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Conservative Reform Party Needed!

Thirty years ago Charles Haughey took hold of the Irish economy and brought it into the sphere of Finance Capitalism by use of the powers of the State. He did this democratically in the face of the hatred of all the parties of the democracy, not excluding his own.

He was hated because he was an innovator. And he was hated because he was an unreconstructed traditionalist. He was an innovator who rejected liberalism as the ideological medium of change, and, if he was not hated for the one thing, he was hated for the other. He was hated most of all for bringing the two into combination: an economically innovating political traditionalist.

The British approved of him at the start as an economic 'moderniser', taking it for granted that he was a political liberal. The two things went together in their understanding. When they saw him as being the one thing without being the other thing, they understood that he was the most dangerous man to their interests in the Irish state. Hence the venomous *Irish Times* campaign against him as a kind of Stalinist thug.

Successful capitalists gave him money. The petty bourgeois reckoning, given classical expression by Fintan O'Toole, was that he was therefore corrupt: "*There is no question but that he was on the take: the only question is whether he gave anything in return*".

He did a service to the capitalist system by bouncing it into the world of Finance Capitalism. It was a necessary development, given that the system was capitalist with no actual possibility that it could become something else. He made it more effectively capitalist.

The sentiment of the easy going life of the country of small property owners was affronted by this. It was undoubtedly a pleasant life. But it involved a high rate of

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Netanyahu/Gantz Deal And The West Bank

GANTZ POLITICAL SUICIDE?

On 20th April 2020, Benjamin Netanyahu signed a 41-clause agreement for an "emergency unity government" with his chief political rival, Benny Gantz.

The agreement provides for a rigid power-sharing arrangement between them: each will have a veto over most legislative and policy matters; each will serve as Prime Minister for eighteen months, with Netanyahu going first; ministerial (and deputy ministerial) posts will be shared more or less equally between their two blocs, even though the bloc led by Gantz is much smaller, over half of his MKs (members of the Knesset) having deserted him because he agreed to sit in government led by Netanyahu while he is under criminal indictment, having promised not to do so in three successive elections (see, for example, David Horowitz, *Times of Israel*, 21st April 2020).

The deal envisages a six-month "emergency" government primarily focused on

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The Sindo Anti-Sinn Fein Party And Its Holy War

Eoghan Harris has undoubtedly campaigned long and hard to see his ventriloquist's dummy, Fianna Fáil leader Micheál Martin, become the 26 Counties Republic's next Taoiseach. For Harris has viewed Martin as the best hope of ensuring the achievement of his own primary political objective in life, the complete exclusion of Sinn Féin from any role in Government. Week after

week, from the New Year onwards, the very headings to Harris's *Sunday Independent* column underscored that campaign:

"The North had no choice on SF in government—but we do"

(January 19);

"Seamus Mallon knew that Sinn Fein poses a moral problem"

(January 26);

"Dark shadows still dominate Sinn Fein's Shangri-La"

(February 2).

In that same issue, on the eve of the General Election, and under the heading of 'Micheal Martin rules out possibility of Sinn Féin-Fianna Fail government after election', Harris Mouthpiece Martin proclaimed that his primary objective was indeed that voiced week after week

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

Alan Kelly

Has Labour's Hour Arrived?

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Senate Election Results

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emigration, and was reaching the end of its tether. The changes brought about by Haughey made it viable economically, in great part because Haughey demonstrated to Europe that Ireland was capable of being something better than Britain's echo.

Haughey was resented by the elders of Fianna Fail, and by more than the elders. They fed themselves on the lie that he had engaged in treason in 1970 for the purpose of bringing about a War of North and South. They could not see how he could have come to power without being helped by some power of Evil, or how, having come to power, he could have done what he did.

They saw him as a trouble-maker against England, even though he demonstrated that it was possible to act in the Irish interest against England while maintaining perfectly civil relations with it. In that respect, Fianna Fail would not accept political heritage from him. And it is now where it is.

The Sunday Independent, with the possibility of a Fine Gael/Fianna Fail Government in view, asks if Civil War politics are over and done with. It is assumed the Civil War politics are a bad thing.

If they are, where are party politics to come from?

And the question must be asked, *are party politics a good thing?* Is it a good thing that government should be so arranged that one part of the Legislature is always committed in principle to trying to prevent the governing part from governing?

England pioneered this development, without ever intending to. For a long period the existence of parties was seen as a hangover from the time when a governing monarchy divided the country against itself in order to rule it. It was distortion of the Constitution. As peace settled in, it would disappear and there would be harmony.

But today an arrangement without inbuilt party conflict is regarded as being inherently unconstitutional. There must be division. There must be conflict. Otherwise there is no democracy.

If Fianna Fail has run its course and it joins with Fine Gael as the only way a government can be formed, where is the Opposition party to come from? It can only come from a development of Sinn Fein which enables it to supersede Fianna Fail.

The Northern origins of Sinn Fein have not prepared it for democratic politics.

Northern Ireland is not a democratic state. It is not even a state.

The function of Sinn Fein in the North was to support the IRA at war, and then take part in devolved government in a system which did not hinge on a Party forming the Government.

In the South, during the Northern War, Sinn Fein's business was to influence Southern opinion in favour of the War. Its development was not within the democratic politics of the state. When peace in the North set in, it based itself in the South on a couple of liberal absolutes coming into vogue in Britain: abortion on demand, and homosexual marriage (which effectively abolishes the institution as it has existed throughout human history, as a means of reproducing the race). And, in addition, it inherited a kind of contempt for the Irish State, which was entirely understandable, given the Northern origins of the Party, and the duplicity of the Dublin position on the North from the Treaty down to the present day.

But, if Sinn Fein is to function as a party of the state, it must adapt to what the state is and become its conservative reformer—which is what Fianna Fail used to be.

In the North, since the War ended, it has been a party in the eccentrically devolved system of the state, which is not itself a state, while the Government of the state did all the essential things that a State must do. It has functioned within a façade of the state, set up by the Government of the state in 1922 for some devious political purpose that was never explained.

And one of Sinn Fein's moral strengths against the SDLP was that it did not care whether the facade was there or not. Its War was against the State, not against its local false-front, while the SDLP was a facade-party.

In the South it must be a Party of the State. It was given an easy start with a couple of liberal absolutisms on matters deriving from late 19th century English legislation, when the vital force in the Liberal Party was Fundamentalist Protestantism. There was no Irish law against homosexual practice, and Dublin used to be where Belfast homosexuals went for dirty weekends. And the scandal of the Kerry Babies, raised by the Dublin middle class, showed that there was a large degree of tolerance in the country on these matters.

In the North, Sinn Fein is an Irish Party in the British state. In the South it has yet to become at ease with itself as an Irish Party in the Irish state on anti-Treaty foundations. □

Lucky Lenin!

Luck plays a huge role in political success. Most successful politicians utilise political situations that come about, that they do not or cannot predict, and which they did little or nothing to create themselves..

Lenin was lucky with the Great War, he was lucky Britain made the Tsar fight to the bitter end, he was lucky with the incompetence of the Provisional Government, he was lucky the Germans lost the War after he signed up to Brest-Litovsk, he was lucky the British exhausted themselves winning it, he was lucky Lloyd George tried to humiliate the Turks rather than adopting Churchill's policy of destroying Bolshevism, giving him a southern shield against Imperialism.

Lenin was a lucky man (or genius?)

Nobody, as far as we know, created or foresaw the Corona virus. But whoever acts upon the circumstances it creates to advance a political cause will be the one who shapes the future. Is there a Lenin in the wings?

Pat Walsh

Obituary

John Gault: Some Recollections

I knew John Gault when he was living in Dublin in the early 1970s. One day he took me aside and, almost secretly, he took some trouble to get me to understand that facts that were being presented in science as support for the belief that the origin of species lay in the emergence of one species from another, through a process of adaptation to changes in the environment, were actually proof of the contrary—that species preserved themselves by survivalist adaptation to changes in the environment. Adaptations were conservative, not revolutionary.

If butterflies changed colour from white to black when a rural environment changed to a smoky industrial environment, that was in order to remain butterflies. There was always some variation in each new generation and the variants that enhanced the chances of survival flourished.

This was heresy in scientific circles in Trinity College, which in John's generation there seems to have been dominated by the highly intellectual, but also socially revolutionary, movement called *The Internationalists*. It was stringently materialist, and it seemed to me to be groping for proof that the world came about scientifically, and was inclined to take short-cuts in reasoning.

John was a Derry Protestant—that is to say, Anglican. I don't know that he

was at all religious (in the sense in which that term was used in Slieve Luacra), but I doubt that he would have made an issue of it on formal occasions.

He was married to Lorna Turner, who was a Derry Presbyterian. I don't think I ever asked them what marriage service they had.

Lorna was acquainted with a Catholic singer from Derry who was very famous at the time, and whom Lorna always referred to as *Rosemary*, which was not her famous name.

Judging by John and Lorna, I got the idea that, beneath the bizarre political system imposed by Westminster, there was in Derry a stratum of relaxed civilization proper to a bourgeois town such as I had never noticed in Belfast.

I lost contact with them after they were obliged to move to Sligo. In those days Belfast was very poorly connected with Sligo by public transport. I can only say that it was a pleasure knowing them.

Brendan Clifford

JACK LANE WRITES:

John came from Derry from the Unionist side and became attached to the Internationalists in Trinity around 1967-8. He was not a typical supporter as he was far too level-headed to be so.

Along with others from that 'stable' he joined the ICO in the late 1960s and participated in the intense debates and actions, such those of the DHAC (Dublin Housing Action Committee). □

What I recall is his contribution to debates on Darwinism and Mendelism—and his preference for the latter which was very, very unfashionable then—and now—especially on the Left.

I also recall his involvement in the defence of the Falls in August 1969, though naturally enough he never spoke much about it: and therefore the details are probably known to very few. My recollection is that afterwards the Special Branch took a particular interest in him and he did not find it easy to get work.

MANUS O'RIORDAN ADDS:

I think it important to acknowledge John's personal courage on both sides of the national question, when it mattered. A Derry Protestant, he did not hesitate to defend Northern Catholics during the August 1969 pogroms. But he also knew the social reality of the national question and he firmly upheld the B&ICO Two Nations analysis. Living in Dublin in the early 1970s, and encountering the vitriol with which that analysis was met across the spectrum from Blueshirt to Stickie, he was willing to sell "*Communist Comment*" from pub to pub, notwithstanding the added hostility he would have met from Dublin pub nationalists as a Northern Prod expounding that analysis.

His employment difficulties were finally resolved in the mid-1970s when he took up a position as a lecturer in the Sligo Institute of Technology, where he remained for the rest of his working life, and was highly thought of by the students he taught. □

(While continuing our series on the events of 1920 with the help of the daily newspaper of the First Dail, the *Irish Bulletin* we are reducing the amount printed, as reproducing the full monthly report is taking up too much space at the expense of other items. We will make the full monthly events available to online to subscribers to this magazine. The whole of this issue, as well as all the previous instalments which have appeared in this magazine, can be seen on our dedicated Facebook, address below.)

LEST WE FORGET (17)

The following are Acts of Aggression committed in Ireland by the armed Military and Police of the English Government, as reported in the Daily Pres Week Ending March 6th, 1920

Date: March:-	1st	2nd	4th	5th	6th	Total.
Raids:-	156	105	153	32	401	918
Arrests:-	71	36	319	20	8	479
Sentences:-	-	-	-	3	1	5
Proclamations	-	1	-	-	--	1
&	-	-	-	-	1	1
	2	2	1	2	-	8
	-	-	-	2	1	2
	4	-	-	2	-	7
	-	-	-	1	-	1
<u>Daily</u>	233	144	473	62	412	1,422
<u>Total:-</u>						

A new element has entered into the armed suppression of the Republican Movement in Ireland. Troops and police are now encouraged to wreck the property of well-known Republicans. In the foregoing week seven such incidents have occurred, these are usually accompanied by looting on the part of the troops. These occurrences appear under the heading "Sabotage". In the above six days the sentences passed for political offences totalled one year and ten months.

MONDAY, MARCH 1st, 1920.

Raids:-

Military and police in large numbers raided and searched upwards of 100 houses in the Rushbrook district of Co. Cork.

At Dublin, in the early hours of the morning, military and police accompanied by armoured cars raided the residences of many prominent Republicans. Some twenty houses were searched including those of Mr. Robert O'Brennan, of the Rathmines Urban Council. Dr. Kathleen Lynn, - Member of the Rathmines Urban Council. In the raid on Mr. O'Brennan's house the troops ordered Mrs. O'Brennan out of bed and when she subsequently asked them not to raid the rooms in which her three young children were sleeping the officer in charge replied "we can't help that" and ordered the room be searched. In a raid upon the residence of Mrs. Hazlewood, that lady fainted and when an effort was

made by a Mr. O'Brien who lodged in the same house to go to her assistance he was held up by the troops who ordered him at the point of the revolver to stand back. (See Military Sabotage). Military and police raided ten houses in the Kildorrery district of Co. Cork. In the Ballingar district of Co. Galway twenty five houses were raided and searched by armed police. Military and police raided the Labour Hall at Inchicore, Co. Dublin.

Arrests:-

Two young men named Hynes and Kilkelly of Abbey, Co. Galway have been arrested on an unknown charge. Messrs James Burke, M. Cronin and T. Jackson, of Rockmills, Co. Cork, have been arrested. No charge has been preferred against them. Fifty six persons were arrested in the Streets of Dublin on a charge of being "abroad" between the hours of 12 midnight and 5 a.m. without the permission of the British Military authorities. Mr. Thos. Donovan of Kilsheehan, Co. Tipperary, was arrested on a charge of having in his possession arms and ammunition. Five young men found in the Emmet Hall, Inchicore - where the local Labour meet, - were arrested in a raid by military and police. Messrs. M. Doohan, C. Doohan, Jos. McGinley and J. Coyle were arrested at Falcarragh, Co. Donegal, on a charge of "unlawful assembly".

Armed Assault:-

At the trial of the above-mentioned men at Falcarragh, Co.

Donegal it was admitted by the police that they attacked and batoned a gathering of civilians. An effort was made by the police to justify their action by alleging that the civilians first stoned them, but the case fell through, the four men being released. The incident mentioned in last week's list in which the armed forces of the British Government stationed in town of Thurles marked the houses of prominent Sinn Feiners by painting at night time threatening symbols upon them, has had its sequel. In the early hours of Saturday morning British military filled the streets of the town and wrecked the houses they had previously marked. They destroyed shop-fronts, and smashed in the windows and doors of private houses. The local Sinn Fein Hall was almost completely wrecked. The troops engaged in these operations were accompanied by their officers.

Military Sabotage

The new element which recently entered into the armed suppressions of the Irish people, that of wanton destruction and looting by the British Military, is being evidenced more frequently. In the raids in Dublin mentioned above, pictures were smashed in several houses, from the residence of Dr. Kathleen Lynn valuable ornaments were stolen by the military raiders, while in the jewellers shop kept by Mr. Farley at 84 Parnell Street, Dublin, a force of British troops looted and destroyed property valued at several hundreds of pounds. Further, in the town of Thurles during the sacking of Sinn Fein residences above mentioned, damage to an enormous was done. In all these instances the troops were acting under their officers.

TUESDAY, MARCH 2nd, 1920.

Raids:-

Armed police raided the residence at Derrygarve, Co. Derry Mr. P. Diamond. The residence, in the same district, of Mr. F. Murphy, was also raided. The raids took place just after midnight. Both the occupants were arrested. (See below). A strong party of police raided the Sinn Fein Hall at Ballinasloe, Co. Galway, while a dance was in progress, and arrested the young men who were attending it. At Derryhee, Emyvale, Co. Monaghan, armed police raided two private houses. Large forces of military and police continued the searching of houses in the Cloyne district of Co. Cork. Over 100 houses were forcibly entered and every room in them ransacked.

Arrests:-

At Derrygarve, Co. Derry, armed police arrested in bed Mr. P. Diamond a man of over 70 years, who is under constant medical treatment. They brought him to the police barracks where he has had to be visited frequently by the doctor. The charge against him is one of being in possession of a shot gun. Mr. Diamond is a farmer and the gun is necessary to him for the preservation of his crops. On a similar charge, Mr. F. Murphy was arrested also at Derrygarve. At Ballinasloe, Co. Galway, 30 young men were arrested in a police raid in the local Sinn Fein Hall. A dance was in progress at the time. This the police suppressed, arresting the men on a charge of "unlawful assembly". Mr. Thos. Reilly of Mullaheeran, Co. Cavan, was arrested on a charge of advertising the Irish Self-Determination Fund displaying posters appealing for subscriptions to it. Mr. H. McCabe of Clarinagh, Enniskillen, was arrested on a charge of having arms in his possession. Two persons were arrested on the streets of Dublin on a charge of being "abroad" between the hours of 12 midnight and 5 a.m. without the permission of the British Military Authorities.

