

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 and its elections: 1918-1922

“*The people have no right to do wrong*” — that is a statement attributed to De Valera in 1922. I don’t know where he said it. I don’t even know that he did say it. But there is no doubt that he did not accept the outcome of the 1922 Election as being democratically binding.

In 1918 the electorate had voted freely, and by a large majority, to establish independent government in Ireland. An independent Irish Government was established by the elected Deputies in January 1919. In the 1921 Election a large majority voted in support of the democratically established Irish Government. In British Constitutional ideology Ireland was an integral part of the British state but in party-political fact it ceased to be part of it in the generation following the 1832 *Reform Act*. The gentry in Ireland were Protestant and British. The populace, excluded from the political life of the state by Penal Laws and the gentry electoral franchise, had remained Catholic and Irish, and when the franchise was extended did not slip into the party structure established by the gentry but formed a separate party of its own.

The franchise was democratised by the 1918 Reform Act. The electorate was tripled. The electorate in Ireland elected by an overwhelming majority a party whose programme was to establish an independent Irish Government. That party called an Irish Parliament in January 1919, which declared national independence and formed a Government.

The British Government, though it had no semblance of an electoral base in four-fifths of Ireland, refused to recognise the elected Government in Ireland. It held that Ireland was subject to the sovereignty of the British Parliament, and attempted to continue governing it in defiance of the Irish electorate. This led to war.

An election held in Ireland in May 1921 showed that the electorate stood firmly by the Government established by its vote in January 1919, despite two years of battering by British military forces of various kinds.

In July 1921 the British Government agreed to a suspension of military activities in order to see whether a settlement could be negotiated.

In early October a Dail delegation led by Arthur Griffith was sent to London to discuss terms of a settlement. Griffith later clarified that the British did not receive their letters of credential from the Dail, but, he said, the British knew who they were.

To cope with the fact that the British did not recognise the Dail or its Government, the Dail delegates were called *Plenipotentiaries*. It was not queried what they were Plenipotentiaries on behalf of.

In olden times, when rapid communication over long distances was not possible, Governments appointed representatives with full power to act for them in negotiations with other Governments. In 1921 instant communication was possible between London and Dublin, so that was not the reason why Plenipotentiaries were appointed. The reason was that the British Government did not recognise that an Irish Government existed and could not admit that it was negotiating with its representatives. It insisted that the people it was negotiating

Irish affairs with had full power on their own, without consulting anybody else, to make a settlement.

Griffith was therefore a delegate of the Dail Government on the one hand and a free-ranging Plenipotentiary on the other hand—depending on which side of the Irish Sea he was.

He was under instruction from the Dail Government that he must not sign any Agreement without its approval, but on December 6th he and Michael Collins decided to act as Plenipotentiaries in earnest and sign the Agreement presented by the British without contacting Dublin. The other delegates, remembering their instructions from the Dail only two days previously, wanted to refer the matter to Dublin. The British insisted that they must act as Plenipotentiaries, and must sign up that very evening, or else there would be terrible and immediate war. So they signed up. And the British propaganda, taking no heed of Dublin, immediately put the document into the world news as a great achievement.

There were two contentious issues: Partition and the Oath to the Crown. There was a sense in the Dail Government that a concession of some kind would have to be made on one or the other. Both were matters that needed careful handling. But it was suddenly found through the world news that its delegates had pre-empted the functions of government and given way on both of them in the most provocative way possible.

When the delegates came home, the Government submitted to their accomplished fact by 4 votes to 3. The matter then went to the Dail, which approved of the Agreement by 64 votes to 57.

De Valera stood down from the Presidency of the Dail. He was unwilling to use the Dail as an instrument for setting up a system of government under the Crown. He stood for re-election on a policy of rejecting the Treaty and was opposed by Griffith. Griffith won by 60 votes to 58, with De Valera not voting. He said that the Republic would continue in being pending an Election. De Valera observed that Griffith, as a Treatyite member of the Dail, would be acting in two incompatible capacities, committed to using the Republican Dail to set up a Government under the Crown.

The Agreement (now generally called *The Treaty*) required its Irish signatories to call a meeting of the Parliament of Southern Ireland under the British *Home Rule Act* of 1920 in order to be installed in power as the Provisional Government of a new body, the Free State. This was done. A section of the Dail met as the Parliament of Southern Ireland and the Provisional Government of the Free State was established, and was armed and financed by Britain. But the personnel of the Provisional Government were simultaneously members of the Dail Government.

Throughout the Spring and early Summer of 1922, until the Election of June 6th, De Valera acted as Leader of the Opposition party in the Dail system, while Griffith was both President of the Dail and head of the Provisional Government.

Collins And De Valera Negotiate An Agreement

Collins, it seems, though he hailed this “*Treaty*” as a great victory, was not at all confident of carrying it in an Election. He had been the strong man of the War of Independence, and had been confident, as head of the conspiratorial Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), of carrying the Volunteers (the IRA) with him in support of the Treaty. But things had not worked out like that. The IRA had grown up in the course of the War, independently of the IRB, and had on the whole held by the Republic which was its reason for existing. Collins was therefore dependent on the mercenary Free State Army, or National Army, paid for and armed by Britain. And it had become increasingly obvious in May that he was acting at every turn on Whitehall instructions, and being brought to order when he tried to act otherwise.

Anyhow he made an agreement with De Valera, about a fortnight before the Election, that it should not be fought on the issue of Free State versus Republic, but should instead be contested by Free Staters and Republicans as a kind of Sinn Fein Coalition, and that the new Dail would be a reproduction of the existing Dail, with the same balance of forces, but with the difference that the anti-Treaty party, instead of being the Opposition, should form part of a Coalition Government.

This agreement was submitted to the Dail on May 20th, and was approved.

Its first paragraph says:

“That the National Coalition Panel for the 3rd Dail, representing both parties in the Dail, and in the Sinn Fein Organisation, be sent forward on the ground that the national position requires the entrusting of the Government of the country into the joint hands of those who had been the strength of the national situation during the last few years, without prejudice to their present respective positions...”

And Paragraph 6:

“That after the election the Executive shall consist of the President, elected as formerly, the Minister of Defence, representing the Army, and nine other Ministers, five from the

majority Party and four from the minority, each party to choose its own nominees...”

If the Election had actually been held on these terms and a Treaty/Anti-Treaty Coalition Government had been formed under the leadership of the two major signatories of the Treaty, Collins and Griffith, the Free State would have been established without the Sinn Fein organisation being destroyed or the Republican Army being broken.

There was a seventh Paragraph to the Pact:

“7. That in the event of the Coalition Government finding it necessary to dissolve, a General Election will be held as soon as possible on Adult Suffrage.”

The Speaker read out the text of the Collins/De Valera Agreement. Griffith as President then immediately, put the motion for an Election. It was an amended version of a motion he had introduced the previous day, May 19th (1922). The Amendment consisted of the adding of this preliminary paragraph:

“Subject to the agreement arrived at between the Minister of Finance and Deputy de Valera and approved by Dail Eireann an election is hereby declared for the following constituencies...”

