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## Ukraine: outcome of war takes shape

The West-Ukrainian nation and nation state are being fashioned before our eyes. It had until recently been a precarious and fragile development. The Russian Federation on the other hand is a construct fashioned on a very different basis, one reminiscent of the Habsburg Empire, incorporating a multitude of autonomous regions, including 22 republics and other districts and entities defined by their dominant ethnic component, with varying degrees of political and administrative home rule, national languages and national anthems. Few, apart from Chechnya and some elements in the volatile Caucasus and Central Asian regions, have striven to break from the Federation.

Ukraine struggled for a decade after 1991 as a type of bridge between the expanding and homogenising EU-led structure to its West and the weakening Russian Federation to its East.

That bridging has now been well and truly ruptured. As long as it functioned satisfactorily for Russia and in particular did not disrupt Russia's position on the Black Sea – its only “warm port” outlet and foothold in Europe—Ukraine's peculiar frontier status was acceptable to Moscow.

But from the 1990s, US meddling was concertedly directed towards unbalancing this arrangement and tipping Ukraine into the West. For the US State Department, under a succession of Presidents, the prize was very big. “*Colour revolutions*” and a western orientation were assiduously nourished and encouraged with the goal of precipitating a complete break with Russia.

As the American Establishment journal, *Foreign Affairs*, blurted out earlier this year, “*Europe*” for three hundred years has essentially been engaged in a great push to eject Russia from itself. The Soviet Union had massively expanded the Ukrainian SSR's territory to the East and South to dilute the potential of nationalist tendencies. That

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## One Thing And Another!

Northern Ireland is being governed without a Government again. Things are normal. The Government of the State, in whose affairs the Northern Ireland region of the state has never played any part, provides all the essentials for the life of the citizens, whether or not there is a Northern Ireland Government in being. The only business of the Northern Ireland system of self-government is to dispute over the presence of the Six Counties within the British state.

This arrangement of things was set up by the British Parliament a hundred and one years ago by means of the *Government of Ireland Act, 1920*. It was confirmed a hundred years ago by the Treaty made between the British Government and a section of the Sinn Fein Party which undertook to establish a Government of Southern Ireland on British authority, and set

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## Non-Alignment Now!

We are told by The Irish Times (15 November) that Taoieach Micheál Martin has repeatedly insisted that “Ireland's official policy is to be militarily non-aligned. We are, however, not politically non-aligned”. This was emphasised during in a Dáil confrontation with People Before Profit TD Richard Boyd Barrett over the Irish

Government's position on State neutrality. Boyd Barrett claimed there was “further evidence of the Government trying to soften up public opinion to abandoning Ireland's neutrality”.

If Ireland is “non-aligned”, then why is it not a member of the Non-Aligned Movement?

The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) represents, after the United Nations, the largest international organisation in the world. It accounts for about 55% of the global population. The Non-aligned Movement was formed by a number of states half a century ago that did not want to formally align themselves with or against any major power bloc, but wanted to remain militarily and politically neutral.

Its origins lie in the struggle against  
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Due to pressure of space, the Index for 2022 has been held to the next issue

massive expansion had meant incorporating historically Russian ethnic territories and virtually the entire coast of the Black Sea and Sea of Azov.

The panic in the EU at the consequences of the geopolitical game in which it had allowed itself become a tool in 2014 is now well known, as is the immortal recorded response of US Secretary of State Victoria Nuland to these EU realisations that a powder-keg was deliberately being lit. Her memorable words were “*Fuck the EU*”.

Defining Ukraine and the Ukrainian nation has now become an existential requirement for Europe, including Russia, and essential to future European security.

The intellectual development of Ukrainian nationalism began soon after the late 18th century great “*Partition of Poland*” between Germany, Austria and Russia. It developed in the Province of Galicia, and its ire was directed primarily against Polish domination by the Habsburg area of

the partition. The western part of Galicia incorporated Krakow and extended well to the west of it, while its eastern (“*Ruthenian*”) part extended east of, and was centred on, Lvov. Krakow was indisputably Polish but Lvov (Lemberg), despite Polish dominance, had a large “*Ruthenian*” population.

Uprisings and political reforms within the Habsburg system, as it itself evolved in the emerging 19th century world, had their counterparts in Ruthenian rebellions in reaction to the Polish rebellions of the 1830s, and as part of the Europe-wide wave of national and social revolutions of 1848. The Habsburg monarchy responded by granting increasing local autonomy and representation in many of its territories, including Galicia, which, however, remained Polish-dominated. Ukrainian nationalists sought an end to Polish domination, and separation and autonomy for a “*Ruthenian Ukrainian*” province within Habsburg’s multi-national system. The Ukrainian national identity

also stirred within the Russian Empire, with Lvovian influence nurturing its spread in the Kiev region where linguistic, cultural and religious separatism from Russia was also growing.

The *Brest-Litovsk Treaty* of March 1918 between Germany and the new Soviet Union, then in its very precarious stage of coming into being, is today forgotten or remembered only vaguely as some kind of punitive and extractive seizure by Germany of vast regions of Russian Empire territory.

As Europe descended into a chaos of break-up following the German collapse just six months later, Brest-Litovsk was soon no more than a historical curiosity. But it had been a very substantial and potentially stabilising affair, providing an orderly framework for the evolution of a system of states in Eastern Europe.

At the time of the Treaty, Germany was still, despite Britain’s food blockade enforced by the Royal Navy, supreme on the battlefields of East and West. Both the German and Soviet negotiating delegations regarded the Treaty as a long-term settlement of borders in Europe’s eastern area. Minorities in both camps—whether Soviet revolutionary expansionists or German Imperialists—were overruled.

Brest-Litovsk established the Kingdom of Poland, consisting of the former Polish provinces of Russia centred on Warsaw. Secure boundaries were also agreed for the Baltic States and Finland.

The agreed Republic of Ukraine established under Brest-Litovsk would begin east of Lvov, as Galicia was to remain an autonomous province of the Habsburg state, and extend east to the Dniepr river, with Kiev as the capital. This eastern border—far to the west of that of today’s Ukraine—corresponded to the centuries-long border that had divided the Polish-Lithuanian from the Russian Empire. Samuel Huntington in the 1990s described it as a rational “*civilisational*” boundary and warned against calling into question its profound historical validity. The first-ever Ukrainian State, founded at Brest-Litovsk, was accorded a section of the Black Sea coast to ensure its viability, including the all-important port city of Odessa, despite its majority Russian population.

The Treaty explicitly declared all of these arrangements an enduring settlement of East European State boundaries.

The leaders of the new Soviet State were divided over Brest-Litovsk. In this division, Trotsky first emerged as a significant

geopolitical figure. He led the opposition to accepting the Treaty, demanding that the Soviet State keep its options open through retaining events in a military state of flux. He summed up his position in a slogan "*neither war nor peace*". Lenin won out by convincing a his Government of the need for of the Treaty to enable the new Soviet state consolidate.

Trotsky made much of the "*punitive*" terms of the territorial and financial provisions of the Treaty, and western propagandist have liberally borrowed Trotsky's arguments ever since to justify the far more draconian terms of the later Versailles Treaty. But Russia proper lost very little Russian territory and the reparation payments were formulated as restitution to Germany for German assets appropriated by the Soviet Union in nationalising its economy. It was a sum quite concisely calculated and agreed.

A similar seizure of US assets by the Soviet State was the ostensible *casus* for the interventionist army the US sent to Russia and for its long-term refusal to recognise the Soviet Government.

Brest-Litovsk freed up hundreds of thousands of German troops for transfer to the West. The German "Spring Offensive" of 1918 in France was expected, including by the British, to achieve a decisive breakthrough and force a similarly negotiated peace settlement in the West. It was British panic in response to this prospect that precipitated the conscription crisis in Ireland. The Irish refusal to participate in it swept the movement for Irish national separation forward. The German Spring Offensive in France was only thwarted by the hurried arrival of the first large contingents of US forces onto the western battlefield.

The Polish, Ukrainian and Baltic states established under Brest-Litovsk are today usually dismissed as intended to be mere German "*puppet states*". This is a retrospective view which distorts the realities of the time, when the new entities were widely welcomed by the leaders of the nationalities involved. The new entities were no less "*puppet states*" than the east European states which Britain and France created at Versailles in 1919, which French Foreign Minister Poincaré described as a "*cordon sanitaire*" controlled by them to ensure against a German revival or Soviet expansion. Is the status of today's former Soviet but now western-aligned East European states really all that different in this respect from either of these arrangements?

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## An Oppotunity For RTE!

The *Derry Journal*, 29th November 2022 reports that SDLP Leader Colum Eastwood has warned that the cuts to staffing and programming announced for BBC *Radio Foyle* are the beginning of a move to phase out the station, which he said cannot be allowed to proceed.

Derry's MP was speaking after the BBC announced the axing of the *Radio Foyle Breakfast Show* and hourly news bulletins, with a number of staff jobs at risk.

Mr. Eastwood said the station provides an important service for people in the north west and that its long-term future must be protected, adding:

"This decision by the BBC top brass is nothing more than a shameful attempt to begin to shut down BBC Radio Foyle by stealth".

The BBC is powerful, practically a monopoly. The independent local radio stations in the North play a lot of pop music, to promote advertising to certain limited age sectors, but do not provide news of local personalities, sports, births, deaths and the like. The routine of community life.

For now *Radio Foyle* performs this function, but only to a very limited extent. And now that the issue of its withdrawal has come up, it may be time to consider a proper replacement.

Like the other Free State Counties, Donegal has a fairly good local radio service, *Highland Radio*. But the North West as a whole could be doing with a decent regional radio station.

With the BBC apparently pulling out, perhaps RTÉ could step into the breach, as a Good Friday Agreement cross-border outreach measure?

Pat Muldowney

## Labour and the House of Lords

Keir Starmer's Labour Party has proposed abolition of the House of Lords, but has not indicated how a second House should be formed. Perhaps the Irish model for the Senate, a legacy from Eamon de Valera, could be an inspiration. It is representative of the society in vocational terms. There are 60 Senators:

Eleven nominated by the Taoiseach.

Six elected by the graduates of certain Irish universities:

Three by graduates of the University of Dublin.

Forty-three elected from five special panels of nominees (known as vocational panels) by an electorate consisting of TDs, outgoing Senators and Members of City and County Councils. Nomination is restrictive for the panel seats with only Oireachtas members and designated nominating bodies entitled to nominate. Each of the five panels consists, in theory, of individuals possessing special knowledge of, or experience in, one of five specific fields. In practice the nominees are party members, often, though not always, failed or aspiring Dáil candidates. The five panels are:

Seven seats on the Administrative Panel: Public administration and social services (including the voluntary sector).

Eleven seats on the Agricultural Panel: Agriculture and the fisheries.

Five seats on the Cultural and Educational Panel: Education, the arts, the Irish language and Irish culture and literature.

Nine seats on the Industrial and Commercial Panel: Industry and commerce (including engineering and architecture).

Eleven seats on the Labour Panel: Labour (organised or otherwise).

David Morrison



But in the case of Ukraine, Versailles came too late for the West. Despite Anglo-French interventionist armies dispatched to the region following the German withdrawal, the dominant Ukrainian nationalist strand accepted the vastly enlarged territory promised it by the Soviet regime, and integrated as an autonomous “*Soviet Socialist Republic*” into the USSR. Poland seized East and West Galicia, and others such as Romania also acquired slices. Under the Berlin-Moscow Pact of 1939, East Galicia was declared part of the Soviet sphere of influence, which it occupied a year later.

West Ukrainian nationalists allied with Nazi Germany in World War 2 in the hope of carving out or restoring the 1918 Ukrainian State with the addition of Polish and Russian provinces. Germany had been active in the 1930s nurturing Ukrainian rebel elements both in exile and covertly within the Ukrainian SSR. Between the wars, the Polish state had several times thwarted Ukrainian rebel organisations operating within its borders. These rebel Ukrainian elements in both Poland and Ukraine were the lead forces in the nationalist development of 1941-45, and their remnants were re-organised by the CIA after that, sustaining an impressive insurgency in the forests of the Ukraine up to the mid-1950s, along with an intellectual/political exile movement.

Many more Ukrainians, especially from the eastern areas of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, formed a formidable cohort of the Soviet Army and were to the fore not only in the liberation of Ukraine from the end of 1943, but all the way to the final battle of Berlin, led by Ukrainian-born Generals. It is monuments to these Ukrainian liberators and their graveyards which are now being systematically dynamited across the territory controlled by today’s Kyiv state.

Western Ukrainian nationalism is today a powerful and assertive force. It has developed a historical narrative which is a mixture of truth and fiction and these views are uncritically relayed to European consumers as historical reality, through media such as the EU Commission’s propaganda outlet *Euronews*.

The story is that Ukrainians have been victims of centuries of Russian “*colonisation*” and “*imperialism*”, but are now finally, with western support, throwing off that yoke. The massive contribution of Ukrainians in the Red Army to the defeat of Nazi Germany is being quietly deleted

from national memory. *Der Spiegel* came to the fore in the re-telling of the story. Hitler’s *Operation Barbarossa* became the “*Nazi invasion of Ukraine*” and it initially called Putin’s invasion “*a war of extermination*” (the term heretofore reserved for Hitler’s one). But that characterisation proved a step too far for some who became queasy at the sinister comparison, and *Spiegel* has retreated to now calling it just “*Putin’s war of aggression*”.

Among the claims made by Ukrainian nationalists is that the Famine of 1932-33 in Ukraine was a conscious and wilful act of “*genocide*” against the Ukrainian people. A cross-party motion recognising this “*genocide*” (“*Holodomor*”) has been passed unanimously by the German *Bundestag*, to rank alongside the Holocaust and the alleged Armenian Genocide. Presumably this will be followed by criminalisation of “*Holodomor-denial*”. The Wikipedia description of it will certainly require editing, as it currently falls short of such a totalitarian certainty:

“The Holodomor, also known as the Terror-Famine or the Great Famine, was a man-made famine in Soviet Ukraine from 1932 to 1933 that killed millions of Ukrainians. The Holodomor was part of the wider Soviet famine of 1932–1933 which affected the major grain-producing areas of the country.”

The leadership of the Soviet Union, which famously included many figures of Ukrainian, Georgian and other non-Russian backgrounds, resolved in the late 1920s on a dramatic industrialisation plan. The USSR, said Stalin, a Georgian, would have to achieve industrially in 10-15 years what it had taken England 200 years to accomplish, though hopefully at a lower human cost. If the USSR did not succeed in this, he warned, it would fall prey to European Imperialism, as indeed happened just ten years later.

But within a year of the plan being launched, farmers across the prosperous grain-producing south of the USSR, way beyond the Ukrainian border, who formed a social class of considerable power, rebelled at the cost-level price-caps the State imposed in the compulsory sale of their grain to feed the new cities being created at break-neck speed. (This is not entirely dissimilar to the production-cost price-caps the West is currently attempting to impose for Russian energy.) The resulting grain-seizures, without which the cities and their new industries faced

collapse, ultimately, in association with other factors, led to famine across the southern agricultural belt, including, though far from confined to, Ukraine. Of the 3-4 millions of victims, perhaps a half were Ukrainian.

Western intellectuals of a moral bent vent much spleen on Stalin and all his works. It is never considered for a moment what the outcome of a farmer victory might have been. The humanist communist and later dissident novelist, Lev Kopelev, recounted in his memoirs how as a Komsomol activist he had idealistically headed out from the Ukrainian city where he lived with teams of other Young Communists to participate in the seizure of grain being hidden, destroyed or sold on the black market by the “*Kulaks*”, so as to save the mortally-threatened cities. It was only in retrospect decades later that he came to understand the ‘horrendous’ consequences of what he had been involved in, as at the time he regarded it as having been an existential necessity.

The current process of “*de-colonisation*” in Ukraine includes official State campaigns of “*de-Sovietisation*” and “*de-Russification*”. Despite up to forty per cent of Ukrainians using Russian in their daily affairs, that language has now been banned in official transactions and all traces of Russian cultural influence are being eradicated. Its status as a second language has been removed from the State, schools and libraries. Streets named after Russian poets, including Ukrainian-born ones, are being renamed. Instead of Pushkin there is now “*Queen Elizabeth 2 Street*”, named after the deceased monarch of Ukrainian nationalism’s most ardent Western advocate. Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* has been banned for “*glorifying the Russian army*” and—though not without some embarrassment for Kyiv—more enthusiastic city councils, such as that in Vinnitsa, have been honouring WW2-era nationalists instead. Despite a US-managed PR make-over, crack regiments of the Ukrainian forces are often photographed still sporting WW2-era SS-inspired insignia.

The viable Ukrainian nation state, if fate should allow it survive, is one which has already defined itself as cleansed of its Russian aspects and, inevitably, territories.

At the cutting end of this spectrum, leaders of major Opposition Parties have been arrested and charged with treason and all media centralised under Government control. Two months ago, the city

of Mikailev was shut down to outsiders for three days while police carried out a “*purification drive*” to root out “*collaborators*”. Hundreds have been purged from Government bodies. The West has viewed these events approvingly, though never following up on exactly what they had entailed.

While seven million Ukrainians have fled westward, up to three million have also fled eastward, to Russia. The German magazine, *Der Spiegel*, which has been to the fore in radicalising German politics towards a complete break with Russia, still features as its illustration above its daily “*war reports*” a photograph of heroic civilian resisters throwing petrol bombs at the “*invaders*”. While there was some of this in the early stages of the skirmishes around Kyiv, the conflict has never taken on the form of such a popular resistance movement. But the notion of a heroic “*resistance*” continues to be disseminated in the west. There have been car bombs and assassinations of “*collaborationist*” officials in Russian-occupied areas, activities which when practised by the Provisional IRA were denounced as acts of unparalleled “*depravity*”—but here are the acts of brave “*partisans*”. The first car bomb, in an occupied southern city months ago, killed soldiers and relief workers distributing food.

The Ukrainian State is currently run by a political-military Junta, or Oligarchy. This is understandable and efficient in a time of war, and too much should not be made of it. Before the limited Russian invasion, Ukraine was classified by US NGO, *Transparency International*, as the most corrupt state in Europe, and the EU envisaged the need for a thirty-year transition period of arduous reform to adjust the state and its economy towards EU “*standards*”.

It was in this State that Zelenskyy, a popular TV comedian, became President. He was promoted by a media mogul named Kolomoisky, who had created and financed Zelensky’s TV show and then his presidential campaign. Zelensky, of Russian-speaking Jewish background from Kryvyi Rih (Krivoi Rog), a large heavy-industry city in the south east, north of Zapparashe, was revealed in the *Panama Papers* as a having become a multi-millionaire in his first year as President, with financial assets in Caribbean tax havens and several properties in western countries. This was before the West transformed him into a symbol of heroic democratic resistance. He has since fallen out with Kolomoisky, who has emigrated to Israel.

Zelenskyy had been elected President of Ukraine in 2019 on a surge of support strongest in the centre, east and south of the country—precisely the areas least hostile to Russia. He easily beat his predecessor, Piotr Poroshenko, a radical west-Ukrainian nationalist supported in the Lviv region, on the promise of reconciling east and west Ukraine, ending the War in the Donbas and balancing Russian and EU-oriented Ukrainian tendencies by implementing the *Minsk 2* accords of 2015.

None of this occurred, of course. Poroshenko recently revealed that those Franco-German facilitated Agreements had been a cynical “*holding operation*” which he had no intention of implementing, and which were used as a breathing space while Ukraine’s armies, battered and facing defeat in 2015, were regrouped and extensively re-organised, equipped and trained up under semi-covert NATO direction. The plan was for a lightning offensive to retake the Donbas and even Crimea as soon as circumstances allowed. Merkel and Macron’s greatest failure, as they pursued their fantasy of an “*autonomous*” EU foreign and security policy, was in refusing to act to ensure the implementation of the Minsk Accords in which they had originally invested so much, but which the US and Britain had obstinately opposed. That the West is led, or rather ordered about, by its victorious WW2 US-UK component has rarely been more patently demonstrated.

It is unclear how sincere Zelenskyy was in his political programme of reconciliation and peace, but it is clear that he rapidly abandoned that platform following his election. The army had been discredited in the Donbas, suspected of containing many officers with Russian-leaning sympathies. The cutting edge of the fighting of 2014–15 had been shouldered by a series of extreme right-wing or nationalist formations created in western Ukraine for the purpose and financed privately by a number of oligarchs. They never formed part of the army, but operated under the command of the Ministry of Internal Security. These units also featured prominently in the early stages of the current war as a stop-gap before a genuine mass army was successfully mobilised. It is clear that these private armies made it impossible for Zelenskyy to do other than follow the agenda already set out by Poroshenko.

