrisons in 1916. It was inspiring to see the Irish Air Corps jets fly past the GPO to the strains of the National Anthem.

The celebrations demonstrated the Irish State's substance and the strong allegiance of the people.

## 1916 BLOOD SACRIFICE?

The great virtue of the celebrations was that it made people think about the 1916 Rising. In the Long Fellow's opinion, the Rising was a substantial military operation. The Battle of Mount Street Bridge was a spectacular success. 220 British soldiers lost their lives while attempting to seize strategic positions held by less than two dozen Republicans. British Officers showed a reckless disregard for the lives of their subordinates in this bloody battle.

Fifteen Civilians were murdered in North King Street when British Troops went on a rampage. This was sanctioned by British officers. No one was charged.

Even the most committed Republicans were shocked at the indiscriminate shelling of buildings by the British Army. The 1916 leaders surrendered in order to avoid further civilian casualties.

The 2,000 volunteers put up a decent fight against the 20,000 from the British side. It is interesting to speculate on what might have happened if Eoin McNeill had not countermanded the order for a Rising. Could the War of Independence have been brought forward by three years?!

## 1916 CLASS POLITICS

The Long Fellow finds that "celebrity economist" David McWilliams either hits the "bullseye" or misses by a mile—sometimes in the same article. His piece on the 1916 Rising (*Irish Independent*, 30.3.16) is a case in point.

His thesis is that the British had more or less given up on integrating Ireland into the Empire by the 1880s. Their policy, nevertheless, was to ensure that it remained at least a semi-detached part of the UK. With this in mind they wished to cultivate a new ruling class drawn from the upper echelons of the Professions. This class would run the country with very little autonomy on behalf of Britain and would ensure Ireland would support the Empire.

McWilliams suggests that the fly in the ointment was the Northern Unionists, but he thinks the British Ruling class thought ("naively"! ) it could manage them. (The Long Fellow would add that the British saw the Unionists as a means of mitigating Republican tendencies. Indeed, that was why the North was kept in a semi-detached form after Independence in the 26 Counties. The British have always been prepared to use the North as a bargaining counter to ensure less autonomy in the South.)

McWilliams points out that the leaders of the Rising were largely drawn from the petty bourgeois: teachers, drapers, clerks, a pawnbroker!, grocers, shopkeepers, a silk weaver! This was in contrast to the British-designated future ruling class drawn from the upper professions. So, *per* McWilliams, the 1916 Rising can be seen as less a movement for Independence as a class conflict among the Irish. He rather pithily describes it as a conflict between the Christian Brothers and the Blackrock/Clongowes boys. The backgrounds of subsequent Taoisigh suggests that the Christian Brothers boys won (McWilliams considers de Valera a Christian Brothers' boy since he only was able to attend Blackrock on a scholarship).

(Philip O'Connor, a contributor to this magazine, thinks that McWilliams misses the Irish Citizen Army/Trade Union element. But could this be subsumed under the Christian Brothers!? He also thinks the victory of the Pro Treaty side represented a temporary reassertion of the Blackrock/Clongowes element until the "Christian Brothers boys" returned in 1932.)

The Long Fellow thinks McWilliams' theory is quite ingenious, if flawed. In substance the 1916 Rising was the seminal event in the achievement of Independence. The class makeup of the insurrection might have determined the nature of our Inde-



pendence, but was not a significant motivating factor.

Nevertheless, the theory adds to our understanding. The Long Fellow always wondered why John Bruton (a Clongowes boy) continues to denounce the 1916 Rising. It could not really be for pacifist reasons, since his hero John Redmond was prepared to sacrifice tens of thousands of Irish men in the First World War.

Could Bruton be reflecting the resentment of a class who had been 'robbed' of its birthright by the 1916 Rising?

#### 1916 AND YANIS VAROUFAKIS

As far as the Long Fellow is aware, the former Greek Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis has never said anything about the 1916 Rising. But could he be another John Bruton?!

It was noticeable that one of his first acts as Finance Minister during the Euro crisis was to visit London, rather than Berlin. An interview in *The Irish Times* (9.4.16) suggests that London remains the centre of his universe.

He begins by excoriating the EU. Ireland only received better treatment than Greece because she was a "model prisoner". He will be leading a political movement called *Democracy in Europe Movement 2025* (DIEM25). The aim is to re-invigorate the EU "as a Union based on democratic consent rather than technocratic governance within the next decade".

It might be thought that with such a lofty ambition he would not be unduly concerned with the prospect of Brexit. But nothing could be further from the truth. He thinks:

"... it is imperative, independently of whether we're on the right or left, as long as we're democrats and we believe that there is a rational, common sense way of stabilising Europe in order to stabilise our own countries, to keep Britain but at the same time to confront the mindset of Brussels without being model prisoners".

It's difficult to know where to start. The "imperative" of Britain remaining in the EU supersedes divisions between the "right or left"?! It might be thought that a development that de-stabilises an entity that makes countries prisoners might be a good thing. But no, it seems that Britain remaining within the EU is self evidently an "imperative". No explanation is given as to why Brexit might be a disaster for the EU. He does say that "it will create awful deflationary forces that will eat Britain up". Poor Britain! She knows not what she does!

The Long Fellow thinks that Alexis Tsipras is well rid of him!

## Remembering Thomas Kent

With all the publicity and programmes dedicated to 1916 these days, one could be forgiven for thinking it was an event that touched Dublin only. April 21st however saw at least two events to remind us otherwise. The first was President Michael D. Higgins' excellent speech on Roger Casement, delivered at Banna Strand in Co. Kerry. A second—more low key but as important in its way—was the launch of Meda Ryan's *Life of Thomas Kent* as part of O'Brien Press' *Sixteen Lives for 1916* series.

Thomas Kent has sometimes been called "the forgotten volunteer"—the one who was executed for his part in 1916 but rarely mentioned as the event was overshadowed by the executions in Dublin of so many people, the 1916 Signatories.

The launch was hosted by Collins Barracks, Cork, and the guest speakers were introduced by Lt. Col Dunne of the Defence Forces, Southern Command, who reminded the large audience that, far from being "the forgotten volunteer", the Defence Forces had always recognised the contribution of the Kents and had conducted a local memorial ceremony on or close to May 9th every year in honour of Thomas Kent. The Barracks also has a close association with the Kents, as Thomas was executed on premises nearby that at the time formed part of the Barracks complex, then known as Victoria Barracks.

Michael O'Brien of O'Brien Press then explained to the audience how, when O'Brien Press approached Meda Ryan to write this book, her first reaction was that there would be insufficient material to produce such a book, so little being known about his life. In the event, her research turned an initial 50,000 word project into a 110,000-word volume, much coming to light about this, one of the least 'famous' of the 1916 Rebels.

Following this Meda spoke briefly on the same theme, adding some basic biographical information on the subject's life. As several members of the Kent family were killed or wounded that fateful day in 1916, when the RIC went to arrest them, it begged the question—'why Thomas, in particular?' Meda answered that question by noting, first of all, that he has been

known as "the forgotten volunteer", and that this was an opportunity to rectify the situation. But, placed in a larger context, he was one of only two 1916 Rebels executed outside of Dublin, the other being Roger Casement, executed in London; and as we earlier noted, the subject of a speech the same day by President Higgins. Between them these two men remind us that the events of 1916 involved a wider world outside the more well-known fighting and subsequent executions in Dublin.

The guest speaker was Cathal Mc Swiney Brugh, who had learned more about his own grandfather because of this book, and of the many connections between the McSwiney (of Terence McSwiney fame) and Kent families. Speaking about how Internet publishing was squeezing even the larger global publishers, Cathal commended O'Brien Press for performing an almost-community service in publishing such material of historical importance in hard copy format. He added that we now realise, despite all the material already published, the history of the War of Independence is only half-told and another half remains waiting between the release of Witness Statements, military archives and perhaps forgotten family papers. Thankfully, he said, we have authors of a calibre to rise to the task, and cited Meda as such an example, given her many years of dedicated hard work and diligence writing biographies of figures such as Tom Barry, Michael Collins and others. He echoed Meda's reflections on why a book on this particular member of the Kent family, adding that Thomas Kent had inspired the people of Cork as much as figures like Pearse had in Dublin, being one of their own.