May 19th: Griffith Introduces Motion For Treaty Election

When introducing that motion on May 19th, Griffith said:

“Over six months ago the plenipotentiaries duly appointed and vested with full powers by Dail Eireann, signed a Treaty with Great Britain. They brought it back here and Dail Eireann approved that Treaty. The next step, as there was a considerable minority in the Dail opposed to it—or even if there had not been—was to put it to the people for their approval or non-approval. Six months have elapsed since then, and the people of Ireland have not been afforded the opportunity of saying whether they accept or reject that Treaty. Various objections were made from time to time and eventually an agreement was come to, to postpone the elections for three months. Objections were then made as to the state of the register and other points were raised. Those who honoured the signatures of the duly appointed and duly empowered plenipotentiaries agreed to postponement—agreed to the declaration on the other side that the people should have time to think and decide. After that agreement, the question was raised about the register. The register happens at the present time to contain fifty thousand more names than it had in the year when Dail Eireann was first elected. In response to these objections, we offered a plebiscite of the whole people of Ireland, and that plebiscite was rejected. Now the people of Ireland have been for the last six months kept in a state of suspense, kept in a state of being muzzled, kept in a state of being denied the fundamental right of the people of any country to decide whether they will or will not have a measure that affects their lives, that affects their property, and that affects their destinies. The time has now come to end that state of affairs... There is nothing more insolent in the history of their country, or in the history of modern civilisation, as it appears to me, than the claim that any body of men, or any minority of this country, should tell the Irish people that they have no right to decide upon an issue which affects their whole future and affects the destiny of the country. I thought when this issue of ‘Treaty or no Treaty’ was being placed before the

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people, it was the biggest issue that could be placed before them. But a greater issue has arisen now—an issue that strikes at every right we struggled for, every conception of nationalism we ever had, every right of a civilised people. The issue that is before the people is that they have no right in their own country to determine their own future... I see no difference between English Government in Ireland and the attempt of a minority in this country to deny the Irish people the right to expressing their opinions. The man who stood up at any time against the English Government on the grounds of democracy and the right of the people, and that now, when the English Government is gone from Ireland or is going, would stand up to say to the people that they must not determine for themselves, is as great an enemy to the Irish people as any English Government ever was. He is a greater enemy, because he dons the habiliments of patriotism to conceal the weapons of tyranny. It is time this humbug ceased (applause). I am glad to hear the supporters of humbug cheer that... These men who would deny to the people the right to vote on a vital issue are the enemies of the Irish nation. Let them call themselves what they will, and disguise themselves as they may, they are the enemies of the Irish people, the enemies of democracy, and the enemies of civilised government. If this country or any other is going to submit to the rule of the revolver, then civilisation is scrapped at once. I read some time ago a declaration from one of the leaders on the other side to the effect that a man with a revolver is worth a hundred men with votes. The man who puts forward a principle of that sort is an anarchist of the worst description. All civilisation and all modern progress depend upon the fact that men substitute the vote for armed force, and the rule of the ballot for the rule of the bullet. We are going to have the rule of the ballot, and we are going to have an expression of the people's opinion, no matter what intimidation is used against us... We would be poltroons of the worst kind if, after having stood up against England and painted her as a tyrant, which she was, we should now submit to a tyranny just as mean and less supportable...

“We stand here for this issue: That the Irish people must decide on this question and nobody will be allowed, as far as in our strength lies, to interfere with their decision...”

“What is the Irish nation? Does it consist of the people of Ireland or a minority of gentlemen, largely coming by birth and descent from the adjoining country, who are going to tell them all about their souls and their future, and all about what they ought to do, or ought not to do? We thought that when we struggled through the last century we struggled to make the people of Ireland masters in their own house, and not by merely exchanging one ascendancy for another ascendancy—and to drive out one minority in order to put up another minority. The policy of democracy has got very unfashionable since democracy was declared, or was shown to be in favour of the people of Ireland taking back the powers wrested from them—since the foreign flag, that we have seen all our lives, disappeared from over Dublin Castle and the Curragh, and since the English soldiers went out and the Irish soldiers came in...”

“We have offered everything that could be offered short of giving away the indefeasible right of the Irish people to pronounce on the issue before them. That we cannot give away. If we did we would go down as the basest cowards in Irish history... I say that the men who prevent, or attempt to prevent the people of Ireland, by force of arms, from exercising their fundamental right will go down to future generations branded with the brand of Dermot MacMurrough—as the greatest traitors in Irish history...”

A debate followed, which covers about 30 columns of the Dail Report.

Griffith was rebutted chiefly by Cathal Brugha. In the end the motion was not put.

Harry Boland said:

“I know, from one of the majority, of men who voted for the Treaty because it was expressly stated by men, whom they have no reason to doubt, that when the Constitution was put up no Republican could find fault with it. Therefore all my work on the Peace Committee has been to conserve the forces of the Republic until such time as there is another alternative placed before us... I ask and I appeal to the men on the opposite benches not to proceed with this election decree by Dail Eireann. This Dail was the first Dail so decreed by the Irish people. We took advantage of the British electoral machinery to constitute the Parliament of the Republic. I was at the time Honorary Secretary to Sinn Fein, when most of the leaders were in prison, and I remember well the question being debated as to whether we should contest the elections in every constituency in Ireland, or not. It was pointed out then that we recognised Ireland as a unit and every constituency in Ireland should be contested. Every constituency in Ireland was contested and in so far as we could make it then and in so far as the Dail could hold it since, a united Ireland is represented here. So long as the Deputy for Fermanagh sits in this House, and the deputies for Armagh, Down and Tyrone sit in this House, [so] long do we preserve, in so far as we can, the unity of Ireland... We have two obstacles at present to our complete independence, one in Ulster and one in Britain. You men who signed the Treaty, if you do not draft a Constitution that will give the Republican ideal in Parliament will be guilty of a crime against the Irish nation, and you will commit this country to endless wars and revolution. I know thoroughly well there is an Ulster difficulty. I do not expect the President or Cabinet can get over that difficulty. But I ask, in so far as this Assembly of the Republic is concerned, that any decree emanating from it as such, should be a decree that an election be held throughout Ireland.

“On Tuesday last the representatives of the Opposition side agreed that an election be held throughout Ireland on the same day. What has happened from Tuesday to Friday that we are now asked to vote for an election for the twenty-six counties? ...”

Griffith had introduced the motion for an election with these words: “the motion standing in my name is as follows” “That Dail Eireann declares an election for the following constituencies of (1) Mid-Dublin, (2) North West Dublin, (3) South City, Dublin...” etc., down to “(28) Dublin University”. What he announced was a series of by-elections, in all the constituencies in the 26 Counties. He made no reference to constituencies in the 6 Counties which had elected TDs to the Dail.

The other point made by Boland had to do with an undertaking that was undoubtedly given by Collins, to increase support for the Treaty, that he would construct a Constitution within the Treaty that would be Republican in substance. That was one of the things he was attempting to do during those weeks.

Richard Mulcahy, who supported the Treaty strongly, on a particular understanding of it, said:

“I want to protest very earnestly against the futility of this debate... I simply want to protest against the lines upon which

this debate is going, and I want to suggest that we depart from all the little points of argument, on this, our 47th debate on the Treaty, and that we go back and find out for the information of both sides in the House on what particular point in their discussions yesterday, Mr. de Valera and Mr. Collins disagreed. As far as I can feel, they came to some small thin dividing line of difference, and whether that line can be pierced or whether it cannot, the important thing for our dignity, and for the safety of the people whom we represent here, is that we should know simply and clearly, and without any oratory or any rhetoric, what are the broad points upon which disagreement has arisen and which still keep this House sundered, without any common objective that they can unite and work on, and that keeps the two Parties in this House divided perhaps by some small difference, but yet divided so completely that they are able to slip back to the futility and disgrace which is apparent here in this House...

May 20th: Griffith Introduces Motion For Coalition Election

Collins and De Valera had for some time been trying to work out a *modus vivendi*. They came into the Dail on May 19th but did not make a report. Collins proposed an adjournment. That was at 6.15 on Friday. It resumed at 4.45 pm on Saturday. The Speaker read out the *National Coalition Panel Statement*. Griffith amended his election motion of the previous day, adding the paragraph that the election would be "*Subject to the agreement arrived at between the Minister of Finance and Deputy de Valera and approved by Dail Eireann*". And that was that. The next meeting of the Dail was more than a fortnight later, June 8th, after the close of election nominations.