That the Ukrainian State, in whatever form it emerges from this conflict—though without its Russian part—can transition to a acceptable capitalist “*liberal democ-*

*racy*”, should not be doubted. Indeed, it is a foregone conclusion. One of the historical embarrassments of the west European political system, despite its hyperbole, is the ease with which Europe’s many former fascist nations transitioned seamlessly to liberal democracy post-1945. The pattern was repeated post-1991 when in many East European states the original historically-dominant fascist tendency re-appeared rather unselfconsciously, but were soon taken in hand by western Public Relations agencies and Non-Government Organisations and fashioned into acceptably liberal-democratic entities without too much fuss or stress.

The great experiment in re-education had been implemented in post-war West Germany. While blatant representatives of the Nazi setup were eased out of the public eye, and individuals with “*anti-fascist*” pedigrees hoisted into public leadership positions, the mass memberships of the new parties, as well as of the administrative, economic, judicial, academic and media structures, consisted of what until then had been the personnel of the Nazi regime, often card-carrying party members. Formal “*Denazification*” tribunals issued certificates of cleanliness like confetti, popularly known as “*Persil Certificates*”—from Persil’s advertising slogan that its detergent “*washes whiter than white*”. It was a running joke. The inner editorial regime of *Der Spiegel* contained former SS officers among its leading personnel, who quickly transitioned to a fervent espousal of “*liberal western values*”, intent on whatever remained of Germany having a future as part of the new hegemon, the Atlantic “*liberal*” West.

The reality is that what fundamentally defines the “*west*” is not its philosophical and often superficial liberalism, but its market-economic essence, with the creation of a liberal structure to accompany it not a serious challenge, once the supremacy of market relations is assured.

At the time of writing (28th November), it is unclear in what direction the war will develop. It is widely stated that Putin “*miscalculated*” disastrously. This may be so, but the “*miscalculation*” is not what his western critics mean by it. Putin never set out to “*invade*” Ukraine, saying from the start he had no intention of occupying “*Ukrainian territory*”. The aims he stated were for a very limited “*special military operation*” to protect the Russian-oriented Donbas and to “*de-militarise*” and “*de-nazify*” the Ukrainian state. These terms are the source

of much hilarity among the frivolous western media. In totalitarian unanimity they proclaim it a “*totally unprovoked*” and “*full-scale invasion*”—with 150,000 soldiers! Their “*war reports*” amount to little beyond uncritically regurgitating the “*Daily Briefings*” of the British MoD and fanciful claims of the Ukrainian Government, embellished by “*analyses*” by the Washington arms industry- and State Department-funded “*Institute for the Study of War*”, all of which had Russia running out of missiles back in May. (The ISW has close links to the family of Robert Kagan, with its current director, Kimberly Kagan, his daughter-in-law. Robert Kagan is the firebrand co-author of the US “neo-con” strategy statement of the Bush era which has not been disavowed by his Democrat successors, *The Project for a New American Century*. He is also Victoria Nuland’s husband.)

Putin’s “*miscalculation*” was that his meandering army column, rumbling towards, and then sitting outside, Kyiv would hasten a negotiation process on a Western-Russian security treaty for Europe and within Ukraine an implementation of Minsk 2, granting the Donbas autonomy within the state, accepting the Russian status of Crimea, recognising Russian language and culture, and committing to Ukraine remaining a non-NATO state. In other words, a type of *Minsk 3*.

These demands were laughed off by the West, which proceeded to launch an unprecedented economic war designed to bring the Russian State and society to its knees “*within weeks*”. The Rouble, declared Biden, would be reduced to “*rubble*”, and, according to von der Leyen, the Russian economy destroyed. With the full might of NATO support pouring in on Ukraine’s side, the issue, declared Borrell, would be “*decided on the battlefield*”. The mysterious radicalism of the Brussels bureaucracy contrasts with a pronounced reticence among the leaders of the major EU countries. Steps towards *Minsk 3*, taking shape in Istanbul in March 2022, were aborted following Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s visit to Kyiv in April. Western support for Zelenskyy, *Foreign Affairs* later revealed, would be dependent on him agreeing to all-out conflict. There could be no negotiations with the “*dictator*”!

Besides its limited focus and operations, the Special Military Operation refrained from the type of war-making fundamental to the western approach of recent decades. Trade was allowed continue, and the railways and critical infrastructure untouched.

Western observers were astounded that unlike their own operations against Serbia, Iraq, Libya etc., all of which started with the massive bombing of communications, power and water infrastructure, Russia refrained from any such actions. But, after the assassinations and car bombs mounted by Ukraine in occupied cities, the assassination by car bomb in Moscow of Daria Dugina, the blowing up of the Nord Stream pipelines—which ended any possibility of a German ramp-off, the attacks on Black Sea shipping undermining the grain export agreement, and the lethal attack on the Kerch Bridge by human bomb (sacrificing the unwitting lorry driver), the Russian gloves came off.

Nevertheless, even then its missile strikes have remained limited to the power distribution network, as opposed to Ukrainian generating capacity, and to military installations. This ensures that damage is temporary and repairable, which was an approach pioneered by the West in its recent wars. Western media as a source of information has disgraced itself with stories of “*indiscriminate bombing*” of cities and “*targeting strikes on residential areas*”. In fact there have been remarkably few civilian casualties.

Residential buildings in western Ukrainian cities that have occasionally been hit have been the victim more often of falling Ukrainian air defence missiles, or only of Russian missiles which have been shot off course by them. Most cities outside the eastern/southern battlefields remain largely unscathed, apart now from their military facilities and, latterly, power-distribution systems.

Large-scale destruction of urban areas has been confined to the Russian-oriented East, where, as even Amnesty International briefly and grudgingly conceded, the cause was Ukrainian forces digging in in residential complexes, transforming them into fortified compounds and forcing the other side to confront them in short-range combat. The overwhelming destruction has been in the Donbas, and it is apparent that not many in the Ukrainian Army shed tears over that.

The military conflict at first saw high Russian casualties as Ukraine employed daring hit-and-withdraw tactics against the relatively unprotected Russian convoys. This has since changed radically with Russian casualties falling sharply while Ukraine’s losses have mounted. Ukrainian casualties resulted from massive Russian shelling of Ukrainian troop concentrations or attacking forces, with its Kherson of-

fensive reportedly involving thousands of losses. Where holding territory threatened high losses, Russians have pulled back to defensible lines and allowed Ukraine re-occupy it.

Zelenskyy is certainly playing the role of his lifetime. To what extent he believes in it cannot be known. Bolstered by an astonishing level of western military and financial support—way beyond what the US had invested, short of lives, even in Vietnam—he has categorically ruled out any negotiations with a Russia ruled by Putin, or until all Ukrainian territories have been freed of the Russian presence. A fight to the finish?

The West blows hot and cold on a negotiated outcome. At this stage it is clear that the only negotiations that count are those that must finally occur between the US and Russia. As Napoleon ruefully reflected in exile, the biggest factor on the battlefield is General Luck. Western military intervention has certainly been a “*game changer*” disrupting Putin’s calculations. Besides the unprecedented enormous western transfers of military hardware and command/control systems, particularly effective has been its satellite surveillance Intelligence which has crippled Russian freedom of manoeuvre in the field.

But, short of a military event like Warsaw’s 1920 “*Miracle on the Vistula*”, being repeated on the Dniepr, it appears that the only viable outcome is some version of the Minsk Agreement, accompanied by some deal on a “*European security framework*”. This was all on offer a year ago, with Russia prepared to settle for much less than it now holds, but all of that was contemptuously dismissed by the West.

Now, some tens of thousands of military casualties later, extensive physical destruction, and the flight abroad of millions of Ukrainians who may never return, does Ukrainian obstinacy on Minsk make any sense?

There has, in addition, been the fundamental wrecking of Europe’s productive economy as it “*decouples*” from cheap Russian energy and access to China’s low-cost products and high-value export markets for the sake of its American security “*umbrella*”.

The local arrangements for a post-conflict Ukraine, now very much a secondary aspect of the conflict, will be what they could have been all along.



## Sean O'Faolain and Canon Formation

### Part 9

When I began this review of O'Faolain's work, I never dreamed that I would still be working on it so many months later!

It is easy enough to see his use of *'The Bell'* as a platform which supposedly enabled a literary coterie to flourish in Ireland during the Second World War. But I gradually realised the more I read about O'Faolain and his work, the more I felt that something just wasn't adding up. And here I am obviously not talking about his fiction—be it his novels or his short stories. There is no literary merit to be found in his output there—even his strongest supporters today can't seem to face the sheer rollicking that would meet any assertion to the contrary. So it is all about his editorship of *'The Bell'*—his *war-work* so to speak.

And it actually took me quite a while before I saw that this really was the case. He founded the magazine and was its Editor from 1940-1945. Those years are very significant, as we all know: a World War was being waged by Britain against Germany, and other countries were gradually drawn into it with the typical tactics that the former always use.

Britain's narrative had being drawn up by powerful State cabals long before war was announced and then all dissent was drowned out by a propaganda so sinuous that it insinuated itself into every and all arguments.

And then there were *its agents* and *they* were everywhere. There were the obvious spooks like Reggie Ross Williamson, whose Passport Officer role offered him a great deal of information, which was then passed onto John Betjeman or others in the British Representative's Office, Dublin, where Sir John Maffey was boss. And, of course, there were the Liddell brothers, Guy and Cecil, among others, whose job definitely included espionage on Eire—*That Neutral Island*, as Clair Wills called it in her book title in 2007.

It is obvious that, by Britain giving paper to *'The Bell'* when it was in such

short supply, even for their own magazines/papers, that *something* was expected in return. O'Faolain himself noted that their supply of paper came from Great Britain, and, in writing about it being "*bum-paper*", maybe he was hoping the, by casting such aspersions on its quality, people wouldn't really notice its origin!

But I have many copies of the original *'Bell'* and they are still in good condition. It seems an odd thing to remark on, but their covers—made from very good quality cartridge paper—were also quite inventive, and in February 1947 there is the quite famous one which reproduces some of the various stamps issued by the IRA, and other forces like the Ulster Volunteer movement and those fighting against the Free State in the Civil War, where there was a "*rich crop of interesting postal curiosities*", including those put out by the Eagle Printing Works in Cork City—which were scuppered (mostly) by the arrival of the Free State army. (This article was written in *'The Bell'* by R. Wyse Jackson and is well worth a look—including the following one, translated by Honor Tracy (formerly of *'The British Ministry of Information'*) with lovely illustrations of French Art that even in one of today's glossy magazines could hardly be bettered.

So the money of the businessmen like J.J. O'Leary and Joseph McGrath also counted for the publication of *'The Bell'*, which enabled Sean O'Faolain to make his mark. As Editor he got to call for contributions from whatever writers and journalists he thought were up to *his idea* of what mattered during those white hot days of war. So those who made the cut were not necessarily those who were the best—indeed it often seems to me now, that those who promoted not so much literature—but political ideas in fairly plain essays were those who were most promoted. The likes of Hubert Butler and Conor Cruise O'Brien, the latter a high-ranking civil servant (whose pseudonym was Donat O'Donnell), courted views that

put them to some extent out of favour with the Government of the country and indeed its policy of neutrality.

Denis Johnston, the playwright (and barrister, theatre director, TV producer, war correspondent), became the drama critic for *'The Bell'*. His biography, *'Denis Johnston: A Life'* by Bernard Adams, (The Lilliput Press Ltd, Dublin, 2002) shows him in London meeting "*leading BBC officials*" and the Ministry Of Information regarding programmes for those Irish who were in the British forces and whom John Betjeman wanted to be recognised: programmes "*which would keep alive among soldiers serving away from home the sense of Irish, in the broadest meaning of the term*". Here he was alluding to the constant irritations of the Northern faction—led by its Prime Minister, J.M. Andrews, and by George Marshall, the BBC's chief in Belfast—to any reference to any soldiers but those of Northern Ireland. To them, mention of any of the sons of Eire drew immediate and intense reaction, but never-the-less Denis Johnston was becoming more able to function knowing that he had at times to "*stub his toes against the obdurate Marshall*". He had not been impressed when he had worked before with Marshall but now the latter—

"was taking his role as censor on behalf of the Northern Ireland government very seriously indeed... Marshall had lunch every day with Unionists politicians at the Ulster Club, where he was regarded as a lone but powerful media sentry patrolling Ulster's political frontiers."

On the other hand, in Dublin, he was "*engaged in agreeable fencing matches with Dr. T.J. Kiernan, the director of Broadcasting in Radio Eireann*". He was using their facilities to do talks for NBC and CBS in America and airily concluded that Dr. Kiernan wasn't much of a censor because he was able to get most things "*past him*". But the Irish Government was very careful about its neutral (at the time) 'friend', the US: "*and so what seemed like carelessness*" to Johnston was very most certainly not that. In the meantime, Johnston had the gall to state that he would never become a propagandist or even a spy. But there is this interesting admission in the book that:

"Often I went from 'Off-the-record' military conferences in Belfast and the War Office to the bar in the Gaiety Theatre where, as like as not, I might find myself back-to-back with Peterson, the German Press attaché in Dublin... what a spy I might have been".

Well – indeed! And what about Elizabeth Bowen? Johnston had this to say:

"On her visits to Dublin in the early war years, the novelist Elizabeth Bowen acted as a *kind of spy* for the Ministry of Information in London."

Ah —but now we have some of the records and they tell a very different tale and one I am willing to bet Denis Johnston knew only too well. If both were War Office visitors in London—and they admit they were —what else were they but spies and very high-ranking ones at that!

So Sean O'Faolain ended up knowing quite a few spies—he openly acknowledged that Elizabeth Bowen and Honor Tracy were his "*Mattie O'Hara's*": a rather obvious allusion to that famous spy, Mata Hari, the Dutch exotic dancer and courtesan who was convicted of being a spy for Germany during the First World War and was shot by the French in 1917.

So who really was Sean O'Faolain? and to answer that we have to go back to Cork and see what contributed to his formation. I am always surprised by his open animosity to all and sundry (unless they were people of quality like Christo Gore Grimes who later became his Dublin solicitor).

In his autobiography, he went out of his way to damn the poverty of Frank O'Connor and his family circumstances. This is how he described his *only* (as he accepted himself) *friend* who was three years his junior: fifteen to O'Faolain's eighteen.

"Michael was ... slightly hooped, all specs, eyes and brow, the eyes myopic, the teeth ingratiating... He wore knickerbockers, long, woollen, hand knitted stockings and, to my fastidious distaste, black boots. With regard to those boots I realised that I must make allowances. I was, after all, a cut above him. His da, it seemed, was merely an ex-private of the Munster Fusiliers (RIP) while my father was a full constable of the Royal Irish Constabulary, the sort of man who put his sort of fellow into jug every night of the week for being drunk and disorderly, which, I soon discovered, Michael's da quite often was."

I find this betrayal of a friend just so appalling but typical of O'Faolain. He went on to state that they both spent the next thirty years: "*fighting with or for one another against church (RC, tyrannical) and state; (Irish, free and even more tyrannical.)*"

In previous articles for the *Irish Political Review*, I wondered how active Sean O'Faolain was during the War of Independence and onwards. I thought his stories of his "*bomb-making*" to be fanciful because he never gave any detail about who his fellow soldiers were or even

where the locations were. In his '*Vive Moi!*', re-issued by his daughter Julia in 1993 (O'Faolain had died in 1991), O'Faolain wrote:

"In my six years as a rank-and-filer of the IRA I shot nobody and I was briefly under fire once. I have no war memories to record except to say: Were those the Troubles? And if so was it a revolution? .... *The Irish Troubles have been overdramatised, partly because they were the first successful fight against colonialism.* ... I remember the happy holiday Eileen" (his future wife) "and I spent in Cape Clear Island even as late as the summer of 1920 and the truce of 1921. We were, indeed, aware, along the way of the occasional presence of those new strange-looking units, half soldiers, half policemen, in khaki trousers and black police jackets, but we had as yet no suspicion of the brutalities of which the scum of England's earth was capable."

Really? O'Faolain's ignorance here is truly baffling, but his decision to downplay the events in Ireland during those years bears another reading altogether. He liked to say that he never got to the top in the IRA, purely because of his father's position as a member of the RIC. This caused suspicion of him by the fighters that he could be a spy or so he thought.

Yet, Tom Barry, that great soldier and patriot had a father in the RIC too and of course he fought in the British Army—yet he got on with the tough fight against the old enemy thus ensuring for all time, his legendary status.

So to cure my own curiosity, I spent some time researching the '*Military Service (1916-1923) Pensions Collection* and what I found there was very revealing, but also proved that my suspicions of O'Faolain being a braggart were spot on.

I wish I could scan the images in because they prove in many ways to be so downright funny. First up there is this cover message typed in bold, noting:

**"This is about the worst case I have seen. There is not any element of military service." (Sean O'Faolain in the MSPC.)**

Then there is a copy of a letter written by O'Faolain written on 19th July 1936.

"To  
The Secretary,  
Ministry of Defence,  
Dublin.

Sir,

Please tell me how application may be made for a pension as a member of the Republican Army, between 1918 and 1924. Yours sincerely,

Sean O'Faolain."

(His signature is above the typed one.)

Finally on the 10th April, 1941 there is this letter:

"A Chara,

I am directed by the Minister for Defence to refer to your application for a service certificate under the terms of the Military Service Pensions Act, 1934, and to inform you that the Referee, to whom your application was referred, in accordance with the terms of Section 8(1) of the Act, has reported that you are not a person to whom the Act applies. In the circumstances, the Minister regrets that he is unable to grant you a certificate of military service which would render you eligible for the award of a pension.

Mise, le meas,

(A scribbled name)".

The Minister at the time was Frank Aitken. And nowhere in all that Sean O'Faolain wrote, and that which was written about him, is there this very important account of how the Irish State rumbled O'Faolain. No wonder the bitterness, the deep in the bone hatred of the State that had fought its way out of the fist of Britain's Empire! Instead O'Faolain came to rely on the Empire and those *of* it who came to his aid with, first a Commonwealth Scholarship and later other help in the shape of jobs, books published, paper for his magazine and, make no mistake, '*The Bell*' was Sean O'Faolain's most important project because from that platform flowed all that came after—most especially his name as *an influencer* of the people that really mattered in Dublin, not so much then as *now*.

Irish academia—really of course we are talking about British academia—has upped the *ante* and promoted Sean O'Faolain like no one else. They now say that he was "*the most eminent Irish literary figure of his generation*".

In Cork, the other day I visited the city library and got out three of O'Faolain's biographies, the one on Constance Markievicz—the 1967 one—not the London-published one of 1934; his 'Daniel O'Connell'—the 1970 one, not the 1938 London version, and the one on Hugh O'Neill, again not the London-published 1942 one, but the Mercier 1970 one.

Why did London during a World War, famished for paper supplies, publish the latter book in the same year that '*Bowen's Court*' by Elizabeth Bowen was also published?

Riddle me that, dear readers!

Julianne Herlihy ©

To be continued



## Number 2, Part 3

# The Brian Murphy osb Archive

## Sean McGarry—outline of his life

continued from November *Irish Political Review*

### McGarry and the Treaty —other interventions in the Dail

McGarry intervened on three more occasions during the Treaty debate, before the vote was taken on 7th January 1922. His first intervention concerned the attitude of the Irish Volunteers to the Treaty and was prompted by a speech of Seamus Robinson on 6th January 1922. Robinson, commanding officer of the Tipperary Brigade during the War and the Dail Deputy for Waterford and Tipperary East, read out a signed letter from the Divisional Commanders of the IRA which stated that "*we maintain unimpaired our allegiance to the Irish Republic and to it alone*" (*DE Minutes*, 6 Jan. 1922, p289; see Ernie O'Malley, *The Singing Flame*, Dublin, 1978, pp 43-48 for views of Robinson and other Volunteers). Among the signatories were the well-known names of Liam Lynch, Ernie O'Malley and also Oscar Traynor of the Dublin Brigade. At this stage in Robinson's speech, de Valera intervened to say that officers of the army should not "*be using the name of the army at all*". McGarry immediately interjected: "*it is done now*" (*Ibid.*). Neither of these interventions prevented Robinson from continuing his speech in an even more forceful manner. He called for a Volunteer Convention on the issue of the Treaty; he questioned the war record of Michael Collins; and he concluded by calling for a charge of treason to be brought against Collins and Griffith.