While the Civil War has been characterised at times as a war between 'two tribes'—those who acquiesced in Britain's subjugation of this country and those who did not—he felt it more a war of ideals, a "conflict of two desires", as he put it. On the one hand, was the mundane pragmatism of those who recognised power and desired tranquillity in which to build their lives and maybe eventually, possible political freedom; the other, idealists who wanted the best for their families, which

for them meant from the outset an Ireland free to decide its own course. In some way these sentiments seemed to echo Tom Barry's comments that, while his men were fighting for their brothers, sisters, mothers, families; the British army fought for their wages.

By 1916 the British Empire had "gone too far": Ireland had lost half its population between 1845 and 1900; it had lost over 50,000 of its men in a war fought by Royal cousins (i.e King George V and Kaiser Wilhelm II) over control of global colonies. The 1916 Rebellion and War of Independence which followed, the overthrow of the British Empire at least within Ireland, was both reasonable and justified. Cathal noted finally that today, in an age where an Anglo-American politic pursues neo-colonial wars around the globe, we can reflect on the lives of people like Thomas Kent to keep that dream alive.

A special mention should go to the Cork Prison Officers male choir who gave a beautiful rendition following the launch.

\*

A number of upcoming events to commemorate the life of Thomas Kent were announced at the launch:

At 11 o'clock on April 23rd 2016 a wreath will be laid at the statue of Thomas Kent at Kent Station, Cork, simultaneously with wreaths laid at the other principal train stations around the country named after 1916 Rebels.

On the 2nd of May the main bridge in Fermoy over the river Blackwater will be renamed the Thomas Kent Bridge in a ceremony in his memory.

On the morning of 9th May a ceremony will be held at the now decommissioned Cork Prison—the site of Thomas Kent's execution—for immediate family descendants and select guests. This will be followed by an open day at Collins Barracks, Cork from 10.30am onwards with military displays. In the afternoon, the public will also have a rare opportunity to visit the decommissioned Cork Prison and see the cell where Thomas Kent was held prior to execution.

On the same day, 9th May, the Everyman Theatre, Cork, will host the opening performance of a play on the life of Thomas Kent.

On the 15th of May there will be a march and ceremony in memory of Thomas Kent in Castlelyons, Fermoy, Co.Cork.

Nick Folley, April 2016

## That Other Anniversary

The *Irish Independent* had a supplement on 20th April on the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death and the leading item was by Michael Dobson, Director of the Shakespeare Institute, Stratford-upon-Avon, and Professor of Shakespeare Studies, University of Birmingham. While he, like all those commemorating the event, heap superlative upon superlative on the plays and sonnets, they can never avoid completely the little matter of the biographical credibility of the author.

Dobson asks: "*What gave Shakespeare the ability to imagine and to share the range of human experiences dramatised in the plays we'll never really know.*" If Mr. Dobson said no more that would be fine but he cannot leave at that. Without any evidence he starts inventing immediately because he knows some explanation is needed. Otherwise we are dealing with miracles and that does not do in the modern world. We are told that: "*His glove-maker father's position as an alderman in Stratford-upon-Avon gave the young Shakespeare access to a solid grammar-school education and indeed to live theatre*" but there is no evidence whatever for either. If he had such schooling, he would surely have learned how to write his name properly.

But Mr Dobson makes a virtue of knowing practically nothing about this William Shakespeare—but that does not prevent him telling us:

"Luckily for us, despite the local allegiances and investments revealed by his biography, Shakespeare is the least local of writers: instead of burdening us with his opinions or anecdotes about his provincial childhood, he has an extraordinary talent for empathy, getting his ego out of the way so that his characters can be themselves."

So this genius was able to ignore all his human experiences and dispense with his ego into his bargain. He would be the first and last genius to have done so. The sonnets alone hardly indicate a man without an ego. We are presented here with a disembodied brain.

Empathy is surely based on some actual experience and involves some familiarity with, knowledge of and interest in the subjects/situations in question. In the 70 odd bits of information available about this William from Stratford there is nothing that confirms any such empathy with the myriad subjects in the plays. A picture

emerges of an entrepreneur whose main interest in life was making money and like all true entrepreneurs he was not that concerned with how he did so and sailed close to the wind legally and morally. He hoarded grain when people were starving in Stratford.

And he got himself a coat of arms and the biggest house in Stratford. Which would indicate some bit of an ego? There is a term that comes to mind—"a *cute hoor*". Fintan O'Toole is enamoured of the plays and sonnets but I doubt if he would be enamoured of the presumed author. But then to Fintan theatre is more real than life, so the real man does not really matter.

While making his pile between London and Stratford and before retiring there, William needed to have all the time and resources necessary to empathise mentally into the situation of 10 plays based in Italy, 3 in ancient Rome, 10 in English history, 2 in ancient Britain/Wales, 10 set in various places such as Vienna, France, Ephesus, Navarre, Illyria, Troy, Athens, Scotland, Denmark, Egypt and England—and write 154 Sonnets.

Poor Stratford, surely it deserved a part, or at least a mention!

### AN IRISH DOUBTER

In the Irish literary firmament one Shakespeare doubter seems to be emerging—Frank McNally in the *Irish Times*. He writes concerning a new argument put forward by Alexander Waugh:

"It concerned Ben Jonson's much-quoted tribute to the "Sweet Swan of Avon", published in 1623, not quite in time for the funeral, but soon enough afterwards to be an impressive argument for Shakespeare's reputation. Except that, according to Waugh, Jonson's reference was not to the Avon that flows through Stratford. On the contrary, it was to a stretch of the Thames that runs past Hampton Court Palace, west of London, where the name "Avon" (a Celtic cousin of 'abhainn') was also applied to the river, and where many plays were performed." (27 April 2016).

There is much more reason to be suspicious of Ben Jonson's reference. It is odd in the first place to compare a man to a swan as it is usually reserved to compliment a female, and also unusual to address a man in the 17th century as 'my beloved' even if he was!

Jonson had a very aristocratic, very talented patron and poet, Mary Sidney

Herbert and she treated him very well at a literary salon she ran at her house for all the literary figures of the day. On the estate there was a river Avon and across the river there was a town called Stratford. Her personal emblem was a swan and in her portraits she is bedecked with them. And another poet now in Westminster Abbey, Michael Drayton, referred to her

as the "*The Thames' fairest Swan*". She is buried on the Avon and the First Folio is dedicated to her sons.

**Jack Lane**

**The Shakespeare Conspiracies**, untangling a 400-year old web of myth and deceit, by *Brian McClinton*. 516 pp **€36, £30**

**Puritanism And The Theatre**, by *Brendan Clifford*. 156pp. **€15, £12**

## 'Murderess' Markievicz Or Malicious Misogyny?

From April 20th to May 2nd of last year a Show Trial took place in the Headquarters of the Communist Party of Ireland. A year later, during this past month of March, the Show Trial resumed in CPI HQ, with the defendant scheduled to be extradited to Paris for the final day's Court sitting on April 23rd. On trial for "*murder*", and undoubtedly scheduled for a death sentence, gender considerations nonetheless signalled commutation.

But no, the CPI has not been seeking to emulate any of the Show Trials that characterised Leninist rule in Eastern Europe. Indeed, the CPI has no responsibility at all for *Madame de Markievicz on Trial*. For understandable commercial reasons, the CPI shares its premises with the New Theatre. But just as I found it incongruous to pass through Connolly Books en route to finding out just how nauseating the theatrical character assassination of Connolly's comrade-in-arms would turn out to be, I am sure CPI personnel found it even more nauseating to witness, on a daily basis, those audiences en route to lap up that Show Trial authored by one-time CPI-archivist Ann Matthews.