The Collins/De Valera Pact changed the nature of the election. Griffith had insisted that it must be a clear contest between Sinn Fein Government and the Sinn Fein Opposition on the issue of the Treaty. The purpose of the Pact was to sideline the issue of the Treaty, maintain the general Sinn Fein structure of national political life, and ensure that the opponents of the Treaty, who had played a vital part in obliging Britain to negotiate, should continue to be in the forefront of public life.

The Pact did the very thing that Griffith said should not be done. But he did not say a word in explanation or justification when amending his motion to include the Pact. Collins had decided and that was the beginning and end of the matter. He had no equal on the Treaty side. Many Treatyites were only Treatyites because he said he would bring in the Republic on stronger ground by way of the Treaty by getting a more powerful army (from Britain [!]) to confront Britain with. If that was to be done, only Collins could do it.

Mulcahy was not really a Treatyite but a Collinsite and he had to be disciplined into Treatyism when Collins was no longer there. Griffith, on the other hand, was not a Collinsite but a Treatyite. But he depended on Collins—playing both sides against the middle—to hold the Treaty for him against the Republicans. He seems to have been overawed that the British conceded as much as they did in the Treaty and was in a panic lest they should snatch it all away again if the Republicans were not crushed, but the crushing of them was a project for which he was powerless. He depended on Collins to do that. And, if Collins insisted on approaching the matter obliquely, he just had to put up with it.

The 7th paragraph of the *Pact* is obscure:

"That in the event of the Coalition Government finding it necessary to dissolve, a General Election will be held as soon as possible on Adult Suffrage."

I suppose "*Adult Suffrage*" means that the voting age for women would be the same as that for men. And I suppose a General Election, as distinct from the kind of election called by Griffith would be an all-Ireland election, instead of a series of by-elections in the 26 Counties.

On May 18th, the Dail decided to hold an election in the 26 Counties, and it gave official approval to the agreement made between its two major parties, the Sinn Fein Treaty Party and the Sinn Fein Anti-Treaty Party, to contest the election as a Coalition and form a Coalition Government if they won.

This was the same Dail that had voted to accept the Treaty in January. Part of it had met briefly as the *Parliament of Southern Ireland* for the purpose of being recognised as the *Provisional Government* by Britain, but it had then returned to the Dail and operated as the Dail Government, with the anti-Treaty wing of Sinn Fein acting as a Constitutional Opposition.

It was not required of Anti-Treaty Sinn Fein TDs that they should sign the Treaty as a condition of admission to the Dail and taking up Government positions.

If the Treatyite Sinn Fein had sat as the Parliament of Southern Ireland, along with a couple of Protestant Ascendancy Unionists, the Treaty arrangement would have been farcical. By rejoining the Dail—it might be argued in breach of the Treaty—it made the Treaty functional.

Collins used a strange phrase to describe what he had got in the Treaty. It was not freedom. But it was "*the freedom to achieve freedom*". If the Election Pact had been carried through, it could be said that he had done just that.

Churchill On The Election Pact

The following account of the British response to the Election Pact is given in the fifth volume of Churchill's history of the World War, *The Aftermath*, published in 1929:

"Up till the end of April [1922] we seemed to be ploughing our way heavily but surely through all our difficulties. The Free State Government seemed to be functioning fitfully but increasingly... All our hopes and aims were directed towards the free election by the Irish people of a representative assembly. There was no doubt whatever that by an overwhelming majority they were for both the Treaty and the Free State Government.

"Towards the end of May a new, and to me a most disconcerting development took place. On May 19 Mr. Griffith had told the Republicans in the Dail that in their violent courses they did not represent 2 per cent of the people of Ireland, and that 'the course they were pursuing placed them on the level of the worst traitors in Ireland, namely, those who by their actions were rendering the return of the English troops inevitable'. The very next day, to the astonishment of all, to the dismay of their friends, and the joy of every enemy, a compact was signed between de Valera and Michael Collins. The compact dealt with the approaching election. It comprised an agreement that the Republican anti-Treaty men (who Mr. Griffith declared the day before did not represent 2 per cent of the Irish people) were to have 57 seats in the new Parliament as against 64 for the supporters of the Treaty. They were not to be opposed by

the Provisional Government to the extent of 57 seats. In other words, the existing balance on the question of accepting or rejecting the Treaty was to be preserved in the new Parliament... Secondly, this compact prescribed that after this so-called election a Coalition Government should be formed consisting of five pro-Treaty Ministers and four anti-Treaty Ministers... On this basis, the two Sinn Fein parties, pro- and anti-Treaty, were to divide the representation and challenge the candidates of every other opinion.

‘I had received news a few days before of what was in the wind and I wrote immediately to Michael Collins...

May 15, 1922

...It would not be an election in any sense of the word, but simply a farce, were a handful of men who possess lethal weapons deliberately to dispose of the political rights of the electors by a deal across the table... It would be an outrage upon democracy. Your Government would soon find itself regarded as a tyrannical junta which having got into office by violence was seeking to maintain itself by a denial of constitutional rights. The enemies of Ireland have been accustomed to say that the Irish people did not care about representative Government, that it was alien to their instincts, and that if they had an opportunity they would return to a despotism or oligarchy in one form or another. If you were to allow yourself to be misled into such an arrangement..., such action would be immediately proclaimed as justifying to the full this sinister prediction. As far as we are concerned in this country, we should certainly not be able to regard any such arrangement as a basis on which we could build...’

‘So we were not, it seemed, to get any foundation after all...

‘We were, however, on this issue in possession of the ensigns of Democracy. Until you get a certain distance down the slope these count for much. We invited the Free State leaders over to London. They came immediately; Griffith plainly in resolute dissent from what had been done; Collins half defiant, half obviously embarrassed. It was all right, he said; we did not know their difficulties... Nothing was stable under their feet. A contested election was physically impossible. It would mean widespread civil war; no one would dare to vote; they had not the strength to keep even a semblance of order. Nevertheless Collins declared himself unchanged in general intention to stand by the Treaty. It looked as if the wounds of Ireland would not react to any treatment known to be science, but would just slough away into mortification.

‘These events produced their immediate reaction in the north. Protestant Ulster was convinced that Southern Ireland would now sink into chaos, and to wall themselves off from this infection was the only thought. Incessant demands were made for troops and arms. Sir James Craig made an uncompromising statement about the boundary.

‘Mr. Churchill to Sir James Craig

May 24, 1922

Londonderry will tell you the results of his discussions with the War Office and the arrangements we have made for the supply of this great mass of material to you. I must say at once, however, that I do not consider your declaration made without any reference to the Government that in no circumstances would you accept any rectification of the frontier or any Boundary Commission as provided for in the Treaty is compatible with requests for enormous financial aid and heavy issues of arms. While I was actually engaged in procuring the assent of my

colleagues to your requests, you were making a declaration which was in effect in one passage little short of a defiance of the Imperial Government whose aid you seek. Several of my colleagues have communicated with me this morning in a strong protest against a statement of this kind being made by you when you were asking for and receiving our assistance and especially at so critical a moment in Irish affairs. All I was able to reply was that de Valera and Collins had made statements in the Dail yesterday of an equally unsatisfactory character... A very strong effort will undoubtedly be made in favour of a policy of Britain disinterested herself in Irish affairs, leaving them ‘to stew in their own juices and fight it out amongst themselves’. Such a disastrous conclusion is rendered more difficult to combat by a statement of the kind you have made.

