

Irish Foreign Affairs

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“Every nation, if it is to survive as a nation, must study its own history and have a foreign policy”
—C.J. O’Donnell, *The Lordship of the World*, 1924, p.145

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Ireland's National Problem

Editorial

Present-day Ireland finds it difficult to maintain a relationship with Britain as a foreign state. Foreign policy towards Britain does not come easily to it.

Martin Mansergh, adviser to Fianna Fail Taoiseachs, has denied that Britain is foreign with relation to Ireland. He has said, in effect, that the default position of Irish is British. And, while that is at least as much a statement of policy by him as an observation of fact, it cannot be denied that there are factual grounds for it as far as official Ireland is concerned.

Irish Governments shy away from holding British Governments responsible for their actions in Ireland. It goes against their grain to do it. They are compelled on occasion by popular feeling to go through the motions of doing it, but they always pull their punches because, no matter how abominably Mother England behaves, nothing can justify matricide.

The problem begins with the birthday of the state. Was it January 1919, or January or December 1922? To date it from January 1919 would be a mortal affront to the Great Mother.

1916 can be coped with. It generated the *tsunami* which overwhelmed the British administration a few years later, but it did not give rise to a continuous governing body, and it was after all an electorally unmandated Insurrection! It would be better if people forgot it, but it can be coped with if they refuse to forget.

The Insurrection was omitted from the Centenary video about it produced by the Government. Irish Anglophiles always overdo these things in their anxiety to please the English. So the video has been discarded, and it begins to look like the centenary celebration of the Rebellion will be rebellious.

But how will the centenary of the rebellion of the electorate be handled, and the constitutional Government established to give effect to the will of the electorate, and the British War against the electorate?

There was a time when Fianna Fail would have had no problem with that. The state was founded in January 1919 on the authority of the election mandate of December 1918. Britain made war on that state and succeeded in modifying it by a threat of all-out war of Imperial reconquest in 1922. A section of Sinn Fein agreed to the modification in order to ward off the threatened re-conquest. The Treaty modification was enforced by the compliant section of Sinn Fein with British armaments and British political support. Enforcement took the form of 'civil war' fought under a renewed threat of British reconquest. Compliant Sinn Fein, which called itself Cumann na nGaedheal, said it was enforcing the Treaty because, while it denied Irish freedom, it gave the Irish the freedom to achieve freedom.

Thus the Free State was founded on the paradox that acceptance of the Treaty, under threat of Imperial reconquest if it was refused, gave Ireland the freedom to reject the Treaty. If it was accepted it could be rejected, but if it was rejected without having first been accepted, full British rule would be restored.

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(The Treaty as "*freedom to achieve freedom*", taken literally, could only mean freedom to declare the Treaty State a Republic immediately after its establishment. And a provision of the

Free State Constitution enabled a change in the Constitution to be enacted by the Government by a simple majority in the Parliament of Southern Ireland/Dail.

The Treaty State was actually a nominal Dominion established by Britain in place of the Republic established by Irish political forces. It was established under duress, and if the duress continued after its establishment it was not a Dominion on a par with Canada, as it was described at the time. Coercion of Canada by Britain had been altogether out of the question long before 1922—long before the 1926 Statute that was said to have established the independence of the colonial Dominions. The independence of the colonial Dominions was acknowledged in the late 19th century, and they participated as independent states in the Committee of Imperial Defence at the start of the 20th. Their connection with Britain was colonial in the proper sense of that term—they were British settlements which had become states. Ireland was not a British settlement—at least the part of it which asserted independence forcefully wasn't—and so it could not have had the kind of relationship with Britain that the British Colonies had—Australia, Canada, New Zealand. The "*kith and kin*" relationship—a relationship which was accorded considerable importance in British political life well within living memory—was missing. Also missing—as Erskine Childers pointed out—was the distance of thousands of miles between Britain and its colonial Dominions. And also missing were the colonial Armies and Navies.

Perhaps it was in the British mind in 1922, when imposing Dominion status on Ireland at the point of a gun, that it might nurse Treatyite Ireland into a kind of honorary colony, and cultivate in it a sentiment of attachment that would serve as a substitute for kith and kin. It was not that Ireland might, taking the comparison with Canada too much in earnest, declare itself a Republic once it accepted the imposed Dominion status.

The possibility of the actual course of events which followed did not lie in the wording of the Treaty but in the subversion of the British War Cabinet by Turkey's rejection by successful war of its imposed Treaty at the time of the formal establishment of the Irish Free State, and by the deflation of Imperial will caused by the shock of it.

The Treatyites sold the Treaty by saying it gave "*freedom to achieve freedom*". We have drawn out the paradoxical meaning of that statement. It is obvious that the Treatyites did not mean that statement in earnest, because many years later they were telling the electorate that voting Fianna Fail would bring the British back.)

*

Cumann na nGaedheal forgot its reasoning of 1922 and governed as if the Treaty was not freedom to achieve freedom, but was itself freedom. But the Treaty as freedom wouldn't take root. The militarily defeated anti-Treatyites became the major political force under the authoritarian Treaty regime. It won the 1923 Election and took Office, with a resurgent IRA in the offing in case there was a threat to uphold Treatyite legitimacy. In the course of the 1930s it took the Treaty apart, daring the Imperial Power to do anything about it. But the Imperial Power, master of the world in 1920, had made a complete mess of the world in the interim, and it was in no position to do in the 1930s what it had threatened to do to Ireland in 1922 if the Treaty was not complied with.

In order to drive this point home, the imposed Treaty was dismantled by unilateral Irish action, not by negotiation and agreement.

Fianna Fail revoked the Treaty and during the next forty years it had no problem with the history of the state it governed.

The Treaty Party was in the political wilderness for 16 years after 1932. During that period it came under Fianna Fail hegemony. When it returned to Office in 1948, it had so far forgotten that it was Treatyite that its Foreign Minister was Sean MacBride, Anti-Treatyite and recent Chief of Staff of the IRA, with whose Party, Clann na Poblachta, it formed a Coalition.

There was then no doubt that the authentic Irish state was founded in January 1919, and that Britain made war on it.

But the story now runs that the Irish state was formed by Britain in 1922. A book called *Defending Ireland*, by Eunan O’Halpin, a Trinity College academic and very much an Establishment insider, begins with 1922. The defence of the Irish state against British aggression doesn’t seem to be a forbidden thought for the present-day Establishment, it’s an impossible thought for them.

It is a high-level probability that Britain masterminded the Loyalist Bombings in Dublin and Monaghan in 1974, but the Dublin Government did its best to stifle investigation.

And it is a certainty that Britain engaged in torture of the people who were interned, more or less randomly, in the North in 1971. Popular feeling at the time was running so high that the Government was obliged to bring the matter to the European Court of Human Rights. Whitehall, using its influence, its diplomatic skill, and its remarkable facility for semantic morality, got a proposed torture finding reduced to one of ‘inhuman and degrading treatment’. But now the matter has come up again in the light of evidence from British State Papers and a Dublin Establishment—which is desperately trying to break the constitutional development of Sinn Fein within its own domain—has been forced to bring an appeal. But it is doing as little as possible towards peeling off the semantic wrapping and putting Britain squarely in the dock for torture.

It is trying to stop the leakage of votes to Sinn Fein by giving massive publicity to an alleged rape in Northern Ireland by an alleged member of the IRA over a decade ago. The allegation

was made by Mairia Cahill, a former activist of Provisional Sinn Fein who turned against the Provos when they recognized the renamed and partly reformed Northern Ireland police as a legitimate police force. From being a Provo activist, she became an anti-Provo activist. And, though she had left the Provos because they recognized the police as legitimate, she went to that police force, the PSNI, with a rape complaint against an alleged member of the IRA. The PSNI proceeded with a prosecution for IRA membership against the person concerned as well as for rape—but they associated this with the prosecution, on her testimony, of a number of other individuals for historical membership of the IRA. The prosecution for former membership of the IRA was brought to court as a preliminary to a prosecution for rape. But in Court she refused to give, in the witness box, the evidence she had given to the police in a statement. The prosecutions therefore collapsed and the individuals were found Not Guilty.

She then claimed that she had been denied justice—by a turn of events for which she herself was entirely responsible.

She went to Television for justice. A programme was made for her, which had the advantage over the Court hearing that the accused would not have a right of cross-examination under rules of evidence. And then she went to Dublin, where the three major parties were leaking votes to Sinn Fein to such an extent that they were falling behind it in opinion polls. Those parties arranged for a day’s debate in the Dail on the alleged rape in another state. The judicial proceedings in the North were treated as an irrelevance, and facts of any kind were in short supply. The purpose, apparently, was to brand Sinn Fein, by the mere demagogic vehemence of denunciation by important people, as a party of rapists and paedophiles.

How could a political Establishment engaged in this exercise, which it appeared to see as being necessary to the saving of civilization, give its supportive attention to a mere case of mass torture by the British State in Northern Ireland, when the indictment of Britain could only be to the advantage of Sinn Fein?

Ever since Sinn Fein established a secure base for itself in the electoral politics of the 26 County state, that State has had an existential problem about itself.

It had never, until 1998, recognized the 6 Counties as being legitimately part of the United Kingdom state.

The *de facto* founder of the Treaty State, Michael Collins, formally recognized Northern Ireland by signing the Treaty and by assembling the Parliament of Southern Ireland in January 1922 under the terms of the British 1920 *Government of Ireland Act* in order to have authority conferred on him by Britain to operate a Provisional Government which would construct the Free State. But what he did in the first instance with the power conferred on him by Britain was make war on Britain in Northern Ireland. He attracted support by declaring that he would prevent Northern Ireland from functioning, and he made war on the local Unionist militia in the North, the Specials. Whitehall allowed this to go on for a while, but when the Specials were unable to cope with Collins’s invasion, the British Army stepped in—and Collins was told that the people he was supposed to make war on were his anti-Treaty colleagues.

The nationalist minority in the 6 Counties was actively encouraged by Collins to boycott British government and was given a guarantee of Dublin funding for an education system independent of the Government. That funding never materialized.

Until 1925 the Free State hoped Northern Ireland would be whittled away by the Boundary Commission set up under the Treaty. The Commission was abandoned in 1925 but

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real recognition of the North did not follow. In 1937 the new Constitution, adopted by referendum, asserted a general sovereignty in the island of Ireland by the 26 County state in Article 2 but suspended its operation to *de facto* in Article 3. In 1973 a Fine Gael/Labour Coalition appeared to recognise the British Northern Ireland system as legitimate, but when it was taken to Court for acting in breach of Article 2 of the Constitution it pleaded, successfully, that it had only said in the Sunningdale Agreement that it was not its *policy* to enforce the assertion of sovereignty, which remained in place for any future Government to act on.

The practical effect of *de jure* sovereignty whose implementation was deferred was unclear until Courts ruled that it applied to Extradition demands from the North and meant that Northern extradition warrants should not be complied with.

Throughout the period from 1922 to 1998 the official Dublin position was that British government in the Six Counties was illegitimate, and was a usurpation of Irish sovereignty, and that the nationalist minority was oppressed. There were Governments that wished they could say that the North was a legitimately governed region of the UK, but they didn't dare say it.

In the era of democracy, in what regards itself as the birthplace of democracy, the oppression of a large minority by illegitimate government must be expected to have serious consequences. And the Northern Ireland system of British government did have serious consequences. The official British view that those consequences were just an outbreak of criminality was accepted by hardly anybody in the Dublin Establishment—other than Conor Cruise O'Brien when he entered a world of his own.

It became customary from the mid-1970s for Dublin politicians to condemn Republican violence while holding Partition and the oppression of the minority responsible for it.

In 1998 the assertion of *de jure* sovereignty over the 6 Counties was repealed. This was done with the approval of the IRA, and it is unlikely that it would have been done without that approval.

1974 marked a turning point in the Northern War. The British Government (in the form of the Secretary of State, Merlyn Rees) attempted, under the slogan of Ulsterisation, to change the Republican/Britain War into a Catholic/Protestant War. This seemed to provoke a change within the Republican leadership, whereby the British orientation of the War was maintained, and the perspective of an interim settlement based on military stalemate with a view to transferring momentum from war to politics, came into play.

That is what was achieved in 1998. The Dublin Establishment had never taken enough interest in the actuality of Northern Ireland to understand what was happening. It patted Sinn Fein on the back condescendingly, congratulating it for seeing the error of its ways, and expecting it, as the froth on the wave of the IRA, to shrink back to the margins.

What actually happened was that the "*constitutional nationalist*" party of the Northern minority, the SDLP, which had got the nationalist votes while the Republican movement was fighting the War, proved to be incapable of handling the situation brought about by negotiation between the parties to the War, the IRA and the Government of the state. That was not surprising. It had perfected an evasive political language by means of which it kept its distance from the War, and even condemned the Republicans for waging it, without antagonizing the mass support of its constituents for the War. It got the nationalist vote on the understanding that it was not in earnest in what it said. But, when the War led to the establishment of

an unprecedented and unanticipated political arrangement, the SDLP could not adjust to it, and it turned out that too many of its members had meant too much of what they had been saying during the War.

Therefore it happened that the movement that fought the War became the constitutional party of the nationalist community in the political arrangement based on the military stalemate.

The SDLP, though called constitutional, had never been an actual constituent part of a system of government. It was essentially a protest group. In 1974, when it was organized, almost despite itself, into being a constituent part of a devolved government, it squandered the opportunity because of lack of ability to engage in political manoeuvre. It could not make the transition from protest to government.

The 1998 Agreement formally established a clear foreign relationship between the 26 County state and the United Kingdom by making the line between the 6 Counties and the 26 into an undisputed international Border. If the SDLP had maintained its position of electoral dominance in the Northern nationalist community, that formal position might have become the politically-operative one. The SDLP, though continuing to make a fetish of Partition, had evolved in practice into a Partition party. But, when the war party displaced it as the constitutional party in Northern politics, and went on to establish itself in 26 County politics, the possibility of that development was cut short.

Besides which, the 1998 Referendums, confirming the Agreement, were played as a confidence trick. They were presented as the first all-Ireland vote since 1918, with the insinuation that, while they displaced the 1918 Election in the ideology of Republicanism, they were also a step towards the realization of its aims. Reinforcing that insinuation was the dismantling of Border controls. Crossing from the UK to Ireland became like crossing from Belgium to France, except that there were no signs telling you that you were leaving one state and entering another. The only sign that told you where you were was the different colour of the road markings.

For Britain the phasing out of the physical signs of the Border at the moment when it gained undisputed official legitimacy accorded with its long-term policy of using the Border to exert influence on Southern political culture. The suggestion was, *Be a little less Anglophobic in outlook, and who knows what might happen?*

Since the formation of Fianna Fail in 1926, Sinn Fein had gained an occasional electoral success in the South at moments connected with some Border incident, but had no stable existence as part of the Constitution of the state. Fianna Fail was the substance of the Sinn Fein movement that had formed the 1919 Government, defended it in the War of Independence, and had kept open the possibility of Republican independence by opposing the Treaty.

Southern Sinn Fein under the Fianna Fail regime was ideological, rather than political—which is not to say that it did not have political relevance. But the constitutional development of Sinn Fein after 1998, as a party that had fought a long War and not been defeated, had the kind of appeal to the Southern electorate that Fianna Fail had in the mid-1920s. And the equivocal character deliberately given by the political Establishment to the Agreement referendum, played into it.

Sinn Fein had returned, and it was here to stay. And its presence was a standing refutation of the authenticity of the

Referendum as an event which legitimized Partition and displaced the 1918 Election as a founding Constitutional event.

The governing parties in the South had for a generation been denying their past and they had given Irish history, which had become too burdensome for their brittle shoulders, to Oxbridge to rewrite in the British interest. And, out of the past, this 'atavistic' force emerges which by its mere presence gives the lie to their cunning schemes, and draws votes away from them at an alarming rate.

How do they cope with this subversive constitutional intrusion from the North? They promptly forget all they had been saying about the North for a generation. They begin to denounce Sinn Fein for having launched a campaign of criminality against the peaceful democratic Irish state in the North, disrupting the neighbourly relations for which Leinster House had yearned.

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Nicholas Mansergh, the Irish-born, Anglo-Irish, British academic and administrator, described by Professor Joseph Lee as the greatest Irish 20th century historian, drew attention to the alleged opinion of Mazzini that the Irish nationalist movement of the mid 19th century was not authentic. This notion was later picked up by Commercially-Sponsored Professor Roy Foster, and was repeated in a centenary history of Sinn Fein by Brian Feeney, one of the better Irish newspaper columnists of recent times.

It appears that Mazzini, who was given refuge in England in the 1840s and allowed to publish radical propaganda in favour of physical-force nationalism in Italy, did not come out in support of the Young Ireland movement, which was apparently inspired by Young Italy, and that he defended his silence to his political group by expressing doubt about the authenticity of the nationalism of the Irish nationalists. A less quibbling reason for his silence would be that influential elements of the English Establishment were asking why the Young Irelanders were allowed to publish treasonable propaganda just because they put it in verse, and some did not approve of Mazzini being given English protection for the publication of his extremist Italian propaganda, and it would have been very imprudent for Mazzini to come out in public support of a nationalist movement that was directed against his host state, and claiming inspiration from Young Italy.

If he had genuine reservations about the nationalist authenticity of Young Ireland, he did not express them publicly, but the view that he had such reservations was asserted by an English follower, after his death, in criticism of the Irish Home Rule Bill. And this was picked up by Professor Mansergh, in a book published in the interesting year of 1941.

Mazzini had an understanding of nationality which those who deplore "*romantic nationalism*", and cite him against Irish nationalism, could only see as utterly romantic. He saw nations as component pieces of humanity, each having its particular mission to accomplish so that the general potential of humanity might be realized.

Whatever one thinks of the Irish, it is hardly disputable that historically they have been very unlike the English. And what they were was subversive of the Englishness of the first centuries of conquerors who came to subvert them into English ways but found themselves seduced into Irish ways. It was not until the conquerors put on the armour of fundamentalist Scripturalist Protestantism that they secured themselves against Irishness and could begin the systematic job of breaking it down. And then they made little headway until the Providence of the potato blight provided the possibility of killing off the Irish by the million, and shipping more millions abroad.

But even that was not enough. Just when Irishness was judged by closely informed observers in England to be all but extinct in Ireland, with an English-type peasantry, which knew its place, taking over from the multitudes of chieftains' sons who didn't, the Irish nuisance all started up again. And this time the Irish employed the devices of English political economy to bring about a result unimaginable in England.

Having been reduced to the status of a rack-rented tenantry, they threw up a Tenant Right movement by which they abolished tenantry in land. The major class in Irish society was then, for a number of generations, a class of hundreds of thousands of small landowners. And if that is to be described as a peasantry, then it was a free peasantry of the Swiss kind, tending to its own affairs, and entirely lacking in deference to a gentry—and not feeling any sense that, in the absence of a gentry, something was missing.

But in other ways they remained as unlike the Swiss as they were unlike the English.

(In recent decades rich people in the metropolis have been feeling a sense of the inadequacy of Irish life. They are wealthy, educated and enlightened—and inadequate. They are notionally middle class—but how can one be middle class when the peasantry has removed the upper class. It is existentially problematic. See the *Sunday Independent*.)

During the hundred years after Mazzini is said to have doubted the authenticity of Irish nationalism, the Irish did something unique. Nothing like it can be found in the history of Europe. Mazzini's doubts, reasonable though they might have been in the 1840s, proved to be groundless.

And there is another way that the Irish passed Mazzini's test—a way that those who dragged up Mazzini are not happy about. Irish nationalism has been single-mindedly irredentist.

Mazzini's nationalism was territorial. It related to historic national territories. The Italian state in the 1840s was a fraction of what it is now. And what it is now still falls short of what was designated by Mazzini as the territory of the Italian state.

Mussolini did his best to realize Mazzinian irredentism. And Liberal England, which gave a safe haven to Mazzini to preach his physical-force irredentist nationalism, made provision for its realization in the Secret Treaty by which it drew Italy into the Great War in 1915. A region of mixed nationality south of the Alps was to be transferred from the Austrian to the Italian state in the event of Entente victory. It was transferred. And the nationalist discontent of the German population was quelled by Hitler following the merger of Austria and Germany in 1938.

But Mazzini's projected Italy also included a coastal strip of the Yugoslav state concocted by Britain and France in 1919. Britain, having decided to destroy the Hapsburg Empire, had to decide what to do with the various peoples in it. Those peoples had not prepared for being erected into nation-states by launching insurrections against Austria when it was under great pressure during the Great War. The Irish, who were deemed to be free by the War propaganda, launched an Insurrection against the British Empire. The 'Yugoslavs', who were deemed to be intolerably oppressed, did not launch an Insurrection. But a group of peoples in that region were thrown together and made into the state of Yugoslavia when Britain decided to break up the Hapsburg state. It needed the Dalmatian coast for that concocted state. It had promised it to Italy as an irredentist fruit of victory before it had decided to destroy the Hapsburg state, but then found it expedient to break its promise. And that was one of the elements that went into the making of Italian Fascism.

And as to Yugoslavia—it was no sooner put together than it began pulling itself apart. The Serbs and Croats may be national components of Humanity, but they are not the same component.

But the worst is yet to come for those who would use Mazzini, as a kind of Pope of nationalism, against irredentist and physical-force Irish nationalism. Possibly they knew little about him other than that he carried on his work under Liberal protection in England. But they brought him up. So here he is:

“Insurrection by means of guerrilla bands is the true method of warfare for all nations desirous of emancipating themselves from a foreign yoke. This method of warfare supplies the want—inevitable at the commencement of the insurrection—of a regular army; it calls the greatest number of elements into the field, and yet may be sustained by the smallest number. It forms the military education of the people, and consecrates every foot of the native soil by the memory of some warlike deed.

“Guerrilla warfare opens a field of activity for every local capacity; forces the enemy into an unaccustomed method of battle; avoids the evil consequences of a great defeat; secures the national war from the risk of treason, and has the advantage of not confining it within any defined and determinate basis of operations. It is invincible, indestructible: (*Autobiographical Notes*, 1861. *General Instructions For The Members Of Young Italy*).

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It became evident that a new era of nationalism was in prospect when the military coup against Gorbachov in 1991 failed. At least it was evident to some, and they said so. Gorbachov was governing the Soviet Union guided by the political propaganda of the West which was designed to disintegrate it. As a senior figure in the political police he had had free access to the political literature of the West, particularly

the anti-Soviet Russian political literature published in the West, and that seemed to have determined his actions—and made him a political simpleton.

Every system of state has implicit rules and can only be reformed effectively in accordance with these rules. That was the political message of Edmund Burke. It was absorbed by the ruling class for which he wrote, but it was not valid only for Britain. Western propaganda did not, of course, advise Soviet reformers to be guided by the premier political philosopher of reform in the West.

Gorbachov set off a process of disintegration in the Soviet Union, urged on by Western politicians. The vast number of nationalities combined in the Soviet Union with minimal use of force was set loose, each to construct a mental world for itself and conceive a destiny.

The process began with the Soviet Union but did not end with it.

The European Union (under whatever its name was at the time) decided that the reconstructed multi-national Yugoslav state of 1945, which had been effectively oriented towards the West in the Cold War, must be pulled apart—which it was, by means of fearsome slaughter. And then the process began to work within the supra-national EU itself.

The kind of world for which Mazzini wrote has returned.

An Irish State which had not been overcome by existential doubt over whether Britain was or was not a foreign state might have been able to comment realistically on the course of events of the past quarter century and devise a policy towards it.

As it is the only substantial evidence against Mazzini's doubt that Ireland could sustain national existence, and play a distinctive part in international affairs, is the resurgent existence of Sinn Fein.

The Irish difficulty about foreign policy begins close to home—or at home? □

Ireland in World War 1

By Pat Muldowney

The Great War: Ours Not To Reason Why

€Readers of the *Cork Evening Echo* WW1 Readers' Letters debate may have noticed a reluctance by the Remembrance side to engage in serious discussion or debate on the rights and wrongs of the Great War.

There are many new books and articles about Irish involvement in WW1. They consist largely of individual and personal stories about heroism, sacrifice and suffering, along with allegations that this important subject is neglected.

But, for such an important subject, they provide little in the way of explanation of it.

This is also the centenary of Home Rule, the Rising, and the War of Independence. In contrast to WW1, these events are weighed, analysed and dissected robustly and critically, as any important historical event should. So why such reticence about the Great War?

There is a lobby which is critical of Ireland's participation in WW1. But it is limited to the traditional “neither King nor Kaiser” line, and shows no interest or curiosity about our

“gallant allies in Europe” - the “gallant allies” mentioned in the 1916 Proclamation of Independence. The critics of the Great War are rather embarrassed on this point. When challenged about “our gallant Allies” they seem quite vulnerable.

When pushed and prodded out of their “heroic sacrifice” comfort zone, Remembrance supporters in the *Evening Echo* debate brought up Germany's invasion of Belgium, its declaration of war on Russia and France, its submarine campaign, gas warfare, and bombardment of English coastal towns.

Consider the latter, for instance - but, for present purposes, just the British responsibility in it. Britain had advance knowledge of the impending German coastal attacks, but let them through in order to protect its intelligence source - its knowledge of German communication codes. Not even evacuation of civilians, they just let them take the shelling and try to escape on foot as best they could - if they could.

Generally speaking, the mainstream or popular British WW1 case is full of gaping holes, and, as the *Echo* correspondence shows, it does not hold up convincingly in debate. Also, much

of it has been tested to destruction over the past hundred years - even in the course of the war itself. So it is not too surprising that serious debate is avoided.

WW2 has an easy explanation - superficially at least. A mad, genocidal dictatorship had to be stopped. Likewise, Napoleonic wars involved an autocratic military genius conquering all round him, with conquered countries mounting a resistance which was ultimately successful at a place called Waterloo --- a word which, like the word Hitler, has acquired fixed meaning and significance and power above and beyond its original usage. Napoleonic wars can also be understood in a framework of revolutionary liberation from antique, despotic regimes. Anyway it's all a bit distant in time and such differences of interpretation provide endless grounds for interesting debate and speculation. Nothing too unsettling or challenging to mental rumination and digestion.

Going back a bit further, most people have heard of wars of conquest, defence and liberation: American War of Independence, Genghis Khan, Hundred Years War/Joan of Arc, something about King Louis XIV of France, maybe. And, of course, Cromwell and various other wars in Ireland. Again, we have ready-made frameworks of understanding of what was at stake for the various parties.

Likewise, interpretation and understanding of more modern wars such as Korea, Vietnam, or Iraq. These conflicts also have clear alternatives and differences of framework and understanding. Depending on your temperament and outlook and degree of serious interest in them, you pay your money and you make your choice, and then you probably find that you are reasonably satisfied with a fairly workable understanding of these great events. Enough, anyway, to hold your own in a five-minute argument in a pub.

The Great War is quite a puzzle, though. First impressions of it consist of trenches, over-the-top, and huge bodies of men marching straight into impenetrable sheets of deadly, flying metal, in a form of voluntary and unforced mass suicide. What the hell was all that about?