There is little doubt in my mind that Constance Markievicz has been the target of systematic misogyny, irrespective of whether the character assassins be male or female. Professor John A Murphy, University College Cork's Emeritus Professor of History, had certainly been prepared to play the role of nasty little man in the *Irish Times* of 22nd October 2004 when, under the heading of "*Markievicz and the Rising*", he gave vent to the following piece of misogynistic West Brit character assassination:

"The argument in your columns about Countess Markievicz's activities in Easter Week 1916 recalls W.E. Wylie's interesting account of her demeanour at the courts martial. Wylie was appointed to act as prosecuting counsel. He was impressed by some of the prisoners, notably Eamon Ceannt and John MacBride, but not by Constance Markievicz. According to him,

the court expected she would make a scene and throw things at the judge and counsel. 'In fact', said Wylie, 'I saw the General (Blackadder, court president) getting out his revolver and putting it on the table beside him. But he needn't have troubled, for she curled up completely. *'I am only a woman'*, she cried, *'and you cannot shoot a woman. You must not shoot a woman.'* She never stopped moaning, the whole time she was in the courtroom.' Though she had been 'full of fight' in Stephen's Green, 'she crumpled up in the courtroom'. 'I think we all felt slightly disgusted. . . She had been preaching to a lot of silly boys, death and glory, die for your country, etc., and yet she was literally crawling. I won't say any more, it revolts me still.' Wylie's memoir of 1916 was written in 1939 when he was 58. But is there any reason to think he was lying about Markievicz, or that his recall was defective?"

In my then capacity as SIPTU Head of Research in Liberty Hall, I submitted the following reply, which was published that 28th October:

"In the *1916 Rebellion Handbook*, first published in that year by the *Weekly Irish Times*, there is a self-revealing observation on the Irish Citizen Army from '*The Steward of Christendom*' himself, Dublin Metropolitan Police Superintendent Dublin Metropolitan Police Thomas Dunne. (This is the title of the play penned in his memory by Dunne's great-grandson, Sebastian Barry—MO'R). He complains that '*it is a serious state of affairs to have the city endangered by a gang of roughs with rifles and bayonets, at large at that time of night with a female like the Countess Markievicz in charge*'. Constance Markievicz's reputation has indeed been bedevilled by a combination of misogyny and contempt for her association with the working class that this union set out to organise, and whom Superintendent Dunne chose to christen '*the disorderly class*'. All the more reason, then, to expect professional rigour to be applied when UCC's Emeritus Professor of History, John A. Murphy, intervenes (October 22nd) in what he calls the 'argument in your columns' concerning Markievicz's role in 1916.

Surprisingly, however, he has nothing to say on the actual issue in dispute: that either Markievicz had shot Constable Lahiff at Stephen's Green, as maintained by Kevin Myers (October 14th), or that she could not possibly have done so, being at that time at the City Hall, as evidenced by Claire McGrath Guerin (October 19th)."

"Prof Murphy has instead chosen to open up a new line of attack, by endorsing, without any qualification, the character assassination of Markievicz offered in his memoirs by the death penalty prosecutor of the 1916 leaders, W.E. Wylie. It is a pity that Prof Murphy has not kept abreast of more recent scholarship in this area, most notably Brian Barton's *From Behind a Closed Door: Secret Court Martial Records of the 1916 Easter Rising* (2002). Writing of Markievicz, whose record had been kept a close secret by the British government for 85 years before they finally agreed to its release in 2001, Barton observes: 'In fact the official record of Markievicz's trial shows that she acted bravely and with characteristic defiance throughout. . . When speaking in her own defence, she retracted nothing, stating simply: *'I went out to fight for Ireland's freedom and it doesn't matter what happens to me. I did what I thought was right and I stand by it.'*"

"Barton further comments: '*Wylie's wilful and scurrilous distortion of her response at her trial is difficult to interpret. It may reflect a personal sense of irritation at her self-assurance and boldness, which he may have considered an insult to the court. Perhaps it reflected deep-rooted sexual prejudice and rank misogyny on his part. More likely, his fictitious account sprang, above all, from a feeling that the Countess had by her actions betrayed both her religion and her class (she had been presented at court to Queen Victoria in her jubilee year, 1887). Such considerations certainly influenced the Trinity College Provost's daughter Miss Mahaffy's assessment of her. . . (as) 'the one woman amongst them of high birth and therefore the most depraved. . . She took to politics and left our class.'*"

"She did indeed. Appointed Minister of Labour in 1919 in the democratically elected Government of the Irish Republic, Markievicz had previously been Vice-President of the Irish Women Workers' Union. She was also made an honorary member of the ITGWU, in tribute to her outstanding work during the 1913 Lockout in organising—with Delia Larkin—the provision, here at Liberty Hall, of 3,000 meals a day to our suffering members and their families. And for that commitment the name of Constance Markievicz will always be an honoured one in the annals of the Irish trade union movement."

Mysogynist-in-chief Kevin Myers has been to the fore in accusing Constance

Markievicz, second-in-command of the College of Surgeons garrison of the Irish Citizen Army during the 1916 Rising, of the gratuitous, triumphalist "murder" of Constable Michael Lahiff at St. Stephen's Green. He was at it again in the *Sunday Times* this March 13th, and yet again on April 3rd. But before that, over a sixteen year period, having been provided with a grip on the "Irishman's Diary" column, Myers had been facilitated by the *Irish Times* in mounting a sustained campaign of character assassination against Markievicz on no fewer than twelve occasions—in October 1990, December 1991, May 1995, March 1996, October 1996, May 1999, August 2003, October 2004, December 2004, October 2005, November 2005 and January 2006.

On only two occasions did the *Irish Times* letters page tolerate exposure of the factual fault line in that Myers campaign. On 19th October 1996, Natasha Mac 'a' Bhaird pointed out:

"Kevin Myers shows a biased and subjective view of Irish history. That Countess Markievicz murdered an unarmed policeman in Stephen's Green is a myth which thousands of Irish people have grown up believing... PC Lahiff, the unfortunate man in question, was shot within five minutes of the occupation of the Green, according to one of the few accounts which mentions the incident, Max Caulfield's *The Easter Rebellion*, and to the *Sinn Fein Rebellion Handbook*. If this was the case, Constance could not have shot him. She did not march to the Green with Michael Mallin and the Citizen Army contingent. Instead, she and Dr Kathleen Lynn, after seeing the companies march from Liberty Hall, drove off in a car packed with medical supplies.

They unloaded part of the supplies at City Hall at 12 noon the time at which PC Lahiff was allegedly shot. Dr Lynn remained at City Hall, while Constance drove to Stephen's Green with the rest of the supplies... By the time Constance arrived, the rebels had gained control of the Green, and at this stage PC Lahiff could not have tried to prevent Constance entering it."

On 19th October 2004, Claire McGrath Guerin restated similar logistical facts, and further argued:

"Kevin Myers recycles the allegation that Constance Markievicz murdered Constable Lahiff on Easter Monday, 1916. This story first appeared in print in Max Caulfield's *The Easter Rebellion* (1963). Caulfield's account does not state the evidence on which it is based... Diana Norman, who collected the evidence in her book *Terrible Beauty—a Life of Constance Markievicz* (1988), states (p. 140): 'What is significant is how willingly

*the story that she shot an unarmed man has been received and the tenacity with which it has been remembered since. It may be that some flawed, unconscious logic has been going on in the male Irish mind. Two rules of gentlemanly warfare were broken at Stephen's Green on Easter Monday: a helpless man died and a woman displayed a joy in battle; therefore the woman broke both rules; QED, Constance shot PC Lahiff.'* The former keeper of State papers, Breandán MacGiollaChioille, informed Ms Norman that he had come across no evidence in his research among the State papers to indicate the truth of the rumour. If Mr Myers has some compelling evidence to indicate the contrary, I will be pleased to follow it up. If not, as this is a matter of justice, I hope he will acknowledge his allegation is baseless."