Proclamations & Suppressions:-

Armed police forcibly suppressed a dance at the Ballinasloe (Co. Galway) Sinn Fein Club, arresting 30 of the participants.

Armed Assault:

In the streets of Thurles, Co. Tipperary, police armed with hand grenades, rifles, bayonets and batons, attacked a number of townspeople who had peaceably gathered in the street. Many were injured. In the same town armed police accosted a local tradesman named James Moloney and having ordered him to hold up his hands beat him with the butt-ends of their rifles.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 3rd, 1920.

Raids:-

At Newport, Co. Tipperary and in the neighbouring districts armed police raided and searched fifty houses. In Cork city police raided over a score of private houses and searched them. Sinn Fein Hall at Ballinasloe, Co. Galway, was again raided by the police.

Arrests:-

Ten persons were arrested on the streets of Dublin on a charge of being "abroad" without the permission of the British Military Authorities. In the second raid on the Sinn Fein Hall in Ballinasloe, Co. Galway, fifteen young men were arrested. The charge upon which these further arrests were made has not been stated.

Sentences:-

Master James Staines, a boy of 17, recently arrested at his father's house by a party of military who were trying to take Ald. M. Staines, M.P. into custody, was sentenced at the Northern Police Court, Dublin, to one month's imprisonment for "having in his possession documents which if published might cause disaffection".

The documents were found in the accused's father's house when it was raided by the military. The magistrate said he could see no connexion between the defendant and the documents; nor did he think some of the documents were "seditious". Nevertheless the defendant was sentenced as above.

Courtsmartial:-

Mr. Joseph McMurray was tried by courtmartial at Derry city on a charge of having in his possession 11 rifle cartridges of obsolete pattern and an empty Mills bomb case. He was found guilty. Sentence will be promulgated later.

Provocation:

At the weekly meeting of the Thurles Urban Council, the Councillors protested against the conduct of the police who frequently smashed peaceful citizens windows at night, and savagely beat innocent civilians returning after dark to their homes. One of the Members of the Council stated: "The terrorism in Thurles is simply terrible". Mr. McCarthy, also a Councillor said when he protested to the police authorities against the conduct of their men he received letters from the police threatening him with violence whenever the police could catch him.

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Revisionists and Trees

(Part 1)

The current Covid plague seems to be calling a halt to the gallop of the globalism ascendant since the 1990s. While some fear the universal emergence of the depoliticised military-medical authoritarian state in efforts to tackle the plague will actually reinforce further global uniformity and conformity as a consequence, the Director General of the WHO, Dr. Tedros Ghebreyesus, a humanitarian globalist, has taken a different tack.

In an unusually philosophic comment, broadcast on 21st April and carried on RTÉ's *News Now* site, Tedros noted that, while elaborating global collaboration in a generous internationalist spirit would be important in "beating" the virus, it would be those societies which exhibited a "strong" and internally "genuine national unity" and intrinsic social solidarity that would most successfully emerge from it.

Tedros thus singled out coherent *national* societies as humanity's real and vital secret weapon in fighting Covid. This is a momentous statement, utterly at odds with the *Zeitgeist* of progressive denationalising globalism. This rising global ideology had been triumphantly smashing all Chinese walls in its path, atomising and discarding the now 'redundant' national entities as it surged. The individualised atoms of humanity were destined, according to this ideology, for a bright future as happily consuming "citizens of the world". With a single phrase, Tedros has demolished that delusion.

It would seem not inappropriate, therefore, to use the Column this month to reflect on an aspect of the very birth of ruthless globalism under England's Elizabethan reign of terror. I refer to the denuding of Ireland's historic woodlands that began at that time, and their eventual, albeit imperfect, recovery. The process of destruction was only finally reversed through the wilful actions of a new state, founded precisely on the type of "genuine national unity" which Tedros has identified as essential to a successful defeat of Covid.

Plagues come in many other forms than

the physical too, not least that of academic fashion serving a political purpose. One of the most curious of these—and also relevant to this story—has been that of the de-nationalised Irish historical 'revisionism' that has accompanied Ireland's own globalisation. It swept the country (or at least its academic *apparatus*) from 1972, after being adopted in panic as official state doctrine in the headlong retreat from the realities of the Northern war.

This revisionism has had little to do with an honest "revising" of historical judgements in the light of new evidence. It was far more an unseemly rush to produce alternative "narratives" (plural *sic!*) to replace the "national" one that now—absurdly—stood accused of having caused the Northern War. To disarm what was now perceived as a perennial timebomb, if not quite a virus itself, Irish history was henceforth to be atomised into disjointed "discourses" on the sundry activities of the natives. The natives and their activities would henceforth be treated as "historical subjects", acting over centuries devoid of national context. The preferred medium of analysis became the "socio-economic". Uniquely in Ireland's case, it was discovered that the nation was in fact nothing more than a "myth", what Roy Foster called the "stories the Irish tell themselves". Stripped of this "myth", the atomised ants could be seen to have simply been pursuing individual economic self-advantage, though occasionally stirred by ancient imagined ghosts to act irrationally. A problem for the revisionists is that this action ended ultimately in the natives producing a state of their own.

The Mystery of Ireland's Absent Tree Cover

A since purged British Labour Party leader, Jeremy Corbyn, startled the Commons recently when he told them: "We [the UK] have the lowest level of tree cover of almost any country in Europe"—just 13% of the UK landmass consisted of forest and woodland compared to an EU average of 30%. In fact the two EU countries with an even lower cover—not mentioned by

Corbyn—are Malta (with almost zero) and Ireland (with 11%). While the case of semi-arid Malta should not surprise, that of Ireland, a non-densely populated island with a typically moist and moderate north-European climate, requires some explaining.

Various popular theories circulate to account for the phenomenon. One is that rabbits, a popular medieval source of food and game-hunting introduced by the Normans, represented, from a forestry perspective, the start of something of a plague, eating forest floors bare of young tree shoots. But this theory falls on the fact that much of northern Europe has suffered rabbit infestations without thereby becoming so totally denuded of their forests.

The unique manner in which industrialisation occurred in Britain, the vanguard of globalism—a term which has replaced the previously more accurate descriptive one of the "capitalist mode of production"—meant that forests were destroyed at a much greater rate there than elsewhere. Nevertheless, from the nineteenth century, what remained began to be managed better to ensure replenishment and reproduction. Industrialisation in Italy, Germany, France and related cultures, on the other hand, where considerable elements of feudal practices continued into the modern era, evolved in a more supervised framework. This included woodland management. To this day, rural dwellers in such countries are often required to co-manage local forests, with the harvesting of timber restricted in its extent and season and within a managed system of woodland rejuvenation. Foresters managing this system are respected local authority officials. In Germany, a highly populated and industrialised country, an astounding 32 per cent of the landmass remains forested.

The current Irish forest cover of 11% may be very low by German or French standards, but in fact represents a major recovery since Independence, when trees covered less than half of one per cent of Ireland's land area. It was an utterly—and,

as they would say today, unsustainably — deforested country when the British started to withdraw.

There are issues around the species which compose modern Irish forests, but these stark figures on forest cover speak volumes, or would do if minds were not cluttered by a “revisionist” historical narrative that has reduced them to meaninglessness.

A Traditional Narrative and its Revisionist “Refutation”

A web essay a few years ago by a certain Arthur Sullivan, broadcast on Germany’s English-language “World Service”-type broadcaster, *Deutsche Welle* (www.dw.com), exulted in the remarkable recovery of small forests in Ireland that had occurred since his childhood. His essay, ‘*Ireland’s forests: Watching a vanished world return*’, recounted the basic facts of Irish woodland history as once known to every Irish child:

“The story of the destruction of Ireland’s forests is not a happy one. No other country in Europe experienced such a wholesale ravaging of its native woodland. By the beginning of the 20th century, forest cover on the island was down to less than 1 percent of the total land mass of 84,421 square kilometers ...

“The destruction of Irish forests was largely down to human activity over the centuries. Industrialization, agriculture and an expanding population that required food and shelter all played a part.

“Ireland’s vanished forests—like ‘an Ghaeilge’, Ireland’s native language now spoken fluently by just a small minority—are lost chords in the country’s cultural and physical identity.

“During the 20th century, the Irish state began to grasp the extent of what had been lost, and began a process of extensive tree-planting, establishing forests—mostly of exposure-tolerant conifers—on mountain land.” (etc.)

The piece had no overt “nationalist” slant to it at all, euphemistically describing the denuding of Irish woodlands as due to “*human activity over the centuries*”, which, as a matter of fact, was decisively reversed by State intervention only after Independence.

But a certain Michael Collins, who described himself as a historian, took issue with Sullivan in a lengthy blogged rebuttal on the DW site. Sensing the whiff of ancient ghosts, he rushed to correct Sullivan’s straight-forward narrative before readers drew obvious conclusions from it.

Ireland, he blogged, “*over the centuries, ... experienced a near-total destruction of its forests mainly because of human ac-*

tivity and a deterioration of the climate: from an initial forest cover of around 80% to less than 1%”. It was the ice age and “*climate change*” at that time that had stripped Ireland bare and left it “*the only country in Europe where such complete forest destruction took place*”. He then fast-forwarded a millennium to account for why Ireland—since miraculously reforested (so it wasn’t the Ice Age after all!)—to claim that —

“it is generally accepted that the large-scale deforestation of Ireland’s landscape started around 1390, as land was cleared for agriculture and grazing. Rapid expansion of the country’s population necessitated that forests be cleared to increase food production. Further areas of woodlands were cleared toward the end of the 16th century, as the exploitation of Irish woods by English settlers began. By 1600, it is estimated that only 12 percent of the country was forested.”

Collins does in passing admit that “*around this time, English forests were close to exhaustion, and Irish woods were seen as a cheap source of wood to fuel English industries*”. This was why “*many English iron- and glass-working factories were established along the Irish coast, ... the abundant wood burned to provide heat, and the finished product exported back to England.*” He adds that “*a bonus to the English settlers of removing Irish forest cover was that it also reduced the hiding places for the Irish rebels who fought against English rule*”. Finally, as wood was far more expensive in England at the time, “*this business plan made economic sense*” (sic!).

Collins has further to admit that “*deforestation in historic times did include asset-stripping under the Elizabethan and, more particularly, Cromwellian plantations*”. Irish oak went to build the Royal Navy when Britannia “*ruled the waves*”. But this was a minor factor, Collins insists, the far bigger culprit being the production of barrel staves for the huge (native) export trade in butter and bacon, salt-fish, beer and whiskey, as well as supplying the French and Spanish wine barrel industry. In addition, given Ireland’s lack of coal, hard-wood forests were felled to produce the charcoal to fuel Ireland’s “*growing industrial base*” and gunpowder for the Royal Navy.

Collins must concede all of these facts—even while pleading for their mitigation—and could not do otherwise, as they had been so irrefutably established in those great scholarly histories—Eileen McCracken’s *Irish Woods since Tudor*

Times. Their Distribution and Exploitation (David & Charles 1971) and Eoin Neeson’s *A History of Irish Forestry* (Lilliput 1991).

But, having conceded these points, Collins’s faux-“*objective*” tone in his riposte to Sullivan is abandoned as he rises to his dramatic rhetorical conclusion:

“Many hold the mistaken belief that we had wonderful unspoiled woodland here until the Sasanach came along. It’s simply not true. Forest clearance had started 6,000 years ago when the first farmers arrived and since then woodlands faced a losing battle against agriculture and population expansion... No doubt the occupiers used much of the little that was left on ship building and such, but the natives had done a fairly good job in felling most of it already. A great example is the blanket peat mountains of the west coast ... The peat only exists because the original forests on the mountains were felled...”

The Sasanach stuff, he concludes, parrotting Foster, is all but an Irish tall tale that “*just plays in to a certain narrative we tell ourselves*”.

Collins’s is not an eccentric theory of his own, but rather a well-ploughed revisionist line on the issue. In 2014, the Four Courts Press published a tome entitled *The woods of Ireland. A history, 700–1800*, by Nigel Everett, who the publishers describe as “*an independent historian specializing in English and Irish landscapes*”. Its blurb states:

“The accepted view of Irish woodlands is that Ireland was covered in trees until the English came and chopped them down. While admirable in its brevity, this interpretation is inadequate regarding the actual management of Irish forests from the later Gaelic era to the close of the eighteenth century. The author focuses on the fundamentally pragmatic and commercial view of trees adopted by much of Gaelic civilization, and the attempts of the various Anglo-Irish administrations to introduce more conservative woodland practices. By the late seventeenth century, the re-afforestation of Ireland had become a paramount badge of respectability for Irish landowners, and gave rise to a distinctive body of landscape design and painting, exemplified by the works of Thomas Roberts and William Ashford.”

So, despite a benign gentry exulting in forests, with a culture shaped by romantic landscape painters, and the valiant “*attempts of the various Anglo-Irish administrations*”, spoliation by the rapacious natives could not be halted. The planter landlord class (“*Irish landowners*”!!) repeatedly tried to save the Irish and their

forests from their awful selves, but sadly their efforts were in vain!

So, were the natives the problem?

What these revisionist narratives omit is that other countries also went through extensive deforestation to make way for agricultural expansion, population growth and—far more than Ireland—industrialisation, while managing to keep large woodland resources through careful management of their exploitation and regeneration. It is success in this that Ireland lacked.

Collins in his *Deutsche Welle* blog rushes us through the nineteenth century (when the natives were at their most despoiling), though not without stressing the valiant attempts “by the then government” to curtail the destructive practices of the natives:

“The overexploitation of Irish forests continued throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, despite several laws passed by the then government meant to protect the remaining forest cover.”

Along the way he pontificates on how the natives’ ignorant hostility to progressive *laissez faire* population reduction policies during the “*Great Potato Famine*” almost enabled them by default to come to their senses:

“The Great Potato Famine reduced the population of Ireland from eight to four million inhabitants... and this eased agricultural pressure on the landscape and possibly freed up land for forestry.”

Collins lauds the minuscule recovery in forestry that occurred from the end of the 19th century, again thanks to our benefactors who, as so often before, had sought to save us from ourselves:

“The end of the 19th century showed a turning point, with the first (albeit small) increases in forest cover in centuries recorded, possibly as a result of planting grants made available at the time by the Royal Dublin Society.”

A Stubborn History

The reality, of course, is that the fate of Irish woodlands was determined by the nature of the colonial crust imposed on top of Gaelic society and which over centuries simply treated the place similarly to how any colony was treated, whether the Congo by the Belgians or the Caribbean Islands by the British. The bit of forest recovery that occurred in the nineteenth century consisted of little more than forest “gardens” planted around estate Big Houses

as an aesthetic landscaping adornment, or once-off commercial plantations after the population culling of the “*Great Potato Famine*” had “eased agricultural pressure on the landscape”. The upper planter class never developed an integrated society such as is essential for the evolution of resource management.

Despite Collins’ crude attempts to rubbish a remembered history, the Irish narrative is proving stubbornly resilient, a tale the Irish certainly still tell themselves, as the hapless Sullivan demonstrated before being ambushed on www.dw.com by Collins. Of all the Irish poem-songs kids learn in schools (though ever less so since 1972), few are retained with such a resonance by Irish people as the famous 18th century *Caoine Cill Chais* (‘Lament for Kilcash’), which recounts the destruction of the Gaelic leadership class, its culture, husbandry and, yes, its forests:

“Cad a dhéanfaimid feasta gan adhmaid?
Tá deireadh na gcoillte ar lár;
níl trácht ar Chill Chais ná ar a teaghlach
is ní bainfear a cling go bráth...”

(“Now what will we do without timber, With the last of the forests destroyed? There’s no more trace of Cill Chais or its household And its bell will be rung no more.”)

Gaelic society placed great store by forestry and its proper protection, which was codified in Brehon Law. As Desmond’s history of Cork and Kerry recounts:

“There were twenty-eight trees and shrubs identified in the Brehon legal tract *Bretha comaitchesa* or *Judgements of the Neighbourhood*, which were divided into four classes of seven, based on their economic value. The most valuable were the ‘lords of the wood’, the oak, hazel, holly, the yew, ash, Scot’s pine, and the wild apple-tree... For an offence against a lord of the wood there would be a fine of two milch cows and a three-year-old heifer. The penalty for damage to one of the ‘commoners of the woods’, which was the next classification, was one milch cow, and so forth to the ‘lower divisions of the wood’ and, lastly, occupying the lowest rank, were the ‘bushes of the wood’ ...”

Numerous place names throughout Ireland honoured woods and even particular trees. Contrary to Collins’s claims of the extinction of oak forests through a native contempt, it is the oak that retains pride of place in innumerable Gaelic place names. McCracken (pp. 24-5) publishes a map identifying hundreds of these.