I know you will not mind my speaking quite plainly, because I am doing my best to support you in all that is legitimate and legal. We could not have complained, for instance, if you had said that the Collins-deValera agreement rendered all co-operation between you and the South impossible. I should have regretted such a statement, but it was entirely one within your rights to make. But it is not within your rights to state that you will not submit to the Treaty which the British Government has signed in any circumstances, and at the same time ask the British Government to bear the overwhelming burden of the whole of your defensive expenses. I should have thought it would have been quite possible for you to have made a thoroughly satisfactory declaration to your own people in these critical times without taking ground which seems to show you just as ready as Collins or de Valera to defy the Imperial Parliament if they take a course you do not like’...

‘While not by any means giving up hope, I thought it right to prepare Parliament for a slattern development, and on the motion for the Whitsuntide adjournment I laid the whole story before the Commons, repeating the most valid of the explanations which Mr. Collins had offered.

‘The Provisional Government could not possibly guarantee the ordinary security of life and property if these securities were challenged by an active, ardent, violent Republican minority. This Republican minority, it is explained, consists mainly of a comparatively small number of armed men, violent in method, fanatical in temper, but in many cases disinterested or impersonal in motive. But behind these, strengthening these, multiplying these, disgracing these, are a larger number of common, sordid ruffians and brigands, robbing, murdering, pillaging, for their personal gain or for private revenge, or creating disorder out of pure love for the disorder and confusion. These bandits—for they are nothing else—pursue their devastating course under the so-called glamour of the Republic and are inextricably mingled with bona-fide Republican visionaries.

‘The Provisional Government... declared that the Agreement into which they have entered with the Republicans would isolate the brigands and would enable these brigands to be struck at and suppressed, that a greater measure of liberty and security would immediately be restored, and that such conditions are an indispensable preliminary to any free expression of the political will of the Irish people... They say, further, that it is in the power of the extreme minority in Ireland, by murdering British soldiers, or ex-soldiers, or Royal Irish Constabulary men who have retired..., or Protestants in the South, or by disturbing Ulster, to produce a series of episodes which, if prolonged and multiplied would in fact destroy the relationship between Great Britain and Ireland and render the carrying through of the Treaty impossible on both sides.’

“I urged the House not to underrate this argument. I added this warning:

‘Irish Prosperity has been seriously affected. Banking and business are curtailed; industry and agriculture are languishing..., the inexorable shadow of famine is already cast on some of its poorer districts. Will the lesson be learned in time...? Or will Ireland, amid the strong indifference of the world—for that is what it would be—have to wander down those chasms which have already engulfed the great Russian people? This is the question which the next few months will answer.’

“I strove against a silent tide of scepticism,

‘I do not believe that the members of the Provisional Government are acting in bad faith. I do not believe, as has been repeatedly suggested, that they are working hand in glove with their Republican opponents with the intent by an act of treachery to betray British confidence and Ireland’s good name. I am sure they are not doing that. They may not have taken the wisest course, or the strongest course, or the shortest course, but they, and a majority of DailEireann who steadfastly support them and support the Treaty are, I sincerely believe, animated by an earnest desire and resolve to carry out the Treaty...

‘If we are wrong, if we are deceived, the essential strength of the Imperial position will be in no wise diminished, while the honour and reputation of Ireland will be fatally aspersed. Whether you trust or whether you mistrust at this moment, equally you can afford to wait...’

“On this very day, however, a new incident which I duly reported to the House had occurred. The townships of Pettigo and Belleek had been seized and occupied by Irish Republican forces. Pettigo lay astride and Belleek was wholly within Northern Ireland territory. This military affront brought into play the other side of the dual policy I was endeavouring to apply. It gave me the opportunity of reassuring Ulster that we were not merely sliding with apologies down the slope, but that whatever else went to wreck, the integrity of their territory would be protected...

“Immediately after the debate, Michael Collins, who had listened to it, came to my room. I mentioned to him amicably that if any part of the Irish Republican Army, either pro-Treaty or anti-Treaty, invaded Northern soil, we would throw them out. He took it quite coolly, and seemed much more interested in the debate. ‘I am glad to have seen it’, he said, ‘and how it is all done over here. I do not quarrel with your speech; we have got to make good or go under... Before he left he said, ‘I shall not last long, my life is forfeit, but I shall do my best. After I am gone it will be easier for others. You will find they will be able to do more than I can do’. I repeated the phrase of President Brand which I had learned in the days of the Transvaal Constitution Bill, ‘Alles zal regt kom’ (All will come right). I never saw him again.

“Here I will record a few thoughts about this man, Michael Collins. He was an Irish patriot, true and fearless. His narrow upbringing... had filled him with hatred of England. His hands had touched directly the springs of terrible deeds. We had hunted him for his life... But now he had no hatred of England... He had come in contact during the Treaty negotiations with men he liked; with men who played the game according to the agreed rules; he had plighted a new faith to act fairly by them. As Griffith seemed to rely especially upon Austen Chamberlain, so Michael Collins was deeply impressed by the personality of Lord Birkenhead. The transition of his sympathies can be

followed in gradations through his speeches by anyone who cares to study them. Whereas he had had only one loyalty, he now had two. He was faithful to both; he died for both. When in future times the Irish Free State is not only the home of culture and of virtue, not only prosperous and happy, but an active, powerful, and annealing force in the British Commonwealth of Nations, regard will be paid by widening circles to his life and to his death...”

The Boer Example

Britain had waged a naked war of conquest on the Dutch Republics in Southern Africa (the Boers). It ground them down by means of Concentration Camps into which large swathes of the general population were swept. It was reckoned that there were 26,000 excess deaths in the Camps in a couple of years. The conquered territory was criss-crossed by a chain of military blockhouses and the country was pacified. Within a few years the defeated and humiliated Dutch Republicans were remade into enthusiastic militarists of the British Empire.

Britain was especially proud of its South African conquest. It had defeated a people of first-rate, white, European stock—its own racial cousins. For too long its wars had been fought against people of inferior stock—Fuzzy Wuzzies. It had been necessary to do that so that it could fulfil its destiny of imposing Christian order on the world—of showing the nations how they should live, as Cromwell’s Secretary of State, the poet Milton, had put it—but there was no glory in it. There was glory as well as virtue in subjugating a people of first-rate European stock, bringing them to a realisation that the English were the master race, and moulding them into agents of English destiny.

And now they were doing it again. They were repeating with Griffith and Collins what they had done with Smuts and Botha—not that the Irish were racially on a par with the Boers, of course! But they were the problem that came to hand just then, and they were being handled competently, with the Imperialised Boers, who were now statesmen of the Empire, standing as an example to them of the glorious future that was open to them, and being ready to help them to realise it.

There seems to be little doubt that Collins was greatly impressed by F.E. Smith, Lord Birkenhead, during the London negotiations—even though Birkenhead was the notorious Galloper Smith of the fierce ‘Ulster’ resistance to the Home Rule Bill of 1912-14. Collins had marginalised three of the five members of the “*Plenipotentiary*” group appointed by the Dail Government in order to engage in intimate discussions, along with Griffith, with Birkenhead and Austen Chamberlain. And he and Griffith, in the presence of the great men of the Empire, seemed to forget all that they had ever said about how the Empire operated.

This was true of Griffith in particular. He had seemed to understand very well how little was the part played by personal trust in relations between states, especially where the British State was concerned, but now they relied heavily on personal understandings which they understood they had been given by agents of the British Empire who had just played an active part in winning the greatest War the world had ever seen.

Constitutionalism

This gullibility probably had much to do with the fact that they did not in their bones feel themselves to be agents of State, appointed by its own Government to engage in negotiations with the agents of a rival state. This was certainly the case with Collins.