The second intervention of McGarry related to the questions raised by Robinson about the actions of Collins during the War. Cathal Brugha attempted to address some of these questions in a speech on the following day, Saturday 7th January 1922. It was the day on which the vote on the Treaty was taken. In an official manner, but in a way that diminished the role of Collins, Brugha, speaking as Minister of Defence, stated that in the Army there was

a Head Quarters Staff, a Chief of Staff, and several sub-sections: "*one of those heads of the sub-sections is Mr Michael Collins... he is merely a subordinate in the Department of Defence*" (*DE Minutes*, 7 Jan. 1922, p326). Brugha declared that it was necessary to speak frankly, since Arthur Griffith had made the claim "*that Mr Michael Collins had won the war*" (*Ibid*, p327).

Brugha denied that Collins was the romantic and mystical character that had been presented in the press, especially since the signing of the Treaty, and he started to elaborate on the particular action of Collins in relation to an ambush. He began: "*in charity to Mr Michael Collins I will not repeat here what a participant in the ambush said about Mr Collins*".

These remarks were cut short by an exchange of comments among the Deputies in which McGarry featured:

"*Michael Colivet*: 'I respectfully suggest that the Minister for Defence ...'

*McGarry*: 'Too late. Let him carry on now.'

*Mr. Brennan*: 'The damage has been done.'

*Collins*: 'No damage is done.'

*Dr. McCartan*: 'The damage is done.'

...

McGarry: 'I think we have enough.'

(*Ibid*. p327)

The intervention by McGarry illustrated not only his own personal loyalty to Michael Collins but also the manner in which the issue of personalities was emerging among the Dail deputies as they prepared to vote.

The final brief intervention of McGarry was made later on the same day, 7th January 1922, shortly before the vote on the Treaty was taken. It was made in direct reference to what emerged as the ultimate question in the Treaty debate: was the Irish Republic, and the Oath to it, preserved by the use of the word "*association*" in either the *Articles of Agreement* or in de Valera's *Document Number Two*? McGarry had already addressed this question in his speech of 3rd January, in which he had concluded that *Document Number Two* provided no significant advances towards safeguarding the republican position. In the final hours of debate this issue was discussed with great intensity and intellectual acumen by Arthur Griffith, on the one hand, and Cathal Brugha, on the other. The pro-Treaty side advocated "*association*" and "*common citizenship*"; the anti-Treaty side advocated "*external association*" and "*reciprocal citizenship*". Griffith denied that de Valera's position radically changed the *Articles of Agreement* and, to prove his point, cited *Document Number Two* to the effect "*that for the purposes of association Ireland shall recognise His Britannic Majesty as head of the association*" (*Dail Eireann Minutes*, 7 Jan. 1922, p.339). An exchange of remarks then took place to which McGarry made a contribution.

"*President de Valera*: 'Why did Lloyd George turn it down?'

*Cathal Brugha*: 'It is not allegiance.'

*Arthur Griffith*: 'Is that a Republic or is it not? I say it is not a Republic. Is that allegiance or is it not?'

*Sean McGarry*: 'That's a Constitutional Republic (laughter).'

*Cathal Brugha*: 'That's a Republic.' "  
(*Ibid.*)

The laughter that followed McGarry's description of *Document Number Two* as providing a "*Constitutional Republic*" illustrated both the complexity and the confusion surrounding the debate. So too did Cathal Brugha's quick denial that it offered "*a Republic*". In fact the anti-Treaty side did claim that the Irish Republic was preserved within, or even despite, a constitutional link with Great Britain. McGarry's remark, therefore, unwittingly and ironically, provided an accurate description of what de Valera hoped to attain by *Document Number Two*.



Sean McGarry

Very soon after this exchange of views took place, the Deputies were called upon to vote. McGarry was one of the 64 who voted in favour of the Treaty; 57 voted against. The closeness of the vote was reflected in the Cabinet and in the Ministry: the Cabinet members were in favour of the Treaty by four votes to three; the Ministry was opposed to the Treaty by eight votes to seven, thus underlining the importance of the decision in August 1921 to create a smaller Cabinet.

One of the few identifiable groups who voted with any degree of unanimity were the women deputies (all six), who voted against the Treaty. These differences were also manifested in geographical terms: in Munster there were 15 Deputies in favour of the Treaty and 24 against; in Leinster, 27 in favour and 15 against; in Connaught, 12 in favour and 12 against; in Ulster, 9 in favour and 4 against; the National University, 1 in favour and 2 against (*Irish Independent*, 9 Jan. 1922. The figures for Ulster were based on the dual mandates that some members possessed).

These deep divisions over principle and persons had manifested themselves in the month since the Treaty had been signed on 6th December 1921, but there was an attempt to preserve national unity before the House adjourned at 8.50 pm on 7th January. Michael Collins was applauded, when he professed that de Valera "*has exactly the same position in my heart as he always had*", and it was recorded that de Valera broke down as he uttered the words, "*the world is looking at us now ...*" (*Dail Eireann Minutes*, 7 Jan. 1922, pp 346,347).

These professions of unity were put to the test at the next Dail sessions on 9th and 10th January 1922 and were instantly found to be wanting.

### **McGarry and role in Dail after the acceptance of the Treaty**

Sean McGarry throughout these debates remained firmly on the side of Michael Collins. De Valera was the first to speak at the Dail meeting on Monday, 9th January, and immediately announced his resignation from Office. Mrs. Clarke proposed that he should be re-elected and her motion was seconded by Liam Mellows (*Dail Eireann Minutes*, 9 Jan. 1922, pp 349,350).

The debate on the motion returned very quickly to the issue of the compatibility of the Treaty with the Irish Republic and personal differences again appeared. Michael Collins, who was the last to speak before the vote, declared that, "*I am voting against the resolution*". When the

vote was put, 58 voted in favour of de Valera's re-election and 60 voted against. De Valera himself did not vote. Sean McGarry voted against.

Significantly, Robert Barton, one of the signatories of the Treaty, who had voted for the Treaty, voted for de Valera. Paul Galligan, Deputy for county Cavan, did likewise (*Ibid.*, pp 378,379; *Irish Independent*, 10 Jan. 1922)

On Tuesday, 10th January 1922, the Dail met to consider the election of Arthur Griffith in place of de Valera. Michael Collins proposed the motion that "*Mr. Arthur Griffith be appointed President of Dail Eireann*" (*Dail Eireann Minutes*, 10 Jan. 1922, p392). The debate again retraced old ground and the personal exchanges became even more bitter.

Finally, de Valera declared that he could not support the motion because Griffith was bound by the Treaty "*to be taking actions which will tend*" to the destruction of the Irish Republic (*Ibid.* p.410). While de Valera and his supporters prepared to leave the House, insults were freely traded among the rival groups. Although McGarry remained silent, the exchanges conveyed the atmosphere in the Dail immediately prior to the vote:

*Michael Collins*: "Deserters all! We will now call on the Irish people to rally to us. Deserters all!"

*Daithi Ceannt*: "Up the Republic!"

*Michael Collins*: "Deserters all to the Irish nation in her hour of trial. We will stand by her."

*Countess Markievicz*: "Oath breakers and cowards."

*Michael Collins*: "Foreigners — Americans — English."

*Countess Markievicz*: "Lloyd George-ites" (*Ibid.* p.410; *Irish Independent*, 11 Jan. 1922 for a letter of Michael Collins correcting a report in the *Evening Herald* that he had used the expression: "*Foreigners, Traitors, English*". He stated that he had not used the word '*Traitors*'.)

In the immediate aftermath of this torrent of abuse, and with de Valera's supporters absent from the House, the motion that Griffith be appointed President of Dail Eireann was carried unanimously. However, Michael Collins proposed that, for the record, a roll call should be made of those who had voted in favour of Griffith. Sean McGarry's name was among the 61 who voted for him.

The 60 who had voted against de Valera on the previous day were joined by Liam de Roiste, who had abstained in that vote. There was one pairing (*Ibid.* pp 410,411). Griffith announced the new Dail Cabinet:

himself, President; Michael Collins, Finance; Gavan Duffy, Foreign Affairs; Eamon Duggan, Home Affairs; William Cosgrave, Local Government; Kevin O'Higgins, Economic Affairs; Richard Mulcahy, Defence.

When de Valera and his followers returned for the afternoon session, the difficulty of finding a united way forward were instantly made apparent. Griffith, in response to a question from Erskine Childers about the powers of the Provisional Government in relation to the powers of the Dail Cabinet, replied that "*I will not reply to any damned Englishman in this Assembly*" (*Ibid.* p.416). Such was the atmosphere in Dail Eireann as it adjourned until late February.

Throughout the controversies that had taken place, and were to emerge, McGarry remained a committed supporter of Collins and Griffith. He also expressed his support for them and for the Treaty in two other forums.

### **McGarry, the Sinn Fein Ard Comhairle and the Parliament of Southern Ireland**

Firstly, on Thursday, 12th January 1922, Sean McGarry attended a meeting of the Ard-Comhairle (the Executive Committee) of Sinn Fein in the Oak Room of the Mansion House, Dublin. The purpose of the meeting was to arrange for an extraordinary *Ard-Fheis* of Sinn Fein.

With that purpose in mind, and taking into account the changing circumstances since the last *Ard-Fheis* of November 1921, it was resolved to elect a new Standing Committee.

Prior to the vote for the Committee, de Valera, acting as Chairman, maintained that the division in Dail Eireann should be reflected in the Sinn Fein party organisation. He argued that two parties had arisen as a result of the Treaty and that, with a General Election soon to be contested, they "*should definitely and cleanly divide and know exactly where they stood*" (*Irish Independent*, 13 Jan. 1922; Michael Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland. The Sinn Fein Party 1916-1923*, Cambridge, 1999, p.367).

Sean McGarry made the same point as de Valera, but from a different political perspective. "*Let us face the fact*", he declared, "*that it is a political organisation and nothing else. If it is a political organisation, it cannot remain neutral, it cannot sit on the fence*" (*Ibid.*). He also remarked that it was the *Ard-Fheis* and not the *Ard Comhairle* that was the governing body of the organisation. Sean McGarry

had been a member of the outgoing *Ard-Comhairle* but was not elected to the new one. The rule that only two serving TDs might be on the Committee may have prevented his election. It was estimated by the *Irish Independent* that twelve of the new fifteen-person committee were supporters of the Treaty.

Among those elected were Darrell Figgis and G. Murnaghan with 47 votes, G. Nesbitt (46) and K. O'Shiel (42). The two TDs elected were Sean Milroy (40) and Joseph McGuinness (36). The responsibility of preparing for the Ard-Fheis was left to this new Standing Committee.

During the Ard-Comhairle meeting several participants had approached McGarry and questioned him about a letter, written by a Margaret McGarry TC, that had been published in the *Irish Independent* on 7th January. The letter had been critical of Hanna Sheehy Skeffington's call to all women to support the Treaty and it made the case for the other side. McGarry denied that Margaret McGarry was a relative of his and wrote to the *Irish Independent* on 13th January 1922 stating that, "*I should be so sorry that any relative of mine should refer to Mr de Valera in the terms contained in the last paragraph of that letter*". The last paragraph of her letter read:

"President de Valera was my guest during the bitterest period of the Anglo-Irish War, and my experience gained in this way makes me quite assured that my attitude at present is correct" (letter of Margaret McGarry, 5 FitzWilliam Square, *Irish Indep.*, 7 Jan. 1922; letter of Sean McGarry, *Irish Indep.*, 13 Jan. 1922).

Secondly, on Saturday, 14th January 1922, Sean McGarry and other supporters of the Treaty attended a meeting of the Southern Ireland Parliament in the Oak Room of the Mansion House, Dublin. The sixty one members who had voted for Griffith as President were joined by the four representatives from Trinity College for this assembly. From the British Government's point of view, explicitly stated in Articles 17 and 18 of the Treaty, it was necessary that this body should ratify the terms of the Treaty. In British eyes, Dail Eireann was an illegal assembly and, therefore, incapable of validly complying with the requirements of English law.

The short meeting, which lasted only some fifty minutes, retained the custom of Dail Eireann and conducted the roll call in Irish. It was noted that two of the Trinity members, Professor Alton and Mr. FitzGibbon, replied in Irish, "*annso*". The motion that the Treaty be adopted was

accepted unanimously and a Provisional Government was appointed. Michael Collins was appointed Chairman and the other members selected were: William Cosgrave, Eamon Duggan, Eoin MacNeill, Patrick Hogan, Fionan Lynch, Joseph McGrath and Kevin O'Higgins. Sean McGarry took his place with all the other members of the Parliament for a group photograph that was taken on the steps of the Mansion House.

On Monday, 16th January 1922, Michael Collins and the other members of the Provisional Government attended Dublin Castle to be installed in their Offices by the Lord Lieutenant, Lord FitzAlan Howard. The official statement from Dublin Castle reported that:

"the Lord Lieutenant congratulated Mr Collins and his colleagues, and informed them they were now duly installed as the Provisional Government and that in conformity with Article 17 of the Treaty he would at once communicate with the British Government in order that the necessary steps might be taken for the transfer to the Provisional Government of the powers and machinery requisite for the discharge of its duties" (*Irish Independent*, 17 Jan. 1922).

The main responsibility of the Provisional Government was to draft a Constitution for the Irish Free State. Michael Collins was appointed Chairman of this Committee and Darrell Figgis was the Acting Chairman, who was responsible for the day to day conduct of the Committee.

It first met in the Shelbourne Hotel, Dublin, on 24th January, 1922. Although the transactions of the Southern Ireland Parliament and the creation of the Provisional Government marked a return to a recognition of British rule in Ireland, Michael Collins intended to draft a Free State Constitution that would rest solely upon the authority derived from the Irish people.

In that context Sean McGarry and other pro-Treaty supporters were prepared to follow Michael Collins in his quest to implement the Treaty. De Valera and his supporters, for their part, were also prepared to shape their conduct in the light of the new Constitution, which became an important issue at the Sinn Fein Ard-Fheis in February.

#### **McGarry and the Sinn Fein Ard-Fheis**

Sean McGarry was present, along with some 3,000 other delegates, when the Ard-Fheis met on Tuesday, 21st February 1922. The anti-Treaty party still retained a strong position on the Executive Committee of Sinn Fein, which exercised a great influ-

ence on the meeting. De Valera retained his place as President of the organisation and acted as Chairman of the meeting.

Other members of the Executive who were aligned with de Valera were Harry Boland and Austin Stack, both Honorary Secretaries, and Mrs. Ceannt, Dr. Katherine Lynn and Mrs. Sheehy Skeffington. The pro-Treaty side were represented on the Executive by Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins, both Vice-Presidents, and by Eamon Duggan, Darrell Figgis, Sean Milroy, Mrs Wyse Power (Honorary Treasurer), Patrick O'Keeffe (Secretary) and some others.

The precise purpose of the Ard-Fheis, as defined by the newly elected Standing Committee of Sinn Fein, was "*to authoritatively and decisively interpret the Constitution of the Organisation*", with special reference to the *Articles of Agreement* and their acceptance by Dail Eireann.

In that context de Valera opened the proceedings and proposed that the Treaty was not compatible with the new Republican Sinn Fein constitution of 1917. Arthur Griffith, however, denied this, citing clauses from the 1917 Constitution to prove his point, and proposed—

"that in accordance with the Resolution of the Ard-Fheis of November, 1921, pledging allegiance to Dail Eireann, this Extraordinary Ard-Fheis supports the action of Dail Eireann in approving the Peace Treaty (Articles of Agreement) signed in London on 6 December 1921" (*Irish Independent*, 22 Feb. 1922; Laffan, *Resurrection of Ireland*, p.370 seq.)

The debate that followed was basically a re-run of the debate on the Treaty in a different forum and de Valera was quick to remind the members that the Sinn Fein Constitution, unlike that of Dail Eireann, required a two-thirds majority on matters such as those being discussed.

Some members, Sean McGarry being one of them, attempted to curtail the debate by having an open vote immediately. He did this in support of a proposal by Kevin O'Shiel that, as members were already committed to a stance on the Treaty, "*the motion of the Standing Committee be put at once*". McGarry seconded this motion affirming that "*everyone there had come with a mandate*" (*Irish Independent*, 22 Feb. 1922)

Michael Collins, rejected this proposal and, somewhat surprisingly, sided with the view of Sean McEntee that a full discussion should take place. Collins not only stated that the main question should be discussed as long as was necessary, but



also denied that "every person had come with a mandate" (Ibid).

In the course of the debate Sean McGarry reacted to the use of the words, 'Free Stater', to describe those who supported the Treaty. He stated that—

"he objected to being called a "Free Stater." He was a Republican, and he did not wait until it was safe to become a Republican, and he would still be a Republican when they had got a Free State Parliament" (Ibid).

McGarry's view reflected that of those on the pro-Treaty side: they had not abandoned the republican position.

Finally, on the second day of the Ard-Fheis, 22nd February 1922, private meetings were held between de Valera and Stack, representing the anti-Treaty side, and Griffith and Collins, representing the pro-Treaty side.

An agreement was reached whereby it was proposed to adjourn for three months in order "to avoid a division of the Sinn

*Fein Organisation and avert the danger to the country of an immediate election"* (Laffan, *Resurrection of Ireland*, p.373).

The Ard-Fheis ratified this Agreement. Not only was the election postponed, but also it was agreed that the new Free State Constitution should be presented to the electorate before the Election took place. Efforts were made to secure cross-party agreement on the Constitution and these eventually bore fruit in the *Collins/de Valera Pact* of 20th May 1922.

Important cross party efforts were also made to secure peace within the ranks of the army and by the means of a *Dail Peace Committee*, but McGarry was not involved in these.

At the same time as these gestures of co-operation were taking place, the two sides continued to develop their particular party structures and to fashion distinctive policies. Sean McGarry's main contribution to the pro-Treaty party was in his constant support for the policies of Arthur Griffith in Dail Eireann.

(To be continued)

The main power conferred on it in the first instance was that of *policing*. The Belfast sub-government, representing two-thirds of the population, was given the responsibility of policing a third of the population—a third which was suddenly cut off, in the middle of a war, from the general Irish national movement of which it had been a leading part.

Northern Ireland policing had little to do with suppressing crime as ordinarily understood. Both the Government and the Opposition, though taking on the superficial form of political parties, were in fact national communities. Their difference was existential, not political. Politics is the business of governing a state.

There were potential policy differences within each community, but these differences could not be realised as political parties, because Northern Ireland was not a state, and because the political parties of the state excluded it from their sphere of operations.

The exclusion of Northern Ireland from the political life of the state was not written into either the *Government of Ireland Act (1920)* or the Treaty, but it was a fact.

The parties which make the British state a functional democracy (Tory, Labour and Liberal) boycotted Northern Ireland from the moment they established it. Because they were wilfully absent, and because Northern Ireland itself was not a State, there was no practical possibility of a development of political parties within it which would displace the communal blocs.

Each communal bloc was cut off from the democratic political life of the nation-state to which it gave allegiance, and the two could not between them constitute a democratic political life in the non-state of Northern Ireland. All that was possible for them in their relations within one another was mutual resentment.

Northern Ireland might be described in a purely objective sense as "progressive", but that was just because it remained part of the British State though excluded from its political life. The Belfast Government reproduced British reforms as a cost to the British Exchequer. It had the *Butler Education Act* and the *National Health Service* in the 1940s because its first Prime Minister, James Craig who became Lord Craigavon, let Whitehall know that he would discontinue

## One Thing And Another

continued from page one

aside—forcibly—the Independent Irish Government of 1919-21.

The only real issue there has ever been for the subordinate Six County Government has been to decide whether the Six Counties should be governed within the British state or should transfer to the Irish State set up by Britain in the 26 Counties.

The country was partitioned by a British Act of 1920. It has often been said by nationalist politicians, and by would-be historians, that nobody in Ireland voted for Partition.

That statement was a piece of profound self-deception.

The Ulster Unionists demanded Partition but they opposed the establishment of a Northern Ireland Government as the means of getting it. But Westminster insisted that the Ulster Unionists could be excluded from an all-Ireland Government only if they agreed to operate a subordinate system of British government in the Six Counties.

The Ulster Unionist Party opposed the Partition Bill—the *Government of Ireland Bill (1920)*—but they did

not oppose it on the ground that it was Partitionist. They opposed it only on the ground that it required them to conduct a Six County government in order to get Partition. But, when Westminster insisted that they would come under Irish Treatyite government if they refused to form a little Government of their own, they gave way and set up their own little Government just as the British Government was beginning to engage with the Sinn Fein Party, which had become dominant in the 26 Counties, with a view to undermining it.

The existence of the Northern Ireland Government was of use to Whitehall in its handling of Sinn Fein. That was a factor in deciding the Ulster Unionists to operate the Northern Ireland system. They said that, in establishing the Northern Ireland Government, they made the "supreme sacrifice for the Empire". They have had to live ever since with the consequences of that sacrifice.

Northern Ireland has had no powers of State, other than those conferred on it for the time being by the Government of the state, in which it was never represented.