Caribbean Model

The destruction of Irish forests—in the sense of non-regenerative managed harvesting—began in the Elizabethan terror. Ireland was viewed as a source, among other things, of plentiful and cheap timber which could be harvested to extinction for staves, ship building, barrel making for provision exports, and charcoal for ore smelters. As the forests—from a settler “adventurer” (i.e. capitalist) perspective—were endless, and free of the type of management costs inherent in an integrated society. They could be and were felled with abandon, making Irish timber far cheaper than that produced in England: it was harvested and exported by settlers to supply markets in England.

One of the first to do so on a large scale, as Eileen McCracken recounts, was Sir Walter Raleigh who, despite a 1596 ban on such exports designed to protect prices and production in England, exported vast quantities of shipping staves for a decade with impunity from his estates around Youghal. After he was purged and beheaded by the regime for other reasons, he was succeeded by Sir Richard Boyle who, as Earl of Cork, used up further vast tracts of Cork woodlands in his ironworks and in stave-making, exporting four million of the latter alone between 1611 and 1628. The East India Company also acquired woods in South Cork, producing vast quantities of timber for its ships and also procuring and exporting further supplies from other settler land-holders. What notional restrictions there were on Irish timber exports were abolished entirely following the Restoration (McCracken 100-101).

McCracken relates how one of the inducements for settlers to move to Ireland were the profits to be made from forest exploitation. An Elizabethan-era document, ‘*Motives and Reasons*’, enticed City of London participation in the Plantation of Ulster on the basis of the abundance of wood available: “*All sorts of wood do afford many services for pipestaves, hogsheaf staves, barrel staves, clapboard staves, wainscot...*” By 1615 large quantities of raw and semi-processed timber produced by settlers supplied markets in England and Europe, and by 1625 virtually the entire oak needed for French and Spanish wine barrels came from Ireland. The main production centres were near accessible waterways, notably on the Bann, the Slaney and in west Cork. The producers and their workers were again almost entirely settler businessmen. When Kenmare’s woods were surveyed, it was expected they would produce 1,000 tons

of hardwood timber a year for export until exhausted, once sufficient English workers could be procured. Though saved initially from the same fate by their inaccessibility, Kerry's forests would nevertheless also later succumb, being "eventually used up in ironworks" (McCracken 98-99).

Approx. 150 wholly settler-"owned" ironworks were established throughout Ireland to service the lucrative English market. This was before the technology of coal burning was mastered, and oak charcoal provided the primary fuel for smelting. Ireland had average ore deposits, but it was the plentiful availability of 'free' oak which was the reason so many smelters were established. Indeed, according to McCracken (p. 92), Irish ore was often of low quality, and English, Scottish and Welsh ore had to be imported to mix with it. The abundant timber was cheap because the forests did not have to be managed, but simply consumed:

"Ideally, the best charcoal for smelting comes from twenty-five-year-old coppice oak, and in England the iron masters practiced coppicing to ensure a continuous supply. Generally, an acre of coppice gave enough fuel to make a ton of iron every twenty-five years. But in Ireland, except in Wicklow, no such provision for a continuous fuel supply was made, and the life of an ironworks was limited by the supply of readily available wood. Some ironmasters, such as Rainey in Londonderry and Rutledge in Sligo and Roscommon, moved their works from one place to another as the local fuel became exhausted ..." (McCracken 92).

The rate of charcoal consumption by the ore smelters was immense, and McCracken (pp. 92-3) describes the consuming of this abundant cheap fuel in Ireland until supplies, i.e. the oak forests themselves, were exhausted:

"Gerald Boate... recorded that it was almost incredible how much timber an ironworks used... An account of the Drumshambo works in 1770 [...] states that the works was ringed with heaps of charcoal as big as three Dublin houses... It took about 2¼ tons of charcoal to make a ton of bar iron. Irish wood was cheap by English standards. ...English ironmasters paid 6s to 7s a cord, whereas in Ireland the price was in pennies ..."

Sir William Petty became a leading deforester, felling forests to fuel several smelting operations in the south-west of Ireland around Kenmare. Common to ironworks throughout Ireland was that not only the owners were English but also that all labour, especially the skilled trades, were also imported from England, while

the use of Irish labour was discouraged and even prohibited:

"Many of the ironworks supported quite considerable colonies of people... It is almost certain that most of the workers were English or European immigrants brought over as a labour force. Sir Charles Coote had 2,500 workers, English and Dutch, at his various works in Cavan, Leitrim and Roscommon; Sir William Petty founded a colony of 800 English at his ironworks at Kenmare... Special permission had to be obtained to employ 500 Irish workers at the Mountrath ironworks in 1654 until English workers could be obtained, and even then the Irish workers had to live within a musket shot of the works. However, it is clear that Irish workers were sometimes employed: Colonel Brown of Knappagh in Mayo asked permission to continue to employ Irishmen during the Williamite wars when gatherings of more than ten were prohibited ..." (McCracken 93).

This was an approach to labour utilisation and replacement not dissimilar to Nazi German policy in Eastern Europe during WW2.

The Final Destruction

Even after this mass and non-replenished deforestation under the 17th century plantations, considerable woodlands remained, and these were used to supply the burgeoning casking trade providing barrels for provisions exports. But with the resource rapidly dwindling, the export of whole timber from Ireland, for which there was still a high demand in England, had almost ceased completely by 1700, and Ireland increasingly became an importer of timber, even for the provisions casking trade.

The great "Estates" created under the Cromwellian and Williamite plantations saw subsequent large-scale clearance of remaining woodlands to create pastureland. Thomas Carlyle would later reprove a "thrifless people" who would not plant trees. But under the Penal Laws any trees planted by an Irish tenant became the property of his landlord. Such was the destruction of woodland and its increasing scarcity that the building of timbered houses in Dublin ended well before it did in English cities. In 1766 Jonathan Swift asserted that "there is not another example in Europe of such a prodigious quantity of excellent timber cut down in so short a time with so little advantage to the country either in shipping or building."

In the early 19th century, the English Government moved to protect England's remaining forests and introduced managed forestry. This was a science that had been

popularised in Germany and was gradually adopted elsewhere, as Eoin Neeson describes in great detail in his history. Measures were introduced to end the great deforestation, and in Ireland bodies such as the Royal Society assisted reforestation by landlords. But, as already stated, the planting that occurred was often just for aesthetic "landscaping" purposes and, as the landlord system began to come to an end, following this brief period of stabilisation, felling experienced a renewed landlord-driven boom:

"The year 1880 marked the zenith of woodland acreage in private hands, for the great land act of the following year began to transfer land control from landlord to tenant. The estate owners, conscious now of their insecurity, not only ceased to replenish their plantations but sold much of the existing timber to travelling sawmillers who came over from Great Britain and moved across the country from estate to estate like arboreal pests" (McCracken p141).

Despite some new reforestation schemes under the colonial-era Department of Agriculture from 1903, which had decided that about 25 per cent of Irish land was good for little other than forestry and encouraged the planting of fast-maturing cash crops in the form of varieties such as the now ubiquitous Sitka Spruce, these came to little as the "Great War" delivered a further, final blow. Meeting the timber demands of the Western Front opened a lucrative final market for plantation owners:

"World War I followed soon afterwards, and, as in England, so much timber was cut that by the 1920s there were in Ireland only about 130,000 acres of woodland, roughly a third of the acreage a century before. The process which had been accelerated at the end of the sixteenth century was completed and about half of one per cent of the land remained as forest." (Ibid.)

In other words, the miniscule 1.5% of land under forestry that had survived to 1906 fell further to just 0.5% by 1920, much of it low-value spruce. These were Maltese conditions.

A New Official Line

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has issued a potted history of itself, "Irish Forests—A Brief History" (2008—available on its website), which tacks to the revisionist wind.

The Department's narrative toys with the "climate change" stories Collins relates for distant millenia, and relates that although "the demand for timber

also increased and exploitation intensified under the Anglo-Normans and, later, successive English monarchs,” there were nevertheless still “extensive forests in Ireland before 1600.” These, however, “were largely gone by 1800.” It waffles on that “no single reason” can be given for the decline, but that it is “generally agreed” that the causes were a mixture of “industrialisation”, ship building for the British Navy and the clearance of “large areas of forest” by planter landlords for agriculture. The continued decline post-1700 was due to commercial felling and a “massive population increase” up to 1840. The latter of course was the native horde, and its impact in further forest erosion is emphasised as “vast areas of forest [had] to be cleared to meet the increasing demand for food and shelter.”

All that needs to be said of this “history” is that all nations and regions across Europe and farther afield experienced “massive population increase” in this period, though at different rates, without it resulting in the type of absolute deforestation that occurred in Ireland. The key difference elsewhere was that integrated societies managed forest exploitation with compensatory and orderly forest regeneration. It was the peculiar colonial political economy that pertained in Ireland that marked it out and determined that as with other unsustainable aspects of development, its forestry resources suffered too. Needless to say, the Department’s “Brief History” has nothing to say on that.

Forestry Policy after Independence

Over four centuries of colonial-commercial woodland destruction only began to be reversed in Ireland post-1920, i.e. following independence. This is a stark and indisputable historical and statistical fact, which even a Collins or a Foster cannot dismiss as simply a “story” or “just ... a certain narrative we tell ourselves.”

Nationalist Ireland in its romantic, Germanic, guise—i.e. Young Ireland—hankered to restore Ireland’s forests, and this was passed on as an ideal and major issue for the Sinn Féin movement which displaced the Redmondite tendency, and hence for the new state when Sinn Féin established it, even the truncated ‘Free State’ of the Treaty era.

For the story following independence, we will, appropriately enough, discard the imperial measure of the acre (A) and apply the Napoleonic European measurement of the hectare (Ha) instead, with 2.4 A = 1 Ha.

A modest programme of reforestation was initiated by the Free State government as early as 1923, when a 388 hectares (nearly 1,000 acres) were planted as woodland despite the multiple other challenges the state faced. The current Department’s “Brief History” states that this was confined to “poor quality marginal land”, with land “fit for agricultural purposes” excluded from the programme. The accusatory tone of this statement is somewhat frustrating, given the inherited problems of residual land distribution and the fact that abundant such marginal and often untenanted land was readily available. In 1928, when the government estimated that only 89,000 hectares of woods had survived in the country, it amended the British-era 1919 Forestry Act, in particular restricting further felling or forestry clearance, and for the first time gave government the power to “compel the replanting of felled areas”. Grants were also provided from 1931 under the Act subsidising landowners to undertake new plantations. Given the land structure of the time, it is unsurprising that such a private-sector approach meant that the “main beneficiaries” were the remaining “large estates”.

Following these minimal initial initiatives, the de Valera era witnessed a radical up-scaling of afforestation, especially through direct state-owned plantation. This rose to about 3,077 Ha p.a. by the end of the 1930s, falling during the war for obvious reasons, to just 1,711 Ha p.a. by 1944/45, with new planting largely spruce replacing hardwoods felled during the war for fuel and timber. The forestry programmes of the 1930s-40s were driven by a desire to achieve timber self-sufficiency, provide sustainable rural employment, generate local industry, and also gradually recover ancient native woodlands. This policy increased afforested land mostly as a commercially productive resource, but also set a target of a quarter of all new planting to consist of regenerated “native” forest. The Forestry Act 1946 established the legislative framework that endures to today, and set a goal of achieving increasing planting by 4,000 Ha per annum.

Shortly before losing power, in 1948 the de Valera government adopted a major afforestation programme based on the 1946 Act, setting a 40-year aim of achieving 1m acres of forest (400,000 Ha) by 1988, largely through state planting. Progress was initially slow, but surged from the late 1950s under the last de Valera government, finally achieving, and surpassing, the annual 10,000-Ha target in 1960, when over

10,162 Ha were planted. The Department’s “Brief History” continues:

“By 1970, the total planted area of State forests amounted to 530,901 acres (c. 214,853 hectares) and 4,395 people were employed in the State forest sector. During the 1970s the afforestation programme continued, achieving an average annual planting rate of 8,800 hectares between 1970 and 1979 ... However, this rate of afforestation could not be maintained. Government policy to exclude agricultural land from the afforestation programme, underpinned by Government restrictions on the price the Department could pay for land, meant that it was becoming increasingly difficult to acquire suitable land. Consequently, the rate of afforestation by the State started to gradually decrease, with the average annual rate of afforestation undertaken by the State between 1980 and 1989 falling to 5,700 hectares. By this time the total State forest area comprised 304,232 hectares ...”

Of the total 465,000 Ha of forest in Ireland in 1989, and despite a grant scheme in place since 1931 to encourage private planting, only 10,192 Ha, or 2 per cent, of woods consisted of private forests. In addition, a massive 70% of total forestry—322,000 Ha—had been planted since 1949, mainly under Fianna Fáil governments. Thus, by 1988, the state, despite its many economic challenges since Independence, had managed to raise Irish forested land cover eightfold from 0.5% in 1920 to over 4.3%, overwhelmingly through state forests.

* * *

How was the 4.3% forestry cover achieved by 1989 more than doubled to today’s 11%? The answer lies in politics, and particularly in a strategy initiated by Charles Haughey in the 1980s and implemented with vigour from 1988. He would unleash the most far-reaching afforestation and woodland strategy yet seen in the history of the state. Needless to say, this goes wholly unacknowledged in revisionist “histories”, and the man himself earns not a single mention even in the Department’s own official 2008 history of itself, *Irish Forests—A Brief History*. As with many problems revisionism encounters, Haughey is disposed of by obfuscation and the silence of the airbrush.

The concluding part of this article next month will reveal that strategy and the means by which it was instigated and implemented within the two short years 1988-90 at a time when the state was impoverished and highly leveraged. □

**‘The Court of O Ceallacháin’
‘I saw, said she, “in that palace of music,
speckled silks, sheer satin cloth,
blades being sharpened, mead for the sick,
warriors playing with the ficheall teams,
.....
harp-tunes playing melodiously,
histories read by the learned and wise,
with flawless accounts of every Order
and family name that arose in Europe,**

**doors never shut on amber dwellings,
candles lighting each wall and room,
casks for the company always opened
and never an ebb in the tide of drink...”**

This is an extract from a long elegy on Dónall O Ceallacháin who died in the year 1709. It is noteworthy that a Gaelic ‘Big House’ at the beginning of the eighteenth century could still be thought of as dispensing such lavish hospitality. Clóna, a Queen of the *sídh*, speaks the lines.

An Duanaire, 1600-1900, Poems of the Dispossed. Seán O Tuama. With Translations into English Verse by Thomas Kinsella. The Dolmen Press. Ireland. 1981.

“Life in the big house, in its circle of trees, is saturated with character: this is, I suppose, the element of the spell. The indefinite ghosts of the past, of the dead who lived here and pursued this same routine of life in these walls add something, a sort of order, a reason for living, to every minute and hour. This is the order, the form of life, the tradition to which big house people still sacrifice much.”

Elizabeth Bowen. *Bowen’s Court*. 1942.

Elizabeth Bowen

A review of Patricia Laurence’s biography. Part 3.

More than once in reading this biography have I stopped dead at seeing a huge mistake which of course has the effect of undermining one’s faith in the rest of the scholarship in this book. Laurence for instance states that:

”Bowen spoke with politicians (members of Taoiseach, the Irish parliament) when what she means is the Dáil in Leinster House.

She also takes the view that the Dominions Office was Dublin based: *”because the Irish Free State was still, to some degree, under the sovereignty of the British...”*

She has John Maffey and John Betjeman as the two top UK representatives in Ireland when Sir John Maffey was UK Representative to Eire and therefore its top diplomat here. Laurence also states:

“While on her Irish errand, Bowen tellingly became friends with James Dillon, almost the only member of the Irish Parliament in Leinster House who was

against Ireland’s stance of neutrality. Early on, she viewed Dillon as a British ally and reported, “all sensible people in this country follow the line taken by Mr. James Dillon”. “She viewed him as someone who might lead the Irish away from what the British and Americans then considered a ‘belligerent’ stance about withholding the treaty ports.”

She falsely claimed,

“Mr. Churchill no more than deprecated the loss of the ports as bases, making no demands nor threats.”

“She {Bowen} described Dillon as one of the ablest members of Parliament, someone who could take on de Valera’s policy: courageous, able and dynamic. But she misread him and the climate: his position was unpopular, and after a rousing speech as deputy leader in 1942 when he petitioned the Government to abandon neutrality, side with the Allies and go to war, he was forced to resign.”

From the foregoing, it is easy to see how far off Patricia Laurence is on her analysis of the situation. She certainly does not grasp that John Dillon was not a member

of the Fianna Fáil party of Government, but that of Fine Gael and was Deputy Leader of it until he was forced to resign.

As for Bowen’s friendship with James Dillon, she had tea with him once and they had what *he* thought to be a long, friendly chat. Going back to Laurence’s account:

“In the 1970s, when Robert Fisk, historian, revealed to Dillon that Bowen had been reporting his opinions to the Dominion Office in Ireland {sic} and the War Office in London, Dillon was taken aback. According to Fisk, when Dillon read the secret memorandum, he showed no bitterness, stating “only that she had abused his hospitality in 1940 by breaking the confidentiality of the meeting”. And in response to her description of his “religious fanaticism”, in the report he snapped back about her “unhappy agnosticism”. Bowen’s loyalty to Britain and the anti-Fascist cause led her to break Irish trust.”