Max Caulfield had written:

"Countess Markievicz arrived in the Green (at the Grafton Street corner—MOR) by Traitors' Gate (the gate that had been erected as a memorial to Irishmen who had lost their lives fighting for Britain against the Boers), almost as if she owned the entire Park... Here, in these few acres of city park, in accordance with James Connolly's ideals, women were entitled to stand shoulder to shoulder with men; and if it came to it, she herself had no scruples about shooting the enemy. She even looked forward to it and as things turned out she would not have to wait long. Within five minutes Constable Michael Lahiff attempted to enter the Green at Traitors' Gate. He was told to go away, but obstinately, if courageously, refused. Informed of his attitude, the Countess rushed to the railings and took aim with her Mauser rifle-pistol. As she fired two men beside her also shot. 'I shot him!' shouted the Countess delightedly. 'I shot him!'" (*The Easter Rebellion*, 1995 edition, p 66).

In his 2002 book, *From Behind a Closed Door—Secret Court Martial Records of the 1916 Rising*, Brian Barton not only nailed the private narrative of Prosecutor William Wylie as a "fictitious account", completely at variance with the Court record, and as "wilful and malicious distortion" reflecting "rank misogyny" (p 80), he found the same misogyny present in the contemporary diary entries of one particular female:

"This (Wylie's fictitious) account clearly circulated widely in Dublin at the time. Miss Mahaffy, daughter of the Provost at Trinity College ... referred to 'the evidence of a little boy ... who saw her shoot a policeman ... (Markievicz) could not frighten or confuse the child who remained clear.' (Diary, 6 May 1916)... She (Miss Mahaffy) writes of Markievicz that she was 'the one woman amongst them of high birth and therefore

*the most depraved... She took to politics and left our class.'* (Diary, 30 April and 1 May 1916)."

The actual facts of the case, however, were that at the Markievicz Court Martial, held on 4 May, the 17 year old "little boy" witness, Walter McKay, had said nothing about her shooting any policeman at all, but of her shooting towards a building on the Green's Northside:

"Between 1 and 2 o'clock that day I was standing at the University Club door (where he lived and was employed as a page boy). From there I could see Stephen's Green, and I saw a few rebels dressed in green uniform; they were pulling the civilians out of the Green and as they were doing this the accused drove up in a motor car, blew her whistle and leaned out of the car. She gave orders to a Sinn Feiner after he had shut the gate of Stephen's Park. She then drove up towards the Shelbourne Hotel—I saw her again about 1.15 P.M.—she was then behind one of the monuments in the Green, she had a pistol in her hand and which she pointed towards the Club and fired. I ran upstairs and saw where the bullet struck. After firing she walked up towards the Shelbourne Hotel dressed in knickers and puttees."

Lauren Arrington, author of a newly-published biography entitled *Revolutionary Lives, Casimir and Constance Markievicz*, appeared to address more updated material earlier this year in a blog on the "Irish Historians in Britain" site, entitled "Did Constance Markievicz Shoot the Policeman?". She mused:

"No one ever seems to ask whether MacDonagh and MacBride, Connolly and Pearse (never mind de Valera and Collins) happened to fire shots at an unarmed individual, policeman or otherwise. But whether Constance Markievicz shot an unarmed constable at St Stephen's Green is the question on which the public judgment of her character hangs. By the afternoon of the first day of the Rising, six policemen had been shot, two fatally, and at least two of them were unarmed. The young Abbey actor Seán Connolly—who was the first among the rebels to die, and whose last moments have been recounted by witnesses and historians in tragic detail—shot an unarmed constable who stood guard at Dublin Castle. The righteousness of this act seems to be unquestionable. Yet, partly because she had the audacity to survive the Rising and its aftermath, Markievicz's identical sin has plagued the public imagination."

Arrington went on to quote more recently-trumpeted "evidence", attributed to the diary of a nurse, Geraldine Fitzgerald, and what she was supposed to have seen and heard from the Nurse's Home located at the South-West (Harcourt

Street) corner of St. Stephen's Green (in contrast with previously published accounts which maintained that Constable Lahiff had been shot at the North-West (Grafton Street) corner):

"A lady in a green uniform, the same as the men were wearing (breeches, slouch hat with green feathers etc.) the feathers were the only feminine feature in her appearance, holding a revolver in one hand and a cigarette in the other, was standing on the footpath giving orders to the men. We recognised her as the Countess de Markievicz—such a specimen of womanhood. There were other women, similarly attired, inside the Park, walking about and bringing drinks of water to the men. We had only been looking out a few minutes when we saw a policeman walking down the path from Harcourt Street. He had only gone a short way when we heard a shot and then saw him fall forward on his face. The Countess ran triumphantly into the Green saying 'I got him' and some of the rebels shook her by the hand and seemed to congratulate her."

This account has now been accepted as Gospel by media *cognoscenti*. The RTE "docudrama" broadcast on March 20th, and entitled *Seven Women*, featured Elsie Mahaffy, daughter of the Trinity College Provost, adding her enthusiasm for the British Army artillery shelling of Liberty Hall, from within its Trinity College base, to her incorrigible loathing of Constance Markievicz. The programme accepted, without qualification, the Geraldine Fitzgerald "eyewitness document" concerning Markievicz's alleged killing of Lahiff, while providing a "dramatisation" at odds even with that account itself, not to mind any other. This did not deter the programme's male historians from embracing such an account with unquestioning alacrity, with Padraig Yeates to the fore in pronouncing that "What shocked her as much as the killing itself was the FACT (my emphasis—MOR) that Countess Markievicz then shouted 'I got him!', and other members of the Citizen Army contingent around her then congratulated her on the killing."

There had been a prompt response to the Arrington blog from Dr. Ann Matthews who commented: "A robust defence of *Madame de Markievicz*." Matthews must have issued a sigh of relief that it had been anything but a "robust defence". Rather than question the Fitzgerald 'evidence', Arrington rested content with gender special pleading:

"The facts of the incident and a rational explanation of Markievicz's denial of the shooting may do little to influence public opinion, which continues to be governed

by emotive and fallacious accounts. If Markievicz's death sentence had been carried out, would historians or the general public view her actions with more sympathy? Possibly. But probably not. Her execution would not have affected the account offered by W.E. Wylie of her Court Martial, which holds so much sway. Nor would it have stymied O'Casey's vitriol or changed Yeats's verdicts. A clue to the reason lies in nurse Fitzgerald's diary: "the Countess de Markievicz — such a specimen of womanhood."

Matthews had now been given *carte blanche* to blow her own trumpet:

"Interesting that my work *Renegades* (2010) is the only one not mentioned, especially as it is the first publication to use Nurse Geraldine Fitzgerald's statement. My play *Madame de Markievicz on Trial* is going on a national tour of Ireland during March and April 2016. It received terrific reviews in 2015 when it was first staged. My play is interactive theatre where the audience is the actual jury, thereby removing this tale from the usual two dimensional story."

Under the heading of "Was Countess Markievicz a hero or a cold-blooded killer?" the *Irish Sun* reported:

"Countess Markievicz was not Michael Mallin's second in command during the Easter Rising, a top historian has insisted. Dr Ann Matthews said the 'eccentric' suffragette with a 'strong sense of self-importance' gave herself the job title. The NUI Maynooth lecturer said: 'Madame de Markievicz was a chaotic person, slightly out of control, believed she was entitled to be in charge and nobody ever questioned it.' ... Dr Matthews, who has written a number of books on Irish Republican women, told the *Irish Sun*: 'We are told that she was a sharp shooter but she was not. Constance de Markievicz was short-sighted from birth. At the age of 48 she couldn't have possibly been a sharp shooter. That's a myth.' It is also believed that she shot and killed Dublin Metropolitan Police officer Michael Lahiff at Stephen's Green on April 24, 1916... Dr Matthews has written a play about Markievicz's trial for the murder of Michael Lahiff."