The people who did this stuff were our granduncles with whom we can still make some personal connection. Such seemingly insane behaviour must have had some overwhelmingly clear and compelling reason. What was it?

Was Granduncle actually insane - a suicidal robot, a psychopath? Maybe. But they can't all have been insane.

The Irish case for WW1 consists, by default, of the British case (whatever that was), in conjunction with a deal with the then British government to ensure Irish Home Rule. The latter reason for war collapsed when, within a year of the start of the war, military setbacks destroyed the Home Rulers' government allies, and the Unionist/Loyalist movement, which had already demonstrated their willingness to die for their cause, got control of the levers of power irrevocably. Remembrance supporters in Ireland cannot get round this point no matter how hard they try. So they completely ignore it.

Was Home Rule worth going to war for in the first place? Probably not. But if it was, then surely battle should have been joined with the power which was playing cat-and-mouse with Home Rule. What on earth was the point of going to war against countries who, if they ever took the trouble to think about it, would in the main have actually supported Irish Home Rule?

That just leaves the British case for going to war. This was formulated most effectively by the Irish Home Ruler Tom Kettle. His eloquently expressed arguments can be read in the book "*The Ways of War*" (now on-line), which was published posthumously by Kettle's widow.

These arguments have been rehashed, debated and refuted over and over again throughout the intervening century. It is surprising how little they have changed or developed. For instance, the "social Germany" issue is taken head-on by Kettle. Well, side-stepped anyway.

For Kettle, and for Catholic Ireland, the religious angle was important, and he doesn't make any bones about playing the religious card against Protestant Prussia. Even though Prussia had already confronted, worked through, and come to terms with its Catholic, its Jewish, and even its Polish issues.

It is amusing to watch Kettle struggling with the incongruity of Ireland going to war on behalf of the secularist French Republic, with its reputation for loose sexual morality and its persecution of the Catholic Church. He says that the dirty books with which France was awash were often produced in Austria. I wonder if he did a lot of personal research into this problem.

Kettle argued that Britain had put its shameful past behind it, also France, and even Russia, and that this newly redeemed and heroic trio had embarked on something new and unheard of - a noble and selfless mission to put down a criminal threat to human civilisation. In reality Kettle must have been conscious of the utter fragility and essential implausibility of this. He was at pains to warn that if it turned out that traditional power-grabbing and profiteering were involved, then the sacred mission was polluted, betrayed and destroyed, and it was all for nothing.

Kettle was a fool, but not a stupid fool. Only a stupid fool could fail to realise over time what was really afoot. Eventually he drank himself stupid, and arranged to get himself killed, which was a convenient way of evading the consequences of what he had done.

If Irish Home Rulers made Britain's war propaganda for it, other Home Rulers eventually exposed it as nonsense. The most remarkable was Charles James O'Donnell. Born in Donegal and educated as a statistician in Galway University, he became an eminent Imperial civil servant in India. He strongly opposed Lord Curzon's destructive divide-and-rule policies in India, and grew disillusioned with the imperialism he had devoted his life to. He was elected as Liberal M.P. in an English constituency in 1906, working to further Indian interests. He did not seek re-election in 1910.

In the 1920's O'Donnell wrote *The Irish Future with the Lordship of the World*. Several chapters of this book are reproduced in *Ireland in the Great War*, published by Athol Books in 1992, with a substantial introduction by Brendan Clifford. Chapter titles from O'Donnell include: *How Germany was Forced into the War*; *Germany Peaceful and Unprepared before 1912*; *The German Fleet and Trade Rivalry*.

Kettle went to town on German atrocities in Belgium, on which his case against Germany rested even though they came after, not before, Britain's declaration of war - since Prussia-Germany was inherently evil, Germany's Belgian atrocities were pre-determined.

O'Donnell comprehensively exposed this as gross exaggeration. In contrast, he said "*the invasion of Eastern Prussia in the first week of war by the Russian armies was a real devastation like the Transvaal or the Shenandoah Valley.*"

Though it still serves the purposes of the mindless Poppy-Remembrance cult, serious contemporary WW1 debate does not waste much time on discredited Kettle-style propaganda. For those who seek to blame Germany for WW1, the up-to-date proof is not the invasion of Belgium, but Germany's so-called "blank cheque" to Austria-Hungary. This is a guarantee, given by Germany to its sole ally Austria-Hungary, that it would support it if Russia intervened militarily on the side of Serbia.

This particular link in the chain of events leading up to war is selected out from the others: the assassination of the Archduke, the resulting war of Austria-Hungary against Serbia, Russian mobilisation against Austria-Hungary and Germany, and so on. If Germany, otherwise isolated and surrounded by powerful hostile armies, had not made this diplomatic declaration to its only ally, there would have been no Great War. Or so they say.

As a "proof" of German war-guilt, the "blank cheque" line brings to mind the Ems Telegram. In 1870 France declared war on Prussia and invaded. Prussia defended itself and defeated France in the ensuing war. This seems pretty clear-cut. But Prussia is declared to be the aggressor, not because it attacked France - it didn't - but because Chancellor Bismarck published a provocative summary of a telegram that the Kaiser had sent to him.

There is a train of thought which does not seek to pin the blame for WW1 on Germany. "The Sleepwalkers" by Christopher Clark (2013) debunks the German war-guilt propaganda in the course of tracking in detail the events which preceded the opening of hostilities. Clark implies that the war was an unintended accident.

But, just like America today, it is implausible that in the run-up to August 1914, the world's supreme military and political power was absent-mindedly neglectful of its overwhelming interests and ambitions, allowing events to take some arbitrary course which it simply observed disinterestedly but which it did not bother to influence and direct.

Amazon book reviews by Patrick Wilkinson include the following points about WW1:

"The most striking aspect of the Great War was that it could not have been an "accident" or the result of "sleepwalking" as it has become fashionable to say. It is really impossible to comprehend the outbreak of WWI without a clear understanding of the Anglo-American imperial "ideal". This ideal not only shaped the scope of British conquest in the 19th century, it also formed the ideological basis of the most influential people in Great Britain and the US at the turn of the century. In short WWI was a logical and even expected consequence of the expansion and consolidation of the Atlantic union."

"By ignoring any serious discussion of the British Empire, its ruling elite, or the global economic and psychological warfare that was waged by it against its European competitors in the years between 1871 and 1914, this book ["The Sleepwalkers", by Christopher Clark] shows that it is the author who was probably sleepwalking, not the European imperialists who together with Great Britain wantonly slaughtered more than 4 million people for profit and power. For the record World War

I was fought by six empires: the British Empire, the American Empire, the French Empire, the German Empire, the Russian Empire and the Ottoman Empire. Three were destroyed and two became vassals of the USA. It is a good time for all of us to wake up."

By the end of the nineteenth century the British Empire was not just a family business which, little by little, had unexpectedly made the big time in accordance with some unaccountable, benign, external decision of Providence, i.e. God.

On the contrary, it was a carefully and professionally run operation. J.R. Seeley published "The Expansion of England" in 1883 (now online), providing a sophisticated, expert, modern framework for British Imperial policy, past, present and future.

WW1 has been described above as a bit of a puzzle and a mystery. Taking a broad sweep, Seeley made sense of such seemingly exotic and strange historic episodes as the War of the Austrian Succession, by putting them into a conceptual framework of British imperial development involving gigantic, world-wide struggles to overcome powerful world-wide rivals - mainly France.

Seeley was connected to an elite intellectual and political movement including Lionel Curtis, Alfred Milner, and Cecil Rhodes who sought to plan and run the world in the interests of Britain. This was not some fantasy. They had the military, financial and political power to do it. It was happening anyway, and it was just a matter of putting it on a less haphazard and more organised and thought-out footing. They provided the policies of government no matter which party was in power. Present-day Chatham House is the successor of this policy grouping.

This was the background to British policy in the run-up to the Great War. There was nothing passive or unambitious about it.

So what was WW1? Was it kings and emperors and dynasties trying to out-do each other? Was it the revolutionary triumph of progress over reactionary despotism? Was it good versus evil? Or was it some inexplicable jumble of Archdukes, pointy helmets, bayonets, trenches, mud, bully beef, mustard gas, heroism and sacrifice, to which we must mindlessly bow our heads and pay obeisance every year, for ever and ever and ever amen?

There is a century's worth of books about WW1, amounting to whole libraries. But the best introduction to the subject is "*The Great Fraud of 1914-18*" by Pat Walsh (Athol Books, 2014).

We know about armies laying siege to cities, as in Derry or Limerick. They consisted of attack by one side and defence by the other. They were highly organised technical operations which required careful planning and implementation.

One way to understand the Great War is to think of it as a siege, not of a city, but of a group of countries encircled by vast hostile armies and navies of implacable enemies who had joined together in order to make their move in the most deadly fashion at the most favourable moment, for the purposes of conquest, dismemberment and destruction, in accordance with an elaborate pre-conceived plan. The brains behind this plan were British. □

Social Democracy and the Shaping of Germany, 1945-49 Part 6: The ISK Group and the Office of Strategic Services.

By Philip O'Connor

The race against the German Communists to secure influence in post-war Germany.

[Instalment 6 of extracts from a thesis written at TCD in the early 1990s.]

3.8 The ISK-Office of Strategic Services take-over of the German socialist émigré leadership

For ISK-SoPaDe, the OSS had now become a vital lever in the race against the German communists to secure influence on the ground in post-war Germany. Establishing control of the international émigré German socialist leadership was the first urgent task.

In 1943 the ISK had already begun planning a revival of its network within Nazi Germany through the International Federation of Transport Workers (IFT) and with the assistance of the OSS. In October 1943 – on almost the same date as the *Union of German Socialist Organisations* finally adopted its own programme for post-war Germany (“*The New German Republic*”) - Ollenhauer for SoPaDe, Eichler for ISK and Gottfurcht for the *Landesgruppe* began joint secret “weekly working talks” with OSS, which for its part intimated its “*partial agreement*” with ISK aims for Germany. At these meetings the SoPaDe and ISK provided “*white lists*” identifying “reliable” social democrats across Germany who could be re-activated for “*reconstruction work*”, and also “*black lists*” of known Nazis and their collaborators. They exchanged information on individuals classified either as “*suspect*” or “*useful to us*” and in this way OSS built up a detailed database of potentially “*useful*” elements in the German socialist underground and émigré networks to be activated during the occupation of Germany.⁶⁵

But exclusion from the White List was not only on the basis of Nazi activities. Communists were rarely included and even other left wing groups had hurdles to jump. The group *Neubeginnen*, although formally a part of the *Union of German Socialist Organisations*, was not trusted by the ISK. According to the ISK leader Werner Hansen, it still “*yearned for a connection to Stalin*”. The Socialist Workers Party, also a partner in the *Union*, was regarded as too close to the “united front” element of the British left and suspected of close links with both MI5 and Soviet intelligence. The Socialist Workers Party was the SAP or *Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei*, henceforth *SAP*. Collaboration with the OSS and SOE is not mentioned in the records of the *Union* except, briefly, as “*cooperation with Allied Relief Organisations*”. All of this meant that apart from certain individuals, both the *SAP* and *Neubeginnen* were kept in the dark about the *Union's* “*working arrangements*” with the OSS.⁶⁶

In return, from mid-1943 the OSS restored the international contacts of the leadership circle of the *Union of German Socialist Organisations*, although on a very selective basis. This was no minor matter, given the stringent wartime postal censorship regime which effectively prohibited meaningful communications. These were restored only for the SoPaDe and ISK leaders and for their joint grouping in the trade union *Landesgruppe*. All post was forwarded (after evaluation) through the London OSS office.⁶⁷ The link established to the emigration circles in Switzerland was to ISK personnel

and to Wilhelm Hoegner, former Bavarian SPD Reichstag deputy, who was neither the most prominent social democrat or even the “*official*” SoPaDe representative there, but who was working closely with Allen Dulles, the Bern OSS station head.⁶⁸ In contrast to this, contact – even basic monitored postal communication - between *Neubeginnen* and *SAP* circles in Britain and their colleagues in the US were not re-established until after the war was over. Even circles of formerly prominent émigré social democrats remained cut off from each other. OSS ensured that only the SoPaDe and ISK circles in its confidence had functioning communications (through the OSS Labour Desk) with their trusted contacts in the US, Switzerland, Sweden, Turkey and even South America.⁶⁹

This new relationship represented a “win-win” for both sides. In the latter period of the war it enabled the small SoPaDe-ISK circle in London to become the sole functioning centre of émigré German socialism in a position to influence the reconstitution of the labour and trade union movement in post-war Germany. Alternative groupings were effectively isolated and excluded. For the OSS and British policy circles it meant the adoption, by this selected German circle, of policy approaches to post-war German socialism and trade unionism closely “on message” with Western Allied plans. The first urgent matter was to establish the London *Landesgruppe* position on trade union policy, and this was now done, by-passing for example the pro-WFTU views of prominent German social democrats in the US who had formed a committee on this basis. Trade union groups similar in composition and programme to the SoPaDe-ISK *Union* leadership of the London *Landesgruppe* were established in Switzerland, Sweden and even the US, often in conflict with or simply by-passing existing émigré leaderships.⁷⁰ The same process that had proved successful in Switzerland was adopted in Sweden. As with the “*Union of Socialists*” established by the London leaders through the OSS in Switzerland through contacts between the ISK and Wilhelm Hoegner, the communications established to Sweden were to a trade union grouping of social democrats and “former” *SAP* members which by-passed the main *SPD* group there. The key figures were former union officials Fritz Tarnow and Fritz Fricke, and a few *SAP* activists around Willy Brandt (aka Erich Framm) and the Enderle couple. Brandt emerged as the ISK's preferred contact in Sweden. He had attracted the interest of the OSS through his known favouring of a long-term US commitment in Europe. He was known to be sympathetic to the pro-US Paul Hagen circle in the US and had become the Embassy's main source of information on “German questions”. A senior OSS Labor Desk official visited Stockholm in early July 1944 and met Tarnow, Fricke and Brandt, armed with a “letter of introduction” from Gottfurcht and Eichler and a copy of the *Union* programme. Within two weeks of this secret meeting, regular postal contact was established through the OSS. The ex-*SAP* political group led by Brandt then developed and issued a new programme of its own – *On the Politics of German Socialists* - which was indistinguishable from that of the London ISK, and the Brandt-Tarnow trade union group adopted a programme along the lines of the London *Landesgruppe*. The way was now cleared for this ex-*SAP* group to be amalgamated with the *Union*-aligned Stockholm *SPD* circle in October 1944,

with Ollenhauer issuing strict instructions to the local SoPaDe leaders not to stand in the way of the process.⁷¹

By the autumn of 1944, therefore, a tightly controlled German socialist émigré network had been established in the West. The ISK was in the vanguard of it and formed the contact point between this network and the Allied – mainly American – intelligence community responsible for insurgency policy in occupied Europe and for political preparations for the occupation of western Germany. Through this framework the policy orientation of the exile social democrats was comprehensively redrafted along ISK lines and adopted in the key exile centres. The agreed perspective was for a post-war, trade union led, “bottom up”, rebuilding of both unions and left politics under Western Allied guidance. Conservative exile social democrats assuming a restoration of the old SPD (and a German State) were excluded from this movement as well as anyone who displayed “united front” tendencies towards the communists. The *Union* alliance with the OSS created a new, if extremely small, social democratic leadership circle in exile with a “Western” socialist perspective for post-war Germany in a process closely steered by the OSS.⁷²

(Endnotes)

65. Hansen to Eichler 27.8.43, Eichler to Gottfurcht 30.8.43, Hansen to Eichler 30.11.1943, and ‘Bericht gegeben im gemeinsamen M[embers] M[eeeting] mit engl. Genossen am 5.XII.1943 – WH’, in AsD NL Hansen, Ordner 6; Ma, August 1943 p. 4, in AsD Best.IJB/ISK Box 49; ‘Vierteljahresbericht des Londoner OV des ISK, Februar-April 1944’, in AsD Best.IJB/ISK Box 52, p. 4; Gottfurcht Notebook, entry for 22.10.1943, in HBS NL Gottfurcht Kasten 37. Union of German Socialist Organisations, *The new German Republic*, October 1943. On compiling of the “white lists”, ‘Bericht gegeben im gemeinsamen MM ...’ (as in previous note); ‘Heini’ [= Hansen] to Eichler 27.2.1944 in AsD Best.IJB/ISK Box 52, in which Hansen also noted that the ISK list of reliable people in Germany had now reached 400, of whom 258 had been passed on to “Sam”. On the meetings also Pratt to Ollenhauer 17.5.43 in AsD SoPaDe Emig., Mapped 79 and the extensive correspondence between Gottfurcht and both David White at the US Embassy and Pratt at OSS regarding the “lists”, HBS NL Gottfurcht Kasten 37. The US authorities also used other sources in compiling these “black” and “white” lists, not least former US embassy staff in Germany and US businessmen who had extensive contacts there. See Heinrich L. Wurmeling, *Die weisse Liste*, Berlin 1981. On vetting of individuals, Pratt to Vogel 27.4.1943 and ‘Additions’ (‘Ergänzung’) of 16.6.1943 on the ‘reliability’ of Paul Kunder and a certain W. Orloff, and Pratt to Ollenhauer 29.12.1943 on Hans Dill, in AsD SoPaDe Emig., Mapped 79. The SoPaDe secretary Fritz Heine was working at this stage with SOI in North Africa analysing interrogation reports on German PoWs (*Biographisches Handbuch*, p. 280-1); Also Gottfurcht to Pratt 21.8.1943, enclosing a manuscript ‘The German Political Emigration in Great Britain’ which had been drafted at Pratt’s request (ibid., 14.8.1943), Pratt to Gottfurcht 22.7.1943 and updated report, ‘Bericht über die sozialistische Emigration’ 27.2.1944, all in HBS NL Gottfurcht Kasten 37. These drafts obviously served as sources for the later comprehensive report compiled by Walter Dorn for the OSS, ‘The German Political Emigration’.

66. On *Neubeginnen*, Hansen, untitled, speech to MSI meeting, n.d. (early 1943), AsD NL Hansen, Ordner 6. On the Socialist Workers Party (the SAP or *Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei*), an intriguing internal ISK memo reported: “Scheffer [an SAP activist – PO’C] was asked by Paul Walther [head of the SAP in Britain – PO’C] to complete the questionnaire [the vetting for potential OSS “workers” – PO’C] and to take part in the work. Sch.[efffer] then spoke to Werner [another SAP activist – PO’C] about whether he should accept as it apparently involved working in some way in the framework of Amgot. [= American Government – PO’C]. What is interesting is that Paul Walther apparently did this at the behest of Dr. Kurt Alexander who

is working in MI5 for the British. The contacts between the SAP and Alexander are very probably through Walther Fischer [another SAP activist – PO’C], who is working very closely with Alexander. Werner [i.e. Hansen – PO’C] thinks that after the talk he had with Scheffer, the latter will very probably refuse to join the organisation [i.e. the OSS – PO’C].” – ‘Notiz’, n.d. (late 1944), in AsD Best. IJB/ISK Box 54.

67. Pratt to Gottfurcht 7.1.1943, Gottfurcht to Sender 6.2.1943 and Pratt to Gottfurcht 9.2.43, in HBS NL Gottfurcht Kasten 37.

68. Pratt to Vogel 29.12.1943 in AsD SoPaDe Emig., Mapped 79; Gottfurcht Notebook p. 6, January 1944, in HBS NL Gottfurcht, Kasten 37; Vogel to Hoegner 6.1.1944, in AsD SoPaDe Emig., Mapped 142; ‘Message from Hans Vogel for Wilhelm Hoegner’ via OSS, 8.2.1944, Gottfurcht Notebook. The most prominent émigré SPD figure in Switzerland was of course Otto Braun, the last elected Prime Minister of Prussia. The “official” SoPaDe representative was Georg Richter. Both men resented their exclusion from the new SPD elite. For Hoegner’s relations with Allen Dulles, which were based on developing a future strongly federalist structure for Germany, see his correspondence with Dulles, Braun, Ritzel and Eichler in IfZ ED 120 NL Hoegner, Bde. 2, 3 and 7. Hoegner also provided Dulles with information on the involvement of circles of former social democratic politicians in the 1944 bomb plot which contributed to Dulles’ analysis of this event for the Allied leadership, which was probably decisive in determining their dismissive view of it.

69. On *Neubeginnen*’s exclusion from postal channels throughout this period, see Karl Frank to Walther von Knoeringen and Erwin Schoettle 26.10.1948 in AsD ED 213 NL Frank, Ordner 11. On the similar isolation of exile SAP groups from each other, Helga Grebing (ed.), *Lehrstücke in Solidarität. Briefe und Biographien deutscher Sozialisten*, Berlin-Bonn, 1983, pp. 11 ff. On the sudden flourishing of ISK-SoPaDe’s international contacts in this same period see ISK, MA Nr. 3, Mai 1944, p. 9 in AsD Best. IJB/ISK Box 52. On the new channels to Sweden, AsD SoPaDe Emig., Mapped 12-13. Contact with émigré SPD circles in South America was established in late 1944 through OSS with Ernst Schumacher in Bolivia, a pre-1933 ally of Ollenhauer’s in the party – see Ollenhauer to Schumacher 20.2.1945 in AsD SoPaDe Emig., Mapped 84. The first contact with Turkey was established via OSS to Ernst Reuter in May 1944 – see Reuter “to the London Representative of the German Social Democratic Party” 22.5.44, in *ibid.* Mapped 96. Both Schumacher and Reuter were later to play significant roles in Germany, Schumacher as an SPD region secretary and Reuter as first mayor of Berlin.

70. It was only at this stage that such a grouping emerged in the US separate from the *Labor Delegation*, composed of formerly secondary figures from the *Delegation* as well as from *Neubeginnen* and SAP, which now disintegrated as organisations. The grouping consisted of individuals working with the OSS or as trusted contact persons for the London leaders. Ollenhauer wrote that colleagues in Washington viewed this grouping as a “camouflaged branch of the Moscow committee” (Ollenhauer to Tarnow, 19.02.1945, AsD SoPaDe Emig., Mapped 84. See also Fichter, *Besatzungsmacht und Gewerkschaften*, p. 57 f. On the interventions in the émigré trade union debate in Sweden, see Gottfurcht to Pratt 19.5.1943, enclosing a letter for forwarding to Fritz Tarnow in Stockholm on London’s views of the Swedish trade union group’s programme, HBS NL Gottfurcht Kasten 37). On the reconstitution of the ISK network and contacts in Switzerland with SOE assistance, see ‘Heini’ [i.e. Hansen] to Eichler 27.4.1944 in AsD Best. IJB/ISK Box 52 and also later Eichler’s own report for the OSS, ‘Experiences of my Journey to the Continent from November 6th to December 8th, 1944’, 1.1.1945, *ibid.* Box 55. On the formation of the London-*Union* orientated ‘Union of Socialists’ in Switzerland, see ‘Bericht von Hanna Bertholet über die Zusammensetzung der Union deutscher Sozialisten in der Schweiz’, 23.5.1945, in *ibid.* Box 56. It was nearly a year after the ISK network was re-established that the ‘official’ SoPaDe representative in Switzerland, Georg Richter, had any contact with London. He was highly aggrieved at the favouritism that had been shown the ISK and Hoegner. Richter

to Ollenhauer 15.10.1944 in AsD SoPaDe Emig., Mappe 102. See also Willy Eichler to Hoegner, 23.11.1944 enclosing the constitution and programme of the London *Union*, ‘Richtlinien der Union der deutschen sozialistischen Organisationen’, a proposal for establishing a similar group in Switzerland, ‘Vorschlag für eine Diskussion unter den sozialdemokratischen Emigranten in der Schweiz’, IfZ ED 120, NL Hoegner. Cf. Kritzer, *Wilhelm Hoegner*, pp. 141 ff.

71. On the SoPaDe group in Stockholm in general see Müssener, *Exil in Schweden*, pp. 139 ff., 156 ff. On London’s contacts to Tarnow and Fricke, see Gottfurcht to Tarnow (via Pratt of OSS) 19.5.1943, to Fricke 30.7.1944 and to Toni Sender 19.6.1943 and *Gottfurcht Notebook* passim, all in HBS NL Gottfurcht Kasten 37. On the ISK and Brandt, ‘Friedel to V.’ [= Enderle?? to Eichler] 18.5.1944 and ‘Heini’ [= Hansen] to Eichler, 27.4.1944, in AsD Best. IJB/ISK Box 52. For Brandt’s US embassy contacts, Peter Kock, *Willy Brandt*, 1979, p. 148 f. and US Ambassador’s reports from Stockholm 1944-45 in IfZ OMGUS-POLAD 729/35 and the US intelligence assessment by Wiesner of Brandt as “the most intelligent and outstanding” of the socialist exiles in Sweden – letter to Thomas Wilson, OSS London, 20.1.45, IfZ OMGUS Mp. Div. 17/257-2/9. On Gottfurcht’s recommendation of Brandt as the London *Union*’s Stockholm contact man in early 1944 and the visit to Stockholm by Dorfmann of the

London OSS in July 1944, Gottfurcht Notebook p. 6 ‘Sweden’, and Memo for Dorfmann headed “Try to get in touch with the following people” 27.2.1944, HBS NL Gottfurcht Kasten 37. For the Brandt group programme – *Zur Politik deutscher Sozialisten* – and the dissolution of the Stockholm SAP, see Müssener, *Exil in Schweden*, pp. 170 ff. and Helga Grebing (ed.), *Entscheidung für die SPD*, 1984, pp. 7-36. The SAP had originally formed in a major split from the SPD youth movement during the crisis of 1932, and Ollenhauer, then secretary of the youth wing, was personally acquainted with Brandt from that period. They had also met up in Paris in 1938 after Brandt had returned from Spain (Koch, *Willy Brandt*, p. 125).

72. In late 1943 Dorn noted with satisfaction that the “left wing” – by which he meant the ISK oriented circles – had gained “the upper hand” intellectually and politically in the main émigré centres, although old SPD leaders such as Stampfer and Brauer in the US would continue their efforts “to keep the London SoPaDe to a conservative course”, i.e. a policy of re-establishing the old SPD. The problem of “socialist unity” – by which he meant unity with the left social democratic groupings – had “much more to do with the basic orientation of leading personalities” than with ideology or programmatic questions (‘The German Political Emigration’, p. 90). □

Starving The Germans: The Evolution of Britain’s Strategy of Economic Warfare During The First World War – The French Connection Part 9

By Eamon Dyas

[Continuing a series of extracts from a forthcoming book by Eamon Dyas on the interaction of Britain, France and Germany in the years leading up to the First World War. We have reached the year 1911, when Caillaux, head of the French government, had negotiated an agreement with Germany regarding Morocco.]

The fall of Caillaux.

Immediately after the terms of the 1911 Franco-German Agreement became known the campaign for the ousting of Caillaux began with the imperialists claiming that the Agreement was an insult to French prestige and a betrayal of imperial ambitions. At their behest a Senate Committee hearing commenced in December 1911 to examine the terms of the Treaty and the nature of its negotiation. The British war party were only too pleased to see these events unfold as they shared the French imperialists’ wish to see the back of a man who they saw as someone dangerously close to Germany.