But, long before there were any talk of ideology, Elizabeth Bowen, knowing Vita Sackville-West and her husband Harold Nicolson, and being friends of them both, she knew that the latter worked in the Ministry of Information, in London, and went there and offered her services in Ireland for whatever Britain’s war might need without qualifications or justifications.

As her letter to Virginia Woolf makes clear, she would do whatever the British State asked of her and only hoped she was up to it. And, in a short space of time, the British authorities had set her up with a nice flat in Dublin, and with, as a *raison d’être*, that she needed to do research for her book on her family history which she had begun rather fortuitously in 1939. It is tempting to speculate that such a book, providing an excuse to travel and meet so many people, was *so useful* to Bowen that perhaps it had its origins in Britain’s *intelligence intrigue!*

The book was *‘Bowen’s Court’* and she had met Sean O Faolain in 1937 after he had sent her on a ‘fan-letter’ about her books while the latter was teaching in London. They met and had a sexual fling which lasted, depending on whose account one reads, a year or thereabouts. But O’Faolain was an important *Irish figure* to know, someone who had many contacts in Dublin and Cork, both political and literary and a friendship with him could give her access to people she thought important in her Intelligence role.

In 1937, Elizabeth Bowen was proposed for membership of the Irish Academy of Letters by her friend, Sean O’Faolain: the proposal was accepted and she became

a member—and all this because of her friendship with O’Faolain. And, through him, she met W. B. Yeats, Frank O’Connor and many others who were to prove quite useful to her in learning about Irish attitudes and positions about World War Two. And she was all the more effective because these people were totally innocent of her aims and took O’Faolain’s introductions as a stamp of approval.

O’Faolain himself never for a second thought her to be a spy and was only too happy to squire her around Dublin and introduce her to everyone and anyone he thought she might find interesting. And, when ‘*The Bell*’ got going, O’Faolain again stepped in and had her interviewed by ‘*The Bellman*’ aka Larry Morrow in 1940, an interview in which she avowed that she was an Irish writer. This really was a brilliant *coup* for Bowen who now had officially ‘arrived’ in Ireland.

So, all in all, Bowen’s literary and personal credentials were well burnished for her spying activities here. And didn’t she do it all with such aplomb!

Victoria Glendinning in her 1977 biography of Bowen thought that this interview was quite an important one for Bowen. It “placed” her firmly within an Irish setting. As she wrote:

"Inevitably, ‘The Bellman’ brought up the question of whether she herself was really an *Irish* writer at all. ‘There are people in this town’, he said, ‘who refuse to admit’...” ... “Elizabeth” stated Glendinning “dealt with this one very firmly”:

“I regard myself as an Irish novelist. As long as I can remember I’ve been extremely conscious of being Irish—even when I was writing about very un-Irish things such as suburban life in Paris or the English seaside. All my life I’ve been going backwards and forwards between Ireland and England and the Continent, but that has never robbed me of the strong feeling of my nationality. I must say it’s a highly disturbing emotion. It’s not—I must emphasise—sentimentality”... (Italics — Glendinning.)

Glendinning found the question about her nationality, about “*where her ‘loyalties lay’*”, offensive—asking:

“Why it mattered so much where her loyalties lay, why was it so inevitable that Dublin should ask of a major novelist ‘But just how *Irish* is she?’...”

But Glendinning, writing then in 1977, knew of her “*activities*”, citing her spying but never calling it that — so Bowen’s “*loyalties*” mattered a lot as she made clear:

“Lord Cranborne, who passed on Elizabeth’s findings to Churchill noted that her

Ministry of Information reports had been ‘sensible and well balanced’...”

Lord Cranborne even “*met Bowen in the Dominions Office*” And she also visited with much secrecy and security clearance the War Office. Cranborne, who was the Dominions Secretary, served his Prime Minister Churchill with great effect: and that he took time to meet with Bowen served to illustrate how powerful a role she was playing at the height of World War Two.

Patricia Laurence gets completely bogged down about Irish affairs in her biography. She complains to Jack Lane in their letters in the March and April editions of the *Irish Political Review* that she was handling a lot of information and trying to balance it all but surely that is what a scholar does? She seems equally at a loss even about American political affairs, writing that President John F. Kennedy beat Henry Cabot Lodge in the Presidential elections which put Bowen’s patrician nose out!! It was of course Richard Nixon who lost to President Kennedy.

Laurence also states: “*Echoing British views, she {Bowen} asserted that the Irish are naïve in politics and “not yet adult in citizenship”...*”. It is such a pity that Laurence does not source this *raméis*. She also attributes to Andrew Christopher, “*the historian*”, some quotation, but of course it was Sir Christopher Andrew who wrote ‘*The Defense of the Realm: The Authorised History of MI5*’, Allen Lane, London, 2009. She writes up M.E. Antrobus as “*Britain’s representative to Eire*”, when it was Sir John Maffey. According to Laurence, what Elizabeth Bowen —

“most feared, and O’Faolain and MacNeice agreed, was that Eire’s isolation from European ideas and culture might breed a “national childishness” bred by censorship of newspapers, authors, and intellectuals, and the parochial influence of the Catholic Church.”

Considering that someone of the ilk of Séan O’Casey said that Ireland’s censorship during the war was “*piffling*” in comparison to that of Britain, Laurence might wish to examine those who would like to suggest otherwise. Louis MacNeice was working as a British propagandist at the BBC; he was not, as Laurence notes, “*Anglo-Irish*”, being the son of a North of Ireland Bishop in the Church of Ireland. O’Faolain was another matter but, considering the Universal Catholic Church and its influence, to suggest that its influence caused Ireland to be bereft of European culture is just the purest of nonsense.

Indeed, when Bowen eventually met for tea — again on a story of pretence — with

the Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid, she was floored when he spoke fluent French, while she had to admit to having only a grasp of *school-girl French*. Conning the Archbishop into thinking she was interested in “*social work*”, she obtained an audience with him. The whole set-up was initiated by TCD Lecky Professor of History, Constantia Maxwell, whose own ‘activities’ in Ireland have yet to be explored. And, if this can be done, it is my contention that she — this quiet woman — will prove to be the most exciting of them all. Eunan O’Halpin hints that the “she” in the Liddell Papers are the best place to start, but when will they be released in full? I have but a fraction in my filing cabinet and have yet to go through them in depth.

The academics/journalists outraged at the Aubane Historical Society’s continual updating of any new spy reports by Elizabeth Bowen are a dismal lot. They actually try and say what she did was for the benefit of Ireland! This is so outrageous, but it does not stop them. They point to her support for ‘neutrality’, when what she actually did was report justly that such a policy was widely supported by the people in the state. Churchill and Cranborne needed to be sure of that and she was the one who made them sure. Laurence pulls Bruce Arnold into her history to debunk the theory that she was a spy. Does she have any notion of those who need to be trusted and those who one needs to be wary of?

Bruce Arnold, OBE and of ‘*The Irish Independent*’ trots out such utter cant that it is hard to believe. But Laurence does believe — and again I ask why? She had her “*Fulbright Foundation for support in University College, Cork, 2011*” and had Eibhear Walshe, School of English,

“*for early support, enlightened conversation, and travel to Farahy and Bowen’s Court...*” She, I note, has upgraded Eibhear Walshe to Professorship. For those of us who follow academic goings on, many were saddened to hear that poor Eibhear, not only didn’t get to be Professor or Head of School, but was sidelined to be ‘*Head of creative writing*’ — the Cinderella of academia. But it was no contest against the brilliant Clare Connelly whose many ‘placements’ in English academic institutions and whose published works were, in the end, unbeatable.

But just how did Eibhear and Patricia Laurence get to travel to Bowen’s Court? Bowen’s Court was demolished in 1959, and no trace of it remains!

Julianne Herlihy. ©.

To be continued.

Netanyahu/Gantz Deal

continued

the COVID-19 crisis, a period which can be extended by agreement between the two of them. During this period, the deal rules out the introduction of major legislation on non-COVID-19 matters.

However, it makes an exception for the issue of West Bank annexation and it appears that from 1st July 2020 onwards Netanyahu will be free to begin the annexation of parts of the West Bank, as agreed with President Trump back in January. More on this below. Obviously, Netanyahu would like to have this process completed before November, so that if President Trump fails to get re-elected President Biden will be faced with a *fait accompli*.

NETANYAHU CHARGED

Criminal charges—bribery, fraud and breach of trust—were finally laid against Benjamin Netanyahu in January 2020 after years of gestation (and his trial is due to begin on 24 May). Nevertheless, in the General Election on 2nd March—the third in a year—he improved his electoral position, his Likud party winning 36 seats in the 120-seat Knesset compared with 33 in last September’s election.

Since 2009, he has served three consecutive terms as Prime Minister, in each case leading a right-wing coalition. However, in all three elections in the past year, he and his right-wing allies failed to win enough seats for that to continue—after the 2nd March election they were 3 seats short of a Knesset majority. But, Benny Gantz hasn’t been able to put together a governing coalition either after any of the elections, although his party, Kahol Lavan, won approximately the same number of seats as Likud in all three elections.

GANTZ / NETANYAHU POLICY DIFFERENCES MINIMAL

Gantz was the Chief of Staff of the Israeli military from 2011 to 2015, serving under Prime Minister Netanyahu. He was in overall command of the Israeli military offensives against Gaza in November 2012 (Operation Pillar of Cloud) and July/August 2014 (Operation Protective Edge).

He entered politics for the first time early last year and fought the three Elections under the banner of *Kahol Lavan* (Blue and White). Former Israeli Government Ministers Yair Lapid of Yesh Atid and Moshe Ya’alon of Telem were allied with him in Kahol Lavan.

Gantz launched his entry into politics

with a pair of videos boasting of the death and destruction the Israeli military had wrought in Gaza under his command (Electronic Intifada, 21st January 2019). One of them showed drone footage of a devastated neighbourhood in Gaza in August 2014, following Israel’s 51-day assault on the territory and bragged that “*parts of Gaza were returned to the stone ages*”. The other displayed a kill-counter of Palestinians while in the background Palestinians are seen taking part in funerals.

Gantz entered politics with the clear intention of ending Netanyahu’s career as Israeli Prime Minister. But his policy differences with Netanyahu are minimal, so much so that the agreement they signed on 20th April contains almost nothing on policy. Instead it says that “*after the establishment of the government, a team will be established to formulate the basic principles of the government*”.

On the Occupation, he is at one with Netanyahu. Asked on 2nd April during the last election campaign if he supported the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, he refused to answer but said: “*We must maintain the Jordan Valley as a security border, we can’t go back to the 1967 line, and Jerusalem will forever stay united as our capital*” (Haaretz, 2nd April 2020). When back in January Netanyahu got the blessing of President Trump for the annexation of parts of the West Bank, he described it as “*a significant and historic milestone*” and said that if he won the upcoming Election he would immediately “*work toward implementing it*”.

GANTZ BREAKS PLEDGE GIVEN AT THREE ELECTIONS

Gantz’s opposition to Netanyahu was based almost entirely on his alleged corruption—and in each of the three Elections he pledged not to enter into Government with Netanyahu so long as he is under criminal indictment. He has now broken that pledge, giving as his excuse the need for a “*emergency unity government*” to deal the Covid-19 pandemic.

That excuse hasn’t been sufficient for a majority of his Kahol Lavan MKs, more than half of whom have deserted him, reducing their number from 33 to 15. Yair Lapid, his former ally in Kahol Lavan, has also deserted him and apologised

“to all those people who I convinced to vote for Benny Gantz and Blue and White this past year. I didn’t believe that they would steal your vote and give it to Netanyahu, that they would use your vote to form the fifth Netanyahu government.” (Times of Israel, 21 April 2020)

*

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Netanyahu’s call for an “*emergency unity government*”, ostensibly to help deal with the Covid-19 crisis, was in reality a clever plan to ensnare Gantz, who couldn’t easily refuse to participate, but was going to be in trouble with a large section of his supporters if did participate. For Netanyahu, the deal has the happy side effect of securing the Premiership for himself, when all other efforts over the past year have failed to do so. True, he has a limited term in Office after which he has to hand over to Gantz, but the nature of the power-sharing arrangement he has persuaded to accept means that he will still have a veto on most decisions when Gantz is Prime Minister.

The Agreement is being challenged in the courts. But, if it gets over that hurdle and is approved by the Knesset, it will end more than a year of political deadlock, during which Netanyahu acted as Prime Minister. Now, he should be able to continue as Prime Minister until at least October 2021 with the prospect of winning an Election in three year’s time now that Gantz has been severely weakened.

(It is possible that the courts decide that it is illegal for a person under criminal indictment to serve as Prime Minister. If that happens, the Agreement will fall and there will be another General Election, in which case he could run on a platform promising legislation to heed the will of the people by overriding the courts—and conceivably become Prime Minister again.)

IMPLEMENTING ANNEXATION

Articles 28 and 29 of the Agreement are concerned with the implementation of the annexation of parts of the West Bank, as Netanyahu agreed with Trump last January.

Article 29 refers to this as “*the extension of sovereignty*” and states:

“...as of July 1, 2020 the Prime Minister will be able to bring the agreement reached with the United States regarding the extension of sovereignty for discussion by the cabinet and the government and for the approval of the government and/or the Knesset”

This appears to give Netanyahu a green light to go ahead with the process of annexation (and appears to deny Gantz a veto over doing so). However, Article 28 states:

“In everything related to the declaration made by President Trump, the Prime Minister and the Vice Prime Minister will act in full agreement with the United

States, including the issue of the maps vis-à-vis the Americans and engaging in an international dialogue on the issue, while striving to preserve the security and strategic interests of the State of Israel, including the need to maintain regional stability, uphold the peace agreements and pursue future peace agreements.”

Obviously, Israel is not going to progress the annexations in the face of opposition from Washington, which did exist back in January when Netanyahu wanted to make progress on the issue in order to boost his chances in the election on 2nd March. Since then, Israel has been working with the US in a joint committee mapping out the precise boundaries of the territory to be annexed.

Commenting on the Netanyahu-Gantz agreement on 22nd April 2020, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said:

“As for the annexation in the West Bank, the Israelis will ultimately make those decisions. Those are—that’s an Israeli decision, and we will work closely with them to share with them our views of this in a private setting.”

That gives the impression that the US will not oppose Israel proceeding with the annexations.

Will other considerations prompt Israel back? For instance, Jordan has threatened to renounce its peace agreement with Israel if it annexes the Jordan Valley. Will the desire to “uphold peace agreements” make Israel think twice about going ahead? It seems unlikely.

David Morrison
27 April 2020

“28. The Prime Minister and the Vice Prime Minister will act together and in coordination in order to advance peace agreements with all our neighbors and to advance regional cooperation in a range of economic spheres ...

“In everything related to the declaration made by President Trump, the Prime Minister and the Vice Prime Minister will act in full agreement with the United States, including the issue of the maps vis-à-vis the Americans and engaging in an international dialogue on the issue, while striving to preserve the security and strategic interests of the State of Israel, including the need to maintain regional stability, uphold the peace agreements and pursue future peace agreements.

“29. Despite what is written in 'Article 28' above, and following discussion and consultation between the Prime Minister and the Vice Prime Minister on the principles outlined above, as of July 1, 2020 the Prime Minister will be able to bring the agreement reached with the United States regarding the extension of sovereignty

for discussion by the cabinet and the government and for the approval of the government and/or the Knesset. [emphasis added]”

(*) Under the terms of the deal, which will end over a year of political deadlock during which Israel has not had a permanent government, Gantz will become prime minister in 18 months. Until then, he will serve as defense minister and have veto power over most legislative and policy matters. While he had campaigned on a promise not to sit in a government under Netanyahu, Gantz said the about-face was necessitated by the coronavirus crisis.

(*) It’s not clear what this proposal would amount to in practice. Of the present relationship between the settlements and the Israeli state, the Israeli human rights organisation B’Tselem [explains](#):

“Although the West Bank is not part of Israel’s sovereign territory, Israel has applied most of its domestic laws to the settlements and their residents. ... Israel has refrained from formally annexing the West Bank (except in East Jerusalem). In practice, however, it treats the settlements established

throughout Area C as extensions of its sovereign territory and has virtually eliminated the distinction for Israeli citizens.”

That being so, it is difficult to judge how Netanyahu’s proposal, if implemented, would alter the existing relationship in practice.