Northern Ireland sub-Government if it did not agree to this arrangement.

But, fortunately or unfortunately, human life is not purely objective. (There would be very little history if it was.) Progressive reform therefore had no discernable effect on dissolving the antagonism of the communal blocs. It was not through any dynamic of Northern Ireland politics that far-reaching reforms had come, and therefore their effect was to sharpen the antagonism.

Irish nationalism might be described as being “*reactionary*” on the ‘progressive’ scale during the half-century of Northern Ireland. The Irish state was based on a democracy of property owners—small farmers. Self-sufficiency was the practice of its dominant class and the ideal of public life. It minimised the authority of the State and kept it out of private life. Noel Browne’s attempt to emulate the British NHS was blocked by the Bishops with the support of public sentiment. And the strategy of the Nationalist Party in Northern Ireland was to outbreed the Unionists—which the Nationalist leader, J.J. Campbell, saw as a practical possibility because the Unionists in British mode had adopted contraception and abortion.

But “*progress*” and “*reaction*” apart, nationalist Ireland was intensely political while Unionist Ulster was hidebound in its provincial dominance.

The Catholic population of Northern Ireland was undoubtedly oppressed by the Northern Ireland system. It had to be in order to make the system functional.

Oppression is not an absolute. It exists relative to expectation. Northern Catholic expectations in the 1920s were located in nationalism and democracy, twin values of the new order of the world expressed by the League of Nations. The Catholic community was deprived of its rights on both grounds: being excluded from its nation-state, and also excluded from the democratic life of the state in which it was held. And, within the non-democratic, non-State, of Northern Ireland it was policed by the essentially communal police force of the opposing community. And, in local government affairs, its influence was curbed by gerrymandering, which was necessary in order to make Local Government functional.

But, in other respects, it was

extraordinarily free. It lived its own life. It was far from the hegemonic influence which democratic states must exert on the populace in order to be functional. It was disengaged from the political life of the State by reason of the fact that the State had disengaged itself from the political life of its Six County region—and the Northern Ireland substitute for the State was content to organise its communal majority at elections to keep itself within the British state and had neither the inclination nor the capacity to hegemonise the Catholic minority.

Under these circumstances—unique in the modern world—the oppressed Catholic community flourished in a particular way. Within the foremost liberal democracy in Europe, circumstances conspired to hold it together as a purposeful community. It was undoubtedly oppressed. But its oppression was stimulating rather than debilitating. It had the purely objective advantages of the British welfare state while remaining free of the party-political divisions (necessary in a democracy) through which the welfare state had been brought about.

It was beholden to nobody. It owed no loyalty to anybody outside itself. It was excluded from the political democracy of the State which held it, but it did not seek access to it because it was the wrong state. It owed notional allegiance to the Irish State, which asserted a right of sovereignty over the North, but the conduct of that State towards it since 1923 had thinned down that loyalty to the status of a remote ideal.

The build-up of latent energy in that community over half a century was released at a touch—or two touches—in 1969-70, when Northern Ireland policing got out of hand in August 1969, and the Free State broke off relations with it in May 1970 by putting John Kelly on trial in Dublin on a specious charge of conspiracy.

It then took its affairs into its own hands, making war on the British State and asserting itself as the conscience of the miserable Irish State which had betrayed it.

The War ended with an admission by the British Government that Northern Ireland was not, and could not be, a democracy. The basic principle of democratic government, rule by an elected majority, was struck off the agenda. It was formally recognised that the political components of Northern

Ireland were not Parties but national communities. Parties exist within each community, but they are not the same parties in each.

Communities are the foundations on which Governments are established, and the two communities are put on a par, with only a vestige remaining of the distinction of majority and minority.

The new system is no more democratic than the old. In fact it discards the veneer of democracy preserved by the old. But it is more tolerable, and more advantageous to the Catholic community. It meets the requirements of the situation.

Sinn Féin has established its dominance within the party-politics of the Catholic community. The watershed event within this development was the funeral of Bobby Storey.

The Northern Ireland Catholics are a people without a State. The British State could not honour its heroic dead, and the Irish State would not. The Northern Catholics therefore act in these matters as their own State. They gave a State Funeral to Bobby Storey in 2020 during the Covid lock-down and the police found it prudent to co-operate. Social Democratic & Labour Party dissent was only mumbled.

Then, in the May 2022 Election, it gave way to Sinn Féin, enabling it to become the largest party in the Assembly, with party conflict in the Protestant community putting the Democratic Unionist Party into second place. This means that, if a Government is formed, Northern SF leader Michelle O’Neill will be First Minister. The DUP does not agree to the formation of a Government. If it did, Jeffrey Donaldson (if he opts for Stormont, rather than Westminster) would be second First Minister. Although the First Minister is not a Prime Minister—the leader of a Cabinet—and the Second is in principle equal to the First, the prospect of a Sinn Féin First Minister is naturally unwelcome to the DUP.

The rule of the game says that, if a Government is not set up within 24 weeks of an election, a fresh election must be called. But, when the time limit was reached, no Election was called. Legislation is now proposed to extend the time period for forming a Government, and it allows the Secretary of State to reduce the salaries of elected representatives meanwhile.

The DUP reckoning is probably that supporters of the Ulster Unionist Party would give way to it in the communal

interest in a fresh election, enabling it to get ahead of Sinn Féin.

But the major DUP concern is the *Protocol*—which establishes customs restrictions between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK, while maintaining Free Trade between Northern Ireland and the EU. If that issue is resolved, it would probably give way on the formation of a Government.

Meanwhile governing goes on well enough without the distraction of a Government.

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Sinn Féin in the North has the confidence of a party that has fought a successful war. This was once well-understood in the South. But that understanding has now evaporated entirely under the influence of hot air, and the prospect of a Sinn Féin victory in the next Election generates hysteria.

Yet Fianna Fáil had its origin in war.

The Government that was set up under Crown authority in January 1922 by the members of the Dáil who accepted the Treaty dictated by Britain, and which was financed and awed by Britain, made war on the IRA under a British ultimatum in July 1922. This event was called a Civil War.

The IRA had sworn allegiance to the Republican Government of 1919-21. It owed no allegiance to the Treaty Party which set up a new Government in 1922. The Dáil Government ceased to have power when Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith, supported by a small majority of Dáil members, set up a Treatyite Provisional Government on British authority. The IRA disowned allegiance to the emasculated Dáil Government in March 1922 on the ground that it had ceased to be an actual government.

The IRA was then an Army on the loose, its Government having deserted it. Whitehall told its Provisional Government in Ireland to get rid of the IRA, or else the British Army would do it. Michael Collins obeyed, without seeking Parliamentary authority of any kind. The IRA was defeated but did not surrender. It 'dumped arms' and the main body of its leadership set about constructing an Anti-Treaty party, Fianna Fáil.

If the Civil War had been authentic—if it had been fought over a conflict of ideals—the victorious party would have been guided by a purpose. But it had only fought under the threat of a

British ultimatum. In victory it had no ideal to guide it, and the strong British Government which mastered it was brought down in the Fall of 1922 by a back-bench revolt, just as the Free State was being installed, and it was, to be followed by a succession of weak Governments.

The defeated 'Civil War' party won the peace.

It challenged for power in 1927, took Office in 1932, and dominated the scene until 1970.

The event which unleashed the energies of the Northern nationalist community for war in 1970—the *Arms Conspiracy Trial*—set the South on a process of political disintegration in which it denied its own history.

The Arms Conspiracy Trial was a *Show Trial*, put on by the first post-Civil War leader of Fianna Fáil, Jack Lynch—who might just as well have been a Fine Gaeler. He was in Fianna Fáil only by career choice. He did not have in him the stuff required for making tough decisions. He bent before the slight pressure applied to him by the British Ambassador in May 1970 and was fobbed off by the British Prime Minister in January 1971 when he tried to exert counter-pressure over the *Bloody Sunday* killings in Derry.

Fianna Fáil stabilised the state in the 1930s by warding off Treatyite pressure for a fascist development, by gaining military independence in 1938, and by asserting neutrality when Britain decided to have another war against Germany. These were not routine measures. The ability to undertake them and then carry them through undoubtedly had its source in the experience of the Civil War. But the ability to do such things was particular to the families that had been through that experience. It was not generalised into an effective State culture.

There was no Fianna Fáil intelligentsia, nor an influential Fianna Fáil academic stratum. Academia was Treatyite in its basic assumptions, or Redmondite, or even straightforwardly West British. These tendencies had pre-empted the ground. Fianna Fáil will and practical tenacity by-passed them in the conduct of the state, but did not create a cultural medium of statecraft as a heritage.

When Jack Lynch protested to

Premier Ted Heath about the *Bloody Sunday* shootings in Derry, he was told to mind his own business. But the British Embassy in Dublin was burned down as a popular response to the massacre. Dermot Keogh, the journalist who was on the Editorial Committee on the *Fianna Fáil* daily paper, the *Irish Press*, observed the event. He noticed that some individuals in the crowd were more active and purposeful than others in bringing about that act of destruction. And the revelation came to him that this was Fascism.

Keogh remade himself into a Professor of History at Cork University. He set about stopping Fascism at what he took to be its source in the realm of ideas. His understanding of Fascism seemed to be militant nationalism relating to Northern Ireland. And he published a big book in praise of Jack Lynch and his Show Trial over the imagined treasonable conspiracy to import arms.

The main victim of the Show Trial was a diligent Intelligence Officer of the Irish Army, Captain James Kelly, who was punished by a conspiracy of Government and Opposition though found Not Guilty in court.

John Kelly, who acted as Liaison between the Northern Defence Committees and the Government was also charged and found Not Guilty, but the effect of his trial was to discredit the Dublin Government in the eyes of the Northern resistance and release it for independent action.

Charles Haughey, a senior Cabinet Minister in Lynch's Government, was also tried and found Not Guilty. He conducted a minimal defence. If he had met the charges head-on, he would have blown the Government away and created a severe crisis of State. Later on, when retiring, he said, quoting Othello, that he had *done the State some service*. He did it the service in 1970 of not pleading that the Arms Importation was an action authorised by the Government, and that Lynch was scapegoating others for his own policy in order to excuse himself with Whitehall.

It seems likely that Haughey agreed to maintain Cabinet Confidentiality and conduct a minimal defence on the condition that he would not be interfered with in consolidating his base in the party with a view to becoming leader.

He was briefly Taoiseach afterwards, but his period of leadership, in 1987,



when he never had an overall majority, was an economic watershed. It created the Celtic Tiger through internal financial initiatives and influence with leaders of the EU. But it proved to be a final flare-up for Fianna Fail.

The settlement in the North, to which Haughey contributed, coincided with the decline of Fianna Fail, and opened the way for the expansion of Sinn Fein in the Republic.

Professor Keogh's view of Provisional

Sinn Fein as Fascist became the orthodox view of the Southern Establishment, which never troubled to inform itself about the strange Northern Ireland entity in which a community of half a million could make war on the British State and bring it to an orderly conclusion after 28 years. And so the Republic now faces the prospect of having what it sees as a Fascist Government in the near future—or at least a Fascist Party in government.

We have not heard Professor Keogh say what should be done about it.

## Non-Alignment Now!

continued

colonialism by countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and in the Bandung Conference of 1955, which was co-hosted and initiated by President Sukarno of Indonesia, President Nasser of Egypt, President Tito of Yugoslavia, and President Nehru of India.

The principles and objectives adopted during the Bandung Conference still form the guiding basis for the members and their political activity in international relations. The Bandung Conference was a prelude to the First Summit Conference of Belgrade (1961), during which the Non-Aligned Movement was officially founded.

The Non-Aligned Movement was a product of the Cold War. The ending of the Cold War brought an end to the bi-polar world order and introduced a new uni-polar global system, dominated by the United States. The closure of West-East rivalry put the future of the NAM and its relevance in the circumstances of the new world to the test. Questions arose regarding the sustainability of NAM, due to the fact that the reasons for forming the NAM had disappeared. With the “end of history” there was seemingly nothing to be non-aligned to!

However, non-alignment to the remaining World Power—the USA—and its foreign adventures became a new gathering point for those opposed to its global domination.

The NAM managed to maintain its cohesion despite all the differences, diversity, and internal disputes among its member states. Non-Alignment was still relevant,

in the uni-polar world order in which the countries of the Global South needed a stronger institutional framework for promoting and protecting their own interests against the US hegemony and Western dominance in international relations.

It should be a major institution for the multi-polar world that is now developing—and whose advent has been escalated since events in Ukraine.

Almost all member states of the NAM are from the Global South and share common colonial histories and socio-economic settings. However, there is a desire within the NAM to reach out to countries in the Northern Hemisphere to enhance political influence.

The NAM has no charter and no statute, unlike other international organisations. It is an informal structure of cooperation without any permanent secretariat, so there is no obligation in strictly legal terms to adhere to any policies or allegiances, but only the understanding that member states should support each other within the principles of non-alignment.

The membership requirement for joining the NAM has remained almost unaltered since the movement's inception. To become a member, a state has to respect and foster the following criteria:

have an independent, non-aligned foreign policy;

non-membership of multilateral military alliances;

support for national liberation movements;

the absence of bilateral military agreements or foreign military bases.

The NAM's continued relevance and validity lies in its incredible size, composition, and struggle for a world order that is based on equality and equity, rather than the dominance and control of a few former colonial powers. It is composed of around 120 countries and has 20 states with observer status.

Nearly all South American and African states are members. Other notable members include Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Palestine, Vietnam and Iraq. Tito was first President and Nasser the second. The current President is Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan. The Presidency has recently been held by Venezuela, Iran, Egypt, Cuba, Malaysia and South Africa.

The Non-aligned Movement represents what independent Ireland historically stood for – anti-colonialism, independence, and neutrality.

Membership of NAM is a positive thing that puts up a real barrier to a slide toward involvement in foreign military adventures and war. It would give Irish Neutrality the substance it lacks, and which it has not really had since World War II. To defend something that currently lacks substance, Ireland needs something that will generate a movement with something positive to defend.

Our horizons, which were formerly broad, have been narrowed in recent years. The European Union once helped Ireland open up to the world, but now it threatens to do the opposite. As it once escaped from the UK into Europe, Ireland must now project itself beyond the confines of the EU into the wider world and link up with the greater part of humanity.

Ireland once had global ambitions, particularly in the Third World/Global South and we need to recreate Global Ireland. Where better to link up with than with countries that have anti-colonial, anti-imperialist pasts like ourselves?

Most of Europe is composed of former Imperialist powers, with residual interests in their former colonies. Ireland does not have these, having been anti-colonial, and an inspiration to anti-colonial peoples. It is different to, and virtually unique in, Europe.

Membership of the Non-aligned Movement would be a big and ambitious statement in the world by Ireland—we would be the first Western Europeans to join the

non-aligned nations. We would be the inspiration to the World we formerly were when peoples fought for their independence and looked on us as an example.

Neutrality has served Ireland well. However, in the last 30 years we have been lulled into a false sense of security about our position. It was not an era of peace: with the wars in the Middle East; and the advance of NATO to the East, threatening new wars. The geopolitical reality is now clear: two hostile blocs are forming on the lines of Cold War with a new potential for World War.

Non-alignment is not pacifism. NAM is composed of many states with formidable armies who will defend their territories with greater tenacity than many who are aligned to the big blocs. The state which currently holds the Presidency of the Non-aligned Movement has recently won a war against an aggressive neighbour occupying its sovereign territory.

Now is the time for Ireland to reassert neutrality in a meaningful way and to give it substance.

Pat Walsh

## Anti-FIFA Humbug!

Following a speech he made on the eve of the Qatar World Cup, FIFA President Gianni Infantino has become the target of an avalanche of Western bile. Commentators in the *Irish Times*, the *Guardian*, the *Spectator*, RTE and a couple of hundred other outlets have been outdoing each other about the extraordinary, bizarre, surreal, staggering, remarkable, rambling, diatribe/monologue/soliloquy/tirade that Infantino dared to make so that attention could return to the actual football.

OK, so it wasn't a great speech, choosing Qatar was crazy and Infantino is no angel, but the FIFA President made one point that has resonated with opinion outside of the West. This is what he said:

"We have been told many, many lessons from some Europeans, from the western world. I think for what we Europeans have been doing the last 3,000 years we should be apologising for the next 3,000 years before starting to give moral lessons to people."

### Choosing Qatar

Apart from the moral humbug, the prevailing Western narrative about choosing Qatar is factually incorrect. The oil-and-gas-rich Gulf monarchy was not chosen as 2022 World Cup host because the Qataris lined the pockets of FIFA officials; it was chosen because a Western leader (Nicolas Sarkozy) put pressure on a legendary figure in French football (Michel Platini), so that Qatari money could be poured into a French club (Paris St Germain, PSG).

The deal was that if Platini could deliver

the World Cup to Qatar, the Emir of Qatar would purchase PSG and make it the richest club in the world; this duly happened in 2011. The original FIFA plan was that the 2022 World Cup would go to the US following the 2018 finals which would be hosted by Russia, the intention being that this might help to improve US-Russian relations. The sequence was overturned when Platini swung a decision on a FIFA sub-committee by getting four European Football Associations to vote for Qatar.

Allowing Qatar to host the World Cup was ill-advised mainly because, like the other Gulf states—the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Kuwait—its economy relies on the exploitation of migrant workers. Roughly 30 million migrants are employed in the Middle East, the majority coming from Nepal, India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, but many also from Africa and Palestine. That many workers died in the construction of the stadiums testifies to the extent of the exploitation and to a social system based on extremes of wealth. The Middle East, of course, is not the only part of the world that gains from the cheap labour that economic migration flows generate.

None of this, however, is the fault of FIFA or its President. It would have been remiss of Infantino to pander to the moralising of the European Associations. His message that the Qatar World Cup now needed to be supported was indisputably correct in the circumstances.

### Football and the Power of Money

The stance being taken in Europe about

the corrupting effect of Qatari money begs a question. Has the power of money been kept in check by the affiliated national Football Associations that make up UEFA (Union of European Football Associations)? Obviously, the sport has been distorted and compromised by the enormous costs involved in putting together teams that can compete in the premier leagues. Obviously, the big money clubs gobble up the spoils—the revenue streams, talented players, public recognition, trophies—in the process pushing out smaller clubs that once represented a vibrant element in local communities. And, in recent decades, in England especially, the game has suffered a further blow in the spectacle of well-known clubs becoming playthings for billionaires.

The effects of the billionaire problem are nowhere more evident than in the recent history of Manchester United Football Club. When one of the biggest names in world football, Cristiano Ronaldo, stated as much in a recent interview, he was only stating what many fans have been agitating over for years.

Ownership is an issue in European football. However, there are shining exceptions. A clause in the regulations of the German Football League stipulates that in order to obtain a license to compete in the *Bundesliga*, "a club must either wholly- or majority- own its association football club" (the 50 plus 1 rule). Barcelona FC, famously, is wholly owned by the members of the club.

The notion that the 50 plus 1 rule, or ownership by the fans, could be introduced throughout Europe will be dismissed by some as overly idealistic—fair enough, but in that case maybe dispense with the moral superiority regarding Qatari money!

### A Skewed Discourse

The other reason for the outrage at Infantino's speech is the way that Qatar, by criminalising homosexuality and restricting the role of women, represents an affront to the West's LGBT agenda. Here again the discourse is being skewed by a large measure of humbug.

Even if the issues of sexual equality and freedom to express one's sexual orientation were being handled in a manner that avoided the polarisation that is actually happening; even if the nurture of children in social units conducive to their development as rounded individuals was being safeguarded; even if the LGBT agenda was simply concerned with the commendable objective of social inclusion; even in such favourable circumstances, it would behove the Western world to exercise tolerance in

relation to regions with different traditions.

But the LGBT bandwagon is not being handled well. It is being driven by a revolutionary ideology of which most of its proponents seem blissfully unaware. A question that should be asked of LGBT supporters is: how many of the works of Judith Butler have you read? Butler, assuredly one of the most influential thinkers in the West today, posits that the concept of gender must be decoupled from biological sex, hence the importance of the transgender cause, and she insists on being referred to by the pronoun, 'they'. The great enemy from her viewpoint is '*heteronormativity*': social life based on the complementarity of male and female.

If political or ideological movements can be judged by the way they conduct themselves, then the LGBT lobby must be seen as intolerant; it explicitly endorses the use of ostracisation and intimidation against individuals deemed to be homophobic or transphobic: in other words people who are not prepared to go along with the latest fads in political correctness. These tactics have been surprisingly effective. In areas like politics, the media, academia, education, or even the business world: being critical of this ideology is, at the very least, a bad career move. So, intimidatory tactics have allowed the lobby to grow from strength to strength.