Regarding the fall of Caillaux, a report in *The Times* published on 11 January 1912, just ten days before he was forced to resign, provides an explanation of the seminal events that led to the resignation. Although it was written by someone who had offered unstinted support to the imperial/colonialist bloc over the years the detail it provides is good reason to quote it extensively.

However, before that a word of explanation to the reference to the behaviour of Caillaux when he was Finance Minister in the Monis Government (March-June 1911). This relates, in some instances to his attempts at honouring contracts negotiated under the terms of that 1909 Franco-German Agreement and carried over from the previous government of Aristide

Briand. In other instances it relates to his attempts to ensure the continuing good relations between the two countries by offering alternatives as compensation in the face of the Monis Government’s provocative actions in the arbitrary cancellation of existing contracts with German firms (a fact of course not mentioned in *The Times* article). Here is the report in question:

“One of the chief points of difference between M. Caillaux and his critics has been the part which he played as Finance Minister in the Monis Cabinet in promoting a Franco-German Congo-Cameroon Railway scheme without the knowledge of those who were officially responsible for French policy. As far as can be gathered from the published accounts of yesterday’s proceedings before the Senate Committee, the Prime Minister explained the nature of this transaction, but it was not clear whether his denial that he had ever conducted negotiations of his own without the knowledge of the Foreign Minister applied to the whole of his recent Ministerial career since March 1911, or merely to the period of his Premiership, beginning from the end of June.

... . “The *Temps* here attributes to M. Caillaux motives and actions which are, to say the least, anomalous in the case of a mere Minister of Finance. It has since been made plain that the responsible Prime Minister, M. Monis, was absolutely ignorant of these negotiations.

The *Figaro* this morning gives a history of the Congo-Cameroon scheme, which, as M. Caillaux’s supporters represent, he was induced to take up in order to console Germany for the failure of the proposed Franco-German Congo-Cameroon development syndicate. According to this account, M. Fondere, director of the Congo River Navigation Company, was taken

to see M. Caillaux some time last May, and at this interview he either solicited or received a mission to go to Germany in order to take the opinion of German colonial circles with regard to the nature and extent of the compensation that the Germans might expect for the collapse of the earlier scheme, which had been abandoned by the Monis Government in April. The Germans were to be offered a concession for a Congo-Cameroon railway to the coast, and they were to be asked to state their terms. According to the *Figaro*, M. Fondere's instructions were, first, to go and see Baron von Lancken, Councillor of the German Embassy in Paris. After this he left for Berlin accompanied by a banker called Henroot, and immediately upon arrival he introduced himself to the German National Liberal Reichstag Deputy Dr. Semler, president of the German Southern Cameroons Company and a prominent Colonial Party man. By the latter part of May the negotiations had resulted in a draft agreement, which M. Fondere, upon his return to Paris, submitted to M. Caillaux and subsequently to M. Cruppi, then Foreign Minister, and to M. Messimy, then Minister for the Colonies.

"The effect of the project, according to the *Echo de Paris*, was to drain all the trade of the French Congo by means of a railway the outlet of which was to be on the German Cameroon coast, and the result would have been that the French Congo would have been placed in a position of economic subjection to the German Colony. Political subjection would inevitably have followed. " (*M. Caillaux and his Critics: Official and Unofficial Diplomacy*, Paris, Jan. 10. *The Times*, 11 January, 1912, p.6).

The report in *The Times* goes on to provide the defence of Caillaux's position under the heading "An Authorized Version" and was based on an account of the events originally published in the *Temps* newspaper.

"These disclosures in this morning's newspapers are so disquieting that this evening the *Temps* publishes an authorized version of the events. Nearly the whole of the Latest Intelligence page is devoted to reproduction of what it describes as 'the facts and the texts.' It is claimed that the documents show first, that the negotiations conducted with Germany by the Briand and Monis Ministries invariably conformed to the spirit of the Franco-German Agreement of 1909 and dealt with economic and not with political or territorial questions: secondly, that these negotiations invariably bore an official character and were conducted either by the Government or under its direct control.

"The detailed enumeration of these Franco-German conversations dealing with the Moroccan *Union des Mines*, the Moroccan Public Works Company, Moroccan railways, the projected Congo development syndicate, and the Congo-Cameroon railway scheme follows the general lines of the article in the *Temps* on July 6, 1911, already cited. The connexion which it is sought to establish between these conversations and the general policy of France and Germany in their relations during the last three years is interesting, and reference may be made to it in due season." (ibid.).

However, not wishing to let Caillaux off the hook by a simple restating of "An Official Version" the correspondent of *The Times* goes on to implicate Caillaux's secret negotiations with Germany in 1911 with his previous encouragement of Franco-German commercial relations.

"It is further alleged that, after the Agadir demonstration, when M. Caillaux was Prime Minister, he personally and secretly resumed the negotiations which he had opened in May.

According to this account, from July 16 to 31, when the crisis was at its worst, he had an almost daily exchange of views with the Councillor of the German Embassy. On July 26 he received a secret emissary of Germany without informing the French Foreign Minister, and on July 27 he had fresh and more precise dealings with Baron von Lancken, who was so impressed that he hurried off to Berlin in order to make a report. It is further asserted that, apart from the very considerable territorial and financial concessions which M. Caillaux was prepared to entertain, the Prime Minister not only accepted, but suggested the principle of an understanding with Germany in Europe the price of which, as is pointed out, would inevitably have been acquiescence in the loss of Alsace and Lorraine and the break up of the Triple Entente.

"It is added that on August 16 M. Caillaux caused Baron von Lancken to be informed that matters had gone further than he had intended."

These allegations are admittedly designed to serve merely as *points de depart* for the Senate Committee's inquiry, but even if only one-tenth of these and of a multitude of other statements which are being published were accurate it would be enough to warrant M. de Selves serious charges in his letter to President Fallieres of the want of combined action on the part of the Ministry." (ibid.).

Caillaux's behaviour was consistent with the terms of the 1909 Franco-German agreement by which joint-enterprises between both countries were to be encouraged. This was agreed under the first Briand Government and when the imperialist dominated Monis's Government replaced Briand in March 1911, unable to revoke the agreement, instead set about undermining the way the agreement was meant to function. Most French governments at this time were only possible through what was effectively coalitions. Political parties were not the same thing as they were in Britain and did not perform the same function in government. It was quite common for individual deputies to vote with deputies of other parties because on particular issues the strength of their convictions on that issue was stronger than the party line even if there was a party line in the first place. Clemenceau was a great admirer of the British party system and regretted that the stability that it brought to British politics could not be emulated in France. Effectively it was the political bloc that dominated French politics and because the political bloc system was more important than individual parties the formation of governments required an accommodation between the different blocs for any government to be effective. Consequently, when Monis replaced Briand it was not unusual that someone like Caillaux would be appointed to his cabinet as a gesture to the moderate left bloc. Caillaux who had been Minister of Finance in the earlier Clemenceau government, was appointed to the same post in the Monis Government. Similarly, when Caillaux became Prime Minister in June 1911, on the back of public resentment of the way that Monis had brought the country to the brink of war with Germany through the invasion of Morocco, he retained Delcassé as his Minister for Marine as part of his gesture towards the imperialist bloc. This need to operate within the political bloc system inevitably involved subterfuge and secrecy becoming a part of the functioning of French governments as policy issues which might offend one bloc needed to be pursued in ignorance of the representative of that bloc - an ignorance that sometimes suited both parties. Without this facility it would have been impossible to govern effectively particularly in the area of foreign affairs, which in the ten years leading to the First World War was an area of particular volatility.

The significance of the hounding of Caillaux was that it was supposedly provoked by behaviour that had been widely accepted as being inevitable given the way that French governments had to be formed during this era and it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the whole thing was artificially generated with British connivance to remove from power someone whose policies which, if they were not based upon a Franco-German rapprochement, certainly gave momentum to such an outcome. The British war party, backed by the likes of George Saunders (the Paris correspondent of *The Times*) was only too eager to support these moves on the part of the French imperialists. Saunders was married to the daughter of Oscar Hainamer, a Berlin banker and he went on to work as a war propagandist for the British Government during the First World War. The high moral tone adopted by Saunders in *The Times* article quoted above is instructive of something that was patently missing when he was commenting on the invasion of Morocco in April/May 1911 where more important issues were at stake. In that situation the subterfuge used by Monis with his two Cabinet colleagues (Jean Cruppi and Maurice Bertheaux) in authorising the invasion without consulting the rest of the

Cabinet let alone Parliament did not provoke such moral outrage either in him, the British press at large, the Liberal Imperialists, or the French imperialists.

Caillaux, because of the presence in his Cabinet of representatives of the French imperialists and anti-German lobby, was forced to negotiate and then come to an agreement with Germany without informing them of what he was planning as he believed that this was the only way of defusing an international situation that was threatening to degenerate into war. That such an agreement was based on the terms that Britain favoured (and indeed had suggested) in preference to conceding territory to Germany in Morocco made no difference to the way that Caillaux was viewed by the British war party. He was not their man and did not represent the tradition in French politics that they relied upon and so he had to go. Ironically, his demise was facilitated by Clemenceau who refused to become a member of Caillaux's proposed new Cabinet. He also made a last-minute attempt to compile the new Ministry by proposing Delcassé in the coveted role of Foreign Minister in an effort to assuage the imperialist bloc but all to no avail. Britain had put the Indian sign on him and nobody was interested. □

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But what about the invasion itself? Is it really true that this was the cause of the war between Britain and Germany? Was this war brought about by a breach in the 1839 Treaty of London? In the record of British Cabinet discussions prior to the attack on Germany it was established beyond doubt that there was no treaty obligation whatsoever on Britain to go to war over Belgium.

The Belgium issue was mere propaganda. Britain attacked Germany for very different reasons. The writer Jerome K. Jerome put it as follows: "Had [Germany] gone round the Cape of Good Hope the result would have been the same."

Though probably striving for political correctness, President Gauck was certainly right to say that Germany's invasion of Belgium was unjustifiable outside of military logic. It handed Britain an incomparable opportunity, one which is still the mainstay of British propaganda a hundred years later.

Lloyd George was Cabinet member and Chancellor of the Exchequer. His secretary and lover Frances Stevenson put it as follows: "I prayed that the Germans would invade Belgium. ... [Lloyd George] knew ... that the invasion of Belgium was ... a heaven-sent excuse for supporting a declaration of war."

The scale of deception in Britain's 1914 war conspiracy makes the 2003 dodgy-dossier-Blair-Bush-Iraq-war conspiracy look like a paragon of fair dealing by comparison.

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Echo 24 September 2014

War bullies

To make war on France, a militaristic superpower attacked a neutral country, burned its capital city including its ancient university, and slaughtered thousands of innocent civilians. This was Britain's onslaught on neutral Denmark - not once but twice during the Napoleonic period.

Considering their historic antagonisms, the 1914 alliance of Russia, Britain and France is a strange one. The alliance was directed against Germany which historically had good relations with Britain and Russia. What is the explanation? In his Echo letters Richard Addington makes great play of Germany's declaration of war on Russia and France in 1914.

What does it take to start a war between states? A war consists of battles. For these to happen in 1914, huge bodies of men had to be trained, armed, and delivered to the place

of battle. The first battles of WW1 were fought on German territory. So if Germany started it all, it must have been very remiss in allowing its opponents the advantage of entering its territory to attack it. The side which starts a war is not usually the one that is taken by surprise.

Where does the declaration of war come into it? This is a legal or diplomatic formulation. It is not the same as engaging physically with the enemy. In 1939 Britain declared war on Germany, supposedly in fulfilment of a treaty obligation to Poland. But its treaty obligation required it to actually make war on Germany. It did nothing of the sort and Poland was overrun. So much for diplomatic declarations of war.

Actual physical preparation for battle is more to the point. Defeated after its invasion of Prussia in 1870, republican France negotiated a close military alliance with Tsarist Russia whose inexhaustible manpower could ensure that a militarily encircled Germany was doomed to defeat in the next war. In the course of the negotiations the French military chief-of-staff agreed with the Tsar that: "The mobilisation is the declaration of war. If your neighbour mobilises a million men on your frontier and you do nothing, you are like the man who, with a pistol in his pocket, should let a neighbour put a weapon to his forehead without drawing his own."

After its defeat by Japan in 1905 Russia renewed its armed forces with extensive financial assistance from its ally France, with which Britain also had an understanding. These three powers had been deadly enemies for generations, but got together to put down Germany, a relatively peaceable country which was outperforming all of them in trade and industry. Former Prime Minister Arthur Balfour privately described this plan to U.S. Ambassador Henry White in 1910, saying that it was easier to maintain British supremacy by destroying Germany in a war than to try to compete peacefully with it in normal trade.

Blocked in the east by Japan, in 1914 Tsarist Russia physically mustered its enormous forces along the borders of Germany and Austria-Hungary in order to extend its power into the Balkans and the Mediterranean.

Nominally Britain was neutral in 1914. But without informing the people's elected representatives in parliament, leading elements in both of the governing parties and the armed

The Road to the Ukraine

By Pat Walsh

It is now being admitted, even in the influential organs of the US political establishment, that the crisis in the Ukraine is largely the fault of the US and its expansionary policy at the end of the Cold War – a war it did not treat as over and which has led it to the borders of Russia.

In the Council for Foreign Relations' magazine, *Foreign Affairs* (September/October 2014) an article, 'Why the Ukraine Crisis is the West's Fault' written by John J. Mearsheimer explains why US/UK policy since the ending of the Cold War has produced nothing but crisis after crisis. Mearsheimer says:

"According to the prevailing wisdom in the West, the Ukraine crisis can be blamed almost entirely on Russian aggression. Russian President Vladimir Putin, the argument goes, annexed Crimea out of a long-standing desire to resuscitate the Soviet empire, and he may eventually go after the rest of Ukraine, as well as other countries in eastern Europe. In this view, the ouster of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich in February 2014 merely provided a pretext for Putin's decision to order Russian forces to seize part of Ukraine.

But this account is wrong: the United States and its European allies share most of the responsibility for the crisis. The taproot of the trouble is NATO enlargement, the central element of a larger strategy to move Ukraine out of Russia's orbit and integrate it into the West. At the same time, the EU's expansion eastward and the West's backing of the pro-democracy movement in Ukraine — beginning with the Orange Revolution in 2004 — were critical elements, too. Since the mid-1990s, Russian leaders have adamantly opposed NATO enlargement, and in recent years, they have made it clear that they would not stand by while their strategically important neighbor turned into a Western bastion. For Putin, the illegal overthrow of Ukraine's democratically elected and pro-Russian president — which he rightly labeled a "coup" — was the final straw. He responded by taking Crimea, a peninsula he feared would host a NATO naval base, and working to destabilize Ukraine until it abandoned its efforts to join the West."

The Road to Ukraine

Mearsheimer locates the origin of the Ukraine problem in US behaviour at the end of the Cold War:

"As the Cold War came to a close, Soviet leaders preferred that U.S. forces remain in Europe and NATO stay intact, an arrangement they thought would keep a reunified Germany pacified. But they and their Russian successors did not want NATO to grow any larger and assumed that Western diplomats understood their concerns. The Clinton administration evidently thought otherwise, and in the mid-1990s, it began pushing for NATO to expand."

NATO's 1995 bombing campaign against the Bosnian Serbs was the first sign of aggressive intent. NATO enlargement toward Russia took place from 1999, bringing in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. The second wave took place in 2004 including Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. Moscow complained about this aggressive expansionism from the beginning but were too weak or unwilling to do anything about it during the Yeltsin period.

In his book 'Putin vs. Putin' Alexander Dugin, Philosopher and sometime adviser to the Russian leader, suggests that it would be a mistake to see the Cold War as ending in 1991.

What actually happened was that the Soviet Union unilaterally withdrew from it. It did not concede defeat, negotiate terms or sign any document of surrender but simply said "I'm out."

The presumption in Russia was that having withdrawn from the Cold War its opponents would do likewise. The US/UK had always proclaimed they were fighting the Cold War for mainly defensive purposes so it was reasonable to assume that once the threat from the 'Evil Empire' of Communism was removed they would stand down their armies and dissolve their 'defensive' force of NATO.

Stalin had tested the West's pretensions a few years into the Cold War. On 31 March 1954 Moscow sent a note to the governments of France, the United States and Great Britain offering to discuss a possibility of the Soviet Union joining NATO. Inasmuch as the Soviet Union of all the big powers that belonged to the anti-Hitler coalition is the only one that is not a signatory to this treaty, the North Atlantic Treaty cannot but be regarded as an aggressive pact directed against the Soviet Union.

Given the proper conditions, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization could lose its aggressive character, that is, if all the big powers that belonged to the anti-Hitler coalition became its participants."

"In view of this the Soviet Government, guided by the unchanged principles of its foreign policy of peace and desirous of relaxing the tension in international relations, states its readiness to join with the interested governments in examining the matter of having the Soviet Union participate in the North Atlantic Treaty."

The Secretary General of NATO Lord Ismay, however, on a piece of paper torn out from a note pad at a Milan hotel, where he was staying, concluded that the Soviet application amounted to "*an unrepentant burglar requesting to join the police force.*" He decided not to bother to find out if Russia would subscribe to the NATO principles, which could only be ascertained by the accession process. And NATO's response did not even represent a polite refusal. It came 3 weeks after Moscow's request and said that "*the unrealistic nature of the proposal does not warrant discussion*".

The Russians maintain that the U.S. secured Soviet troop withdrawal from East Germany in 1990 through promising there would be no expansion of NATO. However, since then NATO has absorbed 12 more countries.

An article by Jack F. Matlock, Ambassador to the USSR from 1987-91, in *The Washington Post* of 14 March 2014 confirms that the Russians were duped by the US, who treated the end of the Cold War as a Soviet surrender. Matlock saw the events at first hand and wrote:

"The common assumption that the West forced the collapse of the Soviet Union and thus won the Cold War is wrong. The fact is that the Cold War ended by negotiation to the advantage of both sides.

At the December 1989 Malta summit, Mikhail Gorbachev and President George H.W. Bush confirmed that the ideological basis for the war was gone, stating that the two nations no longer regarded each other as enemies. Over the next two years, we worked more closely with the Soviets than with even some of our allies. Together, we halted the arms race, banned chemical weapons and agreed to drastically reduce nuclear weapons. I

also witnessed the raising of the Iron Curtain, the liberation of Eastern Europe and the voluntary abandonment of communist ideology by the Soviet leader. Without an arms race ruining the Soviet economy and perpetuating totalitarianism, Gorbachev was freed to focus on internal reforms.

Because the collapse of the Soviet Union happened so soon afterward, people often confuse it with the end of the Cold War. But they were separate events, and the former was not an inevitable outcome of the latter...

Even after the U.S.S.R. ceased to exist, Gorbachev maintained that "*the end of the Cold War is our common victory.*" Yet the United States insisted on treating Russia as the loser.

"*By the grace of God, America won the Cold War.*" Bush said during his 1992 State of the Union address. That rhetoric would not have been particularly damaging on its own. But it was reinforced by actions taken under the next three presidents.

President Bill Clinton supported NATO's bombing of Serbia without U.N. Security Council approval and the expansion of NATO to include former Warsaw Pact countries. Those moves seemed to violate the understanding that the United States would not take advantage of the Soviet retreat from Eastern Europe. The effect on Russians' trust in the United States was devastating. In 1991, polls indicated that about 80 percent of Russian citizens had a favorable view of the United States; in 1999, nearly the same percentage had an unfavorable view."

It is on the record that Gorbachev was given assurances by both the U.S. Secretary of State, James Baker, and German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, that if the Russians consented to the re-unification of Germany, NATO would make no movement eastward. But shortly afterwards, at Camp David, President Bush told Kohl there would be no accommodation with the Russians: "*To Hell with that! We prevailed they didn't. We can't let the Soviets clutch victory from the jaws of defeat.*"

The U.S. determined to ease Gorbachev out of Germany with cash bribes rather than a deal on NATO. In May 1990 Gorbachev believing he had ended the Cold War, asked to join NATO – but the Americans refused to even consider the possibility. In the end no written assurance was given to Gorbachev that NATO would not enlarge into the eastern part of Germany, despite the Soviet leader's agreement over German unity.

When the Warsaw Pact and Soviet Union were dissolved in 1991 Moscow immediately made another approach to NATO. Yeltsin, seeing Eastern European nations being admitted to an organisation that was obviously something else since it had no longer its former enemy, wrote to NATO in December 1991 saying Russia hoped to join the alliance some time in the future. The letter was timed to the first ever meeting between NATO foreign ministers and their counterparts from the former Warsaw Pact countries: the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and Romania.

The Communist bloc wound up its army of the Warsaw Pact, dismantled its bases both in Eastern Europe and Russia and the Soviet Union began to concern itself with its internal affairs. It believed the war to be finished and it did not consider itself defeated. However, this was not just a military withdrawal from the battlefield. The Soviet Union began to dissolve itself as well, so there could be no doubt that the basis of the division in the world since 1945 was over.

However, the US/UK then revealed that the aggressor in the Cold War was not, in fact, the Soviet Union. The US/UK proceeded to continue to wage its Cold War, albeit in a different fashion, appropriate to the changed situation. But it waged it nonetheless by keeping on the advance toward Moscow in the territory Gorbachev signalled he would not defend, and expanding NATO – an organisation that was presumed to be redundant with the removal of its enemy from the battlefield.

The UK/US also attempted to impose an Energy Charter, from 1991, on its new territories involving the integration of the energy resources of the former Eastern bloc into a global marketplace. This involved gaining access to Russia's energy resources whilst excluding it from availing of the European ones which clearly signalled a Cold War defeat and occupation of the defeated enemy, as what happened to Germany in 1918/19.

Russia, despite its rejection of the ideology which the West was at war with, remained an enemy of the West in a continuation of the Cold War. It seems that Russia was an enemy not because it was, or had been, Communist, but because it was Russia. And it had to cease to be Russia to be treated as something other than an enemy.

That suggests that the basis of the US/UK antagonism with Russia was geopolitical rather than ideological, with it being carried on in the hand-over of global primacy between the Anglo-Saxon Atlanticist Powers. The history of British relations with Russia seems to confirm this, as in two centuries, between 1815 and 2014, Britain has only ceased to be an enemy of Russia in the two periods when Russia was required in other geopolitical work, to do down Germany. And the Great Game goes on.

That is not to say that ideology is unimportant. Russia can still be the ideological enemy of the West and is. Liberalism needs an enemy and in Putin and traditional, collective Russia they have found it. All the various individualising forces in the US/UK that have broken up collective identities – whether social class, gender, or cultural – have been mobilised ideologically against Putin. What else could prevent implosion and disintegration of society when it is fragmenting into individuals at such a rate?

Russia remained in a kind of fool's paradise for a number of years – particularly under Boris Yeltsin – until it realised what was really happening. Russia was initially duped by the NATO General Secretary who informed Moscow that it could rest assured his organisation would not expand beyond its borders of 1990 now that the Cold War was over. It was a lie, of course, and Russia had to get used to this form of cheating politics.

Putin's Munich Speech

The U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union at the end of the Cold War confirms in *The Washington Post* that Vladimir Putin was originally benevolent toward the US and inclined to work with it until he too saw the reality of NATO expansionism:

"Vladimir Putin was elected in 2000 and initially followed a pro-Western orientation. When terrorists attacked the United States on Sept. 11, 2001, he was the first foreign leader to call and offer support. He cooperated with the United States when it invaded Afghanistan, and he voluntarily removed Russian bases from Cuba and Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam.

What did he get in return? Some meaningless praise from President George W. Bush, who then delivered the diplomatic equivalent of swift kicks to the groin: further expansion of NATO in the Baltics and the Balkans, and plans for American bases there; withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty; invasion of Iraq without U.N. Security Council approval; overt participation in the "color revolutions" in Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan; and then, probing some of the firmest red lines any Russian leader would draw, talk of taking Georgia and Ukraine into NATO. Americans, heritors of the Monroe Doctrine, should have understood that Russia would be hypersensitive to foreign-dominated military alliances approaching or touching its borders."

Vladimir Putin made his Munich speech on 12 February 2007, which, as Alexander Dugin suggests, represented something of "*a turning point in contemporary Russian history*". Putin said:

"The unipolar world that had been proposed after the Cold War did not take place... However, what is a unipolar world?"

However one might embellish this term, at the end of the day it refers to one type of situation, namely one centre of authority, one centre of force, one centre of decision-making.

It is a world in which there is one master, one sovereign. And at the end of the day this is pernicious not only for all those within this system, but also for the sovereign itself because it destroys itself from within...

I consider that the unipolar model is not only unacceptable but also impossible in today's world. And this is not only because if there was individual leadership in today's – and precisely in today's – world, then the military, political and economic resources would not suffice. What is even more important is that the model itself is flawed because at its basis there is and can be no moral foundations for modern civilisation...

Today we are witnessing an almost uncontained hyper use of force – military force – in international relations, force that is plunging the world into an abyss of permanent conflicts. As a result we do not have sufficient strength to find a comprehensive solution to any one of these conflicts. Finding a political settlement also becomes impossible.

We are seeing a greater and greater disdain for the basic principles of international law. And independent legal norms are, as a matter of fact, coming increasingly closer to one state's legal system. One state and, of course, first and foremost the United States, has overstepped its national borders in every way. This is visible in the economic, political, cultural and educational policies...

And of course this is extremely dangerous. It results in the fact that no one feels safe. I want to emphasise this – no one feels safe! Because no one can feel that international law is like a stone wall that will protect them. Of course such a policy stimulates an arms race.

The force's dominance inevitably encourages a number of countries to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Moreover, significantly new threats – though they were also well-known before – have appeared, and today threats such as terrorism have taken on a global character."

Putin's Munich speech declared to his people and the world that the Cold War against Russia had never ended and his country was still in a state of war. He said that he would rebuild and strengthen Russia's sovereignty and he would not tolerate America's attempt to construct a unipolar world around itself. He declared that this geopolitical objective of the U.S. was doomed to fail. Putin was determined to preserve/re-instate the multipolar world that benefited humanity and its diversity.

This speech had the effect of bringing Russia to its senses, as Dugin says, and the Russian people began to see things as they really were. And it marked Putin off as an enemy of the US/UK which wanted the world for itself, to do with it what it willed, as it was going about such business in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere.

Instead, Putin laid down a marker that Russia could not be written off by the West in its attempt to create a New World Order.

In the speech Putin criticised NATO expansionism:

"It turns out that NATO has put its frontline forces on our borders, and we continue to strictly fulfil the treaty obligations and do not react to these actions at all.

I think it is obvious that NATO expansion does not have any relation with the modernisation of the Alliance itself or with ensuring security in Europe. On the contrary, it represents a serious provocation that reduces the level of mutual trust. And we have the right to ask: against whom is this expansion intended? And what happened to the assurances our western partners made after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact? Where are those declarations today? No one even remembers them.

But I will allow myself to remind this audience what was said. I would like to quote the speech of NATO General Secretary Mr Woerner in Brussels on 17 May 1990. He said at the time that: "*the fact that we are ready not to place a NATO army outside of German territory gives the Soviet Union a firm security guarantee*". Where are these guarantees?