(*) <https://www.haaretz.com/misc/article-print-page/.premium-u-k-eu-states-warn-netanyahu-gantz-government-against-west-bank-annexation-1.8794334>

<https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/eu-backs-warning-israel-over-west-bank-annexation>

<https://www.haaretz.com/misc/article-print-page/.premium-how-israelis-who-voted-for-gantz-feel-now-he-s-in-bed-with-bibi-1.8793939>

<https://www.state.gov/secretary-michael-r-pompeo-remarks-to-the-press-at-a-press-availability/>

<https://www.haaretz.com/misc/article-print-page/.premium-pompeo-says-annexing-west-bank-is-israel-s-decision-to-make-1.8791028>

<https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/pompeo-west-bank-annexation-is-an-israeli-decision-to-make-625509>

<https://www.breitbart.com/middle-east/2020/04/22/pompeo-annexing-west-bank-is-israelis-decision-to-make/>

Israel shuts Palestinian coronavirus testing clinic in East Jerusalem

Clinic in Silwan raided, activists arrested because kits were provided by the Palestinian Authority

Nir Hasson | Apr. 15, 2020 | 1:13 PM | 12

Israeli police raided a coronavirus testing clinic in the East Jerusalem Palestinian neighborhood of Silwan and arrested its organizers on Tuesday night because the clinic was operated in collaboration with the Palestinian Authority.

According to the clinic's managers, there is a shortage of coronavirus tests in Silwan, where doctors say there are 40 confirmed cases and where overcrowded living conditions could lead to a rapid spread of the virus.

The clinic was opened in a hall at one of the local mosques. It was closed on Tuesday night because to the end-of-Passover curfew, but police officers nonetheless arrived, questioned neighbors and arrested four activists who were involved in setting up the clinic.

The coronavirus tests were meant to be processed by the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. However, Israel prohibits any PA activity in Jerusalem and last month also prevented PA workers from disinfecting public spaces in the capital. In contrast, two weeks ago Israel allowed armed PA forces to respond to a violent dispute that took place in one of the Jerusalem neighborhoods that are beyond the separation barrier.

"You [Israeli authorities] are not helping us and are preventing us from getting help from others," said one of the residents, Farhi Abu Diab. "For the first time, we have a common enemy, so let's work together."

Abu Diab said the Israeli government will respond after it's too late, after the month of Ramadan, which he said will surely exacerbate the outbreak. "Instead of working together, [Israeli authorities] are bringing politics into this. I don't care about who has jurisdiction. If something happens to my son I don't care who tests him."

On Monday, at the behest of Jerusalem Mayor Moshe Leon and health professionals, the Israeli Health Ministry opened a testing clinic in Silwan, but it is only accessible to members of the Clalit health maintenance organization.

(Haaretz, 15 April 2020)

This and other stories are to be found on:

HYPERLINK "<http://www.sadaka.ie>"
<http://www.sadaka.ie>

See also:

HYPERLINK <http://www.david-morrison.org.uk>

Sindo Anti-Sinn Fein Party

continued

by Harris:

“Fianna Fáil leader Micheál Martin emphatically ruled out any engagement with Sinn Féin over forming a government after the February 8 General Election as he warned there is a deep anger amongst his party’s voters with Sinn Féin and their lack of contrition over what happened during the Troubles.”

But the expectant Taoiseach-in-waiting was to be disappointed by the electorate. The ruling Fine Gael Party dropped down 12 seats to 35, with 21 percent of the vote. But Fianna Fáil also dropped seats — down 7 to 38 (including the Ceann Comhairle), with only 22 percent. It was Sinn Féin that shot up by 15 seats to 37, and would have gained more seats with more candidates, since it garnered 25 percent of the vote.

The new Dáil had its first meeting on February 20th and accordingly failed to anoint Martin as Taoiseach, since 80 affirmative votes were needed for such an outcome. The outgoing FG Taoiseach Varadkar received 36 votes for continuing as Taoiseach, but 107 voted against. SF leader Mary Lou McDonald received 45 votes for, and 84 against. But FF leader Martin received a mere 41 votes for, and as many as 97 against. The Green Party leader Eamon Ryan received 12 votes for and 115 against. So Varadkar would carry on as a caretaker Taoiseach for the time being, and the only way Martin could now become Taoiseach would be to fix a deal with FG, and for a third party (and possibly even a fourth) to be either cajoled or bullied into signing up to such a FF/FG stitch up—designed to exclude SF, the most popular of each of the three larger parties, from any involvement whatsoever in Government.

Three days later, on February 23rd, and under the heading of “*Micheal Martin rejects Sinn Fein and speaks for the Republic*,” Harris enthused about his protégé:

“Last Thursday, Micheal Martin movingly defended the Irish Republic from moral and political corruption in a magisterial speech whose historic import was missed by most of our craven media... The media also missed Sinn Fein’s subjugation of the so-called left opposition. Shamefully, not even the Social Democrats called out Sinn Fein...”

Three days later again, it was Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, and since the *Sindo* sees that its principal

mission in Irish politics is to wage a Holy War against SF, I suppose we might regard that as Harris’s Lenten Pastoral. And, on the following Sunday, March 1st, just like an old fashioned Redemptorist preacher delivering the parish’s Lenten Mission, Harris roared out his impatience at how dilatory Varadkar was behaving in his failure to date to crown Martin:

“Fine Gael must stop playing games and give us stability.

The Irish Republic has been hollowed out and no longer rests on the firm foundations of alternating Fianna Fail and Fine Gael Governments... Luckily, there are still wise heads from the SDLP tradition... Last week, Alban Maginness, writing in the *Belfast Telegraph* ... had no doubt who had held the line for Irish democracy: ‘It is to Fianna Fail leader Micheal Martin’s great credit that he has rejected the idea of joining with Sinn Fein as a partner in a new coalition government. Micheal Martin has, instead, advocated a grand coalition, between Fianna Fail and Fine Gael, together with the Greens.’ ...It’s about backing Micheal Martin against Sinn Fein’s atavistic agenda and telling Leo Varadkar to stop posing and get on with giving us a government.”

A fortnight later, on March 15th, the third Sunday of Lent, and referring to what he called “*the gyrations of the Green Party*”, Harris thundered: “*Call for national government is a sure sign of bad politics*”.

Harris was, of course, aided and abetted by an array of other Sindo columnists, if somewhat less stridently, in pursuit of that paper’s Anti-Sinn Féin Party agenda. There was but one exception to the rule.

Gene Kerrigan is the resident leftie on the back page of the *Sunday Independent*. A gifted and eloquent commentator, Kerrigan provides incisive social analysis on a regular basis. But, as long as he does not directly challenge his fellow columnists head to head, he has not just been merely tolerated by the Sindo powers-that-be, he has been cherished in a ‘look how broad-minded we are in publishing his column’ sort of way, when, in an era of declining fortunes for the print media, every sale counts, there is a realisation that there are some out there who might buy the paper if only to read Kerrigan’s Column.

However, on the fifth Sunday of Lent, March 29th, Kerrigan became more directly Party political in challenging the Sindo’s own line. “*Amid political opportunism and wondrous dedication, we see that Tony Holohan is the real Taoiseach*” was the heading to his Column that day wherein he cogently argued:

“Today, it’s seven weeks since we got the general election results. In the weeks that followed, Leo Varadkar and Micheal Martin played games. The ploy was to insist it was Mary Lou McDonald’s job to form a government—knowing she didn’t have the numbers. Then, after weeks of play-acting, they could accuse her of failure and reluctantly agree to form a coalition ‘in the national interest’. Their childish insistence that they are the Adults in the Room has inadvertently created a Constitutional Crisis by leaving the new Seanad unable to function and the ‘caretaker’ government potentially unable to pass laws. In a political culture with a sense of responsibility, Varadkar and Martin would by now have resigned from public life. Instead, one or the other or both will probably end up Taoiseach in a new government. I don’t care who gets the State car. The truth is, Dr Tony Holohan (the State’s Chief Medical Officer) is the effective Taoiseach. He and his colleagues have been running the country since the Covid-19 crisis began...”

“Who gets to sit in the big chair, I couldn’t give a toss. I believe that, in their recent game-playing, Leo Varadkar and Micheal Martin have done serious damage to parliamentary democracy. Putting political games above ballot-box results, dressing their ambition in the clothes of moral judgment, they devalued politics. I’ve no idea what the long-term consequences may be but if I was an anarchist I’d be quietly pleased. We’re also getting used to the Great Economic Gear-change. Yesterday, we couldn’t afford anything. We hadn’t the money to house our people, as Fianna Fail did in the 1930s and 1940s. No room in the A&E for many of the sick. We couldn’t even afford to pay the student nurses who were rushed into keeping the wards going, putting their health on the line for our sake. Overnight we can afford everything, as long as it doesn’t cost more than a few billion. The reality of the virus blew away the mock economics that governed us for decades... When the crisis ends it’ll be fun watching the political representatives of the rich try to recreate their version of normality...”

For some time now, the Sindo has placed the articles of its columnists behind a pay wall online. So it’s just as well I’d paid up! For, with reduced availability of newspapers during the lockdown, I’d failed to get a copy of the print edition that Sunday. But at least I managed to secure a copy of the print edition the following Sunday, or otherwise I would not have known what Kerrigan next wrote, since his Column that day was excluded from online availability—the only availability that really matters these days.

On Palm Sunday, April 5th, Kerrigan’s heading read: “*So, we’re all in this together? Well... sort of. Ordinary people are*

putting their own lives at risk, but it's too dangerous for the Dáil to meet. Strange days." He emphatically pointed out:

"Fine Gael/Fianna Fail have a long history of financial, social and class connections to the rich... Over the next five years, a lot of decisions will be made. The economic consequences of this crisis will be decided politically, just as the consequences of the 2008 economic crisis were decided politically. Those decisions, ultimately, determine who among us is winning and who's losing... We're in similar territory now. And the clicking into place last week of the old FG/FF firm is the first step in ensuring those decisions have similar outcomes to the decisions made after the 2008 crisis. Which means limiting the adverse effects on one sector, while imposing a greater burden on the rest..."

"FG/FF have history... Put all those decisions together and they spell austerity. FG and FF spent eight weeks play-acting. The manoeuvres were about isolating Sinn Fein and other outsiders, while seeking to entice Labour or the Greens into the game. The arrival of the Covid-19 crisis added urgency. All the more reason to ensure the exclusion of any political views that might object to the same old solutions, when the bill came in for the emergency measures... It appears we're stuck with Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil as they prepare to 'step up to the plate'. That's what they call it when they stick together after spending two months refusing to compromise with the party that got the most first preferences..."

The key points that most sharply challenged the chief political objective of the Sindo/FF/FG agenda—which we might otherwise designate as the Sindo Anti-Sinn Féin Party—read:

"FG and FF spent eight weeks play-acting. The manoeuvres were about isolating Sinn Fein and ... seeking to entice Labour or the Greens into the game ... refusing to compromise with the party that got the most first preferences."

The Sindo knew, as Kerrigan himself had explicitly stated the previous week, that Mary Lou McDonald did not have the numbers to become Taoiseach of a SF-led government. It was no longer a runner. What might still be a runner, however, was what Kerrigan referred to as "a compromise with the party that got the most first preferences", since the Green Party had called for a National Government that would include SF.

In the Sindo stable, Gene Kerrigan was, of course, a lone voice crying in the wilderness. His Palm Sunday intervention was outweighed, even in the print edition, by those other columnists who had been frantically calling for FF/FG rule. And

so we read:

"In a time of high crisis, will parties on left learn to do the right thing? Voters will punish those politicians who fail to do their duty to a nation in need, writes Jody Corcoran."

By "*parties on left*", of course, Corcoran was playing the "anybody but SF" tune, demanding that it was high time for the three parties in his sights to instal FF/FG rule for the next five years:

"The Greens ... are running a mile from government formation talks, wrapped in a cloak of cynicism unsuited to their image... The hope for a stable government rests on the shoulders of the new Labour leader, Alan Kelly, this weekend, and with him the Social Democrats whose joint leaders face a last spin of the merry-go-round before time passes them by."

In a division of labour, Emer O'Kelly focussed on a single target. Under the heading of "*It's time Ryan and his Green pals focused on the big picture*", she berated the Greens for not backing a Government that would exclude SF:

"Eamon Ryan, with parliamentary (and ministerial) experience under his belt, has learned that membership of a national parliament means you must take off the blinkers... Ryan presents as increasingly lame in his support for a national government rather than the formation of one with a properly constituted opposition. Having ploughed a lonely furrow with only one other Green TD in the last Dail, he now heads a small but significant party... Maybe Eamon Ryan doesn't realise the immense responsibility of his position. That could be called an attractively modest stance. But he has to wake up: our country is in dreadful peril, and he and his admittedly rookie TDs are needed. It's time for him to kick ass and tell them to grow up."

Under the heading of "*Labour needed in government to help fix a broken economy—fairly*", Eoghan Harris set himself the task of love bombing Alan Kelly, the rump Labour Party's latest leader. Spinning yet another column on behalf of his own ideological puppet, FF Taoiseach-in-waiting Martin, Harris wrote:

"Last Friday, Professor Gary Murphy gave Fine Gael a reality check on behalf of Irish democracy—and had some wise words for the Labour Party. On RTE, he reminded Leo Varadkar there had been a general election, Fine Gael had come third, and the current caretaker government had no mandate to continue indefinitely... Leo Varadkar, during Brexit, bigged up what we now see was the hollow promise of EU solidarity. He does not strike me as the party leader

best fitted to get tough with the EU. In contrast, Micheal Martin showed no starry eyes about the EU ... Add to that Martin's radical call for a single-tier health system and Prof Murphy's case for Labour in government is even more compelling. Like me, Murphy believes Labour will not be punished for doing its duty in a crisis—but will certainly suffer if it dodges the column... Ask anyone outside the lefty cocoon and they tell you they are disgusted by the servile march of the Soc Dems and Greens towards the swallowing mouth of the Sinn Fein Moloch. (And Harris's column was accompanied by a cartoon supporting his portrayal of "*the SF Moloch*"—MOR). Going into either government or opposition with Sinn Fein is a political bourne from which no fellow-traveller returns. Alan Kelly, the new Labour leader, has a good feel for the majority private sector. Kelly and Martin, in government with FG, could ensure that exit from the lockdown, however hard, is equally hard for all."

The columns of Corcoran, O'Kelly and Harris were posted online just after midnight that Sunday morning, long before the print edition hit the newsagents. But on this occasion a decision was taken to EXCLUDE Kerrigan's column from any online posting. Nor was it posted any day thereafter. That was his Holy Week chastisement. So it was a good job that I got my hands on a print copy and transcribed it for a Facebook post, or otherwise it would have died a death and would have had no other existence than in the tattered newspaper clippings kept by eccentrics like myself.

That silencing of Kerrigan online had one single purpose. The Sindo wanted only one message to go out: All hands on deck for FF morphing into FG, but still led by Martin, with whatever regime they can construct for the next five years, and with Martin as Taoiseach.

The Sindo love bombing of the new leader of the Labour Party intensified the following week, Easter Sunday, April 12. "*Kelly mustn't pass up Labour's big chance*", Mairia Cahill empathised and cajoled:

"You have to feel for Alan Kelly. Ambitious, he finally gets the reins of his party in the middle of a pandemic. Tasked with reinvigorating and injecting impetus, ironically, Ireland's difficulty could be Kelly's opportunity. While the Greens are growing salad on their window sills, and Shinnners compete for soundbite of the week, Labour has a real chance to effect change... The Labour brand of a party for workers is not enough... Either it acts as a watchdog to a centre-right coalition to ensure protections are afforded to the most vulnerable, or it becomes a mud-guard to

a non-constructive hot-air opposition led by Sinn Fein. There is no going back to old politics. Kelly has his work cut out for him—however, he is not afraid of a challenge. He should take the ball, and run with it. A good player never scored a goal sitting as a substitute. A good Labour politician in government is worth 12 on the opposition benches.”

Jody Corcoran impatiently polemicised:

“It should be noted that the ‘national unity’ proposal is really a mechanism by which to rinse Sinn Fein for government shortly thereafter, where its advocates in Fianna Fail, the Greens and others hope the popularity, or populism of Mary Lou McDonald’s party, will be diminished as it has been for others who have taken office at a difficult time... Last weekend Micheal Martin spoke to the *Sunday Independent* of a ‘new social contract’ on housing, health and climate change, among other things. It is to be assumed the framework document agreed by Fianna Fail and Fine Gael last Friday reflects this thinking. Furthermore, he referenced the opportunity now available to introduce a single-tier health system, for example. Surely the Social Democrats—certainly somebody as policy driven as joint leader, Roisin Shortall—must see the prize now available, to create a lasting legacy on the public administration of this country by introducing such a health system? More than that, Martin said: ‘We need to rethink how we live.’ What a simple, yet powerful expression of an opportunity that must also appeal to the ideologies of the Greens and Labour.”