He was in the first place a member of the conspiracy of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and had become head of its

Supreme Council. The IRB considered itself to be the Irish Republic. After the failure of its attempted revolution in 1867, it operated behind the scenes, entering spontaneous movements (movements that arose independently of it), to stiffen them and guide them. The Dail development was in its eyes just another such movement.

The 1916 Insurrection was brought about by collaboration between IRB and non-IRB elements. The section which inflicted the most casualties on the British Army was commanded by De Valera, who was not a member of the IRB conspiracy. He became a purely nominal member so that as a Volunteer he could take part in the planning, but otherwise made a point of keeping his distance. And it so happened that De Valera, because of his American origin, was the only 1916 Commandant who survived the Insurrection. Then, by virtue of his role in 1916, he held a singular position in the independence movement after 1916.

He was strongly Constitutionalist in outlook. This does not mean that he was in any way Redmondite. There is no inherent contradiction between Constitutionalism and military action. The reason why Redmondite Constitutionalism was rotten was that its leaders swore allegiance to the Crown, sat in the Westminster Parliament while being committed by Party rules not to take part in the proper Constitutional business of governing the state to which they swore allegiance, but supported military action by that state against another state and recruited Irish nationalists into it, while condemning the use of “*political violence*” in the Irish interest.

That is why it was wiped out, all but a handful, in the General Election of 1918. The handful of Home Rule MPs that survived then refused to attend the Parliamentary assembly elected in Ireland, Dail Eireann. They went back to Westminster and took the Oath of Allegiance to the Crown again.

Sinn Fein won the election in Ireland, and then it did what it told the electorate that it would do. It called an Irish Parliament and that Parliament appointed a Government, and the Government set about constructing an apparatus of state.

The British Parliament took no Constitutional notice of the Irish election result. It authorised its Government to keep on governing Ireland. The Irish Parliament, the Dail, was declared an illegal assembly.

The Whitehall assumption was that the Irish, influenced by the excitement of the time—the election being held within a few weeks of the ending of the World War—had been carried away by their imaginations, and that, helped by a bit of harsh treatment, they would soon return to their senses. But the effect of a year of harsh treatment was that the Local Elections of 1920 confirmed the Sinn Fein victory in the General Election, and local Councils detached themselves from the British Government Department in Dublin Castle and declared practical allegiance to the Dail.

There was no semblance of an Irish State in 1918.

The Home Rule Party, which had dominated electoral affairs in Ireland since the 1880s had, in tight alliance with the Liberal Party, gained a *Home Rule Bill* in 1912, along with the means of carrying it through the House of Lords. The device by which the Bill could succeed against the opposition of the Lords involved carrying it through the Commons three times: in 1912, 1913, and 1914. It passed through the Commons for the third time in May 1914. The problem then was how to implement it as an all-Ireland institution against the forces of resistance that had been built up in the British colonial society in Ulster.

While this problem was being considered, an opportunity arose to put into effect the preparations that had been made for war on Germany during the preceding ten years.

At the end of July British civil war over Irish Home Rule seemed to be inescapable. A means of escape was found by declaring war on Germany on August 4th. During the intense British conflict over Home Rule, the Home Rule Party became a virtual part of the British Liberal Party, having enabled it to carry a Budget against the Unionist Opposition—which was equal in size to the Liberal Government. The Liberal Party was in government only because the Home Rule Party supported it from the back benches, in return for a Liberal undertaking to implement Home Rule.

When the Liberal Government declared war on Germany, Home Rule journalists were the most effective war propagandists at the outset, helping to bring the Liberal back-benches into line for the War as a kind of Moral Crusade.

The Home Rule Bill was signed into the Statute Book as an Act, accompanied by another Act which suspended its operation until the end of the War and assured the Unionists that, even then, it would be up for amendment before being implemented.

Redmond became the Home Rule Minister in waiting in September 1914. Home Rule became a legislative fact, and Redmond was its Prime Minister. But there was absolutely nothing on the ground in Ireland corresponding to the legislative fact that it had Home Rule. And Redmond’s main business on becoming Prime Minister-in-waiting was to become a recruiter of Irish cannon fodder for the British Army.

Prior to August 1914, Redmond got a Home Rule Bill in return for making the Liberal Party the Government and enabling it to pass highly-contentious legislation. After August 1914 he got absolutely nothing in exchange for becoming a Liberal recruiting agent and propagandist for the War.

In March 1915 a General Election was due. The Unionist Party, the Opposition, agreed to postpone the Election for the duration of the War on condition that the Liberal Party formed a Coalition Government with it. The Liberals agreed. Redmond’s usefulness to them was finished.

Protest And Reform

Professor Tom Garvin, one of the pioneers of revisionist history, said that the Home Rule Party laid the foundations for democracy in Ireland by getting the people accustomed to taking part in elections. But Democracy is a form of government. And government is not Protest. And Home Rule electioneering was a form of protest.

Home Rule MPs were elected under a Party rule that they must not take part in the governing of the state to whose Parliament they were elected and to whose King they swore allegiance.

One major reform was carried out by a Home Rule group, acting in responsible collaboration with a British Government. That was the Land Reform of 1903. In that reform William O’Brien acted first as a seditious agitator against the established land system, which was widely felt as a grievance, and he was imprisoned by the Unionist Chief Secretary. A little over a decade later, his agitation having helped to devalue the established order, he collaborated with a Unionist Government

headed by the same man (Balfour) to enact a reform which removed that grievance.

The reform was opposed by the Home Rule leadership, which saw the grievance as a valuable asset in its protest politics.

In 1910 that William O'Brien group broke the Redmondite Party in Co. Cork. In 1918-19 it took part in the making of the new Sinn Fein Party.

Redmond's Home Rule Party was a tightly-organised protest party. Under strict discipline it won election after election, but had nothing to do with its victory except protest some more, while taking up jobs in the British administration. The effect on its personnel was degrading and it bred cynicism in public opinion.

The Will To Govern

Sinn Fein, as put together after 1916, was a party with a will to govern. When it won the election it called a Parliament which appointed a Government, which set about establishing a State administration around the country to displace the British administration.

The most difficult State institution to establish was the Army. The country was under comprehensive occupation by a British Army and police force. The police force was armed, and it was not a County Constabulary as the police were in Britain. It was drawn from the native population, but had been developed as a caste detached from the populace, without local loyalties, directed centrally by the British Department of State in Dublin Castle, and it remained largely immune to the strong national development that had taken root in the populace.

A further consideration was that a large number of young men of the kind most likely to be active in the formation of an Irish Army had been diverted by Redmond into the British Army after September 1914 and had sworn allegiance to the Crown.

The Irish army which acted in defence of the Irish Government in 1920-21 was the work of politically-motivated individuals well known in their localities. And it was done most effectively in the region where the 1903 Land Reform had been implemented most thoroughly, where the complaint about the colonial landlord stratum had been removed through constitutional action, and where the Home Rule Party had been undermined before 1916, or 1914, or 1912.

In this region purposeful agitation had laid the basis for purposeful collaboration with the British Government to bring about the abolition of the landlord system by British Constitutional means. The Home Rule Party did not even put up candidates in most of the Munster constituency in 1918. And it was in this region that an Army was constructed in support of the new Irish Constitution in 1919-20. And it was here that the main battles were fought.

The Government did not form the Army. It could hardly have done so under the circumstances. But it assumed responsibility for the actions of the Army.

The Army had formed itself by local action. If it had not done so, the British occupation would not have been challenged effectively. The relationship between the elected Government and the Army that defended it was therefore not one of regular hierarchical subordination and an attempt to treat it as such could only lead to trouble—and did lead to trouble.