It is telling that the individual who has taken a principled stand against transgenderism in the Irish school system, Enoch Burke, is a committed Christian. Under the '*group-think*' conditions that tend to prevail in present day society, it requires exceptional courage to defy the intimidating atmosphere that surrounds such issues. Burke is currently incarcerated in Mountjoy Prison for contempt of court. It is extraordinary that the school authorities could not have simply allowed him to opt out of the requirement to '*affirm*' students deciding to change gender.

A lot more could be said on this subject but the point here is that the West's LGBT agenda is a mess. Seeking to impose that mess on the world outside of Europe and North America through international events like the World Cup is at best a distraction and at worst a recipe for unnecessary polarisation. Will every major sporting event from now on have to pass an LGBT/feminist 'correctness' test? International sport, in that case, is unlikely to last another decade.

Yet the picture arising from this World

Cup is not altogether depressing. Outbreaks of common sense have happened here and there. In an interview with the news agency, AFP, reproduced on the Irish sports website, [www.the42.ie](http://www.the42.ie), French captain Hugo Lloris defended his decision to avoid wearing armbands or getting involved in LGBT protests. He made the following comments:

"When we welcome foreign visitors to France, we often would like them to respect our rules and our culture. I will do the same when I go to Qatar."

"This [wanting the focus to remain on the football] will allow us to avoid having to answer questions on this before and during the competition because there comes a point where you have to keep the focus on the football rather than expend energy on things that are not our responsibility," he told AFP. ([www.the42.ie](http://www.the42.ie), *France captain Hugo Lloris will not wear anti-discrimination armband in Qatar*)

Even the *Irish Times* recently carried an opinion piece headed, "*Why we cannot resist identity politics and succumb to populism*" (Colm Keena, 26 November). Keena's very tame article showed that, even within the liberal camp, awareness is growing that the simplistic thought processes of identity politics can inflame primitive *us versus them* emotions.

## FIFA's Function

In the Western narrative, an unbreakable association between the words 'FIFA' and 'corruption' has developed, so that the Federation is invariably referred to disparagingly. From the time that João Havelange won the Presidency in 1974, bribery has been a part of FIFA's organisational culture. Football supporters outside of Europe, however, might see that development differently from the football Establishment in Europe.

Havelange was the first non-European to become President and he won the position by canvassing the support of developing nations. He promised to expand the number of teams allowed in the World Cup Finals from 16 to 32, and to arrange for a Youth World Cup, to be hosted outside of Europe, and he has duly delivered.

Havelange needed finance to develop his programme for the Federation and to that end made sponsorship agreements with Adidas and Coca Cola. In that initiative he was advised by the British entrepreneur, Patrick Nally, known as the pioneer of sports marketing. Notwithstanding the accusations of bribery, the

model developed by Havelange and Nally was subsequently adopted as the financial model for all global sporting federations.

FIFA's basic function, as outlined in its organisational Statutes, is to grow Association Football internationally by making it accessible to everyone, and advocating for integrity and fair play in the sport. It is also responsible for the World Cup, the Youth World Cup and, from 1991, the Women's World Cup. Under the Presidencies of Havelange, Sepp Blatter, and Gianni Infantino, it has largely fulfilled those functions and responsibilities. Like that of Havelange, Blatter's tenure in the job became mired in controversy due to accusations of bribery, but an element of scepticism regarding such accusations is justified.

FIFA is unusual in having an international reach comparable to the United Nations; it has more Association members than the UN has member states. Within the FIFA Congress, each National Association has one vote, regardless of its size or footballing strength. In that way it is more democratic than the UN. The Federation is not hostile to Western Powers, such as the US and Britain (its records are stored in Manchester), but it is outside of their control.

When proceedings were initiated against FIFA in 2015, they were taken by US federal prosecutors through the US legal system. In 2013 the Palestinian Football Association began a campaign against its Israeli counterpart on the grounds that the Israeli authorities were restricting the movements of Palestinian players. Blatter wished to mediate in the dispute but considered that Israel should make a conciliatory move. At the time he wrote in the FIFA magazine:

"The onus in this respect is on Israel with its outstanding infrastructure, fully functioning professional league and economic context," (AFP, 15 May 2015 retrieved from the Times of Israel website)

When fourteen FIFA officials were arrested, Blatter's position became untenable, and in June 2015 he resigned. Under his watch Federation officials had clearly accepted bribes but the coincidence of the resignation with Blatter's intervention in an Israel-Palestine dispute is curious to say the least. A final point worth noting is that after seven years of litigation in the Swiss legal system Blatter and Michel Platini were eventually cleared of fraud in July 2022.

Dave Alvey



## Paul Mason And Sinn Fein ?

“*How To Stop Fascism*”, by Paul Mason (Penguin, 2021), makes no mention of Ireland. I read it because I understood that Mason had become a mentor of Sinn Fein, and because Ireland was the one place in Europe where Fascism was stopped by the system of party-political democracy and was compelled to operate within it.

Is there a better way of stopping Fascism than by subordinating it to the system that it tried to overthrow?

It might be said that in Britain too Fascism was stopped by the democratic resistance, but in the moment of crisis in 1931 the British Democracy protected itself by suspending the action of its political parties. In view of the essential part played by the conflict of political parties in the states that are recognised as democracies, the British suspension of party-politics from 1931 to 1945 must be seen at least as a feint in the direction of Fascism as a means of warding it off!

I was aware of Paul Mason only as a member of the British media elite. He appeared regularly on BBC’s *Newsnight*, as its radical.

The British media elite, stretches across the spectrum, being next-door to Fascism at one end and next door to Bolshevism at the other. It is to that extent representative of British democracy and helps to keep the democracy functional.

Knowing Mason only by his television performances, I saw him as an expression of the kind of Leftism that brought the working class movement to disaster in the era of Arthur Scargill and Margaret Thatcher. I was surprised to hear that Sinn Fein had taken him as a political adviser.

His *Wikipedia* entry makes no mention of a Sinn Fein connection, but other sources suggest that he was on close terms with it.

### FASCISM IN EUROPE

Central Europe was forcefully democratised in 1919. It was set up as a series of nation-states in the form of party-political democracies, in a general medium intense party-political antagonism, by the victorious Powers in the Great War, in which Britain was the directing force. Traditional authority was broken as new states were set up in place of rival Empires to the

British Empire—entities which Britain abolished, while preserving and enlarging its own Empire.

Those new States were not set up by their own national efforts in struggle against their Empires. They were Anglo-French constructions, with *Anglo* as the dominant term. They were isolated republics who appeared on the instant at the will of the Versailles Conference. They had no political history relevant to statehood. The only forceful assertion of national independence made during the Great Imperialist War was made in Ireland: but, since the British Empire won the War, the Irish—the best-prepared for statehood—were not allowed to be a Republic.

The series of mushroom republics, with inadequate national development behind them, and no preparatory experience of statecraft, were unable to sustain the democracy in the form of party-political antagonism that was conferred on them. Many of them therefore sought to override destructive party-political conflict by establishing national authority in some other form.

European culture was in disarray. Britain, an off-shore island with a world Empire—which had withdrawn from Europe four centuries earlier but intervened in its affairs from the outside for its own purposes—had pretended that its purpose in entering the European War of July 1914 in August 1914 was to save European culture from—from the danger posed to it by the German march through Belgium.

James Connolly ridiculed the British posturing as saviour of Europe. And European culture, insofar as it can be said to have existed, was destroyed by the combination of the way Britain made war and the way it made peace.

European culture was a combination of various elements. The War, prolonged and fundamentalised by Britain, unleashed those elements. In the new, brittle, party-political democracies of the new republics, they were influenced by the class war culture of the Russian Revolution. The issue for Europe was whether it was to be capitalist or communist. The Communist Parties were unable to dominate the situation, but the bourgeois democratic parties could not dominate it either.

These were the circumstances in which the fascist form of politics emerged. Fascism restored State authority by abolishing the rival political parties and establishing class collaboration in place of class war. By this means it preserved the capitalist order in the economy and a diluted form of European culture along with it.

Fascism suppressed the rival parties by drawing much of their strength to itself, rather than by police action against them. The power of police to suppress the democratic political structure remained limited until Fascism had drawn much of the strength from the democratic political parties to itself by means of its class collaborationist strategy.

The doctrine of the Russian Revolution was International Socialism. Fascism was a variety of National Socialism. The Bolshevik position was that European society had resolved itself into a fundamental antagonism of classes—the capitalist class and the industrial proletariat generated by Capitalism. Government in those circumstances could only be a dictatorship of one class or the other. Progressive movement was possibly only under a dictatorship of the proletariat. The fascist strategy of establishing a national socialist collaboration of classes was therefore impossible, and the attempt to realise it would be reactionary and barbaric.

That was the understanding which guided anti-Fascist propaganda in the first instance. And the Communist International exerted very considerable influence intellectually, far beyond the actual membership of the Communist Parties in the 1920s and 1930s—an influence that could still be felt in the 1950s.

Underlying that understanding was Marx’s slogan: *Workers of the world unite: you have nothing to lose but your chains!* Lenin held strictly to that slogan. James Connolly, who had knocked around in many Marxist regions, was however a national socialist. His expressed sense of European affinity was with Pilsudski’s Polish Socialist Party, which was clearly national socialist and was condemned by Lenin.

In 1914 Connolly was prepared to take part in European action against the War, in accordance with the Resolutions of the *Second International*. When the Second International did not even attempt to launch class war against the War launched by the capitalist Empires, and the working classes of the various countries rallied to the national cause, he was not traumatised.

He immediately began preparations for his own national war, and he joined forces with the national bourgeoisie for it.

This was something that was put to me in the mid-1960s in West Belfast by members of the 'Communist Party, Northern Ireland', who were uneasy about the streamlining of Connolly into a Leninist by Desmond Greaves of the Communist Party of Great Britain (and the Connolly Association). They didn't quite know what to make of him.

Connolly, like Stalin, was an actual worker. Stalin—who lived for a while in Austria—does not seem to have believed in the actual existence of the idealised *working class* of the Marxist intelligentsia. Neither did Connolly, it seems. He accepted matter-of-factly that workers were heavily bound by national ties. And, in September 1914, he aligned himself with the German War Socialists on the ground that a German victory over the British assault would bring about the best result for the working classes of Europe.

Some Comintern theorists appear to have worked themselves into the idea that nations were an artificial combination of classes, and that Capitalism had been constructed by putting classes together. But, as far as I could see, the nation—the society—was prior to its components. Capitalist development brought about differentiation into the various components required by its functioning. The components were organically related to each other.

It was the rupture of that organic relationship by the Great War, by its totalitarian conduct by Britain, and by the doctrinaire peace—and also by the hothouse democracies which it established—that was abnormal. And what the fascist development did, by chaotic methods, was restore a degree of normal life. At any rate, Fascism was widely experienced as a return to normality.

Fascism was the political response to Communism at a moment when Communism seemed to be poised to dominate Europe. It was class collaboration in the "corporate state", which warded off the dictatorship of the proletariat. It was a dictatorship in the capitalist interest which was made functional by borrowings from Socialism.

It was pioneered by Mussolini who was a revolutionary socialist before 1914 but who merged socialism and militant nationalism in 1914 and helped to carry

Italy into the War on the British side for the purpose of expanding the territory of the Italian state.

Mussolini formed his nationalist/socialist combination into the Fascist Party in the post-War crisis in Italy, and established the fascist dictatorship. Democracy, in the form of party-political antagonism, proved to be unsustainable in the new European states, and they followed the Italian pattern.

#### AN ANTI-FASCIST!

Paul Mason's book has the title, *How To Stop Fascism*.

It was in fact stopped by the force against which it had been constructed as an aggressive defence: Communism.

The Europe of the *League of Nations* became fascist. Fascist Europe invaded Communist Europe and was destroyed by it.

The United States established a military presence in Western Europe after the power of Fascism had been stopped in Russia and was being driven back. Europe was divided between the Communist Great Power and the Capitalist Great Power.

The Capitalist Great Power took Western Europe in hand, and under its hegemony capitalist democracy in the form of party-political antagonism was made functional. Capitalist Europe and Communist Europe pressed against each other for 45 years, until Communist Europe gave way. Capitalist Europe remained subservient to its creator, the US, which continued to maintain a military presence on the Continent.

The World War in which Fascism was stopped was launched by Britain.

It was not a war against Fascism, though it sometimes advertised itself as such. Two Fascist States which declared themselves neutral in the War (Spain and Portugal) were not interfered with. They were included in the post-War western alliance against Communism, ran their course, and evolved into democracies.

Britain was an active supporter of Fascist Germany until 1939, enabling it to break all the military disabilities imposed on Germany by the Versailles Conference. Its sudden change of front in 1939 has never been explained in anything but schoolboy terms.

The most explicit supporter of Fascism in British governing circles was Winston Churchill. In January 1927, as a Cabinet Minister, he went to Rome to do homage to Mussolini and praise Fascism as a defence of Western civilisation.

And, after he had been made the heroic leader in the 'Anti-Fascist War', he made it clear that he had always regarded Communism as the main enemy of all that he stood for, and that he saw the second war on Germany as an aberration brought about by Foreign Office bungling.

None of this will be found in Paul Mason's book. That is entirely understandable. Members of the British elite do not soil their own nest. And, of course, he does not deal with Irish Fascism. It was Treatyite—i.e., British oriented.

The Treatyite faction in Sinn Féin, which made a deal with Britain in December 1921 and was installed by Britain as the Provisional Government of Southern Ireland in January 1922, destroyed the elected Republican system of 1919-1921. It displayed certain symptoms of Fascism from the start. In December 1922, in order to break the will of the Opposition, it took four leaders of the IRA from prison, where they had been for six months, and killed them.

I have seen this described as *judicial murder*, but there was no pretence of judicial process about it.

It was a deliberate act of terror carried out by the members of the Cabinet on people who had not only been their political colleagues a year earlier, but had been close personal friends.

Justice Minister Kevin O'Higgins killed Rory O'Connor who had recently been the best man at his wedding. He did it for reasons of State. The event might be described as Ireland's *Night Of The Long Knives*.

It was done a couple of days after the assassins had ceased to be members of the Provisional Government and had been installed as the Government of the Free State—their period of apprenticeship under Whitehall ended.

For ten years they governed with *Law and Order* as their motto. For the second half of that period they were under Republican political pressure. Their act of terror had failed to establish the Free State as a dominant moral force. The IRA dumped arms a few months later, with no thought of surrender.

Part of it formed itself into a Republican electoral party, while the other part worked on retaining military force as a back-up.

Once the terror ended, Republican sentiment revived strongly in the country. The Treatyites tried to prevent it from getting representatives in the Dail by obliging

candidates for election to take the Treaty Oath, but that didn't work.

In 1932 the Treaty Government lost the Election to an alliance of Fianna Fail and Labour. In 1933 Fianna Fail gained an outright majority.

The Treaty Party praised itself for not preventing the transfer of power by force. There were reasons, other than democratic principle, why it would have been imprudent for it to do so. If it had made the attempt, there would have been a real Civil War—a civil war to which Britain was not a party. Britain was in the political doldrums at the time, incapable of acting decisively on matters which were of much great importance to it than keeping its Irish proxy in Office. And the IRA was ready for battle again.

But, after Fianna Fail won the 1933 General Election outright, the Treatyites launched a movement to abolish the Parliamentary system. They formed a new Party, a merger with a 'centrist' West British group. The new party was called *Fine Gael*. It had a Fascist programme. And Michael Collins' successor as leader of the Treaty Party in the 'Civil War', W.T. Cosgrave, raised his arm in the Fascist salute.

Revisionist ideologists of later times have argued that *Fine Gael* was not really Fascist because it did not establish a Fascist order. And Professor Tom Garvin, in his epoch-making book, *1922: The Birth Of Irish Democracy*, went as far as saying that the real Fascist party in Ireland was the anti-Fascist party, Fianna Fail!

But *Fine Gael's* Fascism was in earnest. And some of the best academic talent of the Treatyites went into it. It had its uni-formed mass movement. And its shock forces tried to prevent Fianna Fail from conducting public meetings with bully-boy tactics.

It failed because it was held on the streets by the IRA, and because De Valera was an earnest and competent Parliamentarian. He had been so in 1921-2, when others played fast and loose with Parliament, and he proved his quality in the 1930s.

The Fascist rationale, as put by Professor Hogan in *Could Ireland Become Communist?*, was that De Valera was the Krensky of the Irish situation. He was a kind of 'front man' of the IRA, which was Communist. He served a momentary purpose for the Communists and would be brushed aside when he was no longer useful.

If that had been the reality of things, Ireland might have become a State of the normal European kind in the mid-1930s, instead of being the odd man out: the party-political democracy that subordinated the Fascist movement to the Parliamentary system.

Southern Sinn Fein knows nothing about all of this, and apparently does not wish to know.

Sinn Fein in the North is a product of War and it knows why there was a war. It has memory. Sinn Fein in the South is a forgetful development. Although it would not exist but for what happened in the North, it has no curiosity about it. And, as to what happened in the South before the other day—forget about that!

It is in that respect entirely representative of the society at which it is at the moment the biggest political party.

In the days of Rory O'Brady it kept alive some sense of history. O'Brady was moved aside half-way through the War in the North—which, as I recall, he had declared in the Summer of 1970—and the War focussed on a secondary aim in which it could succeed. The requirements of the War, and of consolidating the Peace within the general framework of communal antagonism, gave meaning and purpose to Sinn Fein activity there. But Sinn Fein in the South is a mushroom growth which sprang up after O'Brady had been set aside with nothing to replace his view of things. It based itself on the fashion of ultra-liberalism in the fleeting present.

I know nothing about its relationship with Paul Mason, except that it exists and that it is in tune with him in denouncing the Russian State's response to the process of Ethnic Cleansing directed by the Government of the Ukrainian Nationalist *coup d'etat* of 1914 against the elected President and subsequent campaign of *Gleich-schaltung* against the national minority in the eastern Ukraine.

Mason has put out a statement: *Ukraine: Outline Of A Marxist Position: It's Time For The Left To Break With Stalinism For Good.*

Where on earth is there 'Stalinism' in Europe today?

The British Left broke with Stalinism a very long time ago. It did so at first by supporting "Leninist democracy" against it, only to find that Leninist Democracy was an illusion, or an evasion, or a self-deception.

The Russian State too broke with Stalinism, on the ground of Leninism, and all-but

destroyed itself. Its historians in the 1990s, seeking to rediscover the era of Leninist democracy, were driven to the conclusion that Stalin carried out Lenin's programme, in the State system constructed by Lenin, in accordance with Lenin's methods.

Putin also broke with Stalinism and, like Gorbachev, bought into the idealism of Western (i.e., American) liberalism. But Western idealism is understood in one way within the West, and it is understood in an altogether different way in Western relations with others.

It destroys states which try to follow its practice, instead of doing what it tells them.

Putin discovered this in his efforts to keep a Russian State in being amidst the chaos of the oligarchic democracy, supported and exploited by the West. And, because he succeeded in keeping the State functional, he began to be described by the West as Stalinist.

His ideology was not Stalinist. His framework of action was not Stalinist. And he did not have the means of acting which Stalin inherited from Lenin.

Putin had to live with the capitalist oligarchs created by Yeltsin's anarchic democracy—pseudo-capitalists who had not clawed their way up through the market, but had taken possession of the public goods of a crumbling State—while finding ways of preserving the State and enabling it to assert authority over them.

He was called a *Stalinist* because he succeeded in restoring State authority, not by a *coup* but by gradual reform, and thereby restored national economy. *Stalinism* in this usage has the meaning of effective statecraft not approved of by the USA.

He did not learn from Stalin things about State affairs that he might have learned. He has had to learn them from experience.

He has learned a lot very recently, and has possibly come to understand that it was not by accident that Stalin, acting defensively, won the greatest War ever fought.

Mason says in this document that the present War in the Ukraine is part of a "systemic conflict between two allied militarised capitalist dictatorships and the liberal democratic West", and that this aspect of it is what matters. The liberal democratic West is capitalist too. But:

"There is nothing intrinsic to Western capitalism that says, always and forever, that it will remain liberal-democratic. However, right now that is what it is".



Therefore Russian action in the Ukraine should be opposed and anti-Russian measures of various kinds strengthened.

In his book on Fascism he gives the impression of believing that the liberal-democratic West is in a process of transition towards Fascism. If it is, will what it is doing with regard to the Ukraine retard or accelerate that Fascist development?

The document makes no explicit comment on the 2013-14 events in the Ukraine. But, in his book on Fascism, published in 2021, Mason discusses *A Far-Right Militia In Brazil*, and mentions an armed group led by Sara Winter, which launched a vigorous protest against the Supreme Court—

“over its attempts to investigate President Bolsonaro for interference in a police investigation concerning his business dealings”.