Eoghan Harris also sought to cajole Labour TDs—other than Howlin, they literally add up to no more than a handful!—by enticing them with his attempt to work up envy of Howlin’s ministerial pension and a craving to chalk up their own:

“The old guard in the Labour Party led by Brendan Howlin, warned that Labour would be committing a ‘fatal mistake’ by going into government. Easy for Howlin with his 40 years in the Dail, and his fine pensions, to deny young, ambitious Labour Party TDs of the government roles he relished in his day. This dog-in-the-manger negativity contrasts with the wise advice of that most able of all serious socialists, Proinsias De Rossa, who set out an alternative vision. ‘Wouldn’t it be wonderful to be in government leading the implementation of a New Social Green Deal, which would re-orientate the Irish economy to address the multiple existential crises Ireland and the global community are facing?’ Yes it would.”

It would be wrong for me to say that the Easter Sunday Sindo contained nothing but shameless propaganda to make Harris’s mouthpiece, FF’s Martin the next Taoise-

ach. There was actually one serious piece of political analysis, and it was explicitly so. Under the heading of “*All the policies that were in everyone’s manifesto except Fine Gael’s*”, Hugh O’Connell assessed “*Fianna Fail and Fine Gael’s historic coalition talks*” and wrote:

“While much of the document’s contents have leaked over the past week, we are told to expect a document that will signal significant policy shifts by both parties. ‘The tone and pitch will surprise people’, says one source... All those involved say it will be squarely aimed at trying to get the Greens, Labour and Social Democrats on board, while studiously ignoring the elephant in the room that is Sinn Fein. Its housing spokesman Eoin O Broin correctly noted this week that the two parties appear to have adopted the Sinn Fein manifesto. A Fine Gael Cabinet member was more blunt: ‘All the policies that were in everyone’s manifesto except Fine Gael’s’ ... TWO OUT OF THREE AIN’T BAD.” (This last phrase appearing under a photo of FF’s Martin, FG’s Varadkar and SF’s McDonald.)

Easter Sunday also saw a Sindo resurrection of Kerrigan online. But why can I not award a plaudit to that day’s column, similar to the one I awarded the previous week? After all, his Easter column was indeed headed “*Calling people ‘heroes’ is the easy part: As the old FG/FF crowd prepare a new government, the medics offer us values we need to cherish.*” But, thereafter, Kerrigan pulled in his teeth:

“For weeks, the political forces that have always represented the values of the millionaire set have been play-acting. They’ve manoeuvred toward another coalition of the type that saw a 32 pc rise in the wealth of millionaires. When the crisis ends, their task will be to praise the hard-working nurses and others, while they seek a return to the old values.”

But this time there was no mention made of either the specific Anti-SF Party or anti-National Government agendas being pursued by FF/FG, and championed by his paper. Kerrigan’s Easter column demonstrably lacked the bite of his indictment a week previously.

If “*Love Bomb Labour*” had characterised much of the Sindo style on Easter Sunday, it was more a case of “*Lean on Green*” the following week, April 19th. The editorial, headed “*Greens’ mandate to govern is clear*”, set out once again to undermine its call for a National Government and called for that Party to support a FF/FG stitch-up in its place:

“We needed to rethink how we lived, travelled, worked and how we consumed, the

Greens said in language strikingly similar to that used by Fianna Fail and Fine Gael in the broad coalition framework document presented to the smaller parties last week... On the back of excellent results in the European and local elections last year, the manifesto clearly resonated with the electorate. Among the smaller parties, the Greens showed the largest gains, increasing from three to 12 seats. By any yardstick this can be taken as a mandate to enter government to implement green policies... Yet the Greens here are showing remarkable reluctance to enter government. In doing so, the party risks squandering its input into half of the precious decade remaining to make the changes necessary to save our natural world. This is an unconscionable state of affairs. The Greens are not alone in risking the potential to act on the mandates received. The Social Democrats urged citizens to “*Hope for better. Vote for better*” and had their best-ever result, winning six seats, a gain of four. Similar to the Greens, the Social Democrats are showing every sign of passing on the opportunity to act according to the mandate provided by voters. Indeed, of the three smaller parties, only Labour, under its new leader Alan Kelly, could be reasonably excused from seeking to avoid participation in an emerging government involving Fianna Fail and Fine Gael. Labour had a poor to average election result. The oldest party in the State has served in the past in difficult times. Undoubtedly, it has paid the price for so honourably serving. It has been reasonably speculated that the fear of similarly losing support is what is keeping the Greens and Social Democrats from stepping forward now...”

“*Coalition plan critics are missing the point*”, penned Jody Corcoran, with reference to the sheer shallowness of the “*historic compromise*” framework document:

“The most predictable thing about the Fianna Fail-Fine Gael coalition framework document was the uniformly sceptical reaction to its publication. Politicians, economists and the media responded in a similar fashion, singing from the same tired, old hymn sheet: the document was a wish-list designed by the dastardly two Civil War parties to lure into their death-knell embrace an unsuspecting smaller party; to cling on to power at all costs, and it would never be implemented anyway because it was too unaffordable. Where were the costings, parroted some who would not know one end of a balance sheet from the other... In attempting to form a new government, Fianna Fail and Fine Gael have gone it alone without Sinn Fein, and ultimately may come to regret that. We’ll know in five years. What is evident, though, is how much the Civil War parties have taken from Sinn Fein, or least ways, from the outcome of the election. Change was coming anyway,

Covid-19 or not. As a result, a single-tier health system is on the horizon, a living wage on the agenda, climate action policies will be implemented with or without the Greens, a referendum on land ownership is on the cards and even the question of a united Ireland has been taken into the light and away from the Department of Foreign Affairs... So, well done Fianna Fail and Fine Gael, I say. And as for the rest of you, it's time to get on board. The future train is about to leave the station."

On that same note, under the heading of "*It's not enough to 'win the argument', you've got to actually do something*", Declan Lynch opined, as he too leaned on behalf of FF/FG on those three smaller parties:

"When we used to care about such things, a lot of people voted for the Greens or the Labour Party or the Social Democrats, in the hope that they might bring a 'progressive' twist to the next government... Yes, we understand there has to be a bit of tomfoolery around the 'negotiations', the smaller parties have to pretend at least that being in government is not for them at this time — Alan Kelly does a particularly amusing version of this one on behalf of Labour, fair play to him. Yet there was an apparently serious contribution from outgoing Labour leader Brendan Howlin, alleging it would be a 'fatal mistake' for Labour to go into government (as Eoghan Harris put it last week, 'easy for Howlin with his 40 years in the Dail, and his fine pensions...'). Moreover that 'fatal mistake' had already been made by Howlin himself, insisting on becoming leader just because he could — with six seats they are not technically dead, but being in opposition hasn't exactly electrified them either... To the small progressive parties of Ireland, there is a lesson here — you're winning all the arguments, in fact you have been winning the arguments for years. For the greater good, maybe you should consider losing a few?"

In the liturgical calendar, this April 19th was Low Sunday, a designation with two possible meanings: A traditional name in English is Low Sunday, perhaps given this name because of the contrast with the high festival of Easter on the preceding Sunday, or the word "Low" may be a corruption of Latin *Laudes*, meaning Praise. Or perhaps both were applicable to that day's Sindo. Even Eoghan Harris had calmed down, no longer feeling compelled to indulge in yet more high blood pressure berating of Varadkar for being dilatory in crowning Martin, and now ready to lavish praise on him for finally "stepping up to the plinth":

"For a people who are obsessed with every petty oppression of the past, it's strange

what small attention has been paid to the historic coming together of Fianna Fail and Fine Gael. Critics have concentrated on complaints about the framework document being pie in the sky — a complaint I shall return to presently. What they ignore are the personal and psychological hurdles faced by the two parties born of Civil War — and, paradoxically, the opportunities opened up if they can clear them. Because history shows a fruitful dynamic is often released when former political foes find themselves on the same side fighting a greater enemy... "

"Let me now return to the critics of the framework document (henceforth called Framework) and their complaint that it is too aspirational, and not costed. They miss the point. The Framework was never meant to be a costed economic programme for government — nor does it pretend to be... Anyone with any feel for the public pulse can sense most people wish this new ship of State well and want to give it a fair wind. That is why the leaden response from Roisin Shortall on Sean O'Rourke last Wednesday was both deeply depressing — and politically suicidal. Because in opposition the Social Democrats will be totally overshadowed by Sinn Fein who will be running more candidates next time around. Furthermore, Labour's Alan Kelly, who cursorily dismissed the Framework as "aspirational" (as if that were a bad thing), won't be getting an early bounce at the polls or any reward at the next general election. Eamon Ryan seems to be still trying to do the right thing for his party. Going into government is the Greens' only option if they want to avoid a second general election this year. The Greens have more to fear from a second general election than any other party. Their supporters are mostly idealistic middle-ground voters who crave stable government and responsible politicians. If the Greens go into opposition, these voters will flee back into the arms of Fine Gael and Fianna Fail. The Framework offers the Greens more than any other party: a 'new green deal' — a commitment to revisit carbon reduction targets, a pledge to look at economic recovery via a 'green lens'. But if they drag their heels much more, the Framework parties should take Noel Dempsey's shrewd advice and form a Government from the ranks of the willing, and dare the smaller parties to cause a general election."

So, Harris was now happy to proclaim his FF/FG/Framework parties fighting fit (though this reads more like a speech impediment), "*on the same side fighting a greater enemy*".

And, sure, what harm in posting Kerrigan as the resident dissident leftie curmudgeon?

"*Daft 'draft' makes 'missions' improbable*" and "*While some rethink the future, FF/FG have issued an alarmingly vacuous proposal*" was his Low Sunday offering. He began:

"Two documents crossed my desk in recent days, two ways of looking at the plight in which we find ourselves. Each, in its own way, seeks to lay out what the authors think our world might look like 'when this is over'..." And he went on to favourably contrast a *Financial Times* editorial with what followed from FF/FG:

"Now, the FT says, 'Radical reforms — reversing the prevailing policy direction of the last four decades — will need to be put on the table...' This reflects an establishment fear that sustaining a workable society isn't feasible while clinging to the legacy of Thatcher and Reagan. The editorial says that governments 'must see public services as investments rather than liabilities, and look for ways to make labour markets less insecure. Redistribution will again be on the agenda... Policies until recently considered eccentric, such as basic income and wealth taxes, will have to be in the mix'. In short, even the financial establishment recognises that there are great risks ahead, and great possibilities, in a world that is far from stable."

"What of Ireland? The draft document produced by FF/FG is some tulip. It's as though nothing has changed since February 8, when we voted. To these people, politics is the paper-thin differences between FF and FG, and stability is about ensuring that nothing disturbs that cosy cartel. Here's the FF/FG document... 'We are an island nation, bound together by solidarity, united in our determination to play our part in the world...' You can almost hear Dev's quivery voice. There's not a sentence that couldn't have been written in 1962, or 1932."

But did not the Sindo further indulge Kerrigan this Low Sunday by allowing him to spell out his full wish list for the next Government? "*Mary Lou for Taoiseach? Our experts pick who should be in charge in their fantasy cabinets*" was the heading, and "*Four Sunday Independent political writers pick their fantasy formations*" was the subheading.

Predictably, Jody Corcoran, Eilis O'Hanlon and Eoghan Harris, all picked Martin for Taoiseach. Corcoran said of his choice for Taoiseach: "*They said it would never happen. They were wrong. But can the man who saved Fianna Fail save the country?*" And of the other component of this FF/FG Government: "*A Cabinet based on a working assumption that the Greens and Soc Dems will bottle it and that Labour will once again serve the nation. It would be the most stable, too.*"

Eilis O’Hanlon saw all three smaller parties being seduced to join her FF/FG-led anti-SF Coalition, but Eoghan Harris left the Soc Dems out of it and gave just one Cabinet seat each to the Greens and Labour—with Eamon Ryan in Environment (“*Will be a sorry man if he allows Neasa Hourigan to block him from getting this job*”); and Alan Kelly in Housing (“*SF rivals will be wary of the AK-47 slung over his shoulder*”).

Of his choice of Martin as Taoiseach: “*Also special responsibility for Northern Ireland, a united island, and the promotion of pluralism, decency and civility in public life.*” And of his keeping Charlie Flanagan in Justice: “*Bravest justice minister since Paddy Cooney; deserves credit for his pluralist attempt to honour decent RIC members and for head-hunting top cop Drew Harris.*” Indeed, in the Harrisite scheme of things, Drew can be seen as operating as Eoghan’s paramilitary wing.

Gene Kerrigan went for a SF-led Left parties Government, with McDonald as Taoiseach:

“While the FF/FG cartel remains dominant, a Cabinet chosen on talent, intelligence and an ability to see things differently, must remain a real fantasy. Taoiseach: Mary Lou McDonald (SF)—No other party leader could credibly represent change. The current jockeying (‘It’s Meehawl’s turn, so it is’) makes a farce of the office.”

But Kerrigan also gave readers the quirky addition of two non-Left individuals to his fantasy Cabinet—FG’s Simon Coveney continuing on in Foreign Affairs (“*Instinct says Danny Healy-Rae, just to see Boris Johnson’s jaw drop. But Brexit matters need continuity*”); and FF’s John McGuinness in Transport/Tourism/Sport (“*Played an honourable role in the McCabe scandal; doesn’t stick to the party line*”).

Yet Kerrigan failed to add that these two would either have to resign or be expelled from their respective parties. But why go down that road at all? Why did Kerrigan not keep up the pressure on FF and FG, as he had in his April 5th article, which the Sindo excluded from its online edition, where he denounced the FF/FG refusal “*to compromise with the party that got the most first preferences*”? This might have encouraged the Greens to stick to their guns—or greens, or whatever—in calling for a National Government that would include SF, the possibility of which had been Harris’s greatest fear.

Harris’s project for a Martin-led anti-SF Coalition had nothing more to fear from

Kerrigan, now that the latter was content to lapse into playing a Sindo role as its harmless leftie Court jester. It was indeed a Low Sunday for Kerrigan. His pathetic “*joke*”—indeed sneer—about “*1932*” and “*Dev’s quivery voice*”, was in stark contrast with his acknowledgment of Dev’s achievements in his March 29th column, as he berated the present FF/FG line up with that record: “*We hadn’t the money to house our people, as Fianna Fáil did in the 1930s and 1940s.*”

In contrast, there was actually one opinion piece in the April 9th Sindo which was sharply analytical, by Breandan Mac Suibhne, under the heading “*Fianna Failers keep asking same old question: where did it all go wrong?*”, and the subheading “*After 50 years of hoping for a brighter future, can the party faithful expect anything better under Micheal Martin?*” Yet, even here, the editorial presentation of this article acted to undermine its essential message, with yet another sneer at Dev—an enlarged photograph of him with the caption “*Who takes over when the Big Chief dies: Eamon de Valera wearing a Native American headdress. In 1919 he was made an honorary chief of the Ojibwe-Chippewa people.*”

The facts of the matter were that Mac Suibhne did not make a single mention of Dev! Nor indeed did he mention Dev’s successor, Lemass. Instead, he delivered a sustained critique of every other FF leader since those first two—Lynch, Haughey, Reynolds, Ahern, Cowen and Martin—and took as his point of reference a February 1982 *Derry People* interview with a then 86 year old FF founding member, Charlie Gallagher, described by Mac Suibhne as “*Mr Fianna Fáil in West Donegal*”. Mac Suibhne’s own opinion piece began:

“Where did it all go wrong? Over the last half century, supporters of Fianna Fáil have had more occasions to ask themselves that question than adherents of other parties. Some stalwarts asked it in the 1970s, after Jack Lynch had announced, in 1969, that he could no longer stand by and watch nationalists being burned out of their homes by B Specials—and then stood by and watched.”

And he concluded:

“Jack Lynch left Charlie Gallagher cold. And one imagines that the current Corkman would scarcely warm him. In making a ‘principle’ of not going into government with Mary Lou McDonald, Pearse Doherty and Eoin O Broin—recognised by fair-minded opponents as politicians of high calibre—Martin will cod few voters. Leaving aside that he expects Arlene

Foster and Diane Dodds to sit in government with Michelle O’Neill and Conor Murphy, he well knows that, whenever it has served its interests, Fianna Fáil has come to arrangements with Sinn Féin on county councils. ‘Holier than thou’ is the tone of a Mother Superior and the high moral ground is a cold and lonely place. And Martin’s desperation for power, at any price, will doubtless, as Varadkar well knows, prove massively counter-productive for Fianna Fáil. After all, the current price of Micheal Martin becoming a Lanigan’s Ball Taoiseach, stepping out and in again, is that Mary Lou McDonald becomes the one and only leader of the opposition and calmly bides her time, waiting for the next dance. How is that in the interest of his party? ... Yes, ‘Micheal’s principles’ may soon be the next answer to that recurrent question, where did it all go wrong for Fianna Fáil?”

Wisha Micheál, *alanna* (a *leanbh*, dear child), even if you do secure a stint as Taoiseach, you will yet come to rue the day you ever gave an ear to that other fella!

Manus O’Riordan

Is The Henry Jackson Society More Dangerous Than The Corona Virus?

On Monday April 20 *The Times* reported that 80% of Britons, polled by the Henry Jackson Society, want China to face enquiry over the outbreak of the Corona Virus.