But the relationship of the Government and its Army is something special, even in the most secure and best-regulated of states. In the Spring of 1914 the British Army in Ireland did

something that in Irish propaganda is often called *Mutiny*. The officer corps based at the Curragh indicated that it would not take part in enforcing a Home Rule Act in Ulster. If ordered to do so, they would resign their commissions. The Government gave an undertaking that it would not try to enforce Home Rule on Ulster. The Secretary of State who gave the Curragh officers this assurance—the War Minister Seely—endangered the relationship with the Home Rule Party on which the Liberal Party depended to remain in Office.

Redmond's *No Surrender* stance against the Ulster Unionists depended on the power of the British Army to reduce Ulster to compliance with a Home Rule Act. The matter was dealt with by the War Minister resigning, because he had acted supposedly without authority in giving the assurance he gave to the Curragh officers. But the assurance he gave to the officers was not revoked by his replacement. In fact, he was not replaced. The War Office was nominally taken on by the Prime Minister. There was no War Minister right up to the time War was declared on Germany in August.

The officers at the Curragh were central to the detailed war-planning with France, that was carried on by the Government and which was known only to the inner circle of the Government. The rest of the Cabinet, and the Liberal Party—even the Parliamentary Party—were unaware of it. The appointment of a new War Minister was too delicate a matter to be rushed into. So a deal was made by the Government with the Curragh officers by a Minister who resigned because he had acted unofficially, and he was not replaced, and the deal he struck held good.

Idealists of Law and Order cried "*treason*" and "*mutiny*". But the Tory Opposition in Parliament defended the Curragh officers on high Constitutional grounds. It was equal in size to the governing Party in Parliament. The Liberal Party was in government only in virtue of the support of the Irish Home Rule Party, which was a party that refused to take part in the Constitutional business of governing the state, and wished to break it up.

The only judge in this matter was the electorate; and the Opposition case made sense increasingly to the electorate as conflict over the Home Rule Bill progressed from 1912 to the Summer of 1914. The Parliamentary supporters of the 'Curragh Mutiny' entered the Government in Coalition with the Liberals a year later, and the Liberal Party split a year after that!

One of the 18th century political poets summed up the situation:

"Treason never prospers!
What's the reason?
If it prospers
None dare call it treason."

In fact, if it succeeds, then it isn't treason. There's no rule in politics that is more basic and more true than that.

Law And The Legislature

A British biographer of Collins comments as follows on the Collins/De Valera Electoral Agreement of 1921:

"This pact was justified only by expediency and the rapidly worsening situation; but it was quite illegal, a carve up that ignored the wishes of the smaller parties, such as the Farmers' Party, Labour and the Southern Unionists..."

“Hugh Kennedy, the chief Law Officer of the Provisional Government, was aghast at its illegality...” (p217-8, Dr. James Mackay, *Michael Collins: A Life*. 1997).

Under what Law was it illegal?

British law had ceased to function in Ireland. The system of Irish law being established in practice under the Republic had not been codified and, as far as I know, it had nothing to say in a matter like this.

The Provisional Parliament had been called to meet British requirements for authorising the establishment of a Provisional Government, and the only members of it that counted had then returned to the Dail. And the Dail approved the Collins/De Valera Pact.

Did Churchill mention law when condemning the Pact? Not that I know of. He knew very well that, in the Irish situation in the first half of 1922, everything was politics.

If we must discuss law, we should begin with Collins’s action in signing the ‘Treaty’ in direct violation of his Government’s instructions. His instructions were clear. He was delegated by the Dail to take part in negotiating terms for a settlement with the British Government, but instructed not to sign any document until it had been brought to the Dail Government for approval.

The delegates were called *Plenipotentiaries* because the British Government did not recognise the Irish Government. He was a *Delegate Plenipotentiary*, which is a contradiction in terms. He never informed the Dail Government that he had cast off his delegate status and would in future act as Plenipotentiary in earnest.

It was later alleged that De Valera had insisted that Collins should be part of the negotiating team (which he would have preferred not to be) in order to compromise him and reduce his influence, and enhance De Valera’s own reputation.

But there is an obvious reason of statecraft, having nothing to do with personal rivalries, why it was necessary that Collins should be part of the negotiations.

He was by reputation the ‘extremist’ of the situation. He had rejected the suggestion of a Dominion settlement on the grounds that the effort needed to get a Dominion would get a Republic. And, when De Valera in the United States said that, if Britain’s main concern was about the possibility of a military threat to its security from an independent Ireland, that concern could be met by making an arrangement such as the US had with Cuba (i.e., the base in Guantanamo Bay), Collins had dissented strongly from this suggestion.

Dev was not the only one who thought some kind of compromise with Britain was inevitable. It made good sense, in the interest of maintaining unity, that a popular ‘extremist’ should be centrally involved in the making of that compromise—or else in showing that it was not necessary.

What was not expected was that the extremist should disregard his Government, take matters into his own hands, sign off on a compromise in London, oblige the three delegates who had been excluded from the intimate discussions with Birkenhead and Chamberlain to sign off on it too, and have the ‘Treaty’ announced to the world through the British Press—leaving the Irish Government to learn about it in the papers.

There were suggestions that the delegates should be arrested for treason on their return. A legal case could have been made for that on the ground of the Irish constitution—the Dail system which had appointed and instructed them.

At the meeting of the Irish Government, held two days before he signed the Treaty, Griffith argued strongly that they had got as much from the British as they were going to get, but he accepted the instruction to go back and try to get some more. Collins apparently said effectively nothing at that meeting. It seems that he had made up his mind about what he would do and did not see it as serving his purpose to tell his Government.

If he had told the Government that he would negotiate no further because there was nothing more to be gained, what would have happened?

The agreed procedure was that, when the negotiators concluded that there was no more to be got, De Valera would go to London as President for a final confrontation with Lloyd George over war and peace, putting it to him that, if the British decided on war, it would be on the slender distinction between the Irish description of the capacity in which they would recognise the King and the description being insisted on by the British.

For this to be done, the Irish Government would have to come to an agreement. Collins aborted that process. He relieved the Government of the painful business of agreeing on either a compromise settlement or ending the negotiations and daring the British to make war.

The Problem Of British War-Making In 1922

If the British decided on war, the situation facing them would have been very different from the 1919 situation. The War began in 1919 as police action and built up gradually as policing was met with a purposeful counter-force until the British Army had to acknowledge that it was in conflict with another Army. In June 1921 a Truce was arranged between the two Armies and negotiations began between the British Government and the Irish “*murder gang*”. The ‘murder gang’ took on the *de facto* character of a Government, whether officially recognised or not.

A resumption of hostilities by the British after months of negotiations would have been seen clearly to be an act of war. And the issue on which the British Government declared war would have been a fine distinction between two ways of describing the role of the British King with regard to the Irish state—because Britain became resigned to the fact that Ireland had constructed itself as a State. The 4th Home Rule Act—the 1920 *Government of Ireland Act*, with its Parliaments of Southern Ireland and Northern Ireland—was passed in the knowledge that it would not be implemented. Its practical purpose was to enact Partition under a semblance of establishing all-Ireland Home Rule in order to conciliate American opinion.

Statehood Conceded In Principle

With ‘Ulster’ out of the way, and ‘Southern Ireland’ being a dead duck, Whitehall began to feel its way towards reducing the Dail Republic—whose existence it never acknowledged officially—to a Dominion. And a Dominion in 1921 meant a State.

Northern Ireland was not a State, and it was not intended that it should evolve into a State. When the Ulster Unionist leader responded to the Treaty by suggesting that Northern Ireland should be given status equal to Southern Ireland as a Dominion, Lloyd George dismissed the idea. It seemed to me that it had been suggested only as a warning to Whitehall that Protestant

Ulster had a will of its own and would not put up with being bargained away to the South.