The stones and concrete blocks of the Berlin Wall have long been distributed as souvenirs. But we should not forget that the fall of the Berlin Wall was possible thanks to a historic choice – one that was also made by our people, the people of Russia – a choice in favour of democracy, freedom, openness and a sincere partnership with all the members of the big European family.

And now they are trying to impose new dividing lines and walls on us; these walls may be virtual but they are nevertheless dividing, ones that cut through our continent. And is it possible that we will once again require many years and decades, as well as several generations of politicians, to disassemble and dismantle these new walls?"

Dugin suggests that it was the Western advance into Ukraine that crystallised things for Putin. "*Russia 2*" painted in Orange on the tents in Independence Square, Kiev, in 2004 signalled that what was taking place in Ukraine was something of a trial run for the return of Russia to helplessness of Yeltsin's time.

NATO Expansion to Russia's Borders

At its April 2008 summit in Bucharest, NATO considered admitting Georgia and Ukraine, but hesitated in expanding right up to Russia's borders. Instead a warning shot was fired by endorsing the aspirations of Georgia and Ukraine and it was declared: "*These countries will become members of NATO.*"

This prompted Russia's intervention in Georgia in August 2008 when Putin showed his determination to prevent Georgia and Ukraine from joining NATO. The Georgian President Saakashvili, who was committed to joining NATO, decided in the summer of 2008 to attempt to incorporate two separatist regions, Abkhazia and South Ossetia into his state. Russian forces took control of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, making a point that it would not stand for NATO interference in its backyard. But despite this clear warning, NATO did not abandon its objective of bringing Georgia and Ukraine into the alliance. And NATO expansion continued with Albania and Croatia becoming enlisted as members in 2009.

Mearsheimer also notes the European Union's role in the Ukraine crisis:

"The EU, too, has been marching eastward. In May 2008, it unveiled its Eastern Partnership initiative, a program to foster prosperity in such countries as Ukraine and integrate them into the EU economy. Not surprisingly, Russian leaders view the plan as hostile to their country's interests. This past February, before Yanukovich was forced from office, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov accused the EU of trying to create a "sphere of influence" in eastern Europe. In the eyes of Russian leaders, EU expansion is a stalking horse for NATO expansion."

Mearsheimer also draws attention to the other method the West has employed to expand into Ukraine – the funding of pro-Western individuals and organizations in the country. Victoria Nuland, the U.S. assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs, estimated in December 2013 that the US had invested more than \$5 billion since 1991. The U.S. government has also bankrolled the National Endowment for Democracy and funded more than 60 projects in Ukraine, with the NED's president, Carl Gershman, calling the country "*the biggest prize*" to be had by the West. After Yanukovich won Ukraine's presidential election in February 2010, the NED decided he was undermining its goals, so it stepped up efforts to support the opposition.

Direct threats were made by those penetrating and interfering in Ukraine. In September 2013, Gershman wrote in *The Washington Post*,

“Ukraine’s choice to join Europe will accelerate the demise of the ideology of Russian imperialism that Putin represents... Russians, too, face a choice, and Putin may find himself on the losing end not just in the near abroad but within Russia itself.”

Mearsheimer relates:

“The West’s triple package of policies — NATO enlargement, EU expansion, and democracy promotion — added fuel to a fire waiting to ignite. The spark came in November 2013, when Yanukovich rejected a major economic deal he had been negotiating with the EU and decided to accept a \$15 billion Russian counteroffer instead. That decision gave rise to antigovernment demonstrations that escalated over the following three months and that by mid-February had led to the deaths of some one hundred protesters. Western emissaries hurriedly flew to Kiev to resolve the crisis. On February 21, the government and the opposition struck a deal that allowed Yanukovich to stay in power until new elections were held. But it immediately fell apart, and Yanukovich fled to Russia the next day. The new government in Kiev was pro-Western and anti-Russian to the core, and it contained four high-ranking members who could legitimately be labeled neofascists.”

Mearsheimer is clear about Washington’s role in all this:

“Although the full extent of U.S. involvement has not yet come to light, it is clear that Washington backed the coup. Nuland and Republican Senator John McCain participated in antigovernment demonstrations, and Geoffrey Pyatt, the U.S. ambassador to Ukraine, proclaimed after Yanukovich’s toppling that it was “*a day for the history books.*” As a leaked telephone recording revealed, Nuland had advocated regime change and wanted the Ukrainian politician Arseniy Yatsenyuk to become prime minister in the new government, which he did. No wonder Russians of all persuasions think the West played a role in Yanukovich’s ouster.”

This prompted Putin to secure the important strategic region of Crimea (that had been attached to Ukraine by Krushchev) before it was subject to NATO absorption.

Mearsheimer argues that Putin’s actions were entirely understandable and justifiable:

“Putin’s actions should be easy to comprehend. A huge expanse of flat land that Napoleonic France, imperial Germany, and Nazi Germany all crossed to strike at Russia itself, Ukraine serves as a buffer state of enormous strategic importance to Russia. No Russian leader would tolerate a military alliance that was Moscow’s mortal enemy until recently moving into Ukraine. Nor would any Russian leader stand idly by while the West helped install a government there that was determined to integrate Ukraine into the West.

Washington may not like Moscow’s position, but it should understand the logic behind it. This is Geopolitics 101: great powers are always sensitive to potential threats near their home territory. After all, the United States does not tolerate distant great powers deploying military forces anywhere in the Western Hemisphere, much less on its borders. Imagine the outrage in Washington if China built an impressive military alliance and tried to include Canada and Mexico in it. Logic aside, Russian leaders have told their Western counterparts on many occasions that they consider NATO expansion into Georgia and Ukraine unacceptable, along with any effort to turn those countries against Russia — a message that the 2008 Russian-Georgian war also made crystal clear.”

Mearsheimer notes that the U.S. diplomat George Kennan had warned against US policy at the end of the Cold War in a 1998 interview, shortly after the U.S. Senate approved the first

round of NATO expansion: “*I think the Russians will gradually react quite adversely and it will affect their policies... I think it is a tragic mistake. There was no reason for this whatsoever. No one was threatening anyone else.*” In that same interview, Kennan predicted that NATO expansion would provoke a crisis, after which the proponents of expansion would “*say that we always told you that is how the Russians are.*”

Mearsheimer puts the blame on the Liberal side of the US Imperialism coin:

“Most liberals... favored enlargement, including many key members of the Clinton administration. They believed that the end of the Cold War had fundamentally transformed international politics and that a new, post-national order had replaced the realist logic that used to govern Europe.”

Putin in the Right

The analogies being made with Hitler do not impress Mearsheimer in relation to Putin. This Liberal anti-appeasement view that is periodically trotted out when the US/UK wishes to destroy functional states goes like this in relation to the Russian leader, according to Mearsheimer:

“Putin, having taken Crimea, is now testing the waters to see if the time is right to conquer Ukraine, or at least its eastern part, and he will eventually behave aggressively toward other countries in Russia’s neighborhood. For some in this camp, Putin represents a modern-day Adolf Hitler, and striking any kind of deal with him would repeat the mistake of Munich. Thus, NATO must admit Georgia and Ukraine to contain Russia before it dominates its neighbors and threatens western Europe.”

But,

“This argument falls apart on close inspection. If Putin were committed to creating a greater Russia, signs of his intentions would almost certainly have arisen before February 22. But there is virtually no evidence that he was bent on taking Crimea, much less any other territory in Ukraine, before that date. Even Western leaders who supported NATO expansion were not doing so out of a fear that Russia was about to use military force. Putin’s actions in Crimea took them by complete surprise and appear to have been a spontaneous reaction to Yanukovich’s ouster. Right afterward, even Putin said he opposed Crimean secession, before quickly changing his mind.

Besides, even if it wanted to, Russia lacks the capability to easily conquer and annex eastern Ukraine, much less the entire country. Roughly 15 million people — one-third of Ukraine’s population — live between the Dnieper River, which bisects the country, and the Russian border. An overwhelming majority of those people want to remain part of Ukraine and would surely resist a Russian occupation. Furthermore, Russia’s mediocre army, which shows few signs of turning into a modern Wehrmacht, would have little chance of pacifying all of Ukraine. Moscow is also poorly positioned to pay for a costly occupation; its weak economy would suffer even more in the face of the resulting sanctions.

But even if Russia did boast a powerful military machine and an impressive economy, it would still probably prove unable to successfully occupy Ukraine. One need only consider the Soviet and U.S. experiences in Afghanistan, the U.S. experiences in Vietnam and Iraq, and the Russian experience in Chechnya to be reminded that military occupations usually end badly. Putin surely understands that trying to subdue Ukraine would be like swallowing a porcupine. His response to events there has been defensive, not offensive.”

It is pretty certain that Putin neither wants or needs the Ukraine. What Russia requires is a stable, and non-threatening neighbour with which it can do business. The Novorussians in the Ukraine may desire full independence, but Putin does not

seem interested. Moscow would prefer a Ukrainian buffer-state with autonomy for its regions.

It is the West that is obsessed with controlling the Ukraine, and it is like when Britain looked at Germany in 1914 – it had to imagine its enemy as being of the same nature as itself. But Russia does not want the Ukraine – if it can help it. It can do without a dysfunctional, failure of a state with ethnic divisions that can attract unwelcome elements, and which will require massive subventions to repair. If it is drawn into that then there would be ample opportunity for the US/UK to stir the pot.

Mearsheimer proposes that the US and West should now adopt a different policy toward the Ukraine and Russia that would ensure peaceful co-existence:

“There is a solution to the crisis in Ukraine, however – although it would require the West to think about the country in a fundamentally new way. The United States and its allies should abandon their plan to westernize Ukraine and instead aim to make it a neutral buffer between NATO and Russia, akin to Austria’s position during the Cold War. Western leaders should acknowledge that Ukraine matters so much to Putin that they cannot support an anti-Russian regime there. This would not mean that a future Ukrainian government would have to be pro-Russian or anti-NATO. On the contrary, the goal should be a sovereign Ukraine that falls in neither the Russian nor the Western camp.

To achieve this end, the United States and its allies should publicly rule out NATO’s expansion into both Georgia and Ukraine. The West should also help fashion an economic rescue plan for Ukraine funded jointly by the EU, the International Monetary Fund, Russia, and the United States – a proposal that Moscow should welcome, given its interest in having a prosperous and stable Ukraine on its western flank. And the West should considerably limit its social-engineering efforts inside Ukraine. It is time to put an end to Western support for another Orange Revolution. Nevertheless, U.S. and European leaders should encourage Ukraine to respect minority rights, especially the language rights of its Russian speakers.”

It must be of significance that this view graces the pages of *Foreign Affairs*. It is perhaps the case that the US may be having a rethink over its aggressive post-Cold War policy after Vladimir Putin has checked their expansion and its limits have been reached. And perhaps the same is true because of the mess that they have seen themselves create in Iraq and Syria.

We shall see. □

Cork Echo Correspondence—continued from page 13

services had made detailed arrangements to cooperate with France to attack Germany. Like the run-up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, there was indeed a conspiracy. But by the time it was exposed in August 1914 the conspiracy had already taken effect.

Tsarist Russia is often blamed for turning a Balkans dispute into European war by being the first to mobilise its forces in response to the Austro-Hungarian conflict with Serbia. But Britain’s primary weapon of war - the Royal Navy - was mobilised for war against Germany even before the Russian military mobilisation took place, and before Parliament was informed of these monstrous plans. On this scale of deception Tony Blair was an honest man.

Just like the present, in 1914 Germany was winning power and influence by peaceful methods of industrial and trading efficiency, and advanced education, social, and medical provision for its population. It had no aims that required warfare

for achievement. Peace was working well for it, and war could only damage it.

Britain, France and Russia, on the other hand, were well accustomed to enriching themselves at the expense of other people by war and conquest. They had been doing it for centuries, often against each other.

In 1914 three muscle-bound, tattooed cut-throats buried their differences in order to get rid of the studious, mannerly youth who had recently arrived in the street.

Peadar Laffan Ash Street Youghal

Echo Letters Sat 4/10/2014

The ongoing Evening Echo debate about WW1 is wide-ranging and substantial, with sincerely-held positions trenchantly argued on both sides. Should the war have been fought? Most contributors would probably say no!

Was it simply a tragic mistake which could have been resolved by peaceful means if more care had been taken by those in charge on all sides?

Or was there a particularly malevolent power which was intent on war and which, for the sake of human civilisation, had to be stopped no matter what the cost? Who started it all? Was it the Serbian agent who assassinated the Austro-Hungarian Archduke and heir apparent in Sarajevo? A different question is who or what caused it? Was the Serbian trigger simply the excuse for a deeper Russian (or German or French or British) plot for domination?

What is certain is that Ireland neither started the war nor caused it, and had no realistic chance of gaining anything from it. Quite the reverse. Yet our political leadership used its influence to commit the Irish to the slaughter, at huge cost in Irish lives, and in the lives of opponents with whom we had no quarrel and who had never done us any wrong.

As the war progressed, its causes, motives and conduct came under ever-increasing scrutiny and criticism in Ireland. Recruitment declined dramatically and, for some, the “enemy” became our “gallant allies”. The “enemy” certainly provided arms to the Irish independence movement, which might be reason enough to acknowledge them as our allies.

And what about Belgium? On 17th October 1914 at the height of the German conquest of Belgium, James Connolly wrote as follows:

“Only because of the danger to Belgian neutrality was the mighty heart of England moved to action, and only because she saw this precious thing in danger did England at last reluctantly draw the sword ... And here in Ireland we were tearfully appealed to, to consider the awesome spectacle of the conversion of England to ways of justice and chivalry, and, so considering, to rush to her aid and, side by side with her army, battle for the neutrality of Belgium. But when we look around us all that we see tends to arouse the suspicion that England has simply made a catspaw of Belgium, has deliberately tempted Belgium from her neutrality, [and] left her ... to be defended by her own unaided efforts. ... All during the first month of Belgium’s martyrdom England poured her Expeditionary Troops into France leaving Belgium to her fate. ... Antwerp in its last agony brings out this fact very clearly. ... The English press now admits that before the bombardment commenced the Belgian authorities wished to evacuate the city in order that it might be spared. But the English insisted that Antwerp must fight on although, as they now admit, they were well aware that the forts would be powerless to hold out long enough to be relieved, and that the resistance would mean the destruction of the city. ... They illustrate the cold-blooded determination of England to sacrifice Belgium, all Belgium, to save the precious skins of the Allies. If, [as

On Honouring Limerick International Brigaders and the Character Assassination of a Manchester Irish Commander

Reviews by Manus O’Riordan

From the Shannon to the Ebro: The Limerick men who went to fight Franco, the Limerick International Brigade Memorial Trust, September 2014;

Fighting for Republican Spain 1936-38: Frank Ryan and the Volunteers from Limerick in the International Brigades, Barry McLoughlin, September 2014.

The weekend of September 12-14 saw a wonderful celebration of the legacy of the International Brigades in Limerick. It ranged from a book launch to a symposium where I myself spoke on Frank Ryan, and from a concert to the unveiling of an impressive memorial at Limerick City Hall to the six Limerick International Brigade volunteers: Paddy Brady, Gerard Doyle, Frank Ryan, Joe Ryan, Maurice Emmett Ryan and Jim Woulfe. Attendances of up to 300 people were experienced from start to finish. Premises on Limerick’s O’Connell Street, as well as its adjoining streets, were bedecked with Spanish Republican flags. The Sunday morning parade through the city from the Limerick Mechanics’ Institute to the City Hall was led by a colour party from Ireland’s Organisation of National Ex-Servicemen, carrying both the Irish National Flag and the Flag of the Spanish Republic, followed by International Brigade banners of the Connolly Column, the 15th Brigade’s British Battalion and the Tom Mann Centuria, as well as many trade union banners. The memorial was unveiled by Charlotte Ryan Wetton, a grandniece of Frank Ryan, and a wreath was laid by a sister of Joe Ryan.

The Vienna-based academic and historian Barry McLoughlin is a Senior Lecturer in Contemporary History and Irish History at Institut für Geschichte, Universität Wien. A Limerickman himself, he had been invited to take charge of authoring the LIBMT memorial publication as well as running the Limerick symposium. Last year, on December 12, 2013, I emailed Barry with a request to give a lecture at that symposium on the subject of “Frank Ryan – Patriot or Collaborator?” and I attached my three articles on Ryan that had been published in the March, June and September 2012 issues of *Irish Foreign Affairs*. He replied, informing me: “Your writings on Frank Ryan are known to me... I am writing a brochure on the Limerick IBs to be launched in September... Recently I received some additions on Frank Ryan from Moscow, i.e. on his time in Spain. I also have quite a lot of German material which I used for my MA (under Finbarr Michael McLoughlin) under T. Desmond Williams way back in 1979/80. The Ms. is in UCD Library.” On April 4 Barry McLoughlin circulated his symposium programme. He himself would give the sole paper on all of the Limerick volunteers, “The Six Men from Limerick in the International Brigades”, but there would also be session entitled “Ger McCloskey interviews Manus O’Riordan and Barry McLoughlin about Frank Ryan in Germany”. However, as Brendan Behan once put it, “the first thing on the agenda is the split”. On May 29 came a further email from McLoughlin to all scheduled symposium participants: “Relations between me and LIBMT are over. I am not going into details. The Trust does not want to be associated with my book on the Limerick volunteers, and the committee of LIBMT has taken the organisation of

the symposium out of my hands. So, naturally, I will not be taking part in the conference. I think that you know about this regrettable development since I was the person who nominated you all in the first place. My book will be launched in Limerick, and a nationwide tour is planned.”

I do not know the details of that breach in Limerick relations, but it now resulted in the production of not just one book, but the two books under review. In some ways, this has had a beneficial outcome for those wanting to learn a lot more about individual International Brigaders. Both books bring to life the stories of all six Limerick brigadistas, but particularly of three little known before now. LIBMT Secretary Tom Collopy tells the story of Joe Ryan, a December 1936 volunteer who would be wounded in mid-1937 and later lose his life in August 1941 when his British merchant navy ship was torpedoed by a German U-boat. LIBMT Vice-Chairman Mike McNamara tells the story of Gerard Doyle, already promoted to sergeant when wounded at the battle of Belchite in July 1937, yet back in action by the end of the year for the battle Teruel, but captured by the Fascists, along with Frank Ryan, at Calaceite in March 1938 and fated to be imprisoned in the notorious San Pedro concentration camp until released in a prisoner exchange in October 1938. IBMT trustee Danny Payne profiles the Liverpool-based but Limerick-born Paddy Brady who fought at both Jarama and Brunete, where he was wounded. IBMT trustee and historian Richard Baxell provides an overview of the Spanish War itself, while LIBMT PRO Ger McCloskey profiles both the International Brigades in general and the Irish involvement in particular.

Both books have much to offer in respect of the one Limerick volunteer to be killed in action, Jim Woulfe, an emigrant to Canada, who served in the 15th International Brigade’s Canadian Battalion. Previous histories had said little more than that he had been fatally wounded by a grenade at the battle of Belchite in August 1937. Barry McLoughlin, together with David Convery for the LIBMT book, have each now reproduced the eyewitness account by Woulfe’s Canadian comrade-in-arms Peter Nielsen that pinpoints the spot outside the church of San Agustín where he had fallen, with McLoughlin providing the map and Convery the photograph of that church. It is thanks to both of them that, during a recent IBMT visit to the battlefields of Aragon, I was able to pay a Connolly Column tribute to Jim Woulfe on October 19 at that precise spot in Belchite where he had given his life in defence of the Spanish Republic.

Both books are well illustrated with photographs, many previously unpublished. Each book has its own respective strength. The LIBMT book is also a wonderful cultural miscellany, with a perceptive review by Pamela Cahill of Limerick writer Kate O’Brien’s 1937 book *Farewell Spain*, together with poems by García Lorca, Miguel Hernández, John Liddy, John Cornford and Margot Heinemann, complemented by a biographical essay on Heinemann by her daughter Jane Bernal. Under the heading of “From Limerick to Brunete: the Curious Story of George Nathan”, Melody Buckley tackles

a more difficult International Brigade hero for Limerick to come to terms with. In my 1983 obituary for the Waterford International Brigader Frank Edwards I myself had attempted to address the Nathan enigma as follows:

“A more controversial figure for the Irish in Spain might have been the commander of the British Company, George Nathan. During the First World War, Nathan became, in 1918, the only Jewish officer in the Brigade of Guards. He, however, also served in the British Black-and-Tans during the Irish War of Independence 1919-21. [I should more accurately have described him as an RIC Auxie.] On March 24, 1961 the *New Statesman* of London carried an article by a Richard Bennett which produced circumstantial evidence identifying Nathan as one of the two British officers who had murdered both the Mayor (George Clancy) and ex-Mayor of Limerick (Michael O’Callaghan) in March 1921. Sensationally entitled ‘*Portrait of a Killer*’, the article ended with the rhetorical question ‘*What was the ex-member of the Dublin Castle Murder Gang doing in the International Brigade? Expiating his past? Or like many another, just playing a part to death?*’ An Irish response to the elements of character assassination in Bennett’s article came like a shot. In the *New Statesman* of March 31, 1961, Joe Monks wrote: ‘*I remember George Nathan telling us Irish members of the First Company, which he commanded in the International Brigade, that he had served as an intelligence officer with the British forces in the Limerick area during the Irish War of Independence. He made this statement in the presence of Frank Ryan, who was a native of Limerick. Perhaps it is fair to say that Nathan, the volunteer for liberty, who gave such magnificent service to the anti-Fascist cause in the last year of his life, did not seem in character with the officer portrayed in Mr. Bennett’s article.*’ ... And how did Frank Edwards respond when he met up with a former Black-and-Tan in the person of George Nathan? Two of Frank’s brothers had after all fought against the Tans, in the Irish War of Independence and, in reprisal, the Edwards family were evicted from their Waterford home. There could not, in fact, be any more noble tribute paid to George Nathan than that paid by Frank Edwards in his own account of the Spanish Inferno: ‘*At Lopera, we were 150 going in, after ten days there was left of us, active and still able to fight, only 66.... After ten days fighting and heavy casualties we were pulled out and taken to the Madrid front, to a place called Las Rozas, ten miles north of the city. Talk about out of the frying pan into the fire! I was at Las Rozas only one night when I was wounded... I felt bad under heavy artillery fire. George Nathan came up and removed his helmet. Pointing at a hole in it, he said: ‘You know this is not much good. A stone did that. Still’, fixing it back on, ‘I suppose it is better than nothing. Spread out now,’ said he. ‘We have lost two men already’... Nathan was a brave soldier, no matter what is said or may be suspected of him. He was killed, still rallying his men in that devil-may-care manner of his, in the Brunete salient north of Madrid, in July 1937.*” (See <http://www.irelandscw.com/siteMap.htm> for the wealth of material available on Ciarán Crossey’s excellent “Ireland and the Spanish Civil War” website).

Melody Buckley now provides us with a detailed biographical profile of Nathan, revealing, *inter alia*, that while he had been radicalised in reaction to the anti-Semitism of the British Union of Fascists, it was his father who had been Jewish. His Anglican mother had him baptised and, moreover, his maternal grandmother had been a Cork Catholic refugee from the Irish Famine. Buckley separates fact from fiction, much of it created by Nathan himself, and she reproduces a letter written in 1996 by another Waterford International Brigader, Peter O’Connor, who had fought with Nathan at Brunete and who, like Monks and Edwards, as well as Ryan himself, had formerly been an IRA volunteer: “Nathan was one of the greatest soldiers who took

part in the fight against fascism in Spain. Frank Ryan thought very highly of him and regarded him as a friend, comrade and fellow officer in the fight against fascism. What Frank Ryan thought of Nathan was good enough for all of the members of the Connolly Column.”

Barry McLoughlin’s strengths as a historian are evident in his coverage of the military aspects of the War, with the reader’s understanding greatly enhanced by the author’s reproduction of maps in respect of each of the military engagements described. He makes excellent use of quite extensive and objective – yet hitherto much neglected – *Irish Press* reports on Frank Ryan. His knowledge of German sources also provides for a greater understanding of Germany’s view of Ireland’s World War Two neutrality. He further concludes: “Fearghal Mc Garry, an expert on Ireland and the Spanish Civil War and on Frank Ryan’s life, writes (in his 2002 biography *Frank Ryan*) of ‘Ryan’s decision to go to Germany’, and that he was a collaborator of the Germans. A careful reading of the sources, I believe, would suggest that such statements are too unequivocal.” But McLoughlin’s soft comments are themselves too equivocal. Dr Fearghal McGarry is a lecturer in the History Department of Queen’s University Belfast, and McLoughlin seems to opt for pussyfooting with a fellow academic. He avoids either a critical analysis of the selective use of primary sources by McGarry, or reference to any corresponding secondary source. One such was my own point-by-point refutation of McGarry’s selective use of sources, posted on the irelandscw website for over a decade, reproduced in my *Irish Foreign Affairs* articles, and again restated in my own chapter on Frank Ryan for the LIBMT book. I demonstrated that throughout his stay in Germany, as in Ireland and Spain previously, Frank Ryan remained a Connolly Socialist; that the Spanish Anti-Fascist War never left his thoughts, as evidenced on the very day of his death in June 1944; and that he was no collaborator, but rather his declared policy and practice was one of 100 per cent support for de Valera’s strategy of saving Ireland from both War and Fascism. But, of course, as stated by LIBMT Chairman Jack Bourke at the book launch, my Frank Ryan chapter is a sustained polemic. It is not written in the diplomatic language used by academics when debating with each other. So, although “known” to McLoughlin, as he himself put it, my writings on Frank Ryan must remain “unknown” in the hallowed halls of academia.

McLoughlin is nonetheless worthy of respect as a historian. His 2006 book, *Lost to the Wolves: Irish Victims of Stalinist Terror*, is a product of meticulous research in the Moscow archives and brings to light the biographies of the three Irishmen who ended up in the Gulag Archipelago. All three were made of stubborn stuff and, notwithstanding torture, steadfastly refused to confess to false charges of being Western spies. Patrick Breslin was not convicted of any espionage, but for expressing criticisms of the USSR, defined as “anti-Soviet agitation”. Arrested in December 1940, and sentenced in September 1941 to eight years in the Gulag, Breslin perished as a result of ill-health and malnutrition under its harsh regime in June 1942. Brian Goold-Verschoye had been sentenced to eight years in August 1937, but died in confinement in January 1942. Seán McAteer had, however, been executed in November 1937.