I reckon that 99% of Britons have never heard of the Henry Jackson Society and would think that 80% of readers of *The Times* have no idea what it is. It’s not a polling outfit like Gallup or YouGov, but a collection of individuals who believe in waging unprovoked wars, supposedly to preempt countries acquiring the capacity to attack “the West” but in reality, to install their own puppets and loot those countries’ assets.

I first looked up the Henry Jackson Society three years ago and it inspired my Blog “*Scoop*” of 5 July 2017. The Society is every bit as sinister as I thought and is hell-bent on stirring up trouble with China.

The Daily Mail, which, with Benito Mussolini formed a Mutual Admiration Society for nearly twenty years, and supported Moseley’s Blackshirts, shares the Henry Jackson Society’s anti-China Platform. And Charles Moore of *The Telegraph* is frantically whipping up anti-Chinese paranoia.

The anti-Chinese bias of the British

media was sufficiently noticeable for me to write the Blog “*Congratulations, China*” on 2nd October 2019 for the *Jude Collins* website.

The discovery that the Editor of the recently folded *Jewish Chronicle*, Stephen Pollard, was a member of the Henry Jackson Society inspired my Blog “*Turds Of a Feather – Two Guys Called Pollard*” on 2nd December 2019. The *Chronicle* was condemned by the Independent Press Standards Organisation, for a series of

dishonest articles – part of the successful campaign to hound Jeremy Corbyn from the leadership of the Labour Party.

How the anti-China campaign will end, now that Joe Biden and Donald Trump are singing from the same Hate-Sheet as the Henry Jackson Society, I don’t know. But that Western Alliance may yet prove more dangerous than the Corona Virus.

Incidentally, Professor Bew is a member of the Henry Jackson Society.

Donal Kennedy
April 24, 2020

Under Cave Hill

One hundred years of British influence in the North of Ireland has left its mark,

What would have happened if there had been no state-sponsorship sectarianism from Westminster? We even leave them out of the equation sometimes when we discuss it, though they created the system of having Northern Ireland outside the UK political system while claiming the NI was within it. Some have suggested, like Danny Morrison, that the Catholic population could have thrived under a British administration that had no sectarianism. And, with no sectarianism, there wouldn’t have been a paramilitary police force like the RUC?

I just can’t see the nationalities, British and Irish, and Ireland with its turbulent history, living side by side for any length of time. Remember that British influence was already very strong in the North. It would have been nice to say that British Labour, Conservative and Liberal politics would have been happy in the North. Of course such a thing had to be fought for anyway. You can’t let a State like Britain make the decision for both Catholic and Protestant to be swept under the carpet. It was only right that they shared what was happening in UK proper.

Up to the de-industrialisation of NI, English management and control was quite heavy. It was no use telling them they were in the UK and not in another country: they were in another country. It was only during WW2 that the labour force came together but that would have been in Belfast and Derry where the industry was and high wages was being paid. Additional skilled labour came from South of the border, forcing the workforce to 70,000 in the shipyard, and an additional force into aircraft factories and other heavy industries. There was full employment

with less than 16,000 unemployed out of a population of about a million and a half. It was a strictly-controlled industrial population, working seven days a week in most cases. The RUC could be up at your door if you went missing from work. Industrial wages were doubled but there was nothing to buy in clothes, furniture and timber. Everything was rationed. Eggs and farm-produce could be bought on the black market by going to the countryside. The police raided buses as they returned from the countryside and there were heavy penalty fines.

The IRA operated throughout the WW2. There was a widespread and continuous manhunt, with buses, trains and trams searched by the RUC. Sectarianism was at its height during WW2 in the countryside with B’ Specials reported as firing over the houses of Catholics. Catholics could be Nazi agents in their eyes.

In the meantime, huge signs at the entrance to the Republican/Nationalist Falls Road said: *Out of Bounds to British Troops*. These were put there by the Unionist Government. They might have been a warning to British troops not to stray in there while on leave.

The fact is, 38,000 from Northern Ireland joined the British Armed Forces. It is hard to say how many of these were Catholics. I expect, for a lot of young men, it was joining a military-industrial complex that could take them to various countries they couldn’t afford to go to.

When conscription was mooted just prior to 1939, there was quite a protest from both Catholic and Protestant. The old 1930s CPI led a lot of this protest. The slogan was: “*If they give you rifles make sure you point it at the right person*”. This was said at an open air meeting in Belfast by a Protestant member. Arrests

were made by the RUC.

A number of the CPI had done their two years at the Lenin International School in Moscow and any national divisions in the North were ignored. The CPI had a big influence in East Belfast where the shipyard was, as well as in other industries. Even though the Soviet Union was to enter the war after being attacked, conscription in Northern Ireland was not advocated by the CPI, later the CPNI.

Because of Catholic protests against conscription, the communist movement didn’t want to seem Loyalist. That certainly suited the shipyardmen and other industrial workers, the vast majority of whom were Protestant. Desmond Greaves, who liked to read into what the Protestant was thinking, got his signals wrong on this one. They were still British and weren’t going to cave in to Nationalist thinking.

WW2 always puzzled me in that respect. There was no great loyalty for the war in Northern Ireland. At our public elementary school we were shouted at by teachers acting as sergeant majors; they marched us up and down; we did air shelter drill; learnt how to put out fires when the outside toilets were set on fire; how to avoid plane attacks; and we had the British Army come to the school to demonstrate their heavy weapons. Posters were in the corridor showing German booby-trapped weapons and, on top of that, we crept on to US and British Army firing ranges to pick up live ammunition dropped by the soldiers, which we traded for comics.

Despite all that war influence when we came to play our lunchtime war games we divided the school into English and German, in what was a Protestant school. It was as if WW2 had nothing to do with us.

After WW2, say April 1946, when I joined the workforce of the shipyard, a number of the shipyardmen were returning to their jobs from the British Armed Forces. They were not full of bravado, in fact, they were full of complaints. One former soldier talked of being given a crowbar to wrench off the track of a German tank because the army didn’t have the weaponry. And so on.

The shipyard also had quite a lot of former WW1 soldiers. Many had been in the UVF when they joined up and were ideologically more prepared than the WW2 men. They never protested though some of them had a leg missing: and in its place a heavy steel one. Another had the mark of a horseshoe on his face, while another one appeared to have a pit where his stomach should have been. WW1 and

WW2 men never mixed, as far as I could see. But, then again, most of the WW2 men were pro-Soviet Union: it had saved their lives. But of course, in a couple of years, they had stopped talking about socialism, as the Northern political system seemed to wake them up, and now it was the B' Special for some of them.

When I was twelve years old, just after my birthday in April 1944, my father got a letter asking him to send me to the shipyard for an interview. I was to be an apprentice wood worker, which incorporated joinery, carpentry and cabinetmaking.

I was to start at 16 years old but in the meantime I would start at 14 in the shipyard Wages and Timekeeping offices, that were darted all over the shipyard. I knew the drill. There were rumours that my father was married to a Catholic. But it couldn't be proven. He was part of what you might call a dynasty in the shipyard, going back a bit, and my cousins and uncles were also working there.

I was to find the Joiners' Shop in this vast industrial complex on my own. No one could come with me as it was a restricted area, with its machine-guns and anti-aircraft guns and with quite a few harbour police running around with rifles. My father couldn't be there as he wasn't allowed to take off an hour or so, from his job in the Harland & Wolff aircraft factory, to help me. I must have shown my letter of introduction a dozen times to uniformed and plain clothes police, and been given instructions of how to get there but I couldn't figure it out.

There was the scene of the slipways, with dozen of naval ships and merchant navy ships being built, and the long rows of ships that had been launched, and were being finished, stretching for miles. Very confusing and startling as I had come from the quiet countryside (but not politically quiet!).

Asking around, I found the Joiner Shop, with its hundreds of benches and wartime blacked-out windows, and artificial light, under war conditions. The head foreman's office was somewhere up near the roof, where he could survey the entire shop floor. He had on a bowler hat and wore a neat suit with shirt and tie. The charge-hands also wore bowler hats, but with a brown dustcoat over their suits, collars and ties. They had separated glass offices throughout the shop at vantage points.

The head foreman asked me various details about my education, mainly, could I read and write and how well could I do that. I had to give an example of my

handwriting, and to read from a pamphlet called '*Wartime Restrictions*'. I did read a lot so there was no problem. I had my father's name and I went to a Protestant school, so it should have been straightforward. But there was that rumour. He began to make disparaging about the Pope, followed by asking if I had a flat head through the priest patting it when I was just born and my head being pliable. I stayed poker-faced but might have burst into laughter at some point: it was all going so absurdly. In the end I seem to have got my name down to start in two years' time. The only thing was the head foreman never mentioned Hitler and there was a war on.

April 1946, at fourteen, I was working in the shipyard and quite enjoying it. It was just one big playground to me: sneaking on to ships to see what they looked like. Many passenger liners had been converted into troopships and here they were back again for conversion back to passenger ships. There was also the captured German warships I might sneak onboard with lads of my own age, when the watchman happened to be in the lavatory. We knew he had a weak bladder and would keep watch on him. Then it was all *Achtung*, phoney German accents and a boy as Hitler threatening to blast Belfast with one of the ship's guns.

Though it was 1946, there were still a jumpiness in the atmosphere. Extra heavy armoured plating was still being put on the rear decks of oil tankers and other ships to take anti-aircraft guns. A ship's manager (usually bowler hat, neat suit, shirt and tie) asks a man where he's going with his tea can, when it's isn't the lunch break (dinner time) The man, a former soldier, aged about 25, seems to have had a fit and begins to rant and rave that—

"He had been prisoner of Japs and they couldn't stop him getting water!"

Everyone stopped work to watch the scene. They were now threatening to throw the manager into the tide if he dared sack him. He didn't.

Rules were very strict. If found sitting down, for example, it was instant dismissal. Caught smoking was also dismissal. To be sacked from the shipyard meant you would never be employed there again in your lifetime.

But not so strict in some ways: A manager of the Joiner's Shop was caught bringing out timber in a shipyard ambulance with the bell ringing as in emergency. He was in league with his head

storekeeper.

The storekeeper agrees to take the rap and gets 18 months in the Crumlin Road jail. A year later, with 6 months off for good behaviour, he is back in his job. The Unionist enclave was full of that—a mixture Unionism, Freemasonry and the Orange Order saw things right.

One old joiner who had made a bad blunder in his work, took out his pipe, lit it up, and sat down. He was sacked but not for making a blunder but for smoking and sitting down. He had rescued his reputation as a skilled tradesman.

Generally, as I have just written, the people of Northern Ireland, Catholic and Protestant, have lived under British influence for a 100 years. In the 1920s, we had radio with the crystal set. It was still being used, as I remember in the 1930s, by those who could afford this very contraption with its crystal and cat's whisker. Even post WW2, and you were 14, and wanted your own personal set for your bedroom and couldn't afford a radio (wireless), you bought the very cheap parts in the Smithfield Market in Belfast and made it yourself.

In the kitchen you listened to the old battery radio/wireless as a child and got *Children's Hour* from London, as you sat there in the countryside without electric and with outside dry lavatory, in the middle of Carryduff, County Down. The nights were jet black and the stars about on a clear night were wondrous. *Children's Hour* was the highlight of the day after school.

Within it was *Toy-Town*, which had the outdoors bereft of children while the programme ran. Catholic children also listened to it. Once a week there was *ITMA* (It's That Man Again), which featured Tommy Handley, the comedian, who seemed able to get his English humour to work on the population of Northern Ireland. Certainly most of the Catholic population of the North also listened to it. The programme was made up of disreputable characters, like the alcoholic former colonel or the Mrs Mop (cleaner) who always seen to be up to something with her boss.

(We also listened to the wartime German radio station run by William Joyce, Lord Haw Haw.)

The Belfast streets, and as well as farmhouses, rang with the chimes of Big Ben, again from London. It was the Nine o'clock News. If you were playing out in the countryside as a child, and were required to be home by 9pm and passed a farmhouse, then you usually heard those

chimes ring out and knew you would be late home and due for punishment.

Then there was *Music-While-You-Work* on radio again from London, which was played into the shipyard, aircraft factory and industrial complexes at 3.30 pm every day, with a different band each day. Companies like the Royal Opera Company or the Royal Ballet would visit industrial Belfast at lunchtime and put on a professional show. Nothing was too good for the workers during the war effort of WW2.

Meanwhile in the streets of Belfast you had a suspected IRA man gunned down and killed by a member of RUC, whose remarks were:

“I was more interested in his St Christopher bracelet than his wounds.”

As reported in the *Belfast Telegraph* of the time.

So there was no change there, WW2 or not. In post-WW2 in Belfast there were British films in British cinemas and mainly English acts in the Empire Theatre. English Professors dominated Queens University. Protestant academics wouldn't have liked this. They might declare themselves British but they weren't to be ignored. They were not of the crawling kind.

Belfast had its traditional industries, which were run by the native. But there were also new industries post WW2, which had their English administrators. Such a factory was the man-made industrial complex of Courtaulds, built immediately after WW2. It was just on the edge of Carrickfergus, in County Antrim, and dominated the town. It employed thousands, including workers from England and Wales. A new estate had been built not far from it with public money. The houses were dished out by the Northern Ireland Housing Association in the same manner as a borough council give out houses in England.

There was a guaranteed protected tenancy. It was also a Unionist Government experiment in social engineering. There were said to be an equal amount of Catholics there as Protestants. Every tenant had either a Catholic or a Protestant neighbour living beside them. My family moved there from Carryduff in 1950. The estate had the optimistic name of Sunnylands Estate. We lived in Sunnylands Avenue. Also living there we had a large English and Welsh section. The estate smelt of chemicals right into the rooms of the houses from the large factory. It was before the organisation of petitions. Anyway, so

many living on the estate there worked in the man-made fibre factory nothing much could be done about it. There were also problems inside the factory when locals realised they would never get promotion, that the English workers were getting all the foreman and supervisory jobs. It was mostly the Protestants who were protesting and they even led a strike which was not successful.

Because of that industrial complex the local paper become radicalised, Trade Unionism was on the up, and the local library stocked the works of Mao and Marx. Sectarianism in the town, that saw King William the Third land on the 14th of June, 1690, took a backseat. I, with others, managed to get a ten-member branch of

CPNI started.

My sister, who attended St Dominic's in West Belfast, was able to come home on the estate in her Catholic school uniform, without having to suffer any remarks.

Then, in the 1960s, it was all over. I visited Carrickfergus and the factory had been demolished, with green fields in its place. Elements on the Sunnylands Estate would begin to run pogroms against the Catholic tenants. The local Orange Lodge would be awash with union jacks. It had become a dangerous town. In many ways like the rest of Northern Ireland, much more dangerous that it had ever been before.

Wilson John Haire.
15 April 2020.

A Marginal Incident

The events in Derry and Belfast in August 1969 had a profoundly disorientating effect on political opinion in general. They seemed to be inexplicable. Athol St. attracted attention because its understanding of the Northern situation was not shocked by them. These events fitted in with what it had been saying before the event. It had stood apart from the agitations of the preceding year, regarding them as fundamentally misconceived.

For that reason, the attention of many strands of opinion were focussed on it for some years after August 1969—Irish and British, Nationalist and Unionist. With Fianna Fail alone we had no contact at all. By reflex action it rejected categorically the suggestion that the Ulster Plantation had undergone a national development of its own over the centuries and the proposal that the Constitution should be amended as a precondition of opening lines of discussion with it. The Taoiseach (Jack Lynch) said that Partition was the cause of the troubles in the North and that peace could only come after it was ended.

Fianna Fail was a self-sufficient, enclosed party. It was a managerial party. It had done its thinking, and its understanding of what was to be done was passed on from father to son in influential families whose influence came from having fought against the Treaty.

It was a weighty existential presence in the public life of the Free State. It was rumoured that De Valera had advised that, if it had policies, they should be kept under its hat and implemented op-

portunistically as the necessity for them became pressing.

It could outdo the pious Free Staters at being Catholic when required, but it held the moral ascendancy over the Hierarchy which had excommunicated it in the service of the Treaty and could carry through reforms disapproved of and stopped by the Hierarchy when others attempted them. But the North was entirely beyond its comprehension.

The first sign of thought that we noticed on this subject was Charles Haughey's opinion that "Northern Ireland was not a viable political entity". But we had no more contact with the Haughey tendency—if there was a tendency and not just the man himself—than with any other tendency.

The first—and only—contact we had with Fianna Fail was in 2007 when we were contacted, out of the blue by an adviser to the Taoiseach saying that the Taoiseach would like to launch a book of ours.

Brendan Clifford was at the time writing a book about the *Irish Press*. The *Irish Press* was the Fianna Fail daily newspaper published from 1931 to 1995. It was funded by public subscription. Its founding Editor was Frank Gallagher, who had been active in the War of Independence, and before that as a journalist on the Cork Free Press, the paper of the movement that broke Redmondism in Co. Cork in the 1910 Elections.