Aside from other considerations, this play is not, of course, about the trial of Markievicz that had actually taken place. It is Dr Matthews' fictitious imagining of the trial she maintains should have taken place. Under the heading of "*Markievicz—a stupid, arrogant snob*", Emer O'Kelly reviewed it for the *Sunday Independent* on March 6th:

"The piece is more drama-documentary than play: there is no action as such, and the audience is addressed throughout. The text is based on witness accounts,

memoirs, and official papers from the time, and is set in 1917, after Constance's release from prison under the amnesty for those arrested after the Rising, and during her incarceration for subsequent seditious speech-making. A fictional Queen's Counsel conducts a 'trial', in which he calls various witnesses to the Countess's life and work. They range from the aunt of the unarmed Catholic policeman she shot at point blank range on Stephen's Green during Easter Week, to the adoring and dazzled Helena Molony (the Abbey actor who also took part in the Rising) to Dr Kathleen Lynn, the feminist and humanitarian, to the young nurse who attended the dying policeman. The picture is built up relentlessly, if in a slightly stilted form: the story of her life 'presented' in the form of questioning from prosecuting counsel. And Constance Markievicz emerges as what can best be described as a total cow: stupid, arrogant, snobbish, posturing, insensitive and manipulative, a far cry from Yeats's lines about her and her sister Eva: 'two girls in silk kimonos, both beautiful, one a gazelle'.... Constance was very much the *grande dame* patronising the poor and under-privileged as she flitted through Dublin, although she did found and lead Na Fianna, a boy-scout type organisation with a deadly purpose: to indoctrinate and train the youngsters to become armed revolutionaries."

This provoked a letter from Anne Haverty in the issue of March 13th, which walked a legal fine line in her description of what exactly Dr Matthews was at:

"It is sad that Emer O'Kelly ... should swallow without question the untruths currently being circulated in a play about Constance Markievicz. Nothing of what she asserts is true. In the forthcoming revised edition of my biography of Markievicz, the real facts about these issues are made plain."

And a week later, on March 20th, Anne Haverty addressed these "untruths" in greater detail:

"Who was Constance Markievicz? It's odd that the question has to be asked about someone who had such a significant part to play in the making of the Republic. Without the Fianna for instance, the corps of well-trained erstwhile boy scouts, Easter 1916 would probably have been another of those hopelessly amateurish attempts at rebellion the Irish went in for. It might not have even happened at all. It was Markievicz who founded the Fianna ... as a nationalist alternative to Baden Powell's imperialist, and no less militaristic, boy scouts (and who ended up in Flanders fields)... So why is she not recognised as a hero of the independence movement? Why is she absent from the roll-call of the famous? Why, when she is mentioned, is it as a peripheral figure,

and then often sneeringly, as little more than an attention-seeker? Why is her contribution so often reduced to the—false—charge that she shot a constable during the Rising?..."

"But it is the matter of the constable's death at St Stephen's Green on Easter Monday that most commonly now excuses her vilification. There are at least three versions in circulation. I think it's true to say that most of her detractors know next to nothing about the facts; and the few who do prefer to ignore them. The constable was Constable Lahiff, shot, according to the official report by the DMP—the Dublin Metropolitan Police—at 12pm or thereabouts, as the rebels were taking possession of the Green via the Fusiliers' Gate. At this time Markievicz was at City Hall..."

"The only source for the allegation is 'testimony' from a Miss Geraldene (sic) Fitzgerald. Fitzgerald's account, said to be from her diary of that day, is kept in the British National Archives at Kew, marked *Evidence Against Countess Markievicz* and stamped July 14, 1917. That it's from her diary, 'kindly supplied' by her mother who lived in Birr, can't be verified however, as it consists only of two type-written pages. In fact, it reads more like a deposition, taken down by someone tasked with gathering incriminating evidence. Geraldene Fitzgerald, a trainee public health nurse, tells how she was on her way back to the Nurses Home on the Green after her morning rounds. At 12.30 pm she was in High Street and took a longer route home to avoid Jacob's where the Sinn Feiners were in possession. Making her way to the south side of the Green she saw the Sinn Feiners inside, digging trenches while others 'were ready with rifles to fire on anyone in military or police uniforms who passed that way'. She sat down to dinner in the dining room with some colleagues. It would now be approaching 1 pm, if not later. From the window the nurses saw a policeman coming from Harcourt Street. 'He had only gone a short way when we heard a shot and then saw him fall forward on his face. The 'Countess' ran triumphantly into the Green, saying 'I got him' and some of the rebels shook her by the hand and seemed to congratulate her...' Apart from the crucial matters of the timing and the location of the shooting, which are totally at odds with the DMP's report, there are other extremely questionable aspects to this account. Among them are that the likelihood of a remark, as Fitzgerald relates it, carrying from the west side of the Green and across a wide stretch of road noisy with the activities of the rebels, onlookers and the traffic still going up and down, is small... It's hard to know what to make of Fitzgerald's account or to say what she saw or did not see—only that it seems at the very least fanciful and based more on a year's worth of rumours than on reality. It could not

stand up in a court of law, which may be why it did not appear on Markievicz's charge-sheet when she was tried on various grounds in 1920. Only the obstinately mischievous—to put it kindly—can continue to cite it."

Some months back, Dr Ann Matthews had been as disingenuous as she remained "*obstinately mischievous*" in her response to the Arrington blog, when she boasted:

"*Interesting that my work Renegades (2010) is the only one not mentioned especially as it is the first publication to use Nurse Geraldine Fitzgerald's statement.*" But I, in fact, find it far more interesting that the more recent book from Matthews, *The Irish Citizen Army* (2014), repeats (pp 93-96) her earlier use of Fitzgerald without, however, making any reference whatsoever to the forensic examination of such 'evidence' that has occurred in the interim. The methodology employed in the latter book was criticised as follows in the November-December 2014 issue of *History Ireland*:

"Matthews's approach to oral testimony demonstrates a lack of consistency. A number of witness statements are rightly questioned. Much less rigour is employed, however, when it comes to the question of Constance Markievicz's character and behaviour during her court martial in the wake of the 1916 Rising. A passage from the prosecuting counsel's memoir is quoted in full and without question. In this Markievicz is described as having pleaded for her life—behaviour that disgusted the memoirist. Matthews does not note that the memoir was written decades later (as she does with a number of witness statements), nor does she acknowledge the existence of a transcript of the court martial proceedings that completely contradicts the memoir (p. 143)."

With all due respects to *History Ireland*, its criticism of Matthews, although valid, is old hat, doing little more than repeating my own demolition twelve years ago of Emeritus Professor John A Murphy's attempt to "Wylie" Markievicz. *History Ireland* failed to notice that the most glaring omission from the 2014 Matthews book is any acknowledgement of the direct 2012 challenge to the Lahiff 'murder' charges against Markievicz in her earlier book. Ray Bateson is a historian of the 1916 Rising, the sheer depth and comprehensiveness of whose research and expertise has either been scandalously neglected or left uncredited by others. The fact that he is self-published—under the imprint of *Irish Graves Publications*—is no excuse; his books, at the very least, are easily accessible through the public library system. His 2010 book, *They Died By*

*Pearse's Side*, was followed in 2012 by *The Rising Dead: RIC & DMP*, which his no less marked by the sensitivity he shows in respect of all deaths. But the failure of Dr. Matthews even to mention Bateson, either in her own 2014 book or in the propaganda for the 2015 and 2016 productions of her "*Show Trial*", is not merely neglectful. It is scandalously unconscionable. For, in that 2012 book, Bateson devoted no fewer than 14 pages—pp 39-52—to a meticulous forensic examination of all the pros and cons of the real, imagined or false evidence surrounding Lahiff's death. He noted that, even before the Rising was over, the character assassination machine was well in place, with Markievicz as the prime target. And so it has continued, with Bateson commenting:

"Myers's source for the killing seems to be Caulfield's book but the problem with Caulfield is that he himself did not give any sources."