Their stories were told by McLoughlin in that order, but it would have finished as a more uplifting book if the order had been reversed. Notwithstanding his personal courage, McAteer was not a particularly savoury character. He had fled Liverpool after fatally wounding a half-blind youth in a botched IRA / Communist Party post office robbery in 1923, and in the USSR he seemed hell bent on denouncing his own

political opponents as ‘Trotskyites’, which would have pointed those so denounced in the direction of the Gulag. In direct contrast, Patrick Breslin can be regarded as the Gulag’s noblest Gael of them all, a founder member of the first Communist Party whose idealism had led him to emigrate to the USSR, and of whose integrity and courage his Breslin-Kelly family are rightly proud. Brian Goold-Verschoye’s Simms family can also be proud of his personal integrity and courage. His judgement, however, is quite another matter. An enthusiastic Communist, he had been recruited into the Soviet secret service by the Soviet wife of his brother Neil when visiting them in Moscow, with Neil Goold himself, nonetheless, being kept in the dark regarding that recruitment. Brian, however, had the misfortune to have fallen head over heels in love with a married German-Jewish refugee in London, Lotte Moos, to whom he divulged everything. Having been assisted by Lotte’s daughter in his researches, McLoughlin was careful not to pass any judgement on her, but I find it impossible not to see and conclude that Moos was an irresponsible ultra-left flapper who would prove responsible for Brian’s downfall. While he was serving in Valencia during the Spanish Civil War, Moos was writing to Brian, urging him to support the POUM (the ultra-left United Marxist Workers’ Party). Brian was kidnapped at the end of April 1937, put aboard a Soviet supply ship and, back in the USSR, charged with Trotskyism. But he was nothing of the sort, as Moos wrote to his brother Denis. His disillusionment with communism went in the liberal democratic direction, and he rejected Moos’s provocative urgings to support a POUM version of “the dictatorship of the proletariat” on the eve of their failed Barcelona uprising against the Spanish Republic and the brutal suppression of the POUM by the Communist Party in its wake. Ever the chivalrous knight, because the Soviet secret police had possession of Moos’s pro-POUM letters to him, Brian accepted her “sins” as his own and, in solidarity with his love for her, accepted the charge of being a “POUMist”.

Moos, however, was of a different character, and more than ready to shop others to save her own skin. We learn from McLoughlin that, when she was arrested in London in April 1940 as a German enemy alien, and a suspected Soviet agent in her own right, Lotte Moos opened up to MI5’s Jane Archer, and went on to give her a written account of Brian Verschoye-Goold’s contacts, and of how he had been recruited as a Soviet secret agent by Olga, the wife of his brother Neil, now back in Ireland. Thereafter, both MI6 and MI5 had a shared interest, spearheaded by Archer, in seeing the arrest of Neil Goold in May 1941, and his internment without trial, even though he had no paramilitary involvement, but was engaged in purely social agitation in Dublin on issues of unemployment and exorbitant rents. McLoughlin did not comment on the fact that the very same files he had drawn upon further revealed that Archer’s ongoing interest in Neil Goold’s continued imprisonment in Ireland had been stimulated by Moos’s detailed singing. More seriously, McLoughlin held back from an obvious conclusion to be drawn, that in proving her own innocence to Archer of the charge that she herself had been a Soviet agent, her more detailed confirmation of how Brian himself had most definitely been such an agent, made much more certain than ever before that the appeals of Brian’s mother for British Foreign Office representations to be made, seeking his release from the Soviet Gulag, would not now be pursued, neither in this period of UK/USSR enmity during 1940 nor in the period of the UK/USSR alliance after June 1941. Nor did McLoughlin tell us how significant a spymaster was that same Jane Archer who had so easily turned Moos as an informer. Appointed Head of the Irish Desk at MI6 for the period 1941-44, before returning to her specialisation in international communism, she was

described by the Soviet double agent at the heart of British intelligence, Kim Philby (in his 1969 autobiography *My Silent War*), as “perhaps the ablest professional intelligence officer ever employed by MI5”.

If McLoughlin was careful to withhold personal judgements in his first book, it is otherwise with this, his second book. McLoughlin explains that this book was a rushed job, designed to be launched a week ahead of the LIBMT commemoration. In other words, his objective was to get his retaliation in first. In the LIBMT book Alan Warren is the author of the profile of the third of the unrelated Ryans among those Limerick brigadistas, Maurice Emmett Ryan, while the closing chapter of McLoughlin’s book is entitled “The Killing of Maurice Emmett Ryan”. McLoughlin admits he has no new information to add concerning that death. The fact that Ryan had been executed by British Battalion commander Sam Wild for firing on his own side has been in the public domain since the 1986 publication by Ian McDougall of *Voices from the Spanish Civil War: Personal Recollections of Scottish Volunteers*. Prior to that, International Brigade veterans had avoided all mention of that execution, including two of Ryan’s fellow Irish brigadistas on the Ebro front, Michael O’Riordan in *Connolly Column* (1979) and Eugene Downing in *La Niña Bonita agus an Róisín Dubh* (1986). But in a 2002 interview posted on the irelandscw website Downing finally did so, while O’Riordan republished that Downing interview, **in full** (an important emphasis to make, in the light of McLoughlin’s culling), in the second edition of *Connolly Column* in 2005. McLoughlin, however, complains that Scottish brigadista John Dunlop’s “version of the cause of Ryan’s final and fatal arrest has been accepted by historians”, and while having no additional evidence whatsoever to present, he nonetheless proceeds to mount a new, sensationalist spin.

It is a pity that, in his rush to print, McLoughlin also engages in an unconscionable rush to misjudgement. In his pre-launch press release McLoughlin claimed: “The final chapter is the first attempt to describe in detail one of the most gruesome episodes that occurred in the British battalion: the semi-judicial murder of a Limerick volunteer, the machine-gunner Maurice Emmett Ryan during the Ebro battle in August 1938.” In the book itself he recalls “For twelve years (1991-2002) I was often in Moscow researching the crimes of Stalinism. While at the fount of knowledge, so to speak, I also looked at Irish material in the Comintern archive ... and ... tried to find material on Irish volunteers in the International Brigades.” In contrast with his excellent research on the three Irish victims of the Gulag, however, McLoughlin now seeks to conjure up a fourth Irish victim of the “crimes of Stalinism”, this time in Spain. He further states in his introduction: “There was a sinister side, specifically ‘getting rid of troublemakers’ (assassination), as the case of Sergeant Emmett Ryan demonstrates.” Now, wild accusations of “semi-judicial murder” should not be made without evidence. Paul Preston, a superbly professional and conscientious, if often uncomfortable, historian of the Spanish Civil War, spent decades scrupulously and painstakingly weighing up the pros and cons of the forensic evidence, in its uncullied entirety, before arriving at a definite conclusion on the shared responsibility of the future Eurocommunist leader Santiago Carrillo, together with other communist and anarchist forces, for what Preston described in his 2014 biography, *The Last Stalinist: The Life of Santiago Carrillo*, as the 2,200 to 2,500 “extra-judicial murders carried at Paracuellos” in November 1936. But McLoughlin throws his own allegation around like confetti, ignoring some of the evidence that he himself has presented, while culling more. The prosecutor and chief witness against Maurice Emmett Ryan would not for a

moment have countenanced his execution merely for being a loud-mouthed and cynical shit-stirrer. Quite the contrary, John Dunlop had very much warmed to Ryan, saying of him: “And yet the man, although he was such a rogue, was an extremely likeable rogue.” Nor did Dunlop accuse Ryan of actually killing any fellow brigadista with his “friendly fire”, in which case summary execution without the slightest delay would have been more than justified. That accusation has, of course, been made, and was the subject matter of a controversy between Alan Warren and myself in July 2008 which was posted on both the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives digest and the irelandscw website. Warren had related some gossip that Ryan had killed Lewis Clive, which I immediately refuted, establishing that Clive had been killed by Fascist fire from the front, and not by any Ryan “friendly fire” from behind:

“I fail to appreciate that there is any need to have recourse to anonymous barrack room rumour and gossip when outspoken witness statements have long since been published. To suggest that Lewis Clive might have been shot by Maurice Ryan may inject a sensationalist frisson into the narrative of the battle of the Ebro, but it is demonstrably untrue... The quote from George Wheeler’s memoirs, *To Make the People Smile Again*, is indeed sufficient to dispose of any suggestion of ‘friendly fire’ being involved in the death of Lewis Clive. As he recalled, ‘Lewis Clive re-appeared and asked about the activity on the fascist lines’. George lay crouched in a firing position just ahead of Clive when he felt splashes of blood. ‘Turning, I saw Lewis reel and fall.’ In other words, **Clive had been standing**. [My emphasis – MO’R]. Having had to turn around to look behind him, George was a witness to the immediate aftermath of Clive’s death, but not of that instant itself. But there was a direct witness. A certain squeamishness has hitherto made me reluctant to put pen to paper on this matter. But rather than let legendary red herrings multiply, historical facts should now be recorded. Although my Irish International Brigade father Michael O’Riordan had published *Connolly Column* in 1979, and had written numerous historical articles before and after, he never wrote a personal account of his own experiences in battle. Still less did he ever speak to me during the first 39 years of my own life about the horrors of war, and the more gruesome incidents that he himself had lived through, until he finally did so on November 1, 1988. As we journeyed by car through the mountainous battlefields of the Ebro front, on the occasion of his first return visit to Catalunya in fifty years, my father unexpectedly opened up and spoke of his memories. He recalled being right beside (his immediate superior) Lewis Clive as they were under fire from the fascist lines. When a lull came in the firing, Clive stood up to get a better view. My father said that he immediately thought: ‘*A bad commander!*’ This was no reflection on Clive’s courageous character and bravery, but rather a comment on the recklessness of such bravery in presenting himself in the open as such a soft target for the fascists. The thought had barely formed in my father’s head when Clive was shot in the forehead and my father hit by his brains.”

I have never tolerated false accusations against Ryan, and in two separate publications in 2003, both of which were republished by my father in 2005, I thoroughly rejected any suggestion that Ryan was a Fascist agent. Warren readily accepted my evidence that Ryan was innocent of Clive’s death, but now appears to be agnostic as to whether or not he was guilty of any drunken “friendly fire” at all. McLoughlin, however, insists that he was completely innocent. In the process he blackens Sam Wild’s character, accusing him of “semi-judicial murder”. There is a build-up in this exercise in character

assassination, involving the culling of brigadista testimonies. His account of the British battalion fiesta on 14 July 1938, and “the second event that throws a negative light on Wild’s leadership”, draws on the Billy Griffiths narrative reproduced in Angela Jackson’s 2008 book *At the Margins of Mayhem*. ‘Hooky’ Walker, the battalion cook with responsibility for preparing the fiesta dinner, “had got into a hopeless alcoholic state in the morning” and had to be arrested, and “after the meal Wild returned and subjected ‘Hooky’ to an unmerciful beating”. McLoughlin, however, in contrast to Jackson, stops short of continuing the Griffiths narrative: “In a few days, they made up and carried on as if nothing had happened.” But surely Wild’s behaviour that evening was also a reaction to the outcome of McLoughlin’s first negative “event” of the fiesta, the machine-gun competition that took place, with a considerable amount of drink also taken, between Maurice Ryan and Gordon Bennett, when a failure to clear a gun chamber of bullets resulted in the accidental but fatal wounding of a Spanish Republican soldier and a refusal by the incensed Spaniards to allow any British battalion presence at his funeral.

Both Warren and McLoughlin state that it is not clear whose gun went off. There is, however, a balance of probability. Warren’s account displays a photograph of Ryan operating his machine-gun at the fiesta, but omits to complement it with the second photo that had accompanied it in Jackson’s book, of the self-same Ryan attending to the dying Spanish Republican. While Ryan was undoubtedly upset by the death that resulted from such irresponsible and drunken mismanagement of a machine-gun, it is regrettable that its fatal consequences did not now have a sobering effect on him. Quite the contrary, to such an extent that McLoughlin would have us believe that Ryan was incapable of firing even a single bullet in that end-July unsuccessful assault on Hill 481, with so many British battalion dead, and O’Riordan and Downing among those wounded. McLoughlin argues for “the strong likelihood that Ryan was not firing the gun at all but enjoying a siesta with a bottle of wine”. But such a farcical “fiesta to siesta” portrayal of Hill 481’s bloody battle totally ignores the account in my July 2008 posting of the eyewitness testimony given to me by John Dunlop himself in Glasgow in October 2003. In the wake of reporting to Sam Wild that he had come under fire from a gun on his own side, Dunlop told me that “when he and others subsequently came back to investigate what on earth lay behind that occurrence, they found a drunken Maurice Ryan fast asleep beside his machine-gun, **together with the spent belt** of his erratic, but mercifully off-target, fire.”

Sam Wild did not shoot Ryan on the spot, although that would not have been an unreasonable temptation. Instead, another five days elapsed, as Wild sought to have Ryan formally court-martialled behind the lines. In the midst of such a fight-to-the-death battle, this was quite impractical, and the order came back for Wild to sort it out himself. In his 1999 book, *The Irish and the Spanish Civil War*, Robert Stradling more realistically recounted how hurried consultations among the Brigade’s field officers “in effect constituted a drum-head court martial” but, as the battle raged on, “nor could even a firing squad be spared from among the men on Hill 481. Thus, Sam Wild and his adjutant volunteered to carry out the grim duty.” Downing and O’Riordan were hospitalised at the time, having been wounded in the previous week’s fighting, but Wild asked fellow-Irish brigadista Jim Prendergast to explain to them, on their return from Spain, both the details of, and the necessity for, what Wild himself undoubtedly regarded as his “grim duty”.

McLoughlin otherwise notes that Sam Wild was “arguably the most popular leader in the history of the British battalion.” Coming from a Manchester Fenian family background,

he was particularly pro-Irish. Although organised by the Irish brigadistas, it was the British battalion as a whole that celebrated a Wolfe Tone commemoration in June 1938. And when the battle of the Ebro commenced in July 1938, and the International Brigade boats crossed the river Ebro to retake fascist-occupied territory in Catalunya, Wild said it was particularly appropriate that my father, as an Irishman, should carry the national flag of Catalunya into battle. I know not of a single member of the British battalion who would ever have subscribed to McLoughlin's character assassination of Sam Wild as a semi-judicial murderer. Maurice Emmett Ryan was no Irish martyr, nor had he been executed for any thoughts or words uttered, but for his potentially lethal actions. McLoughlin misses the point of the precise words in the poem by fellow Ebro brigadista James Jump, recalling his own warm friendship with Ryan: "Though I do not condone what

you did... you were a fine machine-gunner when you were not sleeping off the effects of drunkenness." Ryan had been a courageous brigadista, and McLoughlin rightly pays tribute to both his heroism and his proficiency as a machine-gunner during the previous winter's battle of Teruel. But I know not of a single brigadista who would subscribe to McLoughlin's contention that Ryan had **not** drunkenly fired on his own side on Hill 481. Nor, despite appearances, does McLoughlin know of any. In fairness to Warren, he at least retains the integrity of some key remarks by Downing regarding Ryan, quoting in full what followed after his conclusion that "vino was his downfall". McLoughlin, however, completely omits any reference to the very next sentence, where Downing added, without any shadow of a doubt in respect of his own considered conclusions: "During the Ebro battle he turned his gun on his own comrades while roaring drunk." □

Changing the Guard at the European Commission: A December 2014 Report from the EESC with Particular Reference to the Dangers Present in the Proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)

By Manus O'Riordan
Member for Ireland, Workers' Group, European
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During the course of his oration on the unveiling of a memorial to the Limerick International Brigade volunteers of the Spanish Anti-Fascist War, SIPTU General President Jack O'Connor observed:

"The liberalisation of markets and the systematic dismantlement of what remains of the European Social project, so painstakingly constructed by Mitterrand and Delors in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, is now perilously close to completion. The European Social project was itself built on the historic settlement honed out between capital and labour under the auspices of the Social Democrats and Christian Democrats in the post-war years to ensure cohesion and prosperity."

The devastation being generated by the charge towards deregulation has been a particular preoccupation of the Workers' Group of the European Economic and Social Committee over the past twelve months, in close consultation with the European Trade Union Confederation. At the end of last year, on December 2, 2013, the Workers' Group held an extraordinary meeting, where we were addressed by ETUC Confederal Secretary Veronica Nilsson on the theme of "*Rethinking Europe: Simpler Legislation: synonymous of social regression?*" Nilsson provided a devastating critique of the European Commission's so-called "*REFIT*" proposals (Regulatory Fitness and Performance):

"With the publication of REFIT on 2 October 2013, the Commission took yet another step in a process aimed at the deregulation of Europe, the dismantling of legislation protecting workers' rights and the weakening of social dialogue. According to the Commission, the purpose of REFIT is to systematically review EU legislation to ensure that '*aims are being met in the most efficient and effective way, to detect regulatory burdens and to identify opportunities for simplification.*' In practice, REFIT means that the Commission is withdrawing its proposal for a directive on musculoskeletal disorders and the revision of the Carcinogens Directive - the two key legislative challenges regarding workers' health and safety. Additionally, we face

the prospect that there will be no new European Health and Safety Strategy before 2016. Workers' right to information and consultation is also targeted by REFIT. The Commission is envisaging a consolidation of the three directives Framework for Information and Consultation, Collective Redundancies and Transfer of Undertakings, which were subject to a so-called fitness check. The ETUC supports the strengthening of information, consultation and participation rights, but is not convinced that this would be achieved by merging the three directives. Not only is REFIT used as an excuse to get rid of various pieces of legislation, but it is also a serious affront on the social dialogue and the social *acquis*. By refusing to present the social partner agreement on the protection of occupational health and safety in the hairdressing sector to the Council, the Commission is not fulfilling its function as the guardian of the treaties. It should promote the role of the social partners and respect their autonomy. The ETUC supports the need for quality legislation, which means legislation designed to be efficient without imposing unnecessary obligations. Unfortunately, the Commission's smart regulation agenda is not about making legislation more effective or making sure that directives are properly implemented in Member States. Rather, it is an attempt at rolling back the role of the regulator in the belief that companies can self-regulate."

Nilsson referred to the ETUC's "*Rethink REFIT*" campaign which can be found at www.etuc.org/a/11608 and which was also entitled "*ETUC says NO to deregulation and attacks on workers' rights: Working rights are not red tape to be slashed, Mr Barroso!*" Nilsson referred to European Commission President José Manuel Barroso's sneering remarks that surely hairdressers would not need European level Health and Safety protection! EESC Workers' Group President George Dassis stated that when he would come face-to-face with Barroso's right-wing dogmatism in favour of unrestrained market forces, the only role Barroso seemed to envisage for trade unions was to follow a Chinese model of union subservience. I observed that while Barroso's youthful Maoism is sometimes alluded to in his biography, it seemed to me that he had been more a follower of

Mao Zedong's pro-market opponent Deng Xiaoping, who once declared that it didn't matter whether a cat was black or white, so long as it caught mice. But how mice are caught was, indeed for workers, a health and safety issue.

The Barroso Commission came to an end this November, to be replaced by that of the new Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker. George Dassis welcomed Juncker's commitment to a European Investment Plan and his restatement of some of the values of Social Europe that won him the joint support of both Christian Democrats and Social Democrats alike, roundly defeating the hysterical rightwing opposition to his appointment by the British Tory Government. Another of Juncker's declared commitments is to EU wide corporate tax reform. This was a topic up for discussion at a meeting of the EESC's Section for Economic and Monetary Union this past 10 November. A draft opinion entitled "*Completing EMU / Taxation*" was debated. A Spanish union representative enquired if Juncker was the right man to pursue this agenda. He was speaking in the wake of the so-called "*Luxleaks*" revelations that, just as the Irish authorities had facilitated multinational tax avoidance with the "*double Irish*" arrangement, so also had the Luxembourg authorities facilitated similar multinational tax avoidance while Juncker was Prime Minister of that country. I intervened to say that I thought it strange that "*Luxleaks*" should emerge at this particular juncture, that not only UKIP, but also the UK government itself, was now contemplating using it to try and reopen the issue of the Juncker Presidency, and we would be playing into the hands of the right-wing to give any credence to further questioning Juncker's credentials. I pointed out that following a reactionary role in Irish national politics, Pádraig Flynn had turned out to be a most progressive EU Commissioner for Social Affairs, advancing the Social Europe agenda, admittedly under the overall stewardship of the then Commission President Jacques Delors. So also could Juncker turn out to be a progressive leader in now tackling EU wide corporate tax avoidance. I was supported by the German trade unionist Gabriele Bischoff, the DGB's Director for European Affairs, who argued that, because of his past, Juncker could turn out to be the most suitable President to now pursue this issue. As it happened, the right-wing Eurosceptic vote of "no confidence" in Juncker at the European Parliament turned out to be a damp squib, with both Christian Democrats and Social Democrats once again resolutely supporting him, and the Left bloc abstaining.

But there is more than one right-wing threat on the horizon. This end-year extraordinary meeting of the EESC's Workers' Group, held on December 4, addressed the issue of the dangers inherent in the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), as presently proposed. ETUC advisor Tom Jenkins emphasised that there were three red line issues underlying the ETUC's current opposition: (1) The need for adherence to minimum labour standards, as defined by the ILO – a stance shared by the US's own union confederation, the AFL-CIO; (2) The need to protect essential Public Services, such as Health; and (3) Objections to the proposed Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS). Jenkins went on to stress that the change in Commission Presidency from Barroso to Juncker would be positive for future negotiations.

There followed a presentation by EESC Workers' Group member Dr Christoph Lechner, Head of the Department of Constitutional Law in Lower Austria's Chamber of Labour. Lechner referred to a previous EESC opinion that in any TTIP, the parties must reaffirm their obligations arising from membership of the International Labour Organisation and

that the 8 core ILO Conventions must set the minimum basis. The threat, not just to existing national sovereignty, but to the sovereignty of the EU itself, lay in the definition of ISDS:

"Investment treaties enabling companies to sue states at international tribunals. This remedy is only available to foreign corporations or to transnational corporations using a cross-border subsidiary. Affected communities, citizens, domestic entrepreneurs and governments cannot make use of the same mechanism. Arbitration tribunal arbitrators are not tenured judges as in domestic judicial systems. The extrajudicial tribunals are comprised of three private attorneys who sit in closed session, are appointed on an *ad hoc* basis, and are unaccountable to any electorate. Their decision is final and not subject to any appeal process."

Lechner continued: "ISDS elevates transnational capital to a legal status equivalent to that of the sovereign state and mushrooms into an undemocratic mechanism; it fundamentally shifts the balance of power between investors, states and other affected parties; it prioritises corporate rights over the rights of governments to regulate and the sovereign right of nations to determine their own affairs; it is a discriminatory mechanism favouring foreign investors above their domestic counterpart; and ISDS bypasses national legal systems, demanding taxpayer compensation for public interest policies, eg health and environmental protection."

Lechner quoted President Juncker as writing in his political guidelines for the incoming European Commission: "As Commission President I will also be very clear that **I will not sacrifice Europe's safety, health, social and data protection standards or our cultural diversity on the altar of free trade**. Notably, the safety of food we eat and the protection of Europeans' personal data will be non-negotiable for me as Commission President. **Nor will I accept that the jurisdiction of courts in EU Member States is limited by special regimes of investor disputes**. The rule of law and the principle of equality before the law must also apply in this context." [Very different, in tone at the very least, from Barroso! Lechner's own emphases.]

Dr Lechner also drew attention to, and circulated, an important legal opinion drawn up by Professor Markus Krajewski for Germany's Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, the SPD's think-tank, entitled "*Modalities for investment protection and Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) in TTIP, from a trade union perspective*". This legal opinion pointed out:

"The structural ambiguity of ISDS is not the main focus of the public opposition and academic critique of the system. Instead, the potential or actual impact of ISDS on national regulations and regulatory space are at the heart of the current debate. Due to the open and broad wording of the substantive provisions and their equally broad interpretation by investment tribunals, the subject matter of investment disputes is not restricted to direct expropriation and open discrimination, but also to regulatory measures. As a consequence, governments may be faced with large claims for compensation, which may lead to a '*regulatory chill*' effect. In addition, investment claims can be used as instruments to influence administrative proceedings in favour of the investor. They may also become an additional burden in the domestic legislative process. As investment disputes concern actions or omissions of the state and not of private actors, collective bargaining or agreements of the social partners could not become a direct target of ISDS. However, an investor might claim that the omission of state action in this

context could be a violation of an investment agreement. Hence, ISDS may also have an indirect effect on labour regulations based on collective agreements.”

This legal opinion further argued:

“ Even if one does not share the general critique of investment protection and ISDS one may question whether investment protection is necessary in an agreement between the EU on the one side and the US or Canada on the other side. Proponents of this approach such as the European Commission or the United States Trade Representative do not argue that the Canadian, US, or EU legal systems do not provide sufficient legal protection to businesses. While there may have been individual court cases in which the foreign identity of an investor may have had a negative impact on the outcome of the case, there is certainly no widespread and systemic disregard of the rule of law in either of these legal systems. It is also not very likely that US or Canadian investors have been deterred from investing in the EU or that European investors have been deterred from investing in the US or Canada because of the lack of an investment protection agreement between the two sides. Hence, even the traditional argument in favour of investment agreements in a North-South context does not seem convincing in the EU-US or EU-Canada context.”

It is to be particularly regretted that the greatest EU danger to safeguarding what remains of Social Europe in the context of TTIP negotiations comes from an Irishman, David O’Sullivan, who took up office this November as EU Ambassador to the USA, fresh from his role as Chief Operations Officer of the European External Action Service during the downward spiral in EU relations. (To hear O’Sullivan’s views on both EU-Russia and EU-US relations, see www.rte.ie/news/player/2014/0506/20573936-david-osullivan-appointed-eus-new-ambassador-to-washington/ for his RTÉ interview last May). This December 6, under the heading of “TTIP without investor protections a grave mistake – EU Ambassador”, the *Irish Independent* carried the following report of his Atlanticist credo:

“Having a transatlantic trade deal between the US and EU without including controversial investor protections would be a grave mistake, Europe’s Ambassador to the US has said. David O’Sullivan, who was addressing a conference at Dublin’s Trinity College on plans for a China-EU Investment Treaty, said the move was indispensable. Negotiations on investor protection rules in the world’s biggest trade deal have been frozen after sharp criticism in Europe. The European Commission is digesting the results of a public consultation before deciding how to proceed. Irishman Mr O’Sullivan, who took up his post in Washington DC just last month, said he was conscious of the fears of opponents. ‘But I continue to believe that the right kind of investor state dispute settlement clause remains absolutely indispensable to any investment treaty, whether between countries with similar legal systems or between countries with very different legal systems’, he told the inaugural symposium in Trinity. ‘It is true that the way the modern world moves on, these clauses need to be rehabilitated and revisited, but I believe that the notion that you could not have such agreements, such mechanisms in international investment agreements, is gravely mistaken.’ Many EU politicians have said they will reject any Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) agreement that contains investor protections, known as Investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS). But US business groups are adamant the TTIP must include investor protections or risk setting a bad precedent for investment negotiations with

other countries, such as China, negotiations for which began earlier this year. China is the EU’s biggest source of imports and one of its fastest growing export markets. Mr O’Sullivan told the symposium there was no greater possibility for trade and investment expansion than with China.”