“Winter’s avowed aim was to ‘Ukrainize’ Brazil—that is, to overthrow its Congress and Supreme Court in a revolution modelled on the Euromaidan protest of 2013” (p11).

The “*Euromaidan protest*” was directed against an elected Government in Kiev which decided to negotiate trade deals with both the EU and Russia. The EU demanded that the Ukraine should have an exclusive trade deal with itself, and it incited mass protest in the Ukraine, and took an active part in it.

A Ukrainian nationalist force emerged from the woodwork and became a fascist presence in the protest. The EU tried to row back, but the USA said “*Fuck the EU*”, and urged the protest forward to an overthrow of the elected Government and the forming of a Government with fascist components which immediately launched an attack on the Russian population in the state, which defended itself as best it could.

The Russian State intervened in support of the Russian resistance, and it annexed the Crimea by means of a Referendum. This is now referred to as an unprovoked Russian attack on the Ukraine.

Mason makes no reference in his Internet document to his published reference to the “*Euromaidan protest*” in 1921. But, immediately after the passage I quoted about Western Capitalism being liberal democratic “*just now*”, he writes:

“A vivid example of the practical implications was provided by the Donbas miners’ union, whose leaders I met in Kyiv 18 days ago. When the separatists seized the Donbas, they asset stripped the mines, shut most of them down, banned the independent miners’ union, kidnapped and tortured its members. As a

result many of them fled to the Ukrainian side of the border. [I assume he means the border between the Donbas region and the rest of Ukraine.] Little wonder then, that on the first day of the war its members were ringing the HQ to say: “we’ve run away once before, this time we fight”...”

This is in accordance with what is said on the British and Irish State media about Russia having launched an unprovoked attack on liberal-democratic Ukraine in 2014. But I have never heard it said on the mainstream media that Putin destroyed the Miners’ Union, and the mines, in the Donbas in 2014 and that the surviving miners’ leaders are now active in the Ukrainian effort to recover the territory it lost in 2014. It is puzzling that the BBC has kept quiet about it!

This is also puzzling:

“It [support for Ukraine] does not mean uncritically supporting the Zelensky government, or its privatisation strategy, or its alliances with Ukrainian oligarchs, or its anti-democratic laws. It means turning the resistance into a movement for social justice in the new Ukraine...”

In effect this is a call to support Zelensky against Putin as a way of overthrowing both. It is reminiscent of Trotsky in 1941 declaring that the Fourth International would deliver crushing blows against both the Stalinists and the Nazis.

Is Zelensky in alliance with the oligarchs? What evidence is that that he has any power base of his own?

Putin ended the era of oligarchic freedom in Russia by restoring the authority of the State. That was called “*subverting democracy*”.

The era of democracy in Russia was the era of oligarchic rivalry and social disintegration. The preconditions of democracy in England were established by independent aristocrats in the 18th century who emerged from the wars of the 17th century and who formed themselves into a ruling class. The oligarchs who sprang into being when the Soviet State crumbled in the hands of Gorbachov were not aristocrats, but neither were they capitalists in a bourgeois sense. They were not even *laissez faire* capitalists of the kind produced by the 1832 Reform in England, because they had not even sought freedom through political agitation. They had no environment at home. Some British *literati* of the late 1990s expected them to generate a new Russian culture, such as appeared

in aristocratic England, but there was no real possibility of it.

Their large properties needed a capitalist environment in order to become capital. They found it abroad, in the US and UK. And, in the Ukrainian region of the former Soviet Union no domestic political force of nationhood arose to obstruct them.

The Ukraine had no idea of itself as a State. It had never been a State, except as part of the Soviet Union. Moscow enrolled it in the United Nations as a state in 1945 but the reality of statehood in the Soviet Union was the all-Union Communist Party. And, when Ukraine was made independent in 1991, it had no real sense of itself as a nation.

Ukrainian nationalism had been anti-Semitic and anti-Russia, and—to a considerable extent, anti-Russia because it was anti-Semitic. It had taken part, in alliance with Nazi Germany, in the great ethnic cleansing of Jews out of the Ukraine—which had been their homeland—in 1941-44. That national movement rumbled on for a while after the defeat of Germany but, by the mid 1950s, it seemed to have been scotched. It reappeared in Maidan Square in 2014. Europe was briefly shocked by it, but the USA said *Fuck the EU*, and it became a force in government. Authentic nationalism, shepherded by the United States, began to determine the course of events.

The exterminationist anti-Semitic activity of Ukrainian nationalism on its first appearance in 1918, and on its re-appearance in 1941, is never mentioned on the mainstream media. Paul Mason too is silent about it. But it is evident that it was the reappearance of that nationalism in 2014, with American backing, that produced the present situation. The spirit of Bandera has returned.

Brendan Clifford

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## Oscar Wilde

Wellington once said, when commented on about being born in Dublin: "*Being born in a stable doesn't make one a horse*". Well, it didn't make him a Jesus either. The history of the Battle of Waterloo, on the continental mainland of Europe puts the Prussian General Gebhard Blucher as saving Wellington from defeat.

Thus Wellington lived two lies. In his imagination he wasn't born in Dublin. The second lie is put more finely with him reported as leading the armies that defeated Napoleon, which included the Prussian General.

Wellington's claim puts the population of England living a fantasy, living in denial. Much of what is termed the Anglo-Irish, born in a stable, hasn't even given them horse sense (common sense).

Except, of course, Oscar Wilde. He was influenced by the thinking of Pyotr Alexeyevitch Kropotkin, a Russian historian, born in 1842, and died in 1921, so, he would have witnessed the Bolshevik Revolution. His main work is: *The Conquest of Bread and Fields, Factories and Workshops*. Wilde was very much influenced by him. He wrote *The Soul of Man under Socialism* as the result of his reading. Though his works can't be thought of as socialist, they were driven by his political ideas.

He was sophisticated enough, as a playwright, not to show the engine that drove his satire on the hypocrisy of the English upper class. His mockery of some of the characters showed an Irish humour that an English audience usually loves: and thus he passed their test. But there were others who detected that his humour could be hostile to their class. D. H. Lawrence, in his preface to one of his novels mentions the wrath some of the London bourgeoisie had for Wilde, (without giving his name away) calling him "*a Dublin street rat*".

A short essay, put out by the website Grades Fixer, has this to say about one of Wilde's theatre plays:

"Oscar Wilde frames *The Importance of Being Earnest* around the paradoxical epigram, a skewering metaphor for the play's central theme of the division of truth and identity that hints at a homosexual subtext. Other targets of Wilde's absurd yet grounded wit are the social conventions of his stuffy Victorian

society which he exposed as a 'shallow mask of manners'. Aided by clever wordplay, frantic misunderstanding, and dissonance of knowledge between the characters and an audience, devices that are now staples of cotemporary theatre and situation comedy.

" 'Earnest' suggests that especially in 'civilised society' we all lead double lives that force upon us a variety of postures, an idea with which the closeted Wilde was understandingly obsessed."

His father was Sir William Wills Robert Wilde, FRCI, (March 1815 - April 1876) an oto-ophthalmologic surgeon and the author of significant works on medicine. He was born at Kilkeevin, Castlereagh, County Roscommon, the youngest of the three sons and two daughters of a prominent local medical practitioner, Thomas Wills Wilde, and his wife Amelia Flynnne. His family were members of the Church of Ireland. He was descended from a Dutchman, Colonel de Wilde, who went to Ireland with King William of Orange's invading troops in 1690.

Sir William Wilde, in 1837, embarked on a eight-month-cruise to the Holy Land with a recovering patient, visiting various cities and islands throughout the Mediterranean.

He visited Egypt. Back in Ireland, he published an article in the *Dublin University Magazine* suggesting that that one of *Cleopatra's Needles* be transported to England. Eventually, in 1878, one of the *Needles* was nicked and taken to London. Another one was brought to New York's Central Park.

He was awarded his knighthood more for his involvement with the Irish census than for his medical contributions. He had been appointed medical commissioner to the Irish Census in 1841. The Great Irish 'Famine' was from 1845 to 1851. It's difficult to find anything on his involvement in the statistics for the dead, and the true number dead, which is still being investigated to this present day.

He married the poet Jane Francesca Agnes Elgee on 12th November, 1851. She wrote and published under the pseudonym of *Speranza* (the Italian for hope). She believed she had some Italian background. The couple had two sons, Oscar and

William (Willie), and a daughter Isola Francesca, who died in childhood.

In addition to these children he was the father of three children born out of wedlock, of different mothers. He acknowledged them and paid for their education. They were brought up by his relatives.

His reputation suffered later when Mary Travers, a long-term patient of his claimed she had been seduced by him. She crudely wrote a pamphlet which parodied him and his wife as *Doctor and Mrs. Quilp*, portraying Dr. Quilp as the rapist of a female patient anaesthetised under chloroform.

She distributed the pamphlets outside the building where he was about to give a public lecture. Wilde's wife complained to Mary's father, which resulted in Mary bringing a libel case against her. Mary Travers won her case but was awarded a mere farthing in damages by the jury. Legal costs of £2,000 were awarded against Lady Wilde. The case was the talk of Dublin.

William Wilde's refusal to enter the witness box during the trial was widely held against him as ungentlemanly behaviour. As a result of this case Wilde began to withdraw from Dublin to the West of Ireland where he ordered a house to be built for him overlooking Lough Corrib in Connemara, County Galway. He died aged 61 in 1876 and is buried in Mount Jerome Cemetery, Dublin.

Oscar's mother, Jane Francesca Agnes (nee) Elgee, 27 December, 1821 to February 1896, was a supporter of the nationalist movement. She had a special interest in Irish folktales, which her husband helped to gather. Jane was the last of the four children of Charles Elgee, a Wexford solicitor, and his wife Sara, (nee Kingsbury, d. 1851).

Her father died when she was three years old which meant she was largely self-educated. Even so, she is said to be have mastered 10 languages by the age of 18. She claimed that her great-grandfather was an Italian who had come to Wexford in the 18th century, but the Elgees were descended from Durham labourers in England.

On 12th November, 1851 she married Sir William Wilde in St Peter's Church in Dublin. Her eldest son Willie became a journalist and poet. When her husband died in 1876, the family discovered that he was virtually bankrupt. She joined her sons Oscar and Willie in London in 1879, where she made a name for herself in literary circles.

She lived with her older son, Willie, in

poverty, supplementing their meagre income by writing for fashionable magazines and producing books based on the research of her late husband into Irish folklore.

She wrote several books including *Ancient Legends, Mystic Charms and Superstitions of Ireland* (1887). Her poems are said to have influenced her son Oscar's own work. For example, his *Ballad of Reading Gaol* has been compared to her poem *The Brothers*: it is based on a true story of a trial and execution during the 1798 Rebellion. In January, 1896, Jane contracted bronchitis, and as she slowly died, asked for permission to see Oscar in Reading Gaol. Her request was refused. She died at her home, 146 Oakley Street, Chelsea on 3rd February, 1896, and is buried in Kensal Green Cemetery in London. The funeral was paid for by Oscar as Willie was penniless. She is buried anonymously in common ground without a headstone. (*Common ground* is a polite description for a pauper's grave. If Oscar paid for her funeral, then I don't understand why she ended up like this, not unless Willie stole the money.)

In 1996 she was memorialised in the form of a plaque on the grave of her husband in Dublin as

"Speranza of the Nation, translator, poet, and nationalist, author of works on Irish folklore, advocate of equality for women, and founder of a leading literary salon."

In 1999 a monument to her, in the form of a Celtic cross, was erected at Kensal Green Cemetery in London by the *Oscar Wilde Society*. It is located at grid square 147, Cambridge Avenue South (near Canalside), set back 20 metres from the curved path—opposite SQ. 148.

If Jane Wilde wrote for the *Young Ireland Movement* of the 1840s and published poems in *The Nation* under the pseudonym of *Speranza*, with Gavan Duffy as Editor, then she was bound to run into trouble when she wrote calling for armed revolution in Ireland.

The Dublin authorities closed the paper and brought Gavan Duffy to court, but he refused to name the author of the article. *Speranza* reputedly stood up in court and claimed responsibility. Her confession was ignored and *The Nation* was shut down permanently.

She invited the suffragist Millicent Fawcett to her home to speak on female liberty. She praised the passing of the married *Women's Property Act* of 1883, which prevented a woman from having to enter marriage "*as a bond slave, disenfranchised of all right over her fortune*".

Willie Wilde, the older brother, and Oscar were sent to board at the Portora Royal School at Enniskillen, County Fermanagh, where he became known for his good humour and friendliness, being described by a classmate as clever, if erratic, and full of vitality. Oscar became known as '*Grey Crow*', which he disliked, while Willie was '*Blue Blood*'.

Willie was an accomplished pianist. He was said to be more successful at studying than his brother, and became an honour to the school. Willie then entered Trinity College, Dublin; his brother followed later, where they shared a room. He became editor of the College magazine called *Kat-tabos*, in which his first poetry appeared.

After graduating Oscar studied law and was called to the Irish Bar, but never practised law. When his father died in 1876, and it was discovered he was on the edge of bankruptcy, he and his mother moved to London, where, as a journalist, he became the drama critic for *Punch* and *Vanity Fair*, and a leader writer for the *Daily Telegraph*.

He was a regular guest at the Fielding Club, which opened its doors at 8 pm and remained open all night. The club was famous for its grills and its brandy. Its tripe and onions was a special draw on a Saturday night. Members there included Henry Irving, Herbert Beerbohm Tree, and his brother Oscar.

At the time of Oscar's marriage in 1884, Willie was heavily in debt and drinking heavily. He married a wealthy widow, Mrs. Frank Leslie, the owner of a publishing company in New York. The marriage didn't last and within a year his wife was suing for divorce on the grounds of his constant drunkenness, while they were living in New York.

On his return to London in early 1892 he found his brother to be the toast-of-the-town for his successful play, *Lady Windermere's Fan*. One reviewer wrote that the play was brilliantly unoriginal but the dialogue was uniformly right, bright, graceful and flowing. Oscar suspected his brother had written this review under a different pseudonym.

In his next play: *A Woman of No Importance*, a character says: "*After a good dinner, one can forgive anybody, even one's own relations*". By now Willie was in serious financial difficulties and Oscar began giving him money but a bad feeling between the brothers started when Oscar discovered he was pestering their mother for money, even though she wasn't very well off. In January, 1894, Willie married Sophie Lily Lees. The marriage caused

further distress for Willie's mother as both of them moved in with her. Sophie had £50 a year from her family, which was just about enough to buy her clothes, so she couldn't contribute to the household while Willie lived in constant poverty. On top of this Sophie gave birth to a daughter.

Oscar was no longer talking to Willie and their mother couldn't reconcile them. Willie didn't meet his brother after his release from Reading Gaol in 1897. On 13th March 1899, Willie died aged 46 from complications relating to alcohol. Oscar said of him, after been written to from Paris:

"I suppose it had been expected for some time. Between him and me there had been, as you know, wide chasms for many years. Requiescat in Pace".

Willie's widow remarried in 1900 to a Dutch-born translator.

While in prison, for homosexual practises, Oscar wrote *De Profundis* (Latin for *Out of the Depths*) a mighty letter of 50,000 words. It was edited and published posthumously in 1905. Its title are the first two words of *Psalms 130*, and used as part his Catholic funeral service. While in prison from 1895 to 1897, he had written this impassioned letter to his lover Alfred Lord Douglas. He rails against Douglas's selfishness and extravagances but doesn't forget to turn a cold eye on his own behaviour, including his lack of loyalty caused by his sexual relations with other males.

The Governor of Reading Gaol thought it better, in the end, to calm down Wilde. He had been breaking the rules on a regular basis and was punished for that. He let him write. Each page he wrote he took from Wilde. On his release he gave him the full letter. He and Douglas never saw one another again.

Having spent the remainder of his shortened life in Paris, he lies buried in Pere Lachaise Cemetery, Paris: where also lie Chopin, Moliere, Edith Piaf, and Rossini, along with another 100 or so famous people. Also there is the *Communard's Wall*, against which 147 Communards were, taken out of two prisons and shot by a French Army firing squad, during the *Semaine Sanglante* (The Bloody Week).

In 1908 Wilde's literary executor chose Jacob Epstein for the commission of a tomb at a cost of two thousand pounds, which had been donated anonymously for that purpose. The monument began as a 20-ton block of Hopton Wood Stone in Derbyshire, which was brought to Epstein's Cheyne Walk studio in Chelsea,



London. The finished work was unveiled to the press in June 1912. Epstein devised a vast winged figure of a messenger swiftly moving with vertical wings, giving the feeling of vertical flight, but many read into it that this was a portrait of Oscar Wilde. Women visitors were inclined to kiss the sculpture, leaving their lip-stick on the sculpture. In 1961 someone knocked off its testicles. It is said the cemetery manager used them as paperweights but they were never found. In 2000, Leon Johnston, a multi-media artist, installed silver prosthesis. After 2009, a barrier was erected around the sculpture to protect it from the lipstick kisses, which were discolouring the stone, and to keep at bay the would-be castrators.

An epitaph reads:

"And alien tears will fill for him  
Pity's long broken urn,  
For his mourners will be outcast men,  
And outcasts always mourn."  
(from the Ballad Of Reading Gaol)

This is not only the story of Oscar Wilde but an acknowledgement of his sister who died as a child; his father, humiliated by his own sex exploits and bankruptcy; of Willie, his brother, who died youngish from alcoholism; and of his mother, Jane, who ended up in a pauper's grave.

You could call it the ruination of the Wilde family, but Oscar gave them immortality whilst other such privileged families in the Ireland of the past will have disappeared forever.

Wilson John Haire, 23.10.2022

## MEETING REPORT

### 'Rehabilitating Peter Hart'

#### 'Ethnic Cleansing from Bosnia to Belfast via West Cork'

At the Teachers' Club Dublin on 11th November, Niall Meehan spoke on two essays just published by the Aubane Historical Society. They critique Eve Morrison's new book on the Kilmichael Ambush.

The Ambush took place on 28th November 1920, during the Irish War of Independence. That day the IRA answered the counter-insurgency Auxiliary Division of the RIC, a military force.

Under Tom Barry's command, 16 Auxiliaries lay dead, one was left for dead, while another who escaped was later executed.

A week earlier in Dublin, Britain's Intelligence network was decimated by Michael Collins' 'squad'. The day became known as 'Bloody Sunday' when, that afternoon, Crown forces retaliated by killing fourteen people randomly at a football match in Croke Park. In the evening three IRA suspects in Dublin Castle were tortured and executed, allegedly while trying to escape.

Those paragraphs summarise what happened on 21st and 28th November 1920.

That's history.

As Meehan explained, that is not how revisionist historians see it. For them, executed British spies were not really 'spies' and the Auxiliaries were the massacred prisoners. Tom Barry was a liar and, in Eve Morrison's new opinion, a *narcissist*. That's their 'history'.

Morrison backs Hart's claim that there was *no false surrender* by Auxiliaries, a military ruse that led to two IRA fatalities. She says Tom Barry made up that story in the mid-1930s. Meehan, following Meda Ryan in her 2003 Tom Barry biography, showed why that claim is nonsense.

If most Irish people trace the Ambush to the early evening of 28th November 1920, revisionists revere the day in 1998 that the Tom-Barry-as-lying-serial-killer myth was born, in Peter Hart's *The IRA and its Enemies*. At least they did until Meda Ryan, who attended the talk online, along with the late Brian Murphy and the late Manus O'Riordan, started asking awkward questions.

Now Meehan is asking questions of Eve Morrison's new defence of Hart.

He pointed out that Morrison's book is guilty of a massive failure of research. It pretends to be a comprehensive overview of the debate on the Kilmichael Ambush. Yet it failed to mention a 2012 online interview with Fr. John Chisholm, who was responsible for feeding misinformation to Peter Hart and, latterly, to Morrison.

For years we were told that, before Peter Hart appeared, Liam Deasy opposed Tom Barry's version of the Kilmichael Ambush when he published his memoir *Towards Ireland Free* in 1973. Now we have Chisholm's 2012 claim that he alone was responsible for "every word" in the book, that he wrote that book from cover to cover.

The only thing Chisholm claims Deasy was responsible for, was a refusal to include Chisholm's theory that Auxiliaries at Kilmichael did not falsely surrender.

Chisholm also admitted that he held this theory before researching the Ambush. He refused to put it to Tom Barry when they met to discuss the subject. Chisholm was an exceptionally devious Holy Ghost priest.

Hart claimed that Chisholm let him listen to three audio-taped interviews with Kilmichael participants. Hart used them as support for his claim that Barry lied about the false surrender.