Bateson continued:

"Markievicz's detractors, either then or now, are not just confined to the male of the species. Ann Matthews in her book, *Renegades: Irish Republican Women 1900-1922*, quotes from the diary of a student nurse, Geraldine Fitzgerald... As this diary is one of the few sources for the actual shooting, it is essential to examine the diary in greater detail. But this is not possible. Despite extensive enquiries in the (British Public Records Office) archives in Kew, no diary could be found. There are however a couple of typed pages dated and stamped '14th July 1917 Headquarters Irish Command Parkgate Dublin'. It is entitled 'Diary of the Rising written by a Birr Lady'... In the absence of the original, its standing is questionable. Was the diary written on the actual day or afterwards and how long afterwards? Were the pages a verbatim account of what was in the diary or were they an elaboration of the entry in the diary with further memories coloured by other accounts sent in over a year later? Were there other pages or was that all she saw of value during the week? Or was it a deliberate attempt to blacken the reputation of Countess Markievicz?"

"Even if the 'diary' is taken at face value, it requires further detailed reading... The general consensus about the shooting of Constable Lahiff is that it took place within five minutes of the Green being occupied around midday. The timing of the shooting according to the Fitzgerald narrative would make it some time around or after 1.00 p.m. As regards the shooting, it is surprising that Matthews omits from Fitzgerald's account the direction in which Lahiff was walking—from Harcourt Street—for it is crucial to the understanding of the shooting, and might even support her contention that he was shot at



close range... Why did he continue in that direction? Was the shooting a warning that he disobeyed? Was his devotion to duty so strong that he was prepared to die there and then? Was he gathering information to be passed on and therefore was considered a legitimate target? After all, it was an hour since the Green was occupied and most of his colleagues had vanished at the first sign of trouble."

Bateson highlighted another omission by Matthews from this July 1917 document that was at variance with an eyewitness account published a year earlier, in July 1916. He also quoted from the police authorities' own *Constabulary Report* of August 1916 which placed the death of the policeman at the Grafton Street / Traitors' Gate entrance to the Green. I do not know where Lahiff was killed, nor the identity of the one or more who might have shot him. But one thing I know: There is no basis for believing in the veracity of the identical words and actions ascribed to Markievicz by both Caulfield and Matthews, but supposedly occurring at two quite distant corners of the Green. Such are the contradictions of Markievicz's character assassins. Of much greater significance is the reproduction by Bateson of a letter from the most honourable and conscientious British Army officer to have served in Dublin during the 1916 Rising, Sir Francis Vane. For it was Sir Francis who had so readily come to the assistance of Hanna Sheehy Skeffington in exposing the 'execution' of her pacifist husband, Francis Sheehy Skeffington, as having been nothing less than murder most foul, and as but one of five murders committed by Captain Bowen-Colthurst in his orgy of bloodshed. But Sir Francis Vane also wrote the following in a letter published by the *Irish Independent* on 31st July 1916:

"It is baby talk to complain that a few policemen were killed or a few officers or soldiers in uniform, unarmed, were shot. No soldiers should be unarmed. And how were the enemy to know they were so. Yet I wonder, thinking of those times in my native city of Dublin, if an impartial tribunal, a Royal Commission, or whatnot, to enquire into the shootings of innocent civilians by rebels and by the military was instituted, whether the opposition to such an enquiry would come from rebels side or from that of the military?"

Whoever—whether a he, she or they—shot Constable Lahiff, or wherever it might have happened, one thing should be beyond reasonable doubt. Murder it most certainly was not.

**Manus O'Riordan**

## McKenna's Fort a play about Roger Casement reviewed

*McKenna's Fort* a play, billed as being about Roger Casement's role in the 1916 Rising, had its world premiere recently at the New Theatre in Dublin's Temple Bar. It ran from March 21st to April 2nd. Arnold Thomas Fanning, the author, is from Ireland. Michael Bates played Casement. The play consists of a one man monologue. Such a production suits the small, intimate environment of the New Theatre.

The title refers to the *rath* or remnant of an Iron Age circular dwelling enclosure where Casement hid out after landing by rowing boat from a German submarine with two companions in April 1916. The boat had capsized before reaching the shore and all three aboard tossed into the sea. After they had made the safety of Banna Strand, wet to the skin, they decided Casement would wait at McKenna's Fort. Meanwhile the two others went to make contact with somebody who hopefully could bring him to Dublin to meet with the leadership of the planned rebellion. Casement believed the rebellion as planned would result in a bloodbath which could not lead to military success. He hoped the arms consignment from the ship *the Aud* could be landed, distributed and stored but not put to immediate use. He believed the time was not opportune for an insurrection.

The action of the play, such as it is, consists of what might have gone on in Casement's mind as he hides in the rath waiting for his associates Monteith and Bailey to return with the required assistance needed to get him to Dublin. At first his thoughts are on the possible rebellion which he feels to be "*ghastly folly*". Then he remembers the cramped, foul environment he endured on the U-boat. The crew "*hate me*" and snigger as he holds a bucket to his chest.

Then his thoughts go back to when he arrived in Germany in 1914 and what he considered his great diplomatic coup when he persuaded the German Government to make a declaration of goodwill towards Ireland and Irish independence.

Then he is nine years old and he is slowly coming to realise his mother has died. His father is then remembered as a man who died penniless in a hotel in Ballymena and as being "*famous*" for conducting séances. The suggestion is of a childhood marred by tragedy and parental inadequacy.

The play then becomes a potted history of Casement's life up to his submarine voyage from Germany. What we get is a canonical Casement; the canon being that of *Irish historical revisionism*.

Some incidents are contrived from the imagination. Others are based on the extensive trove of Casement-associated archival documentation which has found an outlet in the printed output of various authors.

An irritation is the anachronisms which crop up from time to time. These are mainly Americanisms which would have been unheard of a century ago. Casement once describes his sister Nena as "*feisty*". Irish prisoners of war he refers to as "*POWs*".

The play has Casement exhibiting egomania. After he recalls listening to the Africa explorer Stanley speak in London, he remarks with enthusiasm "*a whole continent was there; needing me*". An aspect of his walks is looking out for and evaluating what he called "*types*"; men of a younger age group who he might find attractive and who could possibly be potential sexual partners. One of the invented scenes has him go down an alleyway in Paris with a young man he expects to experience some intimacy with only to be robbed at knife point.

In another invented incident Casement is staying in Stanley pool in the Congo and has gone out for a walk with John, his bulldog. John barks at the village boys and Casement beats him repeatedly with his stick until it is broken across his back. The dog whimpers the whole time, not understanding what he has done wrong. It is a scene with a sinister nuance; a man out for a walk with his dog, the anonymous village boys, the dog barking, then whimpering, and the frantic assault with the stick. This vignette is at odds with the reports we have of Casement in regard to animals, especially dogs, which relate his kindness and sympathy.

Casement's alleged lover Millar Gordon crops up. They fall out because Gordon has signed the Ulster Covenant! There are reminiscences of various sexual encounters with young males in Peru and Brazil.

The text gives the impression not a single man answered Casement's call to enlist in his Irish Brigade when in fact about 50 did so.



As he hears people coming towards him in the rath, he muses he had always expected to have a role in Irish history given a chance. He is thinking that the people arriving are going to help him get to Dublin to complete his mission.

The Casement that emerges is a disjointed personality, compassionate yet with a violent streak, idealistic yet madly vain, capable yet delusional, desirous of doing great deeds yet lacking depth of character. His views on Ireland or on Germany and the war are not explained save for the suggestion of mild psychosis which in the script hovers over and about the main character.

Michael Bates proves a versatile and effortless mimic. In the 75 minutes or so of the production he speaks German, French and Irish as well as rendering a variety of accents and characters more or less flawlessly. The way he rendered Casement lacked the passion one would expect for a historical personality known to have been deeply emotional. The script required the actor to render a combination of the soulless automaton of the infamous diaries and the historic personality known as Roger Casement. Such an effort can not avoid a certain touch of lifeless incoherence.