The most appropriate riposte to O’Sullivan can be found in that previously-cited German legal opinion from a trade union perspective:

“Many observers ... insist on the inclusion of investment protection in an EU-US agreement in particular ... (arguing) that without investment protection in TTIP, the EU cannot ask for investment protection in other negotiations e.g. with China or India. This position is based on the idea that the EU must display political evenness vis-à-vis its trading partners in international investment and trade negotiations... (But) even if one assumes that an investment protection chapter in agreements with other trading partners is necessary, investment protection in the TTIP is not a prerequisite. In fact, trade and investment relations between European and North American OECD countries traditionally did not involve investment protection agreements. In addition, countries such as Australia have shown that a country can credibly exclude investment protection from a trade agreement with one country (e.g. the US-Australia FTA) and still include it in an agreement with another country (e.g. the Korea-Australia FTA). There is no plausible reason why the EU could not follow a similar path. In fact, it might even be possible that in negotiations with China, China itself will insist on ISDS in an investment agreement even if TTIP contains no investment protection chapter or at least no ISDS.”

There are, indeed, some treacherous waters ahead. □

Cork Echo Correspondence Continued from p. 18

they now say,] Antwerp is of no importance to Germany, then all the greater is the crime of those who forced the Belgians to resist the bombardment when they desired to evacuate the city.”

So much for the propaganda about Belgium. Prior to the commencement of the war, Connolly advocated that war between the capitalist powers should be resisted at all costs by the working classes who would pay the blood-price of the war from which others would profit. But the war started anyway, and the blood of the workers began to flow in rivers. The big question then was who would win. And Connolly calculated that the social interest - the interest of the workers of ALL the nations, or human civilisation - was best served by a German victory.

In 1916, quoting the distinguished American author F.C. Howe, Connolly wrote:

“Germany is more intelligently organized than is the rest of the world. The individual German receives more from society. He is better protected in his daily life. The gains of civilization are more widely distributed than they are with us. ... the needs [of the German worker], and those of his wife and family, are better cared for. And the individual man is more efficient. He is better prepared for his work. He enjoys a wholesome leisure life. He is assured protection from la misère [destitution] in old age. The workhouse does not await him if he falls by the wayside. It is my belief that Germany had just reached the beginning of her greatest achievements. Had not the war intervened, the next generation would have seen her competitors in industry, trade, and commerce outdistanced at an accelerated speed that would have soon left them far and possibly permanently in the rear.”

Thus the 1916 Proclamation, drafted and printed in Connolly’s headquarters in Liberty Hall, included a reference to our “gallant allies in Europe”.

Pat Maloney Editor, Labour Comment Roman Street Cork □

Book Review: *L'inconnu de l'Élysée* by Pierre Péan, 2007, Fayard

By John Martin

This sympathetic portrayal of Jacques Chirac was received with surprise in France because the author tends to write from a left wing perspective. It was expected that a book about a figure from the Gaullist Party would be much more critical. Another reason for the surprise was that the portrayal of Chirac is at variance to his public persona which is why the title of the book is "*L'inconnu*" or the unknown.

Péan has written numerous books on French politics, some of which have been reviewed in this magazine and the *Irish Political Review*. A consistent theme in many of his works is the extent to which the media give a distorted view of politics in the interests of their own agenda. One of his most famous books, "*La Face cachée du Monde*", which he co-wrote with Philippe Cohen is a damning indictment of the *Le Monde* newspaper. This newspaper has a hegemonic influence which affects other organs of the media, including the broadcast media (see a review of the book in the *Irish Political Review*, July 2005). It sees itself has a "counter-power" with its own view of the world which it doesn't hesitate to pursue.

The image that the French media have of Chirac is of a buffoon and a liar (*supermenteur*) who has achieved nothing in the world. Someone who has no ideas of his own and who blows with the prevailing wind. The media instinct is to denigrate rather than to understand, although it is interesting that some politicians always escape its ire.

The book begins with an interview in which Chirac describes his efforts to send money from the King of Morocco to the African National Congress. This opposition to South Africa's apartheid regime reflected Chirac's profound anti-racist view of the world. For diplomatic reasons the King wanted this operation to be done in secret, which meant that Chirac could not obtain any political credit.

The author quotes from a speech Chirac gave at the opening of a museum dedicated to world culture. He believes that languages and culture should be preserved and rejects the "social Darwin" view that one culture is superior to another. He refused to participate in the 500 year anniversary of Columbus' "discovery" of America on the grounds that the development destroyed races in America. He disagrees with the view, which he attributes to a director of the *Louvre Museum*, that culture begins with the European Enlightenment.

He has had a lifelong interest in various cultures throughout the world, but in particular the cultures of Asia: India, China and Japan. When he was President he organised the display of a Japanese manuscript in the *Louvre* and was furious when that museum did not accord the object the prominence that it was due. Chinese politicians were amazed at his knowledge of their culture and his ability to date from which historical period various Chinese artefacts came.

He is also fascinated by the origins of man and has a keen interest and knowledge of archaeological discoveries.

Where do these interests come from? He did not have a particularly cosmopolitan background. His four grandparents were teachers. His grandfather on his father's side was the most notable. As well as being a successful pedagogue he achieved fame as a political campaigner and a newspaper columnist in a popular provincial newspaper. Chirac's Grandfather seems to have been typical of a certain tendency within the French Socialist Party. He was a Freemason and an ardent advocate of secularism.

Chirac's father, by contrast, was not a Freemason nor had any interest in politics. He began his career in banking. He seems to have been very successful and was popular with his business clients. One of his successful clients in the aviation industry, Marcel Dassault, was so impressed that he offered him a job. This association with the aviation industry would much later assume significance in Chirac's political career.

Chirac's mother was a devout Catholic and the marriage took place in a Church, much to the chagrin of his Freemason Grandfather.

Chirac himself seems to have had a very happy childhood growing up in Paris and Corrèze, the region of France from where his family came. In Corrèze he seems to have run wild, rambling barefoot around the area with a high spirited, mischievous band of friends, many of whom were from a much more modest background.

In his adolescence he befriended an elderly white Russian who seems to have had a profound influence on Chirac's interest in Asia. This cosmopolitan aristocratic character, who fled the Revolution must have seemed an exotic figure in Corrèze with its strong tradition of communist politics. The Russian survived on menial jobs. For about three months he taught Chirac Sanskrit. But teacher and pupil were dissatisfied with the progress made and it was decided that Chirac would learn Russian instead. He seems to have gained a very high level of proficiency in the Russian language and translated numerous works by Pushkin, which had never been published before in France. Unfortunately, Chirac didn't succeed in having these new translations published either.

He joined the army and served with distinction in Algeria. Following his discharge he continued in public service. Although in his youth he flirted with communism he became active in the Gaullist RPR party and was an advisor to Prime Minister George Pompidou (later President) in the 1960s. Pompidou advised him to pursue a political career and recommended that he stand for election in a safe Gaullist constituency. However, Chirac preferred to stand in the place where he grew up in Corrèze, which was a communist stronghold. Long before the election he would go down every weekend to this area from Paris. His approach was much like an Irish politician. He tried to understand in a non ideological way the problems of the people with a view to solving them. The long hours paid off and his political career was launched.

He rose rapidly through the ranks, by dint of hard work and personal charm. He held senior economic portfolios where he did not spare himself in promoting French industry abroad. He was a key figure in selling weapons to Iraq in the 1970s when his paternal link with Marcel Dassault was re-established. He seems to have formed a close personal bond at that time with Saddam Hussein.

Péan describes in this book and others the symbiotic relationship between the State and various types of industries, in particular the Arms and Oil industries. The French State promotes these industries abroad generating enormous profits for these companies. Some of the profits are used to finance all the political parties back in France, including the communist party. Many of the regional wars in the past fifty years can be thought of as conflicts of national (or neo-colonial) economic interests. For example the Biafran War can be seen as a conflict between French oil interests (Elf) on the one hand and Anglo-Dutch (Shell, BP) and to a lesser extent American (Gulf Oil and Mobil) interests. In 2003 there was a definite French economic interest in preserving the Iraqi State.

Chirac was the youngest Prime Minister and seemed destined for President. But for a long period his political career seemed to stall. He missed out to Valéry Giscard d'Estaing in the 1974 Presidential election.

The book gives a withering insight into the character of Giscard d'Estaing. Many of his political contemporaries were intimidated by the intellectual calibre of this politician. But no one was more aware of his intellectual prowess than Giscard d'Estaing himself. His arrogance was insufferable. The author gives examples of his treatment of the German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, which went beyond mere discourtesy. Chirac found it impossible to work with him and resigned as Prime Minister.

Notwithstanding his dislike of Giscard d'Estaing, Chirac admired his intelligence, but his view of his rival was that he was not the "incarnation" of France in the way de Gaulle, Pompidou or even Mitterrand (!) were.

After his resignation he concentrated on re-building the Gaullist Party which was at a low ebb in the mid 1970s. He took a reformist line advocating a French version of "Labourism" (*travaillisme à la française*). At the end of 1976 Chirac founded a new Gaullist Party the *Rassemblement pour la République* (RPR) and declared his candidature for the Mayor of Paris. He placed himself in opposition to the "collectivists" (i.e. the communists) and the "Florentines" (i.e. the Giscardistes). Curiously, in one speech he denounced the Popular Front government of 1936 (led by the French Socialist Léon Blum) for not intervening in the Spanish Civil War on the side of the Republicans. He seems to have been an admirer of André Malraux the Gaullist writer who fought on the Republican side of the Spanish civil war.

His election as Mayor of Paris gave him a strong political base. He was unsuccessful in the 1981 Presidential election finishing behind Mitterrand and Giscard d'Estaing. The author quotes the latter to the effect that Chirac conspired with Mitterrand to defeat him. But the evidence is not that convincing. The fact that Mitterrand received a significant proportion of Chirac's votes in the second round reflected a division within the right and Chirac's social Gaullism.

However, Chirac's support in the second round for Giscard d'Estaing was passive at best. Also, he did not criticise his political associates, such as Charles Pasqua, for advocating either an abstention or a vote for Mitterrand. The author concludes that although Chirac did not conspire with Mitterrand, it was probably in the interests of the Gaullist RPR for the non Gaullist Giscard d'Estaing to be defeated.

Chirac lost the Presidential Election of 1988 against Mitterrand. However during the fourteen years of Mitterrand's Presidency Chirac spent a number of years in "cohabitation" (Chirac was Prime Minister or head of the government, while Mitterrand was President). There were many incidents of tension as each of them tried to stake out his territory. Mitterrand succeeded in controlling foreign policy while Chirac had control of domestic policy with the exception of some strategic industries, which Mitterrand succeeded in preventing Chirac from privatising.

Although the conflict was at times bitter, towards the end of Mitterrand's second term the two men became quite close to each other. The main reason was a falling out between Chirac and his economic advisor Edouard Balladur. Balladur had been Chirac's number two and had a big influence on the right wing economic policies of the Gaullists. However, he decided to challenge Chirac's candidature for President. Mitterrand began to take an intense dislike of Balladur for personal and political reasons. The effect of the split with Balladur was that Chirac could be himself. Freed from his relationship with Balladur he began to develop a more social orientation in his policies. The media establishment in France led by *Le Monde* waged a vicious campaign against Chirac and in support of Balladur. Most if not all of the scandals that surrounded Chirac had absolutely no substance. The interesting fact about this period (1994-1995) was that Mitterrand lent his support to Chirac. He helped Chirac defend himself against the media onslaught. After Chirac was elected President defeating the Socialist candidate Lionel Jospin many of Mitterrand's advisors worked for Chirac.

The question of who Chirac is arises throughout this book. He broke with the tradition of de Gaulle, Pompidou, Giscard d'Estaing and Mitterrand whose position was that in the matter of the treatment of the Jews under the Occupation the Republic did not have to apologise for crimes that it did not commit. This reviewer is not sure that he would agree with Chirac on this.

Chirac is diffident when asked what it means to be French. He does not want to appear as if he thinks France is better than any other countries. He thinks France stands for tolerance and respect for others. He feels French when he is in the countryside eating soup in the home of a peasant or in a village café. He admires the Napoleonic Civil code. He feels that one must recognise the faults of France's history as well as her triumphs. He denies that he has a taste for repentance, although that is the impression that this reviewer has of him.

Chirac took a hard line against terrorism following the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Centre. He even broke with Gaullism in allowing French troops to be deployed in Afghanistan under the aegis of NATO.

Chirac opposed the invasion of Iraq, but was prepared to support a resolution approving force if Hussein did not give access to the weapons inspectors. With the passing of time his position on Iraq appears prescient. Chirac warned at the time of the consequences of democracy in Iraq: a permanent Shiite

majority and chaos. The author does not speculate on whether Chirac's relationship with Hussein in the early 1970s might have been a factor in the French President's line. While the French position on Iraq had caused a dramatic improvement of relations with Schroder's Germany and with Vladimir Putin, a split developed between France and Germany on the one hand and Eastern Europe and Britain on the other: what Donald Rumsfeld referred to as "new" and "old" Europe.

In the months preceding the invasion Chirac stood firm. He made it clear - in contrast to Dominique de Villepin - that in the event of war France would not put French troops on Iraqi soil.

Has the author succeeded in penetrating the mystery of Chirac? Certainly he has allowed the reader to enter the former President's "secret garden". We have wandered around and gazed at some of his exotic plants. But can we say we know him? We see a warm, compassionate, generous man who loves his country and her people.

He is impressed with Mitterrand and his profound understanding of French history, which he admits far surpasses

his own. Is it too harsh to say that Chirac's knowledge and appreciation of other cultures is a means to escape from France?

One of the distinguishing features of his political career is his visceral hatred of Jean-Marie Le Pen: an emotion that is not shared by Mitterrand and many of his political contemporaries. It is admirable to struggle against racism and xenophobia, but could his antipathy reflect a reluctance to deal with an aspect of France that Le Pen represents?

Iraq was Chirac's finest hour. France gained an enormous amount of prestige in Africa and the Islamic world as a result of Chirac's position. Unfortunately, France has not built on that legacy. At around the time of the publication of this book just after Sarkozy had been elected President the Russian ambassador to France remarked that Chirac was France's last Gaullist. Notwithstanding his occasional deviations from Gaullist thinking in this reviewer's opinion it is to Chirac's credit and the shame of his successors that the ambassador's statement is true. □

THE Forgotten War

By Pat Walsh

It has been suggested by RTE that Ireland has eradicated its "national memory" with regard to the Great War. The First World War unjustly became "the forgotten war" and those who fought in it were unjustly neglected, or worse. That is the whole gist of the recent fanfare with regard to the centenary of the Great War in Ireland. There is little meaningful debate permitted on the actual issues in the war. The British view is taken on board largely uncritically.

This view clearly shows great contempt for the previous generations of Irish people who actually experienced these events - unlike those who are telling us today what we should think about them - and quite justifiably and logically recoiled from what they had experienced and determined not to be a part of such a thing again.

Despite what RTE and its assembled hand-picked historians infer the response of previous generations to the war was not to eradicate it from the "national memory" but to learn from the experience and understandably say "never again."

Their response was logical and can be more accurately described as "the less said the better" in relation to what happened than any malice toward those who were caught up in the catastrophe. People are not inclined to commemorate a fraud perpetuated on them.

We are led to believe that those who fought in Britain's Great War were forgotten. But the Irish soldiers of the British Army were not "shunned" and "forgotten" - except in Belfast where they were expelled from their employment, burnt out of their homes, murdered, had pogroms conducted against them by their former allies in the trenches whilst the country they fought for refused to recognize the rights of "self-determination" of the small nation closest to them.

This tended to make a mockery of all the principles that had been enunciated from the platforms used to recruit them

and led to the ex-servicemen believing they were duped. In the Northern Catholic press, which had been pro-British in the war there was great anguish over the first Armistice Day. This experience left a lasting impression in Catholic West Belfast which had repercussions in 1969.

Those who wish to install a new "national memory" about the Great War only wish to include a sentimental attachment to the mass slaughter of the western front. They do not wish to revive the "national memory" about other events within the war such as the starvation blockade of Germany that killed over a million civilians, mostly women and children; why war was made on the Ottoman Empire; the British violation of Greek neutrality that created the Greek tragedy in Asia Minor; the creation of Iraq, Palestine and the modern Middle East etc.

The centenary of the war on the Ottoman Empire that Britain declared on 5th November 1914 went by without a mention by the same people who talked prodigiously 3 months previously about "the forgotten war" that Ireland fought.

It is not that such an event was obscure and passing. Its repercussions are with us today with more obvious concern than the war on Germany. But perhaps RTE does not connect what has been happening lately in Palestine, Iraq, Syria etc. with Britain's Great War.

It is the forgotten war in Ireland - as it seems to be in Britain. Or maybe it is so that what England cares not to remember, these days, neither does Ireland.

It is very understandable that Britain cares not to remember the war on Ottoman Turkey.

For England the war on Ottoman Turkey came about from a great change of policy. Britain acted as an ally of the Ottoman Empire for most of the century before the Great War. During this period Britain was determined to preserve the

Ottoman State as a giant buffer zone between its Empire and the expanding Russian Empire. It was part of what was known as the '*Great Game*' in England that '*the Russians should not have Constantinople*' and the warm water port that this would have given them. It was for this reason that England fought the Crimean War. Later on in the century the British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli negotiated the Treaty of Berlin to help preserve the Ottoman Empire against another attempted Russian expansionism in the region.

However, whilst Britain was determined to preserve the Ottoman Empire and was prepared to use force to prevent the Russians having Constantinople its relations with the Sultan were very disadvantageous to the Turks. England, with the French, helped preserve the Ottoman Empire in a weak, dependent state through devices like the Capitulations so that outlying Ottoman territories could be absorbed into the British Empire in a gradual process (for example, Egypt in 1882) when a favourable opportunity arose.

At the same time, despite some writers in England calling for a liquidation of the Ottoman territories and their sharing between the Imperialist powers, it remained British policy to preserve the Ottoman Empire so that it would not fall into the wrong hands and pose a threat to the British Empire in India. In some respects the British acquisition of the Suez Canal altered the commitment to the Ottoman State but it was not the main reason for the great policy change in Britain.

What completely changed British relations with Turkey was the emergence of Germany as a serious commercial rival around the end of the 19th century. Britain had always practised a Balance of Power policy with regard to Europe. For centuries Britain had built its empire by keeping Europe divided and by giving military assistance to the weaker powers against any power that might be emerging on the continent. Then, whilst Europe was preoccupied with war England was able to get on with its business of conquering the rest of the world. It had the great advantage of being an island and therefore it could meddle with Europe and then retire from the continental battlefield and let others continue the fighting when enough had been gained. Its chief weapon of war, its senior service, was the Royal Navy, which established and controlled the world market for it. When the continent of Europe was at war the Royal Navy took over markets established elsewhere by the other European powers and in this way the British Empire went from strength to strength.

During the 19th century Britain's traditional enemy in Europe had been France and her traditional rival in Asia was Russia. However, in the early years of the 20th century England gradually came to the conclusion that Germany was the coming power to be opposed. Therefore, it was decided to overturn the foreign policy of a century and to establish alliances with England's traditional enemies, France and Russia, so that Germany could be encircled and then when war came about Britain would join the conflict and destroy Germany as a commercial rival. The alliance that Britain entered into with Russia in 1907, therefore, was the single most important event that made a British war on Turkey inevitable.

The alliance with Russia was obviously the main factor that spelled trouble for the Ottoman Empire. But what was it that made this alliance so important to Britain that she overturned her traditional foreign policy of preventing Russia from having Constantinople?

As I have said, Britain, an island nation, was primarily a sea power. It did not have a large army and it had been opposed to

military conscription. Therefore it would have been impossible for Britain to have defeated Germany by itself. Therefore, it needed the large French army and the even larger Russian Army to do most of the fighting on the continent for it. The Russian Army was particularly important and it was described in the English press as a '*steamroller*' that would roll all the way to Berlin, crushing German resistance by its sheer weight of numbers.

The problem for Britain was that the Russians (unlike the French who wanted to recapture Alsace/Lorraine after their loss to the Germans in 1871) had no real reason to fight Germany. Therefore, something had to be promised to the Czar for his help in destroying Germany and for the lend of his "*steamroller*".

That something was his heart's desire, Constantinople. That fact should always be borne in mind when people suggest that Turkey brought the war on itself. The fact of the matter was that in order to defeat Germany Britain had to promise Constantinople to Russia and in order for the Russians to get Constantinople there had to be a war on Turkey, one way or another.

Historians have overlooked the role of Maurice Hankey in conducting spying operations on behalf of Royal Naval Intelligence in the summer of 1907 based on the contingency that Britain would soon be at war with Germany and Turkey.

Lord Maurice Hankey gave unparalleled service to the British State. He was much more than just a civil servant. It would be no exaggeration to say that he kept the State together over a generation.

Hankey's career began in the Royal Navy and continued into the Admiralty's Intelligence Department. He became Naval Assistant Secretary to the Committee of Imperial Defence in 1908, before being appointed the Secretary of it in 1912. Within this body he observed much of the planning that went into the war on Germany, supervising it and doing much of it himself. When the war that Hankey helped plan was declared in August 1914 the Committee of Imperial Defence, having successfully performed its function, was suspended. It was replaced by the War Council, of which Hankey was appointed Secretary. Hankey also became Secretary to the War Committee, the supreme British authority for the direction of the war. When Lloyd George replaced Asquith as Prime Minister he made Hankey Secretary to his War Cabinet and then to his Imperial War Cabinet. Hankey was also Secretary to the Imperial Conferences, and served on the British Empire delegation at Versailles and the very important Washington Conference in 1921 which was something of a watershed in the history of the Empire. He then remained Cabinet Secretary for a generation seeing in the Second World War on Germany in Churchill's cabinet.

Hankey and his colleagues scrutinized the harbours and naval defences of the Ottoman Empire from Syria, through to Smyrna and Istanbul, up to Trabzon on the Black Sea. He surveyed, in particular, the coastal defences of the Dardanelles with an amphibious landing at Gallipoli in mind, to follow up a report of the Committee of Imperial Defence entitled '*The Possibility of a Joint Naval and Military Attack upon the Dardanelles*' which had been produced originally in December 1906.

And it was Hankey as Secretary to the CID who first proposed to the British War Cabinet in December 1914 that the pre-war plans should be considered and put into operation as soon as possible.

In the summer of 1907 Hankey went with the fleet to Constantinople. The Royal Navy were guests of the Ottoman Sultan who entertained and decorated the English visitors. As an ally of Britain the Sultan allowed Hankey and the Navy intelligence officers to tour the defences of Istanbul and the Straits. However, Hankey used the opportunity for intelligence gathering for one of the future plans of the Great War on Turkey, an attack on the Straits:

“During the journey up and down the Dardanelles I made such scrutiny of the defences as was possible from the ship, enlisting the assistance of some of the most able officers of the fleet. We all agreed that they could not be forced by naval attack, and I reported accordingly to the admiralty, a fact I was to recall in 1915 when the attack on the Dardanelles was under construction.” (*The Supreme Command*, p.42)

Hankey noted further investigations taken in this area later;

“Another somewhat elaborate inquiry... which lasted from March 1908 to the end of January 1909, had been held into the Baghdad Railway, Southern Persia, and the Persian Gulf, which had resulted in defining our policies in these regions. As early as February 1907... the Committee of Imperial Defence had examined the question of forcing the Dardanelles, and it is interesting to recall that the conclusion had been reached that the landing of an expeditionary force on the Gallipoli Peninsula would involve great risk and should only be undertaken if no other means for putting pressure on Turkey were available.” (*The Supreme Command*, p.75)

Hankey's revelations confirm that it was Britain's intention to draw the Ottoman Empire into its war on Germany, at least seven years prior to the Great War itself. This became essential when the arrangement with Russia was made since the Tsar wanted Constantinople as the price for the loan of his steamroller.

The agreement with Russia gave the Tsar the chance to expand into the Balkans and possibly to the Straits at Istanbul where he desired an exit point for his fleet – a desire of Russia's for centuries and the Tsar's first strategic priority which Britain had up till then taken great care to prevent.

Half of all Russian trade went through the Straits and exports of grain were essential in permitting the agricultural reforms necessary to produce a stable class of Russian peasantry. Britain forbade Russian naval entry into the Mediterranean and war involved the closure of the Straits to shipping. So the Tsar was desperate to secure this outlet with British consent. So Grey turned the British foreign policy of a century around to organise the war alliance against Germany. In doing so he made war on and the destruction of the Ottoman Empire a prerequisite.

Grey's future gift of Constantinople would mean the end of the Ottoman Empire and a free for all involving its territory. So Britain began to make plans for the strategic parts it wanted – in Mesopotamia and Palestine.

As his biographer Stephen Roskill notes when Hankey mentioned “*certain contingencies*” in a letter to his wife, “*certain contingencies*’ were a war with Germany in which Turkey were her ally.” (*Hankey – Man of Secrets*, p.82)

There were other issues of concern for Britain in relation to Turkey that encouraged an aggressive attitude. Germany had,

itself, begun to show interest in the Ottoman Empire. In 1898 the Kaiser made a celebrated visit to Istanbul to show Germany's good faith to Turkey and to establish relations. What worried Britain about the German involvement with the Ottoman Empire was that it was not a parasitic relationship like that of the other imperialist powers. The German objective seems to have been to rejuvenate and modernize the Ottoman Empire in exchange for commercial rights there. England and Russia had seen the Ottoman Empire as the ‘*sick man of Europe*’ and they had been waiting around for his death but now they looked on as Germany threatened to revive the sick man, and dash their dreams of conquest.

The centrepiece of German involvement in the Ottoman Empire was the Berlin-Baghdad Railway. This was a major cause of the war because Britain looked at it and saw the economic and strategic advantages it would provide to continental Europe and Asia. As I have said, at this time the Royal Navy controlled the global market by ruling the sea. It was feared that if the Berlin to Baghdad Railway was built trade would increasingly go across land and be beyond the guns of the Royal Navy. It was also feared that the Railway would transport goods at a lower cost, giving the Germans a commercial advantage over Britain in the East. And there might even be the development of a great customs union - a kind of early European Community, with Germany at its head - that would prosper outside of the global market that Britain had established for its own benefit and which the Royal Navy policed.

One of the first things Britain determined to do about this railway was to stop it achieving a port at the Persian Gulf. It was the British policy to prevent any power establishing a trade route at this point because England was obsessed with the security of the ‘*jewel in its crown*,’ India. For this reason, a local tribal leader was encouraged to detach his territory from the Ottoman Empire and establish his own principality called Kuwait, guaranteed by Britain, so that the Baghdad Railway could be prevented from having a terminus and a means of shipping goods further on.

When the Germans saw how important this issue was to Britain they decided to make concessions and offered Britain a stake in the Railway. However, these proved to be too late because anti-German feeling had been built up in England and the process of strategic reorientation and organizing and manoeuvring for the war had already begun. When the issue was debated in the Westminster Parliament there was a great outcry and the proposal was dropped.

Historians, even those that are sympathetic to Turkey, do not attribute enough responsibility for the war on the British State and tend toward putting some blame on the Ottoman Government, and particularly Enver. They tend to ignore the wider context of the war and get tied up in the diplomatic detail, which can be very confusing – and intentionally so. The British State is expert at diplomacy, at covering its tracks and producing a narrative that, if it does not exonerate, sufficiently confuses people into tacit acceptance of the British position.

It must be remembered that the British State puts great resources into producing its case to the world and it is very difficult for alternative, independent views of matters to gain currency against this version.