Meehan said there were two such interviews and that, far from refuting a false surrender, the taped testimony supported it. Chisholm claimed in his 2012 interview and to Morrison, that Jack O'Sullivan said there was no false surrender. In fact, O'Sullivan's tape transcript mentions IRA volunteer Michael McCarthy being killed before a '*bogus*' surrender. The other interviewee, Ned Young, twice mentioned on tape being told of a false surrender by other fighters. Young did not witness it: as he reported, he was pursuing an escaping Auxiliary at that time.

Hart did not cite these parts of the testimony of Young and O'Sullivan in his book.

Chisholm told John Young (Ned's son) in 2008 that he had no taped interview with his father and said that Young knew there was no false surrender. Three years later the tape emerged, with Young speaking of a false surrender.

For years we were also told that Hart also personally interviewed Ned Young about the Ambush. Now we are told, in a throwaway line in Morrison's book, "*There is no direct commentary about Kilmichael*"

in Peter Hart's interview notes.

For more years, as Meehan noted, Morrison contradicted John Young on the after-effects of a stroke, making his father unable to speak coherently when Hart said he 'interviewed' him. Now, Meehan asked, why did Morrison bother if Young said precisely nothing to Hart about the Ambush, despite Hart's claims?

Morrison also unwittingly solved the mystery of the man Hart interviewed six days after the last survivor, Ned Young, died. Instead of an ambush participant, as Morrison claimed, he had been guarding a bridge 15km away.

So, of the two people Hart said he spoke to about the Ambush, one said nothing about it and the other wasn't there!

Instead of having five accounts of the ambush, he had two: Chisholm's two tapes that contradicted his main claim.

Hart got away with his myth-making because he anonymised his sources. He got away with that in his TCD PhD on which his book was based, because his Examiners did not properly examine him.

In another revelation, Meehan spoke about external examiner, Charles Townsend forgetting he had examined Hart's thesis, because Hart had no—otherwise standard and compulsory—*viva voce* exam.

In the Q&A afterwards, Meda Ryan supported Meehan's research and confirmed meeting Ned Young (as she did many times) before Hart did. She said he was unable to speak after his stroke late in 1986, three years before Hart said he met him.

One member of the audience remarked on a *Phoenix* magazine comment that Meehan was a modern Tom Barry in the way he has handled the current debate as he "takes no prisoners". Meehan told me afterwards that he could never claim that mantle, not least since it is well known no Dub can achieve the status of a Cork person, dead or alive!

Two essays which appear in a pamphlet based on the talk (see below) go into the issues mentioned here in greater detail and deal with other matters, such as Morrison's attempt to compare the hounding of Teddy Katz, an Israeli researcher whose MA was taken from him, with criticism of Hart.

As Joost Augusteijn recently remarked, Hart's unionist-friendly claims elevated his career. His first job in Queen's University, Belfast, was "partly politically inspired" said Augusteijn.

Meehan also traced the origin of Hart's false allegation of IRA 'ethnic cleansing' against Protestants to unionist propaganda in the 1990s. That story featured another product of the Queen's University, Belfast, History Department, Liam Kennedy.

All that and more is in the essays — read them.

Jack Lane

PS

Eve Morrison posted on her Facebook that she was:

"Feeling very pleased. Professor John Kerrigan named my Kilmichael book as one of his books of the year in the Times Literary Supplement! "

Apparently, Professor Kerrigan consid-

ered it one of the "best books in the field" because, he claimed, that Morrison :

"...sifts early and changing accounts of a celebrated IRA ambush of Crown forces in Co. Cork in 1920, and shows how divergences relate to temperamental and political tensions within republicanism."

The specific, central issue that gave rise to the whole debate about this Ambush was the allegation made by Peter Hart in 1998 that there was *no false surrender*.

However, the fact of a *false surrender* by British forces during the engagement was never subject to "changing accounts" as it was never denied by any participant. It was also confirmed by the leader of the relevant Crown Forces, the Auxiliaries, General Crozier, among others.

There were no "tensions within Republicanism" on that central issue.

What varied, quite naturally, were accounts of the various personal experiences in that hectic brutal encounter that had nothing to do with temperament but with the sheer reality of the life and death clash. Every man fought his own ambush as every man fights his own war.

It is surprising that Eve Morrison relies on an endorsement from an academic whose area of expertise is English Literature! Professor Kerrigan is a literary scholar and Professor of English. He has recently dabbled in Irish history (LRB, Oct. 2022), and in the course of a piece gave us these glib words of wisdom:

"The Famine did fill coffin ships with those who had no alternative. But ... the pull factors for leaving were sometimes stronger than the push. The Irish left in search of opportunity and flourished at the expense of Indigenous peoples (aboriginal Australians, Native Americans.)"

And in a glorious lack of self-awareness he then advises that "*Simplification should be resisted*".

But we are used to history written in this shallow style by a master of the craft, our own dear Roy Foster, who as a frustrated literary figure himself tried to turn Irish history into one long literary exercise where substance was sacrificed to style every time *à la* Professor Kerrigan above—who may well have learned the style from Foster.

## IRISH FOREIGN AFFAIRS

DECEMBER 2022

SPECIAL ISSUE

### THE RUSSIAN PERSPECTIVE ON THE WAR IN UKRAINE

- The Russian perspective: Pat Walsh
- Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's remarks at a meeting of the UN Security Council on Ukraine, New York, 22 September 2022
- Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's news conference following Session of the UN General Assembly, September 24, 2022
- Presidential address on the occasion of signing the treaties on the accession of the DPR, LPR, Zaporozhye and Kherson regions to Russia, September 29, 2022, The Kremlin, Moscow
- Quo Vadis Pax Caucasia? Pat Walsh
- Russia and the 'Fourth Political Theory' Peter Brooke

## Some History For Ambassador Mulhall

I am delighted that Liverpool University has acquired a treasure trove of information relating to Ireland and the Irish in Britain, and that it is dedicated to the memory of Breandan MacLua, co-founder and editor of the *Irish Post*.

I note that, on opening the Library, our Ambassador, Dan Mulhall, suggested that generations before his own were so dazzled by the story of the 1916-21 struggle for independence that they had a simplistic, unsophisticated view of 20th century history, one which ignored Irish participation in the First World War.

His Excellency, born in 1955, was a mere stripling when Ireland's opinion-formers did intellectual cartwheels, and this may explain his confusion.

In 1931, when W. T. Cosgrave was in power, a *Narrative History of Ireland*, by James Carty BA, was a standard textbook. It quoted General Liman Von Sanders, the German officer who commanded the Turkish defence of Gallipoli, and his tribute to the courage of the Irishmen in the British forces who opposed them.

Carty's history may not have been too sophisticated, but it was still a school staple when Mr. Mulhall was born, and had been used when the Department of education had Cumann na nGael, Fianna Fail, and Fine Gael Ministers.

In 1930, another gallant German officer, who had been demobbed after the Great War, was Director of the Irish Army's School of Music and Conductor of the No. 1 Army Band. A series of *Irish Fantasias* was recorded by the band and the first track is *The Foggy Dew*.

That old song was given a new lyric after the 1916 Insurrection, which celebrated the Insurgents but also saluted the Irish Wild Geese of the day whom Britannia had bade fight that "*small nations might be free*".

In the 1950s, Brendan Behan wrote a Column every Saturday in Eamon de Valera's *Irish Press*. Often he celebrated, with great humour, his Dublin neighbours, many of them veterans of the Great War and the Second Boer War, their wives, widows and children. He recalled watching a film advertised in Dublin as *Gallipoli*, but entitled in its land of origin as *Tell England*.

So the organs of state, and of parties of Nationalist Ireland did not brush Irish involvement in England's wars, on the side of the English, out of the picture.

Besides, the veterans were still about, some of whom, like Tom Barry, later joined the IRA, or had brothers in the IRA.

If anything, Dan Mulhall has a less nuanced appreciation of our history than the poor, unsophisticated generation whom he patronises.

I doubt His Excellency ever read old copies of *The United Irishman*, published by Republicans still unreconciled with the Irish State in the 1950s. I remember reading an article in it on Gallipoli and the Irishmen who fought there. It recalled a British officer watching the landings from a ship and asking:

"*Why are our men resting?*"

The answer was that the men he was looking at were dead, not taking their ease on the beach.

Donal Kennedy

Speech by Pierre de Gaulle, grandson of General de Gaulle, at Russian Embassy, Paris

## Ukraine Trapped In A Spiral Of War

Your Excellencies, Official Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you, on behalf of my family and my father, Admiral de Gaulle, for inviting us to celebrate your national holiday.

Our peoples are linked by long years of friendship and by the blood shed against the Nazis. This is an opportunity for me to repeat that the Franco-Russian relationship was of particular importance to General de Gaulle. France and Russia are close to each other, but are also united by the awareness of their common interests and destinies.

Furthermore, Russia was seen by my grandfather as an inverse ally, indispensable for his security, but also because it was part of his conception of the stability of Europe and of Europe's place in the world. The General even said, "Napoleon's disastrous decision to attack Alexander I is the biggest mistake he ever made. Nothing forced him to do so. It was contrary to our interests, to our traditions, to our genius. It is from the war between Napoleon and the Russians that our decadence dates"

I have come here to affirm once again, loud and clear, that it is in France's interest to maintain good relations with Russia and to say that we must work together in order to help the union and security of our continent, as well as the balance, progress and peace of the entire world.

Today, everyone recognizes the responsibility of the United States in the current conflict, the disastrous role of NATO, which is constantly expanding, and the reckless policy of the Ukrainian government. The latter, strengthened by beautiful promises and fed by American and European illusions, has led a very condemnable policy towards the Russian-speaking populations of Donbass, multiplying discrimination,

plundering, embargoes and bombings. Unfortunately, the West has allowed Zelensky, his oligarchs and the neo-Nazi military groups to be trapped in a spiral of war.

This blindness has serious consequences for the Ukrainian people. But let's make no mistake — what do the Americans want, if not to provoke a new East-West confrontation, whose only goal is to weaken and divide Europe in order to impose their directives, their economy and their system? Since the First World War, the Americans have made a pact to establish a necessary balance of forces in Europe and to be involved in the security of the European continent. It is not by organizing a systematic military escalation in Ukraine that they will fulfil their commitment, nor their great principles of freedom and democracy!

The United States is wrong, NATO is wrong, whose unbridled and thoughtless expansionism leads inexorably to the imbalance of the world and to injustice. The beautiful promises of the Americans not to enlarge NATO to the East, nor to the North, have not been respected. The Minsk agreements have not been respected.

The reality is that the Americans have never accepted, nor the West with them, that after the difficult transition of 1991 and the reconstruction that followed, Russia would not fit into their unipolar world. Neither the Americans nor Europe have ever accepted that Russia should transform itself according to the Western model — in its own way.

Because of this, and from the beginning, President Putin was perceived as a dictator, whereas he is a great leader for his country!

The United States has also never accepted the loss of the role of the dollar as the dominant currency in the settlement of international trade in the world. The worst thing is that, in this blindness, they are only reinforcing, by moving the economic and financial interests to the East, the position of China and the Chinese currency that they also want to fight! Sanctions — which are the policy of the weak — are inoperative, except to weaken the Europeans and other nations of the world. Even Africans, through the intermediacy of the President of the African Union, Mr. Macky Sall, are very worried about this.

By provoking a deep, systemic and lasting economic crisis that is already affecting us all, from the price of bread to heating and fuel, but also by the shortage of food, raw materials and industrial metals that all this entails, the Americans are weakening the Europeans for their own benefit. Have we forgotten that for at least a century, all the major financial crises have come from the United States? Our dollar, your problem," said Henry Kissinger. The Americans still hold us by their debt, which they export.

By imposing a cultural and social model based on the cult of pleasure and consumption, the Americans are undermining the foundation of our traditional values and the two pillars of



civilization—the family and tradition.

Europe, and of course France, have everything to lose, if they entrap themselves into this military and ideological escalation desired by the United States and NATO. As Charles de Gaulle said, “America is not part of Europe. I believe I discovered that on the map.”

France can and must play a key role in the current terrible and formidable situation. France and Russia are both daughters of Europe. France must not forget that she is the eldest of the European nations and that none of them has such a long trail of glory behind her. My grandfather always supported and defended the imperative need, even in the most difficult moments of history, to build and preserve a strong and shared relationship with Russia.

He loved Russia. My family and I love Russia and its people. The Russian people, whose property rights are so unjustly violated around the world. It reminds me of the worst moments of the occupation and the Vichy regime in France. And are Russian artists and sportsmen also responsible?

This systematic and blind policy of confiscation and discrimination of the entire Russian people is scandalous and shocks me greatly.

Allow me to quote General de Gaulle once again: “In France, we have never considered Russia as an enemy. I am for the development of Franco-Russian friendship; and I have never sent and I will never send arms to people who would have fought against Soviet Russia.”

The Americans give money (and weapons). We pay them with slices of our independence. I regret that the French government is committing itself to this submission to NATO and thus to American policy.

I deplore the fact that, because of the will of certain French presidents, France has dissolved into NATO. However, General de Gaulle always tried to maintain France’s independence in the integrated command of NATO.

NATO is absorbing Europe. And so the Americans no longer speak to France and no longer consider us a strong and independent nation.

Do we need to recall the recent slap in the face suffered by France in the brutal and unilateral breach of the contract for the purchase of Australian submarines by Australia, a member of the Commonwealth, which was orchestrated by the British and the Americans? Can France be satisfied, in addition to its loss of sovereignty, with the three-day advance in ammunition and fuel that NATO grants it? I do not understand the policy of the French President.

On the strength of his convictions, his army and the deterrent force that he himself built to the great displeasure of the Americans, General de Gaulle had the determination to leave NATO, while remaining a full member of the Atlantic Alliance. I wish that the French President had this courage and this will, rather than being subjected to the throes of single-mindedness and the common policy imposed by the Americans,

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## Deception And The Kilmichael Ambush

As the anniversary of the 28th November 1920 Kilmichael Ambush rolls around, *Cork Independent* readers may be interested in responses to Eve Morrison's recent book on the subject. Dr. Morrison's research defends the late Peter Hart. In *The IRA and its Enemies*, he alleged that Ambush Commander, Tom Barry, was a lying serial killer, who concocted the story of a *false surrender* by some British Auxiliaries. This military ruse caused the deaths of two (out of three in total) IRA volunteers, said Barry. The deception was the basis for Barry refusing further surrenders and fighting, literally, to the finish.

Morrison attempted to justify her belief that Barry concocted his narrative in the mid 1930s. That is a clear mistake on Dr. Morrison's part, as Meda Ryan demonstrated in her Tom Barry biography, and as I confirm in my recent essay on Morrison's book, *'Rehabilitating Peter Hart'*.

It is also now beyond doubt that Peter Hart's assertion that he spoke about the ambush to two participants is a false claim.

Hart said he spoke to two anonymous Kilmichael Ambush IRA volunteers in 1988-89 when one, Ned Young, was alive and aged 96. Hart's notes on his Young 'interview' confirm no discussion of the ambush, as Dr Morrison admits in a throwaway sentence in her book. That is probably because, as Ned's father, the late John Young, confirmed in 2008, Ned Young suffered a stroke two years earlier, making speech impossible. This condition was confirmed recently by Meda Ryan, who remembered meeting Ned Young at Kilmichael Ambush commemorations, before Young's death on 13th November 1989.

Peter Hart's second claimed interviewee did not participate in the ambush. He was tasked with guarding Enniskeane Bridge 15km away, while the battle raged. Using her historical imagination, Dr. Morrison speculated that, 'conceivably', on 28th November 1920, he may have commandeered a horse or bicycle and galloped / ridden to the site of an ambush no one, apart from those already there, knew was happening.

This man, Willie Chambers, never claimed to have fought at the ambush, despite what Peter Hart thought he heard from him at the ambush site on 19th November 1989.

That was a few days after Cork newspapers referred to, "Ned Young... the last survivor of the Kilmichael ambush" and "sole survivor of the Kilmichael Ambush". On that basis, whoever Peter Hart spoke to after 13th November 1989, he did not fight at the Kilmichael Ambush.

In *'Rehabilitating Peter Hart'*, and in *'Ethnic cleansing from Bosnia to Belfast via West Cork'*, I point out that Peter Hart's historiography was heavily influenced by Ulster Unionist propaganda during the 1990s. The essays are available from the *Aubane Historical Society* or online at *academia.edu*. Reader's may also be interested in Joost Augusteijn on the Morrison book in *Dublin Review of Books*. He was a contemporary and friend of Peter Hart's during the 1990s.

It is safe to say that Tom Barry's reputation is in rather better shape today than Peter Hart's.

**Dr. Niall Meehan,**

Letter to the *Cork Independent*

which make him dependent.

In the same way, I do not recognize myself in today's France, in this policy of “en même temps,” which weakens us. I do not recognize myself in the current abandonment of values, of our history, of our culture, of our great principles of freedom, duty and security.

General de Gaulle wrote, “There is a twenty-fold pact between the greatness of France and the freedom of the world.” Our goal is and must remain to establish a European entente between the Atlantic and the Urals. In the midst of the alarms of the world and the dangers of the present crisis, France can and must once again throw all her weight behind seeking an arrangement with the belligerent countries, and Russia in particular.

One does not wage war alone!

It is a conviction that ideologies, and therefore the regimes that express them, in Ukraine as elsewhere, are only temporary. “*Only the patina of centuries and the capacity of countries to remain great count, based on political foundations.*”

As General de Gaulle said in 1966 during his second trip to Russia: “The visit I am finishing to your country is a visit from the France of always to the Russia of always.”

See full text of speech at: [https://www.thepostil.com/ukraine-trapped-in-a-spiral-of-war-pierre-de-gaulle/?utm\\_source=sendfox](https://www.thepostil.com/ukraine-trapped-in-a-spiral-of-war-pierre-de-gaulle/?utm_source=sendfox)

Circulated by Anthony Coughlan

## Climate Change

It would seem that most of the people in Government do not really believe in Climate Change. Not just people in the Irish Government but also in most Governments around the world. The gathering of the elite or top people in Egypt at Sharm El Sheik at the COP 25 Conference resulted in about four hundred (yes! 400!) jet aeroplanes arriving at Sharm El Sheik and being parked there for the duration of the junket. It was very definitely a junket because the Irish Minister for the Environment (and almost every other Department really) Eamon Ryan, Green Party Leader, had a personal retinue of fifty five people at the event and when he was asked afterwards in Dáil Eireann why he needed fifty five people with him, he would not or could not explain.

His conduct certainly does not show he believes in Climate Change. Nor does the conduct of all the other top people at the Conference. It was all useless in any case because the Conference did not achieve any thing meaningful. Just to rub salt in our taxpaying wounds, the Conference finished on a Friday and many of the ‘delegates’ stayed on over the weekend to enjoy the sun and the partying at our expense! Who was to know? The media were almost silent on that part of things—being there themselves.

Minister Ryan and his fifty five had the party of a lifetime and it is very likely it will be forgotten when it comes to election time. Or maybe his voters will admire his brazen neck and vote for him (they’ll say) because “*sure wouldn’t we all do it if we had a chance!*”

The Irish people have certainly got the Government we deserve. It must be the most egotistical greedy government ever.

### Rising Sea Levels?

Another example of the lack of belief in Climate Change is the continuing building of new Multi-Million office blocks, hotels and apartments within one metre of the current High Water mark in various cities such as Dublin and Cork, and indeed in various cities around the world. The builders and the Town Planners just do not

believe that sea-levels will rise as a result of Climate Change.

And yet Governments continue to impose Carbon Taxes based on their stated efforts to reduce carbon emissions. Do they believe in the effects of Climate Change or not? The evidence is that they don’t. They do not even believe in protecting our environment: as evidenced by the 400 jet planes at the COP-25 Conference.

It is a matter of scientific fact that Dublin Airport had the most polluted atmosphere in Ireland when measured by the quantity of particulate matter in the air. From Aeroplanes. This probably will have no effect on the climate but it greatly affects the health of people living and working in Dublin Airport or its environs.

What does affect the climate are volcanic emissions, wild-fire smoke, and electromagnetic storms from the Sun. Climate Change has taken place many times over aeons of time. Our human activities do not affect it very much, if at all. What we can do is clean up our act so that our breathing environment is improved: and this has not much to do with “*carbon emissions*”. Every living person has to emit carbon dioxide to stay alive and trees need carbon dioxide to grow. So what’s not to like about Carbon? But aircraft, buses and cars with worn tyres and worn brake pads are much more serious. We are inhaling much of the worn stuff and it is fatal for us.