The Treaty broke the 1920 Act, which imposed separate Home Rule on Ulster, which Ulster did not want, along with Home Rule for the South, and with a connecting Council of Ireland, by constituting the Parliament of Southern Ireland—which had never met—into the legislature of a state. The North remained a region of the British state, as Collins found out to his cost when he made war on it in May 1922.

Professor Garvin Psychologises

Professor Garvin asks, “*Why was a civil war necessary to preserve the infant state?*” He gives this smart reply:

“The answer seems to lie in the collective experience of a generation of young men who came of highly authoritarian personal backgrounds, who were politically inexperienced, who had exaggerated personal expectations, and... countered authoritarianism with hostility to authority. They had also tasted power as local level IRA commanders, and liked it...

“...The Civil War was deeply unpopular with the majority of the population and was, in a sense, an anomalous event. It involved only elites and their immediate followers, the new political class. The split did not truly involve the general population, unlike that of 1891, which had destroyed Parnell. This was so because the Catholic Church, while siding with the pro-Treatyites, kept its lines out in many different ways to the anti-Treatyites, and made peace with them subsequently; crucially, de Valera was a pious Catholic, whereas... Parnell had been a Protestant guilty of a public sexual misdemeanour... For the dead Parnell there was to be no forgiveness; for the long-lived de Valera there was to be not only forgiveness but an apparently unconditional popular pardon for his mistakes of 1921-25... Ireland was ready for democracy, but some of its elites and activists were not quite so ready...” (p25/6, 1922).

The Parnell comparison is off the mark, and essential bits are omitted from this account. It was Parnell himself who split the Party by refusing to stand down from the Parliamentary leadership to let the sexual scandal blow over. It was not the Irish Catholics but the fundamentalist English Protestants, who were the heart and conscience of the Liberal Party, who made a Confidence issue of the sexual misdemeanour. The Party split when Parnell treated the Party as his personal property and demanded that it should break the alliance with the Liberals, on which he himself had made it dependent, and who ran his own candidates against Party candidates at elections.

These omissions tell us what jumps out to Professor Garvin’s eyes in situations and what remains invisible to him.

And De Valera, the pious Catholic, was the leader of the excommunicated republicans.

An even smarter explanation follows:

“The oath was... to be the rock the movement split on. The symbols of monarchy in its Treaty, there to comfort English opinion and to deceive it as to the status quo of the new polity, actually succeeded in deceiving much of Sinn Fein and the IRA, who saw, or claimed they saw, a puppet state being erected on Irish soil...” (p52).

Symbolic Monarch Or Actual Prime Minister

I can recall no trace of general anti-monarchy sentiment in the Republican culture in which I grew up. That culture

was thoroughly Jacobite in its songs, stories, music and card-games. We lived to a considerable extent in the culture of the Stuart monarchy a couple of centuries after that monarchy had been crushed and anathematised by the militarism and religious fanaticism of the penal civil society of the Hanoverian monarchy.

It was well understood that the actual Monarch of the Treaty was the English Prime Minister. And I’m sure that had been understood twenty years earlier. (I seem to recall that it was actually spelled out in the Dail *Treaty Debates*.)

Monarchy as symbols was for the unpolitical English masses. In political affairs the Crown Prerogative was exercised by the Prime Minister.

When the Irish state declared itself neutral in the British war on Germany in 1939, Churchill said that under the Treaty it did not have the Constitutional right to be neutral when its King was at war. Six years later he said as Prime Minister that, if he had occupied the Free State in 1940, he would have been within his rights in doing it. If he had done it, Parliament would have supported him, as it supported him in invading Iraq and Iran, and he would therefore have acted Constitutionally.

What was at issue in British insistence on the Oath was not mere symbolism. Whitehall was determined that the Irish state it recognised should be what was called a *Successor State* to the British state in Ireland, accepting responsibility for all that Britain had done in the attempt to prevent its formation.

It would have been a very serious setback for Britain if it had had to recognise an Irish state that had founded itself against it as an independent state, able to indict it for all the destruction it had wrought in Ireland.

It was in its interest to ensure that the Irish force that had brought it to the negotiating table did not survive as the ruling force in the Irish state which it recognised. It was its purpose to break up that force. In the world of states, that was an entirely reasonable purpose.

The Joker In The Pack

De Valera, in the arrangements he made for negotiations with the British state, tried to ensure that the Irish national force that brought Britain to negotiation, would hold together in the face of the compromise that, however unjust from a moral point of view, would almost certainly have to be made with British demands.

This was done by the composition of the negotiating team—which had Griffith at one end (who had advocated a Dual Monarchy, in which the British King would act in a second capacity as King of Ireland, in which capacity he would be advised by the Irish Government, and under which Ireland would become a separate colonising force within the Empire, and Michael Collins, apparently a “*no compromise*” republican on the other—and the condition that the delegates were to sign nothing that had not been approved by the Government.

The essential thing was that the Government, in which the main strands of nationalist opinion were represented, should be compelled to come to an agreed decision, which would then be put to the Dail and to the Army, with the Government acting collectively as persuader.

There was nothing extraordinary, or difficult to understand, about this arrangement. It went awry because Collins, the staunch Republican, suddenly became the arch-compromiser.

He hustled the other delegates in London into signing the deal presented by the British Government without consulting Dublin.

His biographer, Dr. Mackay suggests that “*after that unseemly wrangling in the Dail two days earlier, Michael felt that there was little point in contacting Dublin at this juncture*” (p225).

So he presented the Government, the Dail, and the Army with a signed ‘Treaty’ through the medium of the British press. And he did so after consulting the IRB, which had never recognised the Dail as sovereign.

He had lost patience with wrangling in the Government, and had sat contributing nothing during its final session before going to London and signing the Treaty. But statesmanship in problematic situations always involves a great deal of wrangling.

There needed to be no wrangling in the IRB. It was not a Government but a conspiracy. It had seen many movements come and go, played a part in them, but never lost itself in them. It seems that it treated the Dail as just another such movement.

Commissioning The Army

There was another element in the situation. De Valera was regularising the position of the Army. It had come into being bit by bit through local initiatives. The Dail took responsibility for its actions, but it was a series of independent units. De Valera, after the Truce, set about a systematic commissioning of it as the Army of the elected Government.

Tim Pat Coogan, who was Editor of the *Fianna Fail* paper, the *Irish Press* around 1970, though himself a Treatyite and Collinsite, published a series of best-selling books about Collins, De Valera and “*The Troubles*”. Many people seem to have depended on those books in the revisionist era for information about the War of Independence, the Treaty and the Civil War.

Coogan presents the commissioning of the IRA as the Army of the Republic as a manoeuvre against Collins, intended to undermine his influence with the Army—or the influence of the IRB with the Army, which amounts to the same thing. And this was done after Collins had been sent to London to negotiate, make the necessary compromise, and be a scapegoat.

Coogan has done in depth research in certain directions, so I assume he found some evidence that this is how Collins himself saw things. But, if so, why did he rush to sign the Treaty, instead of referring it to the Government as instructed and letting De Valera be the one who signed the compromise?

It is said that, when signing the Treaty, he said he was signing his death warrant. So why did he sign it? Lloyd George’s advisers were surprised that the bluff about a train waiting to take a letter to Craig that evening, with war following immediately if it was missed, appeared to work. And Collins himself said repeatedly that he did not act under duress. So, why the hasty signing in response to the bluster of *immediate* war?