So why did Turkey end up in the Great War? British accounts present a number of arguments. The first one is that the Germans lured the Turks to their doom by political trickery. A second argument centres on Enver and claims that he worked

with the Germans so that Ottoman power could be expanded after a successful war. In other words, like the Kaiser, Britain accused him of desiring conquest and world-domination.

The Great War on the Ottoman Empire is usually treated as an incident in the war against Germany, with the Ottomans taken as merely a military ally of the Kaiser. But the activity and behaviour of the Turkish Government in the years preceding the Great War suggest that the Ottoman Government did everything possible to establish good relations with England and France, and the alliance with Germany was actually a defensive act of the last resort, when the Ottoman Government was left with little other option.

The Young Turks, who had overthrown the Sultan, Abdul Hamid, in 1908, were admirers of Britain and France. Many of them had been educated in London and Paris and had got their political ideas from there. They mostly wished to disentangle Ottoman Turkey from the German connection and to establish closer ties with Britain and France – and even the Russians to secure the future of the Ottoman state.

According to Lord Kinross, between November 1908 and June 1914, the Young Turk Government made at least six attempts to establish defensive alliances with Britain, Russia and France - but all were rejected. Some humiliating economic concessions were granted to Britain along with recognition of the British control in the Persian Gulf and Kuwait in an attempt at buying off the aggressors. England was granted a monopoly on navigation of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers in Mesopotamia. And it was agreed that the Berlin/Baghdad Railway should not terminate at Basra and also have two British directors on its board.

However, the logic and closeness of the Entente that had been established to encircle and wage war on Germany at the appropriate moment, doomed all these Turkish initiatives and concessions to ultimate failure.

As part of this conciliating process, and as a token of goodwill, the Young Turks entered into a naval agreement with Britain in which British dockyards took orders for Turkish battleships, under the supervision of Winston Churchill and the Admiralty, and a British naval mission was established at Constantinople. By 1914 the size of this naval mission was as large as the German military mission, and they were looked on as a counter-balance to each other by the Turks. If it was said that Turkey had a military alliance with Germany in 1914 it could be equally said that she had a naval alliance with England.

The Turkish Government offered England and France extraordinary positions of influence in the Ottoman State - positions that no other country with concern for its sovereignty would offer. They entrusted to Britain the most vital components of the defence of their capital - the reorganisation of their navy under Rear-Admiral Gamble and Admiral Limpus and an English Naval Mission, and the modernisation of the arsenal at the Golden Horn (Turkey's centre of munitions) by Armstrong and Vickers. Admiral Limpus offered advice to the Turkish Admiralty on such matters as the location of mine fields in the Straits and mine laying techniques as well as torpedo lines.

It is not surprising that the British took on this constructive work, even though their long-term ambition was to destroy the Ottoman Empire. It countered German influence at Constantinople, gave the English a unique, inside knowledge of the defences of the Turkish capital and controlling influence over the Turkish Navy - and made sure that the Russians, French

and Germans did not possess such influence or information themselves. And when the English naval mission left, those in charge of it were the first to suggest to Winston Churchill that Constantinople should be attacked, and how it should be attacked, with all the inside information they had obtained.

So the last thing on the minds of the Turks was to wage war on Britain - for to have had this intention and to have entrusted England with such expert knowledge of the defences of the Turkish State would have been like the proverbial turkey voting for Christmas.

The only aspect of Ottoman reorganisation entrusted by the Young Turks to the Germans was the army. I'm sure the Turkish Government saw this as a kind of insurance against being betrayed by the English and French and also as a kind of balancing act between the Powers to ensure that everyone was kept happy.

And so the Turkish alliance with Germany should be seen as an alliance of last resort forced on the Turks by the gathering of hostile aggressors around the Ottoman territories who refused to be bought off with either goodwill or bribes. This fact determined that Ottoman Turkey, having been refused security from the Entente, could only remain neutral in the war at great risk to itself.

In July 1914 the main intention of the Ottoman State was to survive the War. It knew that Britain had its eyes on grabbing the Arab parts of the Ottoman Empire and its ally Tsarist Russia wanted Constantinople. To ensure its own survival Turkey initially remained neutral in the war and played for time. The Ottomans initially resisted German attempts to get them into the war with a number of preconditions for an activation of the alliance, when it became important for the Kaiser to gain allies.

It is sometimes argued by British historians that England desired Turkey to remain neutral in the war. However, there are a number of reasons to doubt this argument. Firstly, whilst Turkey had little to gain in entering the war it was necessary from Britain and Russia's position that the Ottoman Empire should be engaged in the conflict. How else was Constantinople to be got for the Russians? Secondly, Britain began to engage in some highly provocative behaviour towards Istanbul. A major example of this was the seizure by Winston Churchill of two Turkish battleships being built by the Royal Navy that were being paid for by popular subscription. These were seized illegally and confiscated without compensation by the British - effectively signalling that the naval alliance with Turkey was over.

It is difficult not to conclude that the manner of their seizure was designed to give the maximum provocation to the Turks and to drive the Ottoman government toward Germany. It might be argued that England was only looking after its own security in doing this. However, Lloyd George later publicly stated that the Ottoman entry into the war had added at least two years to its duration. Britain, if it was really serious about keeping Istanbul out of the war, could easily have sacrificed two minor ships in this effort. Two extra years of war, which resulted in the bankruptcy of the British Treasury and the loss of hundreds of thousands, was surely worth two ships?

It was not the British intention to keep the Ottomans out of the war. Its aim was to make war on Turkey at an opportune time and blame the Ottoman Government for the breakdown in relations - while at the same time denying it all for the historic and diplomatic record.

Edward Grey, the British Foreign Secretary, who had been making the arrangement to hand over Constantinople to the Russians, set down British intentions toward Turkey in early October in an internal memo at the Foreign Office: “*To delay the outbreak of war as long as we could, to gain as much time as we could, and to make it clear, when war came, that we had done everything to avoid war and that Turkey had forced it.*” (A.L. Macfie, *The Straits Question In The First World War*, *Middle Eastern Studies*, July 1983, p.49)

The opportunity of finding a cause of war against Turkey developed after the Royal Navy forced two German ships trapped in the Mediterranean into neutral Constantinople in early August. The German crews faced with the prospect of destruction if they re-entered the Aegean handed the ships over to the Turks. The Turks accepted them in place of the two battleships owed to them by Britain.

Churchill laid a blockade on the Dardanelles to prevent the ships coming out. This, in itself, was an act of war against the Ottomans. Then he organised a series of meetings in the first days of September to discuss a pre-emptive strike on Constantinople - to “Copenhagen” the city, as Nelson had done in destroying the Danish fleet in its port in neutral Denmark in 1801 before a declaration of war. And on the last day of October Churchill gave the order to “*commence hostilities with Turkey*” without informing the Cabinet or formally declaring war. The Royal Navy began bombarding the Dardanelles on 3rd November even before war was declared on Turkey by England.

The occasion for the British declaration of war was an obscure incident in the Black Sea where the two formerly German ships engaged Russian ships that were attempting to lay mines on the approaches to Constantinople to complete the blockade which the British had instituted at the other end of the Straits. The ships then engaged Russian guns at the port of Odessa. The Russian operation was designed to prevent the Turks from being able to reinforce their Eastern provinces via the Black Sea - something that was indispensable to Ottoman forces due to the lack of a road network toward Eastern Anatolia.

The Black Sea incident that provided the cause for war is an unusually obscure event and I could not find a detailed account of it published in Britain. This is despite the fact that many detailed accounts exist about the events leading to the war on Germany.

Mustafa Aksakal, in his recent book *The Ottoman Road to War* attempts to piece together the events that led up to the incident using the Ottoman, and other archives. He argues that Enver’s account of the incident was false and that the Russians were deliberately attacked by the German Admiral Souchon in order to bring on the war – even though Enver never actually gave the order. He suggests that Enver and other members of the cabinet realised that they could not hold back from the war any longer with German patience running out and vital financial assistance needed for the defence of the Ottoman territories - which was inevitably going to be attacked by the Entente anyway. It was therefore a question of fighting with German assistance or being left in the lurch to resist the Entente alone, either during or after the war on Germany.

His argument is that Enver and his comrades, who had decided that war was inevitable and who saw the importance of the German alliance for the long-term security of the Ottoman Empire against the Entente predators, required an incident for

which the Russians would be blamed to win over the rest of the cabinet, CUP and Turkish people for the war effort – for which most were disinclined.

This account is plausible. But it does not condemn Enver and his associates as instigators of war unless it is removed from the overall context of the situation. If some had decided within the Ottoman cabinet to bring about what they saw as the inevitable conflict with Russia, they did so as a consequence of the position they found themselves in – with little room for manoeuvre.

An account of the war must take in much more than the decision-making process within the Ottoman elite. It must take into account the historical relationship between the Ottoman Empire and the West and the great change in British policy that was made between 1904 and 1907 that led to the reorientation against Germany. It must also take into account the perception of the Ottoman/German relationship that emerged in England in relation to this reorientation and which manifested itself so markedly in the hostility directed toward the Berlin-Baghdad Railway.

It is only within this historical and geopolitical context that the Ottoman road to war can become understandable beyond the details and manoeuvrings of diplomacy.

This is because the Ottoman decision to go to war took place within a context imposed upon the government at Istanbul that gave them very little room to manoeuvre – and intentionally so. They were “damned if they do, and damned if they don’t” in the old British saying. And, of course, if they had somehow managed to avoid entering the war we will never know what would have happened – although, an understanding of the war intentions of the Entente would give us a good indication that things would have turned out similarly.

In late 1914 the Ottomans were confronted with a number of massive extraneous events including a British understanding with Russia that left the field clear for the annexation of Istanbul and the division of the desirable parts of the Ottoman Empire between the Western Imperialist powers, a European war that could provide for a radical restructuring of Europe and its Asian hinterland, and the probable destruction of the Ottoman’s only substantial ally.

Within this vast, over-bearing context the Ottoman leadership struggled to find a way out of its predicament and various points of view emerged at Istanbul. One point of view won out – not because of the deviousness of its proponents or their political trickery, nor indeed because it was the majority view. But because it was the only course of action that was left to the Ottoman State as events took their course. All other possibilities were carefully closed off to Istanbul, despite all the wishful thinking and Ottoman diplomatic efforts to avoid it.

Istanbul waited another week to declare war on Britain when they found a British army coming up from Kuwait and heading for Baghdad. Kuwait had supposedly been an independent principality in 1914 but it found itself with a sizeable British Indian army camped inside it and ready to expand the Empire into Mesopotamia. And by this time the Russians had already made an incursion into Ottoman land in the east.

Britain’s Great War on Turkey – Ireland’s forgotten war – was on... and it is still resolving itself, it appears. □

Cork Evening Echo — Exchange of Letters, Part 4

16 August 2014 – 4 October 2014

Plus Article and Letter in the *Examiner*

EVENING ECHO, Cork-16.8.2014

Remembering all Irish who died for country

I NOTE with interest that the debate on Ireland and the Great War is continuing to rage on the letters page of the Echo. I believe the fact that this debate has continued for months is an indication of the interest this topic continues to attract, especially during our Decade of Commemoration.

Readers will be familiar with my views on the issue of Ireland's participation in the war, and that of remembering those Irishmen who died in it fighting with the armed forces of the Allied nations.

While I have no intention of returning to the debate, there are a number of points that I would like to raise.

First of all, I would like to say how pleased I was to see the heads of state, politicians and other representatives from the nations who fought each other in the Great War stand side by side in the dignified ceremonies that took place at various locations throughout Europe last weekend.

This is exactly what remembrance of the Great War should be all about, peace, reconciliation, a reminder of the horror of war, the sacrifice made by those who lost their lives, the pain suffered by the loved ones they left behind and the anguish suffered by the veterans who returned home broken in mind and body.

With the debate in these pages veering very much towards the issue of who was responsible for the war, it is important to keep in mind that remembrance was the issue that sparked it in the first place.

While I have disagreed with Pat Maloney, the editor of Labour Comment, on a number of significant issues raised during the course of this debate, I must echo his call for a greater involvement by Cork's academics and historians.

I had the good fortune to attend the Academic Conference on the Great War organised by the School of History in UCC last January. I believe I'm correct when I say it was one of the best attended conferences ever held in the college, which, again, reflects the interest in this subject.

While the papers delivered were of the highest quality and covered a variety of topics, there was very little opportunity for a proper debate. Perhaps the School of history would consider arranging such a debate as a follow up to the conference?

Finally, I would like to return to the issue of remembrance. While the ceremonies marking the centenary of the outbreak of the war are now behind us, there will be others during the Decade of Commemorations. While I am delighted to see that the Irishmen who fought and died with the Allied armed forces have finally been given the recognition they deserved, I would stress that it is also important that we remember those who fought for Irish independence during that same period of our history.

The words 'For the Glory of God and the Honour of Ireland' are inscribed on the base of the Celtic Cross memorials that were erected at Wyttschaete in Belgium, Guillemont in France in memory of the men from the 16th (Irish) Division who died in those countries.

Today, many people may not know that those same words were once inscribed on a panel located on the front of the Irish Volunteer Hall on Sheares Street.

This proves that both the Irishmen who fought in the Great War and those who fought for Irish freedom during that time firmly believed they were doing the right thing for Ireland.

Today, we can remember those Irishmen who lost their lives in the Great War, and it doesn't have to be at the expense of those Irishmen who died in the 1916 Rising, the War of Independence and Civil War.

Equally, we can remember the Irishmen who died in those conflicts, and it doesn't have to be at the expense of those who died in the Great War. They were all our people and they deserve to be remembered.

Gerry White, Chairman, Cork Branch, Western Front Association

EVENING ECHO, Cork-18.8.2014

Germans guilty

IN their most recent letters on the Great War, Peadar Laffan ('War Bias', Aug 7) and Eamonn de Paor ('British Wrong', Aug 8) once again attempted to shift most, if not all the blame for starting the war from 'peaceable' Germany. Instead, they insist that the war was all part of an elaborate British plot to exterminate that country.

However, as both history and recent events prove, both are wrong. Mr Laffan suggests if I was sitting a history exam I would get a 'big fat fail'. In response I would have to say I would be amazed if he and some contributors to this debate even get as far as sitting the exam!

Mr de Paor takes me to task for stating 'Germany' did not exist before 1871, and it would be like saying 'Ireland' didn't exist before 1916. The reality is that the geopolitical entity known as 'Germany' actually DIDN'T exist before 1871 while the one called 'Ireland' DID exist before 1916!

At least in his letter, Mr Laffan correctly identified that in presenting his statistics as to the involvement in wars by the major European powers, Captain Russell Grenfell refers to 'Prussia/Germany' and not just 'Germany'.

Mr Laffan appears to have come up with his theory that Britain hatched a conspiracy to eliminate Germany based on a SINGLE conversation between former British Prime Minister Arthur Balfour and Henry White, the US Ambassador to Britain, recorded in White's memoir 20 years after the conversation took place! Surely he can provide further evidence for such an important conspiracy theory?

In his last letter, he also states that Britain's attempt to avert war in July 1914 by holding an international conference was 'pure hypocrisy intended to cover its true intention'. The historical FACT is that Edward Grey, the British Foreign Secretary, DID try to organise an international conference to avert war but Germany refused to participate. Again, I would be happy if he would provide any evidence he has to support his theory.

In all their correspondence, Mr Laffan and Mr de Paor have refused to address the historical fact that Germany declared war on France and Russian and invaded neutral Belgium. Mr de Paor correctly identified the atrocities committed by the Belgians in what he calls the ‘Congo genocide’ yet he simply dismisses those committed by the Germans by saying that when the Kaiser countermanded this policy, ‘the damage had been done’.

Would he not also consider the atrocities committed by the Germans to be ‘genocide’?

He also says that, compared to Britain, Germany did not ‘eschew colonialism until very late in the day’. He is correct, because as I pointed out, ‘Germany’ did not exist until 1871 – but in the two world wars it certainly made up for lost time!

Mr de Paor suggests that Germany did NOT perpetrate the atrocities I listed. I can only assume he is referring to Germany’s invasion of the neutral Belgium and the atrocities the German Army committed against its civilian population. In this regard I will refer him to the book *German Atrocities, 1914*, by John Horne and Alan Kramer which proves conclusively that Germans DID commit these atrocities.

If all the facts listed in this letter and in my previous correspondence still fail to convince Mr Laffan, Mr de Paor and others that Germany bore the largest share of the guilt for starting the First World War I will refer them to the following words spoken recently by Joachim Gauck, President of the Federal Republic of Germany: “This war began in western Europe with Germany’s completely unjustifiable invasion of neutral Belgium.”

Richard Addington, address withheld on request

EVENING ECHO, Cork—20.8.2014

RICHARD Addington (‘You can’t paint Britain as WWI aggressors’, Aug 11) declined an invitation to debate in person his ideas at a public Cork venue. He wrote: “I don’t live in Cork, but if I did I wouldn’t attend as I doubt very much if there would be an opportunity to have a balanced and objective debate at this event.”

I can assure him that a well informed debate took place between 50 or so participants, from Cork and from as far afield as Dublin, London and Ballycastle, Co. Antrim. None of the UCC war historians turned up. It’s a pity Mr Addington shirked this engagement.

The following points give the tenor and substance of one part of the discussion. This was about an issue raised by Mr Addington – but not face to face, regrettably.

Submarine warfare against merchant shipping was a response to the starvation blockade placed on Germany by Britain’s Royal Navy. The Germans threatened submarine warfare in February 1915 and as the English Liberal Irene Willis noted:

“There is no doubt that the threat would have been withdrawn had we consented to remove food supplies for civilians from the contraband list.” (*England’s Holy War*, p. 198).

This was confirmed in the British press, e.g the Daily Mail of February 25, 1915: “Almost from the day on which she proclaimed her bogus (submarine) blockade, Germany has graciously allowed it to be known that she might be induced for a consideration not to enforce it... President Wilson has now acted on Germany’s appeal. He makes informal proposals to the British and German Governments. The gist of them apparently is that we should allow foodstuffs intended for the civilian population to enter Germany under some form of American guarantee and American distribution, and that Germans, in their

turn, should drop their submarine warfare... The principle is not likely to be acceptable to the British Government. Germany has menaced us with horrors and penalties she has no means of inflicting. Whatever our losses from submarines, they cannot represent more than an inappreciable fraction of our merchant marine. Germany, unable to enforce her threat, is, not unnaturally, willing to withdraw it on conditions. But it is not to our interest to listen to any conditions. We prefer that Germany should do her worst, knowing very well that her worst will be quite bearable... Our answer to the American suggestion should be a polite refusal.”

Britain would not trade in its starvation blockade for a cessation of submarine warfare because it believed the former would win the war and the latter was puny in its effects in comparison. Winston Churchill stated in the Commons that the “full force of naval pressure... may be enough without war on land to secure victory over the foe.” (February 15, 1915).

On March 1, Prime Minister Herbert Asquith announced that the Royal Navy would prevent commodities of any kind reaching Germany, not just ‘contraband’. The neutral Dutch called this “a policy of lawlessness” and “a distinct invasion of sovereign rights of neutrals”.

In March 1915, U.S. President Woodrow Wilson’s note to England and Germany proposing U.S. supervision of an agreement trading the British blockade of foodstuffs in for a German end to submarine warfare against merchantmen was greeted in a “most friendly way” by Germany. Germany’s only demand was for raw materials used for peaceful economic purposes, like fodder, to be allowed through. But Wilson’s note was met by a flat refusal on England’s part.

Admiral John Fisher became First Sea Lord in 1904 and reformed the British Navy for war on Germany. He had warned the Admiralty about the potential danger of submarine warfare and urged them to mine the German approaches to the North Sea with thousands of devices. He also urged the building of more British submarines but the German naval scare demanded dreadnoughts as symbols of British prowess.

On the dismissal of German Admiral of the Fleet von Tirpitz in March 1916, Fisher wrote to him: “Dear Old Tirps... You’re the one German sailor who understands War. Kill your enemy without being killed yourself. I don’t blame you for the submarine business. I’d have done the same myself, only our idiots in England wouldn’t believe it when I told them.” (Memories, p.17)

Admiral Fisher’s book *Records*, published at the close of the war, has a damning indictment on the waging of the Great War in its Preface: “At the very beginning of the war we deceived the German Ambassador in London and the German Nation by our vacillating diplomacy. We wrecked the Russian Revolution and turned it into Bolshevism. I mention these matters to prove the effete, apathetic, indecisive, vacillating Conduct of the War – the War eventually being won by an effective Blockade.”

Peadar Laffan, Ash Street, Youghal

Examiner, Saturday 23 August 2014

The Fog of War: The Lies That Lay Behind WW1

By Jim Roche

Anti-war activist and lecturer **Jim Roche** argues that the brave men who signed up so willingly to fight in WW I were victims of a series of lies orchestrated for the benefit of the few at the expense of the many.

REFLECTING on the horrors of World War I, 100 years on, it is hard to fathom that so many volunteered, apparently willingly, for what became such a catastrophic mass slaughter.

Men queued up in droves throughout the UK answering General Kitchener's call "Britain needs you".

An estimated 200,000 Irishmen, from north and south, enlisted to fight in the war, with 49,000 of those never to return.

It is important to acknowledge that there were likely to have been numerous complex reasons why people enlisted for the war including genuine patriotism, the belief that it was the right moral thing to do, a sense of camaraderie, a feeling of obligation towards fellow recruits, the promise of Home Rule (in the case of some Irishmen) the chance of getting clothed and fed properly every day and the promise that they would be home for Christmas dinner.

But what created this fervent ideology? One of the main reasons men were so influenced has to be the effect of the massive propaganda campaign waged by the governments and the established elites of the various countries involved.

This took many forms such as posters, postcards, public speeches, meetings, rallies, newspaper articles, cartoons, radio broadcasts, etc. A unity of purpose pervaded between the government, the military, media moguls and high-ranking members of the establishment in what can only be called a conspiracy of lies.

War journalist and critic Phillip Knightley has noted in regard to World War I that: "... more deliberate lies were told than in any other period of history, and the whole apparatus of the state went into action to suppress the truth".

One of the main protagonists of the war, British prime minister Lloyd George, admitted to CP Scott, editor of the Manchester Guardian in 1916 that: "If the people really knew [the truth] the war would be stopped tomorrow. But of course they don't know and can't know."

As we commemorate World War I, it is worth then reflecting on some of these substantial lies and try to comprehend why so many people signed up apparently so willingly.

Germany's sole responsibility for the war

Persuading ordinary people to fight in wars often relies on one key myth, i.e. that the enemy is solely responsible for starting the war. All major powers in wars play this game. One of the greatest wartime myths of WWI was that Germany was solely responsible for the war and thus had to be stopped at all cost.

From H.H. Asquith in 1914 saying: "And with whom does this responsibility rest? ... One Power, and one Power only, and that Power is Germany" to Lloyd George as late as August 1917, suggesting: "(We are fighting) to defeat the most dangerous conspiracy ever plotted against the liberty of nations, carefully, skilfully, insidiously, clandestinely planned in every detail with ruthless, cynical determination."

This message was further propagated by the media moguls who had been promoted to powerful positions in government to conduct the propaganda war, such as Lord Northcliffe who said: "The whole situation of the Allies in regard to Germany is governed by the fact that Germany is responsible for the war".

Arthur Ponsonby in his 1928 book *Falsehood in War-time: Propaganda Lies of the First World War*, through analysis of quotations both during and after the war, challenged the popular belief that Germany had sole responsibility for the war, and presented it for what it was; a wartime myth created to persuade ordinary people to fight.

Some of the pronouncements made after the war by members of the establishment on the real reasons for the war confirm this wartime myth.

A sombre Lloyd George noted in 1920: "The more one reads memoirs and books written in the various countries of what happened before August 1, 1914, the more one realises that no one at the head of affairs quite meant war at that stage. It was something into which they glided, or rather staggered and stumbled, perhaps through folly, and a discussion, I have no doubt, would have averted it."

This represents quite a shift from his definite blame on Germany in his wartime statements.

Others in the ruling elites were even more explicit about the real causes of the war. Lord Cecil of Chelwood speaking in 1927 noted that: "No one could deny that the state of mind produced by armament competitions prepared the soil on which grew up the terrible plant which ultimately fruited in the Great War."

There was also this classic from US President Woodrow Wilson who said in September 1919:

"Is there any man or woman let me say, is there any child who does not know that the seed of war in the modern world is industrial and commercial rivalry? ... This was an industrial and commercial war."

This was the same President who claimed in 1917 that the US must enter the war because "the world must be made safe for democracy" understood quite well that it was to make it safe for the major western industrial powers — an incredible admission to make just one year after the war ended.

Defend 'plucky little' Belgium

The entente powers, especially Britain, made much of the invasion of Belgium as the cause of the Great War. As Lloyd George noted on January 5, 1918: "The treaty obligations of Great Britain to that little land (Belgium) brought us into the war".

Again Ponsonby is instructive here as he cogently refutes this fallacy and, supported by reliable quotes from British government ministers, posits that the real reason the British government went to war against Germany was because of its secret alliance with France and that it had little to do with Germany's invasion of Belgium.

The false image of defending 'plucky little Belgium', however, was a powerful recruitment tool in both England and Ireland. As Ponsonby noted: "it was used to excite national enthusiasm".

Of course the former barbarity of King Leopold's forces in the Congo was conveniently not aired at this time.

The demonisation of the enemy

In addition to blaming the enemy for starting the war the protagonists needed to portray the enemy as evil incarnate. Joshua D. Johnson of the Lloyd International Honours College, in a paper examining the propaganda used by both Germany and Britain, has written: "From the start ... Great Britain was forced to use its most powerful and persuasive propaganda weapon: the demonisation of the enemy. Germany also employed these tactics, but they were nothing in comparison to the flood of atrocity stories and cultural animosity that Great Britain (and later the USA) would produce."

The German Kaiser was thus portrayed as a monster in human form in British posters and the media. John Jewell notes that: The Daily Mail of September 22, 1914 portrayed him in separate reports as a "lunatic", "madman", "barbarian", "monster", and "modern Judas".

That's a lot of imagery for one day!

There is also the case of a famous military dispatch, allegedly from the Kaiser, that referred to the British Expeditionary Force as the "contemptible little army". This was never proven as

originating from the Kaiser but the British establishment used it for propaganda purposes to create resentment throughout Britain.

Ponsonby notes that: "Churchill made great play with it in a recruiting speech at the London Opera House on 11th September 1914."

This was all part of the propaganda used to create a hate figure for people to vent their anger against so they would be easily convinced to go to war. Ponsonby claims that Kaiser William 2 "was, and always had been, a tinsel figure-head of no account, with neither the courage to make a war nor the power to stop it" and who, at the end of the war, the entente powers were content to leave living peacefully in exile in Holland.

Again we witness contrasting attitudes being openly expressed in the post-war era as Lord Edward Grey, the wartime Foreign Minister, noted that: "If matters had rested with him (the Kaiser) there would have been no European War arising out of the Austro-Serbian dispute."

So the Kaiser was a fine little chap after all and the demonising of him during the war was purely a necessary part of the propaganda machine needed to persuade a gullible and frightened population to prosecute the war.