Gallagher was prosecuted on a charge of seditious libel in January 1932, in a Military Tribunal set up in 1931, under

an 18th century British law.

The charge was that on 22nd December 1931 the Irish Press published "*a seditious libel concerning the Government of Saorstát Éireann, and intended to bring the administration of the law into disrepute and vilify the Government of Saorstát Éireann.*"

In his book on the *Irish Press*, Clifford summed up the Defence position as follows:

"Fianna Fail was committed to changing the character of the state by peaceful methods, but while awaiting its opportunity it refused to condemn the IRA out of hand. It held that the wilful refusal of the Government to engage in any Republican reform of the Free State system made continuing IRA activity inevitable."

The Tribunal found against the *Irish Press*, as it had to do under the law under which the Government had chosen to prosecute, but, seeing the way the wind was blowing, the sentence was only a token fine. The Free State Government fell in the Election the following month.

The book consists chiefly of circumstantial accounts of the 1927 Elections, the Military Tribunal hearings, and the 1932 fall of the Free State system.

Clifford had understood for more than thirty years that anything he wrote would be suppressed as far as possible by the Dublin and Cork Establishments, partly because of its content and partly because of his description of the Ulster Protestant community in 1969. He had accepted that as being how things were, and had gone on with producing books that would never be seen in Cork bookshops because of the hostility of the University which was a major economic power as far as book-buying was concerned.

That condition had become part of his routine. But he agreed to take part in launching a book along with the Taoiseach, though he did not expect that it would ever actually happen.

The text of the book was sent to the Taoiseach's adviser chapter by chapter by chapter. The book was completed. Against all probabilities the Taoiseach's adviser said it was fine.

It made no sense. The book, though it ended with 1932, went entirely against the 'modernising' anti-Haughey spirit of the time. Haughey had come and gone. He had constructed his own party within the Party, and had brought Ireland into the epoch of Finance Capitalism without jettisoning the traditional Republican medium, and he was being demonised again.

He is not mentioned in the book. It was

not written under his influence in any way. But, if launched by the Taoiseach (Bertie Ahern), it would have been regarded as a regression towards Haugheyism.

The book was printed. The Taoiseach's adviser became uncontactable for arranging the details of the launch. Our contact with Fianna Fail ended. We had not sought it, and we soon forgot that it had ever happened.

We did not waste effort trying to find out what it was all about. A Taoiseach has

many advisers. We assume that somebody put his foot down firmly.

The book was published by the Auburn Historical Society under the title, *Fianna Fail, The Irish Press, And The Decline Of The Free State*. With that our contact with Fianna Fail began and ended.

Fianna Fáil, The Irish Press And The Decline Of The Free State, by Brendan Clifford. Index. 172pp. €15, £12 (post-free in Ireland and Britain)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR · LETTERS TO THE EDITOR · LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Political Fog?

[The following letter has been received. It is unsigned.]

The Editorial entitled Sinn Féin And The Fog Of Party Politics unfortunately includes a number of unsupported claims. It is not meaningful to claim that current political stances on the peace process or on Sinn Féin participation in government make Fianna Fáil a pro-Treaty Party, or, in other words, to try and interpret them by reference to the ideological framework of old divisions.

The peace process was based not on an agreement about the legitimacy of the IRA campaign, but on placing Northern Ireland politics and wider relationships on a different footing for the future. As I pointed out in my February column in the *Irish Catholic*, it is not Fianna Fáil's attitude to the Treaty that has changed, but the attitude to Sinn Féin compared to earlier key stages in the peace process.

As for the far-fetched claim that my influence turned Fianna Fáil into a pro-Treaty party, which it neither is nor was, I attach a copy of a speech setting out my position at a Trinity College Philosophical Society in 2015, opposing the motion that 'This House Would Have Signed The Treaty', giving five reasons, first in summary and then in detail.

Martin Mansergh, 30 March 2020

Philosophical Society Speech

"Remarks by Dr. Martin Mansergh in a University Philosophical Society Debate, opposing the motion 'This House Would Have Signed the Treaty', Trinity College Dublin, Thursday, 12 March 2015, at 8.00pm approx.

I would like to thank the Phil. For their invitation. It brought back to mind the first time I participated in a debate of this Society in 1987, marking the 50th anniversary of the Irish Constitution, with the late Michael O'Leary, former Labour Party leader.

It is generally accepted by historians that this State derives from the Treaty, so, assuming we value our independence, why would we not have signed it? Moreover, unlike tonight, the atmosphere at the time was very tense and highly charged, and the Irish delegates who had huge responsibility were under immense and conflicting pressures, so no one today can say with certainty what they might have done, if they had been in Hans Place, Sir John Lavery's studio and the equivalent of what we would call today the Irish delegation room, or Downing Street that night.

To my mind, there are five reasons why the Irish delegates should not have signed the Treaty on 6 December 1921.

The first is that they had promised their cabinet colleagues, only a couple of days previously, not to do so without further reference back.

The second is that by signing the Treaty they allowed the British to split the independence movement, having already split the island.

The third reason was that immediate signature was being demanded under threat of immediate and terrible war, and treaties signed under duress are strictly speaking invalid in international law.

The fourth reason is that the status of the Irish Free State to come into being exactly one year later was not based on democratic principles of consent or self-

determination but on imperial concession described euphemistically on the British side as 'dominion home rule'.

The fifth and most important reason was that the Treaty put forward a sham united demanded on the Irish side coupled with a deceptive device, the Boundary Commission, which led not only to long and difficult decades of Anglo-Irish relations, but to conflict in Northern Ireland, after discriminatory and permanent one-party majority rule, which is not democracy, was eventually challenged on the streets by the Civil Rights Movement in the late 1960s.

I will now elaborate a little on each of those reasons. No Ministers or negotiating team in virtually any country today would dream of signing a major Treaty in opposition to the known wishes of their leader or going outside an agreed cabinet position without first consulting back. The telephone existed in 1921 but was not used. Now I noted that in an Irish Times report of 6 March 2015 that Finance Minister Michael Noonan, reflecting on the Eurozone Finance Ministers travaux with their Greek colleague, quipped that "if Michael Collins had a mobile phone we would still be under the British", implying that he was right to cut the knot. Lloyd George was a brilliant and theatrical negotiator. If Griffith and Collins, neither of whom were subtle negotiators, felt the Treaty had to be signed, they should have gone home and made that case, even if that meant a political crisis, and if necessary brought back de Valera with them. One can understand the view that people did not want a resumption of the war, and that Ireland was militarily vulnerable, but the delegation should not have acted unilaterally. The reality rarely commented upon is that the Treaty brought to a head an increasingly bitter internal political power struggle, and saw de Valera ousted by Griffith and Collins. A proof that it was not purely ideological was the stance of de Valera's critic in America, the old Fenian John Devoy. He denounced the Treaty at first, because he thought it had de Valera's support, but reversed position and supported it when he learnt that de Valera was opposed to it.

The only people to feel a sense of triumph over the Treaty were Lloyd George and his friends. He had split the independence movement, and now the British could hand over to one side the task of bringing the other to heel as an enforcer, severely weakening the country that would become independent in the midst of civil war. In the first half of 1922, the ever pugnacious Churchill as Dominions Secretary advised by the imperial ideologue Lionel Curtis vetoed every compromise, and pushed Collins and Griffith into taking on militar-

ily their opponents, supplying the guns that bombarded the Four Courts, including, by one account, a gunner.

As Lloyd George laid out in a letter of 13 August 1921 to de Valera, regarding the Irish claim that Britain should acknowledge the right of Ireland to secede from her allegiance to the King, "No such right can ever be acknowledged by us". On 7 September, he referred to the principle of consent as the foundation of British constitutional development, but said he could not accept an interpretation of that principle which would commit them to any demands they should present, such as setting up a republic and repudiating the Crown. As we know, de Valera, without much republican support, was prepared to agree what he called "external association" with the British Commonwealth. A generation later, beginning with India in April 1949, Britain dropped its opposition to republics within the Commonwealth, just at the point Ireland was headed for the exit. Lloyd George, who depended on the Tories, had little room for manoeuvre on this, and it was an issue that would be sorted out over time. The Irish Free State was a dominion only in name not in sentiment, with that status reduced to the bare minimum post-1932 before the passing of the External Relations Act of 1936.

The worst failure of the Treaty related to Northern Ireland, where it emphatically did not provide the freedom to achieve freedom. On unity, on which Redmond had been so strongly criticized, the delegation was looking for a fig leaf, a placebo, a face-saver, or in the words of the diary of Tom Jones, Lloyd George's private secretary, after a conversation with Griffith "a conditional recognition of Irish unity, however shadowy". Like Redmond before them, Sinn Féin let Fermanagh and Tyrone slip through their fingers, where there was a clear Nationalist majority, for which, as Lloyd George put it privately, no one in Great Britain was prepared to die. When power would be transferred to a nominal 32-county Irish Free State, Northern Ireland would be allowed to opt out, which it did the following day. The Boundary Commission, which was only ever going to recommend very minor two-way adjustments, allowed the pro-Treaty side to believe or at any rate to claim that large areas would be transferred, even making Northern Ireland unviable, while the British side privately assured Unionists that Northern Ireland would for all practical purposes stay as it was. The biggest failure of first Redmondites and then Sinn Féin was that they did not make Unionists face up to the rigorous consequences of partition, which was that no county or city contiguous to the

proposed 6-county border which had a clear Nationalist majority should be incorporated in the excluded area, subsequently Northern Ireland. That would have left a lot of Unionists on the wrong side of the border, which would at least have given them pause for thought.

None of this is to justify the series of mistakes made in 1922 both by civilians and military, by Free Staters and Republicans, and by the British Government as a third party. A collective cabinet decision to accept or reject the Treaty without being confronted with a *fait accompli* was required, and the delegates should have insisted on that, which would have left Lloyd George with no basis for carrying out his immediate threats.

Some Editorial Comments

Martin Mansergh's *Address on the Treaty* was entirely unknown to us when in the April issue we made the comment to which he objects. If the text of the *Address* was circulated to the press, it did not come to the *Irish Political Review* and we did not notice an account of it in the *Irish Times*, which Fianna Fail has accorded the status of the national newspaper of record.

The content of that *Address* is in the main in accordance with the criticism of the Treaty published by the *Irish Political Review* over decades—except for the portion dealing with Partition and the North.

If we exaggerated Mr. Mansergh's influence on the direction of Fianna Fail, we were not the only ones to do so. We read in a recent Oxford University book:

"I remember in my early days in the Northern Ireland Office having very difficult discussions with Irish officials, and observing them, and trying to get them to face up to the consent principle properly. Not just this stuff about: "Well we know it would only happen if everyone consented". We wanted to get them to accept, and say, that, as a matter of principle, not merely political reality, it would be wrong to have a united Ireland except with consent. And they wouldn't.

"I think Martin Mansergh played a very significant role in that because he went further than the joint declaration and propounded the principle that, once a country had been divided, it can only be brought together by consent on both sides. I think he completely changed the ideology of Fianna Fail by a sort of stealth" (*Negotiating A Settlement In Northern Ireland, 1969-2019* by J. Coakley and J. Todd, OUP 2020, p289).

This is the view of Sir Quentin Thomas, a senior British civil servant assigned to the Northern Ireland Office in 1988, who

became its Political Director in 1991.

Sir Quentin, we assume, had extensive contact with Mr. Mansergh in the course of the process of negotiations, and was also supplied with information by the British Intelligence service. We know Mansergh only through his letters and articles in the press. If our view was not reinforced by Sir Quentin—whose business it was to know such things—we might think we had exaggerated his influence because he was the only leading Fianna Failer who contributed regularly to discussions in the press,

"The peace process was based not on agreement about the legitimacy of the IRA campaign, but on placing Northern Ireland politics under wider relationships and on a different footing", writes Mansergh.

That "*different footing*" in the internal life of Northern Ireland consisted of recognizing people, who had hitherto been regarded officially as the godfathers of murder, and on whom the rhetoric of disgusting abuse had been exhausted by successive Secretaries of State, as responsible leaders of the community, suitable to be members of the devolved Government. In Athol St. we used to wonder if there was a Committee whose job it was to come up with ever more disgusting similes for the Secretaries of State to use.

"Murderers" were released so that their "*Godfathers*" could enter constitutional politics as leaders who had established their constitutionality through war and had negotiated a conclusion of it that was advantageous to the cause for which it had been fought. This is not how outbreaks of organised crime are usually dealt with!

There was of course no formal acknowledgement by Whitehall that it had set up a system of Government in the Six Counties which caused a War that it was unable to win, but it was tacitly acknowledged by it that that was the case.

Where it was not acknowledged was in governing circles in Dublin. The Fianna Fail leadership in particular still seems to hold to the view that the Republicans responsible for War and Peace in the North were criminals, and are not admissible to the Government of the state against which they did not make war.

We cannot quite follow the sense of this statement:

"It is not meaningful to claim that current political stances on the peace process or on Sinn Fein participation in government make Fianna Fail a pro-Treaty Party, or, in other words, to try and interpret them by reference to the ideological framework of old divisions."

It was not Fianna Fail's stance on the

Peace Process that led us to conclude that it had become Treatyite, but statements from Fianna Fail sources that Irish statehood was founded on the Treaty.

As to the "*ideological framework of old divisions*", they served the country well enough after Fianna Fail broke through Treatyite obstacles and came to power as an anti-Treaty Party, leaving Fine Gael to be the Treaty Party. It is the rejection of that "*ideological framework*" by Fianna Fail that led to an election that was unable to return a Party to govern.

The Labour Party, back in the days when it thought it saw a great future ahead for itself, argued that the Civil War party division was irrational, and expected it to give way under this criticism and make way for clear class politics. It did not happen, and we did not expect it to happen.

One of the most difficult things about constructing a functional democratic system of representative Parliamentary Government is the devising of a system of party division that works. Party systems planned according to a formula tend to fail. The party systems that pioneered this development and showed it was possible came from Civil Wars in the two major instances—Britain and the USA. The Tories and Whigs were Cavaliers and Puritans, and the Republicans and Democrats were Yankee capitalists and Plantation slave owners. They were not planned. They were just there. And similarly with Fine Gael and Fianna Fail, Treatyites and Anti-Treatyites.

It was not Britain's intention to give the Irish state a party system when it conceded formal Dominion status in a way that was designed to break up Sinn Fein and then insisted that Collins should start the 'Civil War' against opponents of the Treaty, but that is what it did. The 'Civil War' did not arise out of any conflict within Sinn Fein that was waiting to erupt. It was a forced development brought about by a credible British threat of re-conquest by Boer War methods. But divisions forced from outside worked well enough as a party division. It was Fianna Fail reneging on its role within it, as established by De Valera, that brought about the present three-party stand-off.

Dr. Mansergh begins his statement to the Trinity Philosophical Society thus: "*It is generally accepted by historians that this State derives from the Treaty...*"

If there was no Irish State before the Treaty, who did Britain make a Treaty with?

Britain did not recognize the State with which it made the Treaty, but it was there. It had been there for three years. The Treaty did not create a State. What it did was enact

a regime change in a State that had been established without its approval.

For the rest, there is nothing of substance to disagree with in Dr. Mansergh's Trinity Address, other than his view of the North.

It is certain that, with regard to 'Northern Ireland', the Treaty "*did not provide the freedom to achieve freedom*". But in Northern Ireland there was no general idea of what freedom was. Two-thirds of the population saw it as one thing while a third saw it as a very different thing.

It is indisputable that the Northern set-up gave rise to "*discrimination and permanent one-party majority rule, which is not democracy*". But that was because what was at issue in Northern Ireland was never the election of a party to govern the state.

Northern Ireland was not a State. The State was the United Kingdom, and Northern Ireland was an entirely subordinate region of it, though excluded from its political system.

All that was ever at issue in Northern Ireland politics was whether the 6 Counties should remain within the UK or secede to the Free State/Republic. There was always a clear majority in favour of remaining within the UK and accepting the legislation enacted by the British parties.

But that was not an arrangement desired by the 6 County majority. In the 1918 Election the Ulster Unionist policy was that the 6 Counties should be excluded from the Home Rule Bill and remain simply a region of the British state. The Northern Ireland system was imposed by the British Government against the wishes of the Ulster Unionist Party.

If the Six Counties had not been obliged to conduct a devolved government in exclusion from state politics, it would not have had one-party rule, and the conflicts of the devolved system would not have produced the political materials which sustained a long war.

Dublin Governments of all complexions preferred this Northern Ireland system, which generated irreconcilable communal antagonism, to a return of the 6 Counties to the democratic system of the state.

Partition need not have been a 6 County division. Redmond might have negotiated it down, but in order to do that he would have had to acknowledge that it was unavoidable, short of bringing the Ulster Protestant community to heel by force. The area of Partition had been on the political agenda in his time. It was off the agenda by 1921.