*McKenna's Fort* runs as part of the 13th International Dublin Gay Theatre Festival 2016 at The Teachers Club (Studio), Parnell Street West, Dublin, from May 2nd to May 7th 2016 at 7.30pm.

**Tim O'Sullivan**

**Roger Casement: The Crime Against Europe.** With *The Crime Against Ireland* Introduction by B. Clifford. 184pp. . £18, £15

**Roger Casement: A Reassessment Of The Diaries Controversies** by Mairead Wilson. 32pp. £6, £5

**The Casement Diary Dogmatists.** by Brendan Clifford. 68pp. £8, £6

**Traitor-Patriots In The Great War:** Casement & Masaryk by Brendan Clifford. 56pp. £6, £5

**Casement, Alsace-Lorraine And The Great Irredentist War** by Brendan Clifford. With extracts from Casement's *Crime Against Europe*, and works by Rene Bazin, Coleman Phillipson and Nicholas Mansergh. 48pp. £6, £5

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Account Of Meeting held in Kanturk on 23rd April, addressed by Jack Lane

## The 1918 Election: An Ignored Centenary

We have just had numerous events to commemorate the Rising and rightly so. But 1916 without the 1918 Election result would be almost a non-event and this election is not listed as one of the events that's highlighted for commemoration during 'the decade of Commemorations.' In fact it is never commemorated. It was the endorsement of 1916 by the electorate in 1918 that made 1916 the event it was. Otherwise it would have been a failure like '98, 1803, '48, and '67. It therefore deserves a fairly prominent commemoration. Up to a few months ago there were 974 books listed in the NLI on 1916, and well over a 1000 by now, but not a single one on the 1918 Election! I wonder will there be at least one book published on it before 2018?

It is impossible to understand subsequent events such as the War of the Independence and the so-called 'Civil War' without appreciating the 1918 Election. That was the seminal event of the period. It endorsed the Rebellion and was the basis for Interdependence.

All the critics of 1916 about the lack of a mandate should be lauding 1918 but they are strangely muted about it. The results of any General Election can hardly be ignored but that is exactly what happened in 1918 and the more one thinks about it the more extraordinary it becomes.

Not responding to, and ignoring, such an event is not a case of there not being a policy—that is a very definite policy.

Here was a British General Election which produced in Ireland a unique result that I don't think has ever been matched in what are usually called democratic countries. Ireland was treated as one unit, as it had always been, and the Sinn Fein party got 73 and other nationalists 6 of the 105 seats, over 70%. It gave a clear mandate to withdraw from Westminster and set up an independent Government in Dublin.

### It was a first in many ways.

It was an interesting Election. It was the first to be held on one day and counted all together on another day. The Electorate had increased from 31% of the population to 75% with all males over 21 and many women voting—those above 30. Women got the vote because of how they participated in WW1, not by the suffragettes convincing everybody. The suffragettes

who invented the '*white feather*' did more than most to win the vote. Like some hard-faced MPs, women 'did well out of the war'.

The election itself was held in the widest franchise ever, in which a British election was ever held. The self-proclaimed '*mother of Parliaments*' never had more people voting for it.

The result gave democratic sanction to the 1916 Rebellion and was therefore as important as the Rising itself. If that election had not happened, the Rising would be a footnote in our history and classed as a failure. It was the real origin of the state as we know it. The Rising was an aspiration for Independence. This was the aspiration become reality. Therefore it is the founding event of our state, of what we are.

No doubt the electorate as a whole thought that in these circumstances 'of democracy all round' that they only needed to vote for freedom to get it. And their message could hardly be clearer.

### Critiques of the election result

There has been a series of critiques of the Election and I should briefly mention these as they keep being repeated.

### Intimidation

The word *intimidation* is thrown about and it's always directed against Sinn Fein. Indeed, there was massive intimidation. Sinn Fein was banned, about 100 leaders were in jail, all Republican publications banned, and the rest of the press censored. Several candidates were in jail, giving rise to the wonderful slogan "*Put him in to get him out!*" Only 29 of the elected Sinn Fein MPs were present at the opening of the Dail—the others being on the run or in Jail. Instead the Dail was proclaimed, i.e., outlawed and later suppressed.

Sinn Fein canvassers were fired on in Waterford and Sinn Feiners had to fire back. Sinn Feiners were viciously attacked in Belfast—by Redmondites in both cases.

It was a British General Election held under strict rules. Nobody lodged a complaint of malpractice—no Unionists or Home Rulers and the RIC did not do so either. But such complaints were often made in the past and MPs were sometimes forced to resign. It was a pretty regular occurrence.

The Government put forward no

candidates—were they intimidated as well?

### ***Sinn Fein got a minority of votes***

Because there were so many unopposed seats, 25, the suggestion is that Sinn Fein might have been defeated in these seats. All of Kerry and all Cork County seats were unopposed. Were Unionists and Home Rulers likely to win in these? And there is no record of people being stopped from standing. In fact there were more contested seats than was normal in Irish elections. For example in the 1910 Election there were 46 uncontested seats, compared to 25 in 1918. And there were 74 in 1906 and 64 in 1886. It was only in 1892 that the majority of seats were contested. By this logic the Unionists represented Ireland for decades!

### ***They did not understand what they were doing***

Ireland's claim to be recognised by the Versailles Conference, in this new era of democracy and national self-determination poses problems for our modern historians. After all, several countries were recognised: Finland, Poland, Baltic States, Czechoslovakia. But not Ireland (or Vietnam.)

One argument is that the Irish did not understand the issues because they were not educated in the matter of politics. In *'Controversial Issues in Anglo-Irish Relations, 1910-1921'* (2004), Professor Cornelius O'Leary and Dr. Patrick Maume say:

"The mission [to Versailles] was a failure, the new regime was not admitted to the League of Nations and the report of the Paris Peace Conference made no mention of Ireland. In spite of earlier optimism, it ought to have been clear to Sinn Fein that the delegates at the Conference were most unlikely to take any action that would antagonise Britain, and this was particularly true of President Wilson.

"It might be appropriate at this stage to advert to the ignorance of foreign (apart from British) politics on the part of Irish politicians generally. (Even in the days of the Irish Parliament Party John Dillon was alone among the leaders with both a knowledge of and interest in foreign affairs.) The reasons are not far to seek. In both Great Britain and Ireland the academic study of politics was then in its infancy. The first holder of a chair of Politics at an English university was Professor W.G.S. Adams, who as a member of Lloyd George's "Garden Suburb" played an important role in Anglo-Irish relations between 1916 and 1918. (It was not until 1948 that a lecturer in Political Science was appointed at a university in Dublin, Trinity College.)

Moreover, serious students in Ireland did not have access to comparative works on political systems, the first of which in English was Herman Finer's *The Governments of the Greater European Powers*, published in 1931" (p.80).

So if they had read the right books they would have forced the Victors at Versailles to accept them. But the books were not written at the time! So there was an insuperable problem here.

Of course the US and French Republic were the Irish model—especially for the Fenians who led the Rising. There was no need to consult books about what they wanted—it existed already in a real sense in France and the USA.

### ***Was it a fluke?***

Did the Irish just get carried away? This was definitely the British view. But not only did the people defend the new Government elected in 1918, they voted several times for it during the War which was made on it. This again is something extraordinary. Britain cancels elections during wars. Here we kept voting. Those elections were the January 1920 Municipal Elections where Republicans got 77%; the June 1920 Rural Council Elections where they got 83%; the June 1920 County Council Elections where they got 80%; and the June 1921 General Election where they had 100% success in the 26 Counties. And they got these massive majorities despite the sudden introduction of PR which was an attempt to maximise divisions amongst the electorate and dilute support for Sinn Fein. These results show that it was a people's war in a real sense and fought on full democratic grounds and the people had no regrets about their 1918 vote.