The ordinary German soldier fared even worse from this type of fallacious portrayal in what is known as 'atrocities propaganda'. The popular myth about the barbarity of German soldiers, which circulated particularly after the invasion of Belgium, was that they raped Belgian women and cut off the hands of their children.

This is also when the derogatory term 'The Hun' began to be used to describe German soldiers. Images depicting these supposed horrors were circulated around Britain and France but no evidence ever produced.

One image shows the Kaiser with an axe standing behind a chopping board, several severed hands on the floor, beckoning to a group of women to bring their children forward. Some of the children have had their hands cut off already.

There were many poster images produced depicting German soldiers engaged in similar acts of depravity, including impaling babies on their bayonets, replete with slogans in bold text such as 'The Rape of Belgium' or 'Remember Belgium'. Stories abounded also about the handless Belgian child who was travelling around Britain and then to the America and even the far west.

It is not hard to imagine how such falsehoods, when depicted in graphic and lurid detail through widely distributed posters and newspapers, could impact on frightened populations in Britain and France.

The myth lived on well after the war. Ponsonby notes that as late as 1928 how a Liverpool poet, in a volume called *A Medley of Song*, wrote the following lines in a "patriotic" poem:

*"They stemmed the first mad onrush
Of the cultured German Hun,
Who'd outraged every female Belgian
And maimed every mother's son."*

Ponsonby elaborates on many more atrocity stories of alleged German barbarity that were promulgated by British media and politicians, including accounts of cutting off women's breasts and raping daughters and wives in front of their husbands then killing the entire family, including babies, with bayonets.

A Baptist minister in Sheffield preached from the pulpit that a young 12-year-old Belgian girl who had made it to Sheffield "had had her nose cut off and her stomach ripped open by the Germans, but she was still living and getting better."

Huge damage was done by these false atrocity stories, which were officially sanctioned by the British establishment through

the publication of the infamous Report of the Committee on Alleged German Outrages, better known as "The Bryce Report" (named after James Bryce, the head of the committee). The report was eventually discredited but not before it had been translated into 30 languages by 1915 and had, in Joshua D. Johnson's words: "stoked the righteous indignation of the allied populace and dramatically increased recruitment for the cause of defeating Germany."

Such atrocity stories were investigated and almost all disproved, the case of the girl with her missing nose and stomach being rebuked by the Belgian consul, in a letter of March 11, who wrote: "Although I have heard of a number of cases of Belgian girls being maltreated in one way and another, I have on investigation not found a particle of truth in one of them, and I know of no girl in Sheffield who has had her nose cut off and her stomach ripped open. I have also investigated cases in other towns, but have not yet succeeded in getting hold of any tangible confirmation."

A serious rebuttal of alleged German barbarity in Belgium came from four American journalists who wrote:

"To let the truth be known, we unanimously declare the stories of German cruelties, from what we have been able to observe, were untrue. After having been with the German army for two weeks, and having accompanied the troops for over one hundred miles, we are not able to report one single case of undeserved punishment or measure of retribution.

"We are neither able to confirm any rumours as regards maltreatment of prisoners and non-combatants. Having been with the German troops through Landen, Brussels, Nivelles, Buissière, Haute-Wihérie, Merges-le-Château, Sorle-sur-Sambre, Beaumont, we have not the slightest basis for making up a case of excess.

"We found numerous rumours after investigation to be without foundation. German soldiers paid everywhere for what they bought, and respected private property and civil rights. We found Belgian women and children after the battle of Buissière to feel absolutely safe. A citizen was shot in Merbes-le-Chateau, but nobody could prove his innocence.

"Refugees, who told about cruelties and brutalities, could bring absolutely no proof. The discipline of the German soldiers is excellent; no drunkenness. The Burgomaster of Sorle-sur-Sambre voluntarily disclaimed all rumours of cruelties in that district. For the truth of the above we pledge our word of honor as journalists."

The journalists were Roger Lewis, Associated Press; Irwin Cobb, Saturday Evening Post, Philadelphia Public Ledger, Philadelphia; Harry Hansen, Chicago Daily News, Chicago; James, O'Donnell Bennett,

Chicago Tribune; John T. McCutcheon, Chicago Tribune, Chicago."

The deep irony of all these untruths directed at German soldiers about alleged atrocities in Belgium is that actual cases of multiple raping of women and the severing of children's hands, the latter actually recorded in photos, were those carried out by the agents of King Leopold 2 of Belgium as part of his rape and plunder of the African Congo over 20 years previously.

Another infamous wartime catastrophe, and a case of the entente powers being less than truthful with the facts, would extend the war to involve America and bring a whole new impetus to the allied propaganda machine.

Sinking of the Lusitania

A German U-boat sank the Lusitania off the southern Irish coast on May 7, 1915, apparently without any warning, killing 1,198 people, including 128 Americans on board. It was a horrific loss of civilian life and a blatant attack on an apparently defenceless civilian ship.

However, according to David Swanson, “the Lusitania was in fact “packed with American-made war material, including ten-and-a-half-tons of rifle cartridges, 51 tons of shrapnel shells, and a large supply of gun cotton, not to mention 67 soldiers of the 6th Winnipeg Rifles. The German Embassy in New York had published a warning in New York newspapers prior to its sailing that because the ship was carrying war supplies and soldiers it would be subject to possible attack.

Multiple lies were told about the true nature of the cargo after the sinking. In particular the fact that there were soldiers, armaments and ammunition on board was denied by US government officials including by President Woodrow Wilson, causing his secretary of state to resign.

There has been much speculation also that the ship sank quicker than it would otherwise have done because of secondary explosions caused by the lethal cargo, carried in defiance of American laws, thus contributing to the huge loss of life.

The key issue however is the way that the pro-war lobby in America manipulated the event in order to convince the population of the necessity of joining the war effort in Europe. As Ponsonby notes: “The very crucial political significance of the catastrophe, however, gave it special propaganda value in inflaming popular indignation, especially in America. Here obviously was the necessary lever at last to bring America into the war.”

Ponsonby also reveals how the event was used by the Entente Powers to stir up hate against the Germans, this time using a pre-war-time photograph with a misleading caption.

He notes: “A photograph was taken in Berlin of a crowd before the royal palace on July 13, 1914 (before the outbreak of war). This was reproduced in *Le Monde Illustré*, August 21, 1915, with the heading: “ENTHOUSIASME ET JOIE DE BARBARES”, with an explanation that it was a demonstration to celebrate the sinking of the Lusitania.”

This was one of many examples of photographs being either doctored or labelled inaccurately to create an illusion of barbarity.

Conspiracy between Government, big business and the media barons

Editors and owners of the major newspapers were charged with various aspects of Government war propaganda.

By 1918 Beaverbrook, the owner of Express newspapers, was Minister of Information, while Robert Donald, editor of the Daily Chronicle, was director of propaganda in neutral countries. The journalists at the war front were effectively treated as members of the army and were there to report on heroic deeds, to protect the generals from criticism and to aid recruitment at home. Some of the copy sent back was so ludicrously misleading and offensive.

Jewell quotes correspondent Herbert Russell thus on the catastrophic first day of the battle of the Somme: “Good progress into enemy territory. British troops were said to have fought most gallantly and we have taken many prisoners. So the day is going well for Great Britain and France.”

In reality, while the British army made minor territorial gains, the battle on July 1, 1916, was the worst day in its history with a casualty figure of c. 60,000. Journalists, editors, and newspaper owners, in connivance with the government, played down this mass carnage.

Undisclosed reality

Life was made very difficult for those who tried to expose the real aims of the warmongers and arms manufacturers, and relate instead the true horrors of the war.

In America Woodrow Wilson introduced the Espionage Act once war was declared in 1917. It was designed to stifle any dissent and soon there were 1,000 anti-war campaigners

imprisoned including the outspoken Eugene V. Debs, sentenced to ten years after he made the following observations in a speech:

“Wars throughout history have been waged for conquest and plunder ... and that is war, in a nutshell. The master class has always declared the wars; the subject class has always fought the battles.”

All of the major powers, Germany included, used lies and propaganda in order to both frighten and stir up their populations. It worked. The major effect of this was a massive increase in recruitment as hundreds of thousand of men marched off to be slaughtered.

Johnson notes that:

“The emergence of propaganda in World War One set the standard for wars to follow, and sanctioned the deception of civilians and the demonization of the enemy. In the end, the point is not really the differences between German and British propaganda, but in their similarities. Both nations were driven by a philosophy that marked an important moment in cultural history: the opening of a vast gap between the “official truth” and the undisclosed reality of war.”

This is useful in understanding the role propaganda played but Johnson misses a key analysis here, that of the difference between who was telling the lies and whom they were being told to.

Far from being a “war to end all wars” or a “victory for democracy”, World War I was a military disaster and a catastrophe for humankind, all premised on big establishment lies. Caring little about humanity, establishment powers sent millions to be slaughtered and also used the war as a testing ground for new mechanised techniques of mass killing that encouraged huge profiteering through the armaments industry.

Should we commemorate the war? Absolutely, yes! But the lies told to mask what Johnson calls the ‘undisclosed reality of war’ commemorations. The commemorations should also be a time to expose the lies that have been told of successive wars since then, and more importantly — of wars currently waged.

In Ireland we should commemorate the memory of every individual, especially the 49,000 Irishmen, who died in World War 1. But, while recognising that many joined for different reasons, we should look back in anger at the way all those soldiers were stirred up, frightened, made to feel guilty if they refused to join up, cajoled by fantasies of great glory, manipulated and lied to — by army generals, politicians, clergymen, industrialists and media moguls — while forced to fight their fellowmen and die horrible deaths in muddy trenches and scorched battlefields for what was ultimately one big lie, orchestrated for the benefit of the few at the expense of the many.

Jim Roche is PRO of the Irish anti-War Movement that has produced a pamphlet titled World War I – what did they die for? from which this essay is taken. Copies of the pamphlet may be purchased from www.irishantiwar.org. He is also chairperson of Academics for Palestine. He lectures in the Dublin School of Architecture, DIT.

EXAMINER 26 August 2014:

A Chara—Jim Roche’s article (Fog of War: The Lies that Lay Behind WW1, 23/8/14) is a welcome antidote to the ritualistic incantations of “gallantry, heroism and sacrifice” by which our brains are softened into acceptance and even admiration of the industrial-scale killing by Irish soldiers in the British Army, killing that was authorised and approved by the Irish prime-minister-in-waiting, John Redmond in 1914.

Fortunately, there was another view. In the *Irish Worker* (29 August, 1914), James Connolly characterised the war as “the war of a pirate upon the German nation ... [Britain] determined that since Germany could not be beaten in fair competition industrially, she must be beaten unfairly by organising a military and naval conspiracy against her ... The British capitalist class has planned this colossal crime in order to ensure its uninterrupted domination of the commerce of the world.”

In *The War Against Europe* (New York edition published as pamphlet, September 1914), Roger Casement wrote: “England fights as the foe of Europe and the enemy of European civilization. In order to destroy German shipping, German commerce, German industry, she has deliberately plotted the conspiracy we now see at work. The war of 1914 is England’s war.”

Redmond justified his call to the slaughter by vacuous propaganda. Connolly and Casement carefully and rationally explained their case, which has ample confirmation. [...]

PAT MALONEY, Editor, “Labour Comment,” CORK CITY

EVENING ECHO CORK 29.8.2014 TWO SIDES

GERRY White (Aug 16) says: “The words ‘For the Glory of God and the Honour of Ireland’ are inscribed on the base of the Celtic Cross memorials that were erected at Wytshaete in Belgium, Guillemont in France in memory of the men from the 16th (Irish) Division who died in those countries.

“Today, many people may not know that those same words were once inscribed on a panel located on the front of the Irish Volunteer Hall on Sheares Street.

“This proves that both the Irishmen who fought in the Great War and those who fought for Irish freedom during that time firmly believed they were doing the right thing for Ireland.”

As Mr White well knows, the Volunteers in that Hall he refers to were fundamentally split in their judgement on what constituted “doing the right thing for Ireland” in WWI. One side supported Britain and John Redmond and the other totally opposed participation in that war and instead prepared for a revolution against Brittan in Ireland.

Surely we must do justice to both sides and to history by acknowledging that division and the consequences of their different judgements. As both sides were intelligent men, any other attitude is patronising and condescending to both and an affront to the historical record.

The opponents of participation in the war went on to create an independent Irish State and the Army that Mr White has the privilege of being a member. The others joined an Army that did everything in its power to prevent this State and its Army coming into existence.

Under the cloak of remembrance and glib phrases, Mr White is trying to explain away rather than explain the historical reality about the attitudes of Irish Volunteers in Cork and Ireland to WWI and this is an injustice to all concerned. A hundred years on we should do better.

Jack Lane, Aubane, Millstreet, Co.Cork

EVENING ECHO, Cork—30.8.2014

Richard Addington (11 August) does not accept that the killing of a million or so German civilians by British starvation blockade was murder. He argues that this method of warfare was justified, citing the naval blockade imposed on the Southern Confederation in the American Civil War.

Mr. Addington is sceptical of the evidence that, just as now now, Germany was historically the most peaceable and least

warlike of the big powers. Here is an authentic 19th century British expression of derision at the peaceful nature of the German “poets and dreamers”.

Times editorial, 23 October 1860: *[Prussia is] present in Congresses, but absent in battles ... ready to supply any amount of ideals or sentiments, but shy of anything that savours of the actual [warfare]. She has a large army, but notoriously one in no condition for fighting. ... No one counts on her as a friend; no one dreads her as an enemy. How she became a great Power, history tells us; why she remains so nobody can tell.*

Mr. Addington cites American blockading practice. Here are some contemporary American views of German aggressiveness.

New York Times, 8 June 1913: *[The Kaiser] is acclaimed as the greatest factor for peace that our times can show. Former U.S. President William Howard Taft: [The Kaiser] has been, for the last quarter of a century, the single greatest force in the practical maintenance of peace in the world.*

It is questionable whether the perpetrators of Sand Creek, Hiroshima and My Lai should be appealed to as arbiters of the morality of warfare against innocent civilians. Civil War General Philip Sheridan was an American military observer in the German camp during the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71. He was scathing of German moderation, famously declaring that true victory was signalled by the smoke of burning villages - which just happened to be his own highly successful mode of warfare.

Mr. Addington is OK with the British slaughter by starvation of a million or so German civilians - women, children, the sick and elderly being the prime targets. Is he also OK with the slaughter of thousands of Boer women and children in concentration camps? He is clearly in tune with former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright who famously declared that the slaughter of half a million Iraqi children by sanctions or blockading “was worth it”.

Were German atrocities in 1914-18 worse than British atrocities against civilians?

Professor Carroll Quigley made the following points:

“When Belgian civilians shot at German soldiers, the latter took civilian hostages and practiced reprisals on civilians. These German actions were publicised throughout the world by the British propaganda machine as ‘atrocities’ and violations of international law (which they were), while the Belgian civilian snipers were excused as loyal patriots (although their actions were even more clearly violations of international law and, as such, justified severe German reactions). These ‘atrocities’ were used by the British to justify their own violations of international law. As early as August 20, 1914, they were treating food as contraband and interfering with neutral shipments of food to Europe. On November 5, 1914, they declared the whole sea from Scotland to Iceland a ‘war-zone’, covered it with fields of explosive floating mines, and ordered ships going to the Baltic, Scandinavia, or to the Low Countries to go by way of the English Channel, where they were stopped, searched, and much of their cargo seized, even when these cargoes could not be declared contraband under existing international law. In reprisal the Germans on February 18, 1915, declared the English Channel a ‘war-zone,’ announced that their submarines would sink shipping in that area, and ordered shipping for the Baltic area to use the route north of Scotland.” (Tragedy And Hope - A History Of The World In Our Time, pp. 237-8.)

In the Congo Belgium killed about the same number of people as the total numbers killed by all sides in WWI. As late as the 1960’s, while trying to clean up Belgium’s mess in Africa, Irish soldiers died there at the hands of Belgium’s proteges.

Belgium was not exactly neutral in the way British propaganda suggests. It was well known in Belgian governing circles that England was pursuing a secret policy of war against Germany. The Belgian Ambassadorial record tells us this. The Belgian state was really part of the political front against Germany and a kind of unofficial member of the Entente. Belgium had its own war aims of an Imperial kind - and subsequently did very well out of the spoils of victory in 1919 when it was rewarded with even more African territory. Prior to 1909, the Belgian army numbered 100,000 men recruited by volunteering. In 1912 Belgium adopted a military programme raising the war strength of its army to a massive 340,000. In 1913 the Belgian Parliament introduced the principle of universal compulsory service, in preparation to meet her obligations and responsibilities to her 'allies.' In August 1914, Belgium was able to put a larger army in the field than Britain - despite being a so-called neutral country.

Eamonn de Paor Dunmore East Co. Waterford

EVENING ECHO, Cork—4.9.2014

Hundreds of thousands of Irish killed and were killed in wars for centuries. What is so special about WW1?

One difference is that we are asked to embrace a particular kind of ceremonial, Great War Remembrance. This is not the same as acknowledging, remembering and commemorating the soldiers, some of whom one might be induced to admire, and others one might be tempted to despise, depending on their reasons, motivations, and actions.

The poppy cult and Remembrance rituals are quasi-religious, involving prayer-like reverence and incantations of "gallantry, heroism, sacrifice". Religion seeks to promote good living by means of devotional commendation of conduct which is approved on grounds of belief rather than reason.

There is nothing wrong with that. But should we set aside reason, logic and good sense when dealing with human decisions which cause the slaughter of millions of people?

The key point is that in 1914 Irishmen voluntarily left home to kill fellow human beings who were no threat to them or to their country. Why? The European conflicts of 1914 had nothing to do with us. The Irish did not cause the Serbian, Austro-Hungarian, Russian, French, Belgian, British or Turkish conflicts, and we had no quarrel with the countries we went off to fight against. We had no dog in the fight, yet we killed many thousands. This must set alarm bells ringing, no matter how "gallant" these soldiers were, or how much they suffered personally in 1914.

With incantations of "gallantry, heroism, sacrifice", with war sites that look and feel like church buildings, with church interiors that look like war memorials, and with endless rehashing of the horrific minutiae of offensives, defensives, and trench warfare, the public mind is battered into amnesia of the actual reasons why we took part in industrial-scale killing.

Richard Addington's letters to the *Evening Echo* illustrate this displacement activity. He talks of submarine and aerial warfare, poison gas, atrocities against Belgian civilians, the September Programme and so on. But even if he is correct about all this (and he is not) the quarrels between other countries were not our quarrels, and we were wrong to throw bodies on the pyre on Britain's behalf. There have been other wars since, big and small, just and unjust. But since WW1 we have rightly kept out of fighting that we have no part of. Mr. Addington has thrown into this debate the full canon of British Great War propaganda. When individual bits of this propaganda are debunked in the *Evening Echo* he responds with emotion, derision and scorn rather than with reason.

Was Britain the good guy, Germany the bad guy in 1914? Or was Germany, like Britain, an aggressive, war-mongering murderer of innocents? In terms of Irish involvement it does not really matter which of them was worse. Whether or not Germany was every bit as bad as Britain makes no difference -- Ireland should have kept out of Britain's war, regardless of who started it. That is largely how Irish governments have conducted foreign affairs since the WW1 disaster, and how our government-in-waiting should have dealt with WW1.

Actually, there is strong evidence that Germany's record was more peaceful than any other big power, and Britain secretly planned and organised a war against it for trade and imperial reasons. Despite all the evidence, Richard Addington scornfully dismisses it all, and, for no reason connected with Irish interests, seeks to justify Britain's aggressive war.

What about his complaints that I have unfairly denigrated the Great War Irish? The reasons and motivations usually given for Irish recruitment to the British Army - to kill for Britain - are money, excitement and Home Rule, not "gallantry, heroism, and sacrifice". What do you call somebody who is prepared to kill people for money? For pleasure? For a bogus promise of Home Rule?

War has always attracted mercenaries, psychopaths and fools of every nationality and persuasion. In Ireland those who took the King's shilling were generally despised. But for centuries that did not stop hundreds of thousands of us from signing up to do the King's killing. It was an inevitable consequence of colonial subjection. Those people were just like the rest of us. Most of them had little alternative except to turn themselves into cannon-fodder.

In retrospect, should we now despise them for this? The way I have put it in these columns is that they were tragic dupes of Imperial war-mongering. There is no reason to amend this. But this forgiveness does not extend to John Redmond, the party leader who gave political cover in Ireland - and in Britain - for British war-mongering.

Pat Maloney Editor, Labour Comment. Roman St, Cork city

ECHO 8 September 2014

War truths

ON August 4, a ceremony was held in Liège, Belgium, to commemorate the outbreak of World War I. Speaking at this ceremony, attended by the Heads of State and other representatives of the nations that took part in the war, His Excellency, Joachim Gauck, the President of the Federal Republic of Germany, spoke the following words:

"We are here today to commemorate the terrible 'Great War', which became the first of the two world wars. This war began in Western Europe with Germany's completely unjustifiable invasion of neutral Belgium. The invasion only followed military logic, and it thus became apparent on the very first day of the war that treaties were worthless and that the standards of civilisation had been rendered null and void. Outside Germany, people were horrified by the conduct of the German troops, particularly by their treatment of civilians and their attacks on cultural heritage. The destruction of the world-famous library in Leuven became a symbol that spread fear, shock and rage far and wide. But in Germany itself, intellectuals and artists wrote a disgraceful text in which they declared that crimes against a country and its people, including even attacks on culture, were justified and indeed necessary. What had become of the community of scholars and artists? What had happened to the civilisation called Europe?"

Those powerful words, admitting German guilt for starting the war by invading neutral Belgium and for the crimes committed against its people, were spoken by someone who knows far more about the history of Germany than Peadar Laffan, Eamonn de Paor or Pat Maloney.

Unfortunately, these individuals continue to insist that Britain was responsible for starting the war and that 'peaceable' Germany was innocent. I have repeatedly mentioned the historical FACTS that Germany declared war on France and Russia, that it invaded neutral Belgium and committed atrocities against its civilians, that Germany bombed British cities and coastal towns, killing innocent civilians, that it introduced and waged a campaign of unrestricted submarine warfare against unarmed merchant ships that resulted in the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians, and that the German Army was the first to use poison gas.

These are all undeniable historical FACTS. Unfortunately, for some reason, known only to themselves they are facts that for the most part, this trio of correspondents have chosen to repeatedly IGNORE!

In fairness, Mr de Paor did mention atrocities committed against the Belgian population in his last letter. He quoted Professor Carroll Quigley who acknowledged that the German reprisals against Belgian civilians were violations of international law.

Unfortunately, she then went on to say the actions of Belgian civilian snipers were 'even more clearly violations of international law and, as such JUSTIFIED severe German reactions.

Does Mr de Paor SERIOUSLY believe this? May I remind him that the German Army INVADED Belgium and these men were defending their country! Equally, if he was to follow the logic of that argument it could be stated that the forces of the Crown were justified in carrying out the severe reprisals they inflicted on civilian population of Ireland in response to attacks carried out by the IRA during the Anglo-Irish War. And we all know they weren't!

Both Mr Laffan and Mr de Paor continually refer to the deaths of German civilians caused by the British naval blockade as 'murder' – once again I will ask them if they consider the deaths of innocent civilians caused by the German bombardment of British cities and coastal towns as 'murder'. Somehow I doubt if they will answer that. In relation to the British naval blockade, while it was put in place to prevent food and other supplies reaching Germany, it was also there to keep the German High Seas Fleet bottled up in its base where it couldn't attack British (and Irish) shipping or coastal towns.

Prior to responding to this letter, I would ask Mr Maloney, Mr Laffan and Mr de Paor to take on board the powerful words spoken by Herr Gauck, unless of course they know better than the President of the Federal Republic of Germany. Then again, they probably think they do.

Worse still – they might think that the words spoken by Herr Gauck are all part of an elaborate British plot to blame Germany for the war!

Richard Addington address withheld on request

ECHO 20 September 2014

Richard Addington (8.9.14) says "She [Professor Carroll Quigley] then went on to say the actions of Belgian civilian snipers were 'even more clearly violations of international law and, as such JUSTIFIED severe German reactions'". Before he wrote this Mr. Addington should have googled Carroll Quigley, who was an influential historian - and also a man, unlike 'Carol' Quigley of whom nobody has ever heard.

Mr. Addington says that, according to a public confession by Germany's President Joachim Gauck, Germany started WW1. The start of WW1 is usually declared to be the assassination of the Austrian Emperor-apparent by a Serbian agent on June 28 1914, an event similar in consequences to the 9/11 attack. This was followed by Austro-Hungarian declaration of war on Serbia, and the shelling by Austria-Hungary of Serbia's capital city Belgrade.

Clearly, Germany did not assassinate the Arch-Duke, nor did it bomb Belgrade. What President Gauck actually said was: "This war began in Western Europe with Germany's completely unjustifiable invasion of neutral Belgium." Since the war began in central-southern Europe, not in western Europe, it must be assumed that what President Gauck said is that the war in Western Europe (the west Europe component of the Great War) began with Germany's invasion of Belgium. This is not the same as saying that Germany caused the Great War, which is what Mr. Addington wants to read into it. It is not even the same as saying that Germany caused the western Europe component of the Great War.

What President Gauck said, according to Mr. Addington's quote, is that Germany's invasion of Belgium was unjustifiable. It had nothing going for it other than military logic, he said. Unfortunately, military logic tends to be applied whenever there is a war. Military logic led to Britain invading neutral Iceland in 1940. Similarly, Churchill declared that he was prepared to invade neutral Ireland.

What about the atrocities? In the course of 100 days in 1914, Germany wrecked several Belgian cities and killed about six thousand civilians. That's about 60 per day. In the course of three days in Easter Week 1916, Britain wrecked Dublin and killed three hundred or so civilians. That's about 100 per day.

The Irish independence fighters were allied to Germany and were armed by it. Though they could easily have escaped to fight another day, and knowing that as prisoners of war they would surely be murdered, the Irish leadership ordered surrender in order to stop the insane British killing-and-wrecking spree in Dublin.

The poet Siegfried Sassoon vividly described British murder of prisoners:

*You bragged how once your men in savage mood
Butchered some Saxon prisoners. That was good.
I trust you felt no pity as they stood
Patient, cowed and scared as prisoners should.*

*How did you kill them? Speak and don't be shy.
You know I love to hear how Germans die.
Downstairs in dugouts, "Kamerad!", they cry,
And squeal like stoats when bombs begin to fly.*

The fighting in Western Europe could be said to have begun with Germany's invasion of Belgium, as President Gauck implied. But was it the cause?

The war in western Europe consisted mainly of war between France and Germany, along with war between Britain and Germany. While the war between France and Germany is generally attributed to causes unrelated to Belgium, it is usually stated that Germany's invasion of Belgium was the cause of the war between Britain and Germany.

Certainly, Germany's invasion of Belgium had no bearing whatsoever on the war between Austria-Hungary, Serbia and Russia. Also, just like the British atrocities in Dublin, German atrocities in Belgium cannot have been the cause of the war in the west since these occurred after the war had already got under way. (Continued p. 13)