### Anglican Culture

I do not mean Anglican as in the religion, although the religion may have something to do with it. I mean the names of places in Ireland, such as ‘*Aylesbury Downs*’ or ‘*Chelmsford Drive*’ and ‘*Devonshire Square*’ etc. Believe it or not, the Earl of Pembroke, who was granted title to land in South Dublin by English King John about 800 years ago, held onto the Pembroke Estate up to modern times and, when granting building leases, the English names of streets and avenues were, it seems, insisted upon. Hence names in Dublin such as Pembroke Road. This I was told by a Dublin building contractor.

Of recent years an English manager, who probably is an Anglican, started calling the area of Cork City around MacCurtain Street, the ‘*Victorian Quarter*’.

The manager was employed by the Metropole Hotel, which is regarded as a Victorian-style building. What was troubling was that many native Irish business owners started adopting ‘*Victorian Quarter*’ as a Marketing strategy, being so advised by Cork City Hall and Cork Chamber of Commerce. But there was an outcry against honouring Queen Victoria who presided over the Irish

Holocaust and who is known as the Famine Queen. Famously an Arab Sultan, who was offering £5,000 assistance to the starving people of Ireland, was told to withdraw his offer because it exceeded what Her Imperial Majesty Queen Victoria was offering. She offered £2,000. As a result of protests, the quarter of the city around MacCurtain Street is still called that by most locals, but the City Hall officials have quietly rebranded it VQ, which is how much they honour a martyred Lord Mayor of our city.

In Youghal, Co. Cork the area around St. Mary’s Collegiate Church is being referred to as the ‘*Raleigh Quarter*’, based on his reputed occupation of a 16th century house next to the Church. Both house and Church were stolen from the Catholics around 1540. It is possible that the house was built from stone taken from a suppressed Dominican Church nearby known as North Abbey.

Raleigh, as well as his friend Spenser, the poet, was one of those in Lord Grey’s army who by a trick got those in Dún an Óir at Smerwick, Co. Kerry to go back into their fort after laying down their arms. Over 600 of them were butchered in the fort—men, women and children. Two priests were tied to wagon wheels and their limbs were broken and they were murdered in a very gruesome manner.

Some years ago a group of Americans from North Carolina visited Youghal. They were from a town there called Raleigh and they had no illusions about Walter Raleigh. Walter got about 10,000 acres of the land in Ireland taken from the Earl of Desmond. The occupants were killed. Raleigh’s services to the English Queen Elizabeth 1st were, *inter alia*, the supposed establishment of a colony in South Carolina. He landed the people brought from the West of England—Cornwall and Devon—but did not give them enough supplies. And he promised to return with the supplies but he did not do so and they all died. Apparently they all starved to death. The present town of Raleigh (pronounced Wrawlay) is the result of a later colonisation.

Queen Elizabeth locked Raleigh up in the Tower of London. She had many people executed, but not Raleigh for some reason. He was in the Tower eleven years and was beheaded on the orders of King James. It is said Raleigh bribed the executioner to sharpen his axe but, either he did not sharpen it, or Raleigh had a hard neck because it took three chops of the axe to get the head off.

Not a good name for the Quarter in Youghal: but our own neo-colonists are on a roll, they have no shame: but what is that famous aphorism – if we forget our history – it will be at our peril!

Michael Stack ©

## PRESS continued

*Irish Times: Past and Present*, a record of the daily paper since 1859, by John Martin. Index. 264 p.p. ISBN 978-1-872078-13-1. Belfast Historical & Educational Society. 2008. €20, £15.

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# Organised Labour!

## The Government, the Minister, the Courts, the Employers and the Unions!

"The State has agreed to consent to the High Court quashing an order signed by Damien English, Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, setting pay and conditions for electrical contractors" (Irish Times, 7.10.2022).

The Government has agreed to drop a third bid to set pay and conditions for electrical contractors following a legal challenge by a leading industry body. (See *Irish Times*, 7.10.2022)

Damien English, Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, signed an order in December last year setting pay, working hours, pension contributions and other conditions for electrical contractors under the *Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2015*.

The National Electrical Contractors of Ireland (NECI), which represents the industry's smaller businesses, subsequently began High Court proceedings challenging the Order on several grounds.

Chief State Solicitor, Maria Brown, recently wrote to the organisation confirming that it would consent to an Order quashing the Statutory Instrument when the

issue is due back in court later this month.

Once the Court quashes the Order, the terms, pay and conditions that it sets out will no longer be valid.

■

This is the NECI's third successful challenge to efforts to set pay and conditions for its industry. In 2020, the Supreme Court overturned a similar Order made the previous year following proceedings brought by the organisation. In 2017, Unions withdrew an application to the Labour Court after the NECI challenged this.

The NECI represents smaller contractors, based mainly outside Dublin, and it feared that the terms and conditions in both Orders could push members out of business.

The 2015 law is meant to set employment terms for construction. Following an application from Trade Unions or Employers, the Labour Court can recommend to the Minister that he or she issue a "sectoral employment order" governing pay and conditions in a particular industry.

If both Houses of the Oireachtas pass the Draft Order, the Minister can issue a Statutory Instrument making the Order's terms binding on the industry as a whole.

The Labour Court last year recommended that Mr. English make the Order governing electrical contractors

following representations from *Connect Trade Union*, the *Electrical Contractors' Association*, the *Association of Electrical Contractors Ireland*, the *Construction Workers' Pension Scheme*, the *NECI* and others.

The NECI lodged its challenge with the High Court in February, 2022. The State did not file any response, but wrote to the organisation saying it would consent to the court quashing the Minister's Order on one of the grounds that the industry body set out.

In a note to members, the NECI says that it has constantly sought fairness and transparency in the Labour Court procedures that have led to the introduction of two redundant Sectoral Employment Orders for its industry.

"Despite the N.E.C.I.'s efforts it has always been our opinion that the Labour Court has substantively ignored our concerns," the note adds.

"The treatment of sectoral employment order processes to date leaves us still very concerned that the Labour Court can effectively rubberstamp agreements made between the Electrical Contracting Association, Connect trade union and the Construction Workers' Pension Scheme," says the N.E.C.I.

## 'LODGE' ALLOWANCE

The nub of this dispute arises over the shortage of Electricians and, in an endeavour to contend with that shortage, non-NECI employers agreed to pay country money (also known as *lodge allowance*) tax free. The payment of tax-free travel and subsistence payments are governed by the criteria set out by Revenue.

However, it would seem that the urgency of a number of major multi-national construction contracts meant that the €180 weekly payment, tax-free, is still being paid regardless of Revenue criteria. ■



## PRESS continued

The group availed of two Government wage subsidy schemes, receiving €3m. Subsequently it said that a decision had been made to repay the money, due to the strong trading performance for the year 2021.

### THE IRISH EXAMINER (EST.1841)

In the first decade of the new century, Thomas Crosbie Holdings (TCH), owner of the *Irish Examiner*, went on a spending spree: provincial papers, radio stations and of course, in 2002, the *Sunday Business Post* were purchased. It seemed that the expansion plan would bear results. By 2005, the Crosbie family were able to take out €7m in dividends, along with Directors' remuneration of €2.6m.

Then the recession hit: the 2009 results told it all—an operating loss of almost €3m. Turnover was driven down to €82.5m from €106m. In the year to January 2011, turnover was down by €10m and there was an operating loss of €3.1m. The results were similar to those in 2010, when a hefty restructuring charge of €32m was taken.

In 2013, the core Thomas Crosbie Holdings titles went through a receivership exercise, resulting in the company being acquired by *Landmark Media Investments*, a vehicle controlled by members of the Crosbie family. Around €10m may have been written off the €28m TCH owed Allied Irish Bank.

In 2018, *The Irish Times* concluded the purchase of the entire business of Landmark Media, whose other titles include the '*Evening Echo*', '*Western People*', and '*Waterford News & Star*' newspapers, along with the '*Roscommon Herald*', as well as the '*Nationalist*' newspapers in Carlow, Kildare and Laois.

Speculation surrounds the Landmark titles! The *Irish Examiner* recorded a 6% year-on-year fall in circulation in January-June, 2019, leaving it on 24,574. Sales of the daily *Echo* also fell 6% in the similar period to only 8,439 per day.

The future of print would appear to lie in a transition to digital—but, while investing heavily in the digital side, the *Irish Times* is also evolving from a newspaper publisher to a printing company, based on its City West printing plant in West Dublin.

\*\*\*\*\*

	2019	1983	1992
Irish Independent	165,768	149,065	83,900
Irish Times	86,146	92,797	79,021
Examiner, Cork	63,560	55,516	24,574

Irish Press	94,295	50,443	—
<i>Sundays:</i>			
Sunday Ind.	249,021	247,198	152,417
Sun. Tribune	103,000	90,034	—
Sunday World	343,639	301,528	123,095
Sunday Press	319,105	179,923	—

\*\*\*\*\*

The Irish Press Group (1931) ceased publication in May 1995; The Sunday Tribune was founded in 1980, closed in 1982, relaunched in 1983 and entered receivership in February 2011, after which it ceased to trade.

What really highlights the dramatic fall in circulation of daily newspapers in Ireland—despite the 50,000 daily copies which the Irish Press sold per day in 1995, the loss of that substantial competitor did little or nothing to improve the circulation of their two main competitors.

It is hard to assess sales of the printed newspapers. *News Ireland* (a subsidiary of News Corp, the Murdoch group) in 2019 opted for a private Audit Bureau of Circulation audit some time ago.

*Independent News Media* decided to withdraw from the ABC certification in August of 2019 and, as they accounted for a large share in the two markets (53% of the Sunday and 43% of the Morning market), ABC could not get a complete audit of the released circulation figures.

At one point there were over 100 brands in the Republic audited by the ABC, the figure now stands at five (only including brands that are categorised as "*Republic of Ireland Paid Newspapers*").

Does that not say it all in relation to the public's faith in the print media—when the proprietors refuse to reveal their circulation figures to an independent Audit Bureau?

### SUNDAY TIMES

Sales of the *Sunday Times* have fallen from more than 100,000 in the pre-digital days to a low of around the 60,000 copies to-day.

### INTERNATIONAL TRENDS

USA—The top 25 US newspapers lost 20% of daily subscriptions between the first quarter of 2020 and the first quarter 2021. The numbers, based on Alliance for Audited Media reports, come from analysis by the British media news site Press Gazette (31.8. 2021).

### USA

• National papers had the deepest declines. *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times* and *USA Today* together

lost more than 500,000. *USA Today*, with its hotel-heavy distribution, did worst of all with a decline of 62% year to year.

• The *Wall Street Journal* now has the largest daily print circulation by a wide margin at 787,000. The *New York Times* is down to less than half that — 363,000 — as it has switched to emphasising paid digital subscriptions while letting its pricey print circulation slide.

### UK

National newspaper sales have fallen by nearly two-thirds over the last two decades, according to analysis of ABC circulation data by *Press Gazette* (26.2.2020).

The figure shows the extent of the devastation that digital disruption has wrought on the traditional print-centric newspaper business model.

In January 2000, 16 daily and Sunday paid-for national newspapers had a combined circulation of 21.2m, according to ABC figures.

Within ten years this had fallen to 16.4m among 17 newspapers—now including the *Daily Star Sunday*, which launched in 2002—representing a drop of nearly a quarter (23%).

According to recent circulation figures available, the same group of newspapers sold a total of 7.4m copies—a fall of more than half (55%) within ten years.

### GERMANY

The decline in sales came to Germany almost a decade later than America, but the newspaper crisis is sweeping the country, with plummeting circulations and revenues.

Three decades ago, the editors of the Munich daily *Abendzeitung* produced a newspaper each day for 300,000 buyers.

Fast forward 30 years and its circulation has declined to 107,634.

Local newspapers have lost about 30% of their readers in the last decade, with readership declining at an ever faster clip.

(*Spiegel*, 13.8.2013)

\*\*\*\*\*

Part Two on the Print Media covering the Political and the Social aspects of the industry will appear in the January 2023 *Labour Comment*.

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## PRESS continued

"In a triumphant article on how newspapers had "won their battle... to be zero-rated for VAT", Irish Times journalist Laura Slattery reported that the VAT announcement "was greeted with some cheering from the Dáil press gallery and Government benches". What an interesting alliance—is this the Irish version of a Greek chorus?" (*The Phoenix* magazine, 4.11.2022) Slattery also noted, by the way, that "it is not expected that the measure will be passed on to consumers in the form of lower cover prices or subscription charges". A writer on media and business for the Irish Times, Slattery knows what she is talking about here" (ibid).

### COSTLY ANOMALY?

*The Phoenix* magazine (4.11.2022) has highlighted a serious anomaly in the application of the VAT removal:

"A specific, detailed reference to the zero-VAT measure was contained in Donohoe's Department of Finance documentation under the heading: "Summary of 2023 Budget Measures". This referred to the "application of a zero VAT rate for newspapers and newsperiodicals [Goldhawk's italics], including digital editions"..."

*The Phoenix* is a news periodical.

Another Finance Department document, "Budget 2023 Tax Policy Changes", said: "The VAT rate on newspapers and newsperiodicals will be reduced to zero from 9%".

On the day of Donohoe's budget speech, the Revenue Commissioners also described the new VAT rate of zero for "periodicals" in its Budget 2023 summary. That's three references to "periodicals"—two of which were from Donohoe's Department, which clearly understood his budget speech remarks to include such publications.

However, when the *Finance Bill* was published on 20th October 2022, it referred to the new zero VAT rate as being applied to "newspapers". There was no announcement from either the Minister, the Finance Department, or the Revenue about this apparent U-turn on VAT relief for those who "hold power to account".

### MAGAZINE SALES

Believe it or Not: 60 million magazines are bought in Ireland each year; 12 million of which are Irish!

Irish Magazine publishers contribute

between €150 and €200 million annually to the Irish economy with €50-€75 million in taxation (see *Magazines Ireland*). According to US publication sources: Print Newspapers & Magazines in Ireland will have a market value of US\$363.00 million in 2022.

And herein lies the problem for the *Phoenix*! If the Zero Vat applies to the *Phoenix* magazine, then it must apply across the board, which means that the "€50-€75 million" in taxation is lost to the exchequer.

### CIRCULATION FIGURES?

#### *The Irish Independent* (Est. 1905)

In January-June, 2005, the circulation of the *Irish Independent* was 164,202. In the comparable period seven years later, sales were 125,986. A circulation decline of 23%; however, about 10% was accounted for by bulk sales-free copies or promotion.

In July-December, 2018, the *Irish Independent* had a combined print and digital edition circulation of 87,512, down 6% year on year. The *Sunday Independent*'s combined print and digital edition circulation was 168,976, down 7% year on year. The *Sunday World* print sales were 123,095, down 8%. The *Herald* was down 20% to 28,940.

Mediahuis owns the *Independent* Group. Last year, 2021, its Irish operation revealed it had 50,000 digital subscribers—up over 60% from 30,000 at the end of 2020, the year it introduced subscriptions: *independent.ie* accounts for over 43,000 of the subscribers.

In 2019, the Belgian media group, Mediahuis, acquired the former *Independent News & Media* (INM).

At the time, INM had €81.7m cash on its balance sheet: Mediahuis effectively bought the group for less than €64m. INM made a pre-tax profit of €24.1m in 2018; therefore the sale price was a multiple of just two-and-a-half times annual earnings, well below the norm at that time.

"While the Sunday Independent is considered to have enjoyed a 'good pandemic', sales of the Irish Independent are said to be falling. All of this may not cause publisher, Peter Vandermeersch to shed too many tears. It fits perfectly with his plan to transition from print to digital."

In May, 2021, he told RTE radio that in—

"... maybe five, maybe seven, maybe

12 years, we go to a system here in Ireland where we have very big and important Saturday and Sunday papers in print, combined with digital during the week. That's basically the whole strategy of the company, to prepare for that future."

In May 2021, Denis O'Brien sold his Communicorp media business, apart from its radio stations based in Britain, to Bauer, a German media group. He spent about €500m accumulating a shareholding and ended up with €43.5m from selling it. For the first time since 1989, O'Brien has not declared Irish media business.

### THE IRISH TIMES (EST. 1859)

*The Irish Times*, which is owned by the Irish Times Trust and employs about 800 people, reported an operating profit of €8.3m before exceptional costs in 2020: more than double the €3.8m figure reported in the previous year. While the IT and Mediahuis's business have shown improved trading, many journalists fear what will happen when the artificial support of the State subventions and heavy health sector advertising reduces, or ends completely post-Covid.

### THE DIGITAL ANSWER?

At the end of 2020, the *Irish Times* had 126,656 digital and home delivery subscribers, up from 89,688 a year earlier. Total subscriber numbers grew to 135,561 by the end of June, 2021. The tally was boosted by the launch in March of digital-only subscriptions to the *Irish Examiner*, (which the IT now owns, along with Cork daily, the *Echo*). The Cork-based title has 7,000 subscribers.

Sales of the *Irish Times* fell 8.3% in January-June, 2012, compared with the similar period in 2011. Circulation slumped to only 92,565: down from 100,951. The fall below the psychologically-important 100,000 mark left the IT's circulation at early 1990s level.

In 2018, the *Irish Times* recorded a pre-tax loss of almost €1.49m compared with a pre-tax profit of €2.03m in 2017.

In 2019, the paper had a combined average daily circulation of 79,021 for its print and e-paper editions in the first half of the year. Print sales fell 6% to 56,518 between January and June. Sales of the digital edition rose 19% to 22,503 in the same period.

However, the monetary value (in sales and advertising) of one hard copy sale is a multiple of a digital one.

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**LABOUR**

# Comment

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“THE Press was protected so that it could bare the secrets of the government and inform the people. Only a free and unrestrained press can effectively expose deception in government. And paramount among the responsibilities of a free press is the duty to prevent any part of the government from deceiving the people” (Justice, Hugo L. Black, US Supreme Court).

\*\*\*\*\*

## A Kept Press ?

### “Move to scrap VAT is ‘Vital Lifeline’ for Newspapers”

*Daily Mail, 28.9.2022*

“The VAT rate for newspapers will be cut from 9% to 0% from January 1, 2023, Finance Minister Paschal Donohoe has announced. The minister called out the important work done for our society through a free and independent media sector” (Daily Mail, 28.9.2022).

In July 2022, the “*Future of Media Commission*” recommended that newspapers should be zero-rated for VAT.

The 9% rate had applied to print newspapers since the introduction of this reduced rate of VAT in 2011 but, until 2019, digital editions were subject to the standard 23% rate. The new rate does not apply to magazines.

The cut comes after lobbying from media groups, with Taoiseach Micheál Martin saying in New York last week (23.9.2022) that he was “*positively disposed*” to abolishing the tax. Mr Martin said Fianna Fáil was doing everything possible to “*enable media to survive, particularly print media, in what is a very difficult environment*”.

The change, costed at €32.5 million in the first year and €39 million in a full year, is “*in line with the Government’s commitment to support an independent press*”, he said.

The main beneficiaries will be the *Irish Independent* and the *Irish Times* companies. Both newspapers made millions during the pandemic, with Government wage subsidies and a raft of large-scale

Government health advertising enriching both newspapers, plus substantial regular revenues from both State and Semi-State Companies’ advertising.

Another anomaly is that the Irish editions of British and other foreign newspapers will also be receiving tax relief from the VAT measure, while Irish print publications such as *The Phoenix*, *Village* magazine and other ‘disrespectful’ periodicals will continue to be penalised.

*The Farmers’ Journal*, *The Irish Catholic* and *Ireland’s Own* will also benefit from the removal of the 9% VAT rate, as they are published weekly, whereas *The Phoenix* is a fortnightly publication and is regarded as a periodical publication.

Ciaran Cannon, Fine Gael TD for Galway East, said:

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“This is a really welcome move to protect journalism, to protect the truth, in a world of disinformation.” He described the tax cut as a “vital lifeline” to good journalism, to “those who are writing our history (sic)”.

The 9% rate was one of the highest in Europe. Conor O’Donnell, Group Editor, Irish Mail Newspapers, said:

“Throughout the pandemic, amid a fog of disinformation online, people turned to trusted news sources to inform them what was really happening in the world.”

He added—

“People turned to newspapers for their commitment to accuracy, fact-checking and fairness. They relied on newspapers to guide them through the era of Donald Trump’s fake news and, even more recently, the propaganda perpetrated in the shameful war in Ukraine”.

Aye, indeed!!!

People turned OK: but not to the print media which they have deserted in droves: and the removal of VAT is not going to prevent that drift.

#### **A FREE AND DEMOCRATIC PRESS?**

For years, we were reminded of our good fortune to have a free and democratic press, unlike the Chinese and Russian State-controlled media: but now the Government and the Media are hand in glove with more to come—via the “*Future of the Media Commission*”.

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