I doubt if you will find anything similar happening anywhere at any time—4 elections confirming support for a war to defend a government at war—in this case to defend the Republic.

### ***Was it legal?***

Joost Augusteijn argues that "*recognition by the international community is a central element in the debate on legitimacy, and in international law, the Irish state was created by the 1921 Treaty, and not through the vote of 1918*".

Peter Hart made a lot of this: that it was not legal because the Versailles Conference said so. WWI had been fought for the freedom of nations yet it was illegal to claim that freedom after fighting and voting for it!

In case people need reminding, Hart's thesis is:

"... the Dail had no legal standing and was never recognised by any foreign government. Nor did the IRA, as a guerrilla force acting without uniforms and depending on their civilian status for secrecy, meet the requirements of international law. The British government was therefore within its rights to give courts-martial the power to order executions" (Irish Times, 23 June 1998).

"Nor were members of the IRA protected by the Hague Convention, the basis for the law of war on land. The British government and its forces were not at war in this sense. To be recognised as belligerent soldiers, the guerrillas would have had to be fighting for a responsible established state, wear a recognisable uniform or emblem, carry their arms openly, and not disguise themselves as civilians. None of these conditions applied. It is of course true that international law favours established states, but if any group can claim belligerent status when using political violence, then so can the INLA or the UVF. The Oklahoma bombers would also conceivably have a right to POW status" (Irish Times, 22 July 1998).

The Hague Convention was drawn up by the Empires of the world in 1907 and was based on a sort of ideal version of two armies lined up like toy soldiers obeying laws. The Irish Republic did not exist so was not a member. The Irish met all the conditions of Convention in the 1916 Rising but the British broke the first rule of the Convention in not taking prisoners of war of the entire enemy after the surrender.

All the rules were ignored in WWI and developments in spying and Intelligence made the Hague Convention even more redundant than it was originally. With the invention of concentration camps, the British did not fight the Boer War according to the Hague Convention and the Black and Tans hardly met the rules. And the Convention could never be interpreted by anybody to prove that war against an elected government was legal. The UVF, INLA or the Oklahoma bombers did not win general elections.

### **The Context**

To put the election in context. It was held after WWI, which was fought, allegedly, "*for the freedom of small nations*". That was why a quarter of a million Irishmen joined up—and killed and were killed by the tens of thousands for this alleged freedom. The Bolsheviks in Russia had left the war and were encouraging in every way they could national liberation and self determination in all the colonies across the world.

By the end of the war the USA had

joined in on the basis of Wilson's 14 points, which essentially meant for the rights of nations to self determination.

So everyone, quite literally everyone, was for national independence.

The League of Nations was set up to promote this new world of free nations.

It was the flavour of the era.

### **A vote for war!**

This has been put about for a long time. In 1979 Professor Cornelius O'Leary from Cork wrote a book "*Irish Elections 1918-77*", which says that: "*As is well known, the meeting of the first Dail inaugurated a two-and-a-half year period of military repression and guerrilla insurgency (the War of Independence.)*" p.8.

But it was not the Dail that 'inaugurated' or instigated the repression. The Dail was a victim of this. And that resistance to that repression could not be called an *insurgency* as it was an elected government being suppressed and defending itself.

This needs to be emphasised because a constant refrain is that *people voted for a war*: That the election and the result in themselves led to war. Professor Diarmaid Ferriter, who is one of our top pop historians, says in his latest book, "*The war evolved from being one characterised by attacks on the RIC to being a war waged against British troops and 'it remains very unclear as to whether this was the kind of war that people voted for at the general election of December 1918, indeed whether they had voted for any kind of war at all'*". ("*A nation and not a rabble—the Irish Revolution 1913-23*").

The electorate did not vote for any kind of war, they had had enough of that in WWI and had been persuaded that it had been a war for national freedom. Unless they were crazy, the electorate would not have voted for another war for the same purpose after the dreadful experiences of WWI. The mass of people thought they had fought their war for independence!

There is an attempt to give credence to this notion by the coincidence of the Soloheadbeg ambush on the day the Dail met. The impression given is that this started the war. But a full scale war did not result and the Dail condemned the ambush and Dan Breen and his friends were advised to leave the country—or go to Cork. They did not choose that date for the ambush—the RIC did when picking the day to move some gelignite. There was no war unleashed by this incident that year. A few, a small minority like Dan Breen (and Sean Moylan here), had always thought the

election would be ignored but they were a very small minority view. They turned out to be right but it was the British Government that proved them right. The people, millions of them, were not led by Dan Breen to engage and support a war. People anywhere do not act like this. It takes quite a lot to get a whole people to engage in war at every level.

The fact is that there was a simmering ongoing war going on at the time. The situation was described as one of being at war by John Redmond himself who said on 12th July 1916 that the terms of the proposed Home Rule Act amount "*to a declaration of war on the Irish people, and to the announcement of a policy of coercion*".

There was in effect military government under DORA with censorship, break up of printing presses, raids, arrests, banning of meetings. Volunteers were shot trying to acquire arms; Thomas Ashe died after forced feeding.

The British Government passed a Conscription Act to apply to Ireland on 12th April 1918. Representatives of all Irish political parties, with Éamon de Valera joining John Dillon. They met at the Mansion House on 18th April 1918, and declared that the Conscription Act "*must be regarded as a declaration of war on the Irish nation*".

Mulcahy went to London to kill Cabinet Ministers to stop conscription, supported by Ernest Blythe. The latter also advised the shooting dead of soldiers who would engage in conscription.

This situation was made very clear when Sir John French accepted appointment as sole Lord Lieutenant in May 1918 on condition it was as a "*Military Viceroy at the Head of a Quasi-Military Government*".

French was one of the top military men of the day up there with Kitchener, Haig, etc.

There was the German Plot with arrests of all the leaders which was an excuse for war on republicans.

All this was a reaction to growing support for Sinn Fein as shown in bye elections that were encouraging non-violence.

The situation could not go on—it was bound to explode. But Soloheadbeg was not the beginning of the war. There was a war situation already. Though of course officially according to the British there was never a war in Ireland. It was only police action.

### **But what happened?**

The Government totally ignored it. The attitude was that the Irish would come to

their senses. They treated the result and therefore the electorate with total contempt. And contempt was the consistent view, even when the Government was forced to concede a Truce two and half years later with what they had constantly described as a '*murder gang*'.

And the strangest thing is that among our modern historians and commentators this ignoring of the 1918 Election result is treated as normal and there is no surprise at this. We are constantly lectured, and outrage is constantly invoked about awful the '*terrorist*' past and present here and elsewhere among those who have no respect for democracy and the rule of law, etc. etc. but there is no such outrage expressed about this blatant disregard of an election result and no awareness that such disregard has consequences. In this case it caused a war—the War of Independence. The vote and result did not cause the war—it was the reaction to it. That was the cause and effect in this case.

The British reaction was to ignore the result and hope that the Irish will forget it. That's what they are like. The Irish have never fought us before and had never been able to make a rebellion succeed so why would they now do so? And even when Home Rule was suspended they fought *for* us by the hundreds of thousands. After all, this was Britain at the height of its power: toppling states, creating others as they wished. The world was at its feet. They could ignore this little hiccup.

But of course doing nothing is also a very definite policy and as deliberate a policy as doing something. In this case it meant continuing to rule the country militarily as before and treating the attempts by those elected to do what they were elected to do as a criminal activity, with martial law, censorship, raids, court-martials etc.

What explains this attitude? In a word—utter contempt for the Irish.

And if the Irish had no self respect and did not have the courage of their voting convictions, this policy of contempt would have succeeded.

So why was this clear result ignored and opposed? Ignoring the result and contusing as before was a very definite policy based on contempt for the Irish electorate.

This would never be made explicit of course, such is the not the way with sophisticated Britain politicians. So we have to go 'behind the scenes' to judge their policy.

### **Joe Devlin**

One of the few members of the Irish Parliamentary Party who was returned to