He may have seen the Dail Government as a mere façade and the IRB conspiracy as the real thing, and therefore he didn’t care that he was putting himself in the wrong with it? But, in that case, why the remark about the death warrant? He was the master of assassination, and was acting for the IRB. Did he already sense that the Army formed in the course of the War by its local commanders was out of reach of the IRB?

Anyhow, by his actions he disrupted both the Government and the Dail. He got a bare majority in the Dail for his

accomplished fact, and it was a divided Government that put the matter to the Dail, where a bare majority voted for the Treaty.

The Signing Of The Treaty Did Not Start The ‘Civil War’

But it was not the signing of the Treaty that started the Civil War. If Griffith, a mere Parliamentarian, had had his way, it possibly would have been. But Griffith without Collins was of little consequence in the situation they had brought about, and Collins would not authorise a conflict of Treaty versus Republic.

De Valera was ousted from the Presidency by Griffith and Collins got a standing Army in uniform and called it the National Army, though he knew that the Army of the War of Independence was substantially against him. But there was no war.

The Provisional Government appointed by the British Parliament of Southern Ireland functioned in the Dail, which was not purged of the Anti-Treaty members. The Dail acquired a party system of Government and Opposition, despite British demands for clarification by means of a Treaty Election.

After five months the Dail decided to hold an election, but not a Treaty Election. Collins made an agreement with the leader of the Opposition to combine forces in the election with the object of forming a Coalition Government.

Griffith was furious and he transformed “*Mick*” into “*Mr. Collins*”. And of course the British Government—itsself the product of a Coalition Election—was furious, and condemned it as a breach of democracy.

There was no more compulsion on the electorate to vote for this Sinn Fein Coalition than there had been on the British electorate in 1918 to vote for the Liberal/Tory War Coalition, but there was the same kind of incentive to vote for it. The British Coalition was made up of “*the men who had won the War*”, and the Sinn Fein Coalition was made up of the men who had compelled the British War Coalition to negotiate and make concessions to the “*Murder Gang*”.

In December 1921 Collins had broken the procedure agreed by De Valera’s Government. In June, when he himself was The Man, he broke the Coalition Pact he had made and began the Civil War. But he did not revoke it cleanly before the voters voted.

The Election of mid-June 1922 was not a Treaty election. It was the election of a Government. The Sinn Fein Coalition won it easily. The Dail was to meet again on July 1st, with new members elected in the 26 County by-elections taking their seats alongside the sitting 6 County TDs elected in 1921. At least that is how I read the fact that Griffith did not call either a Free State General Election, or a General Election of the Parliament of Southern Ireland.

(The Free State did not yet exist and the ‘Parliament of Southern Ireland’ was a profound embarrassment to the Treatyites, even though it was the source of their Provisional Government.)

If the Dail had met on July 1st and the provision of arrangements authorised by the Dail on May 20th had been adhered to, a Coalition Sinn Fein Government would have been set up. The Election Pact had not been dissolved. Collins had not revoked it. His speech in Cork city on the eve of the election only said that voters were free to vote for other parties than Sinn Fein. They were free to do so, regardless of Collins’s

statement of the obvious. And the fact that they did so made it all the more the election of a Government on non-Treaty terms, rather than a Treaty election.

Afterwards the votes for the Farmers' Party and the Labour Party were added to the votes got by the Treatyite candidates in the Election Pact, and were declared to be votes against the anti-Treatyites, but the conduct of the election campaign did not warrant that interpretation. On the whole both sides of Sinn Fein voted according to the terms of the Pact.

The Free State Constitution that Collins had drafted to reassure anti-Treaty Republicans that the Free State was taking a step on the way back to the Republic from the 1920 Government of Ireland Act, to which nominal obeisance had been given in order to get armaments from Britain and a degree of British military withdrawal, had been rejected by Whitehall. Whitehall gave Collins its Constitution for the Free State, as it had given him its Treaty to sign. He accepted it. But it was not published until the actual day of the Election.

If the Dail had met on July 1st, it would have had the dictated Constitution to deal with—to bow down to or to resist.

The September Dail

But the TDs elected in June did not meet until September 9th.

In the list of TDs at the start of the Official Report of that date, Laurence Ginnell (Longford and Westmeath) is entered with *Teachtainárthóg a suidheacháin* (TDs who did not take their seats). But he was there right at the start of the Session, and the first question to the Speaker was put by him. He had not signed in. He wanted to know what Assembly it was, so that he could know whether to sign in. If it was Dail Eireann, then he was elected to it and it would be his duty sign in: *Was it DailEireann?*

Mr. Ginnell: May I ask you whether you will reply to me please? I have not signed the roll, and I am willing to do so if this is a Parliament for the whole of Ireland; otherwise not.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Dail has been constituted and the Chairman elected, and Deputies who have signed the roll have the right to speak; Deputies who have not signed the roll have not the right to speak...

Mr. Ginnell: They don't want to speak.

An Ceann Comhairle: This summons is to the Dail for the whole of Ireland, and I am unable to solve these other problems.

Mr. Ginnell: Will any member of the six counties be allowed to sit in this Dail?

Acting President: It is my painful duty to move that this gentleman be excluded from the House. Only members who have signed the roll have the right to appear here.

Mr. Ginnell: I want to know — —

Acting President: Everyone recognises what his position is, and what his responsibility is, and what this Parliament is.

Mr. Ginnell: No. Is it Dail Eireann?

An Ceann Comhairle: You are not entitled to speak here since you have not signed the roll.

Mr. Ginnell: I have been elected to Dail Eireann. Are my constituents to be disfranchised by you, sir?

A Deputy: By yourself.

Mr. D. J. Gorey: I ask you to exercise your authority in the Chair. This is not a baby show.

...

Mr. Ginnell: Is this Dail Eireann or is it not? You began by shifty conduct. I am prepared to sign the roll if this is Dail Eireann.

An Ceann Comhairle: The motion is that the gentleman who has not signed the roll be and is hereby removed.

...

Mr. Ginnell: You have to begin your proceedings by expelling a member."

After some further exchanges Ginnell was put out, having failed to get an answer to his question whether that was the assembly to which he had been elected. What he had been elected to was Dail Eireann, which had called the election, under the terms of the Pact, to form a Coalition Government of Treatyites and Anti-Treatyites.

The refusal—the inability—of the Speaker to say what assembly he was the Speaker of should be sufficient proof that the June election was not a Treaty Election, in which the Provisional Government sought a mandate from the electorate to set up a 26 County state under the authority of the Crown and to recognise the legitimacy of Partition and of the subordinate British regime set up in the Six Counties.

In the list of TDs, seven of them are recorded as having died since they were elected—most of them in the Civil War.

31 are recorded as not having taken their seats.

The authority for those who assembled as the Legislative body and appointed a 26 County government and expelled those who would not sign in was obviously the authority of the military force that began the War with Collins' attack on the Four Courts with British artillery on 28th June 1922, and that in September was making progress in the conquest of the country.

On September 11th a Labour member expressed some unease about the way things had been done. Kevin O'Higgins, Minister for Home Affairs, and the strong man of the new regime, who was especially commended by Churchill, made this authoritative statement:

"The last Dail approved of a particular Treaty, knowing well that in doing so it was voicing the will of the people, that it spoke through the authentic voice of the people of Ireland. It is not quite in order to say that, because the people of Ireland were not confronted with a perfectly free choice, that it was not their will but their fear. That was an epigram raised by a Deputy at the last Dail. It was pointed out that the people of Ireland were confronted with a state of facts that they were powerless to alter. To say that we are not free to judge on that set of circumstances is unsound; to say that the people have no right to be wrong is merely a clever epigram. Mankind down through the ages has found no surer rudder or base than the free will of the community democratically expressed."

Conclusion Of An Introduction

The 'Civil War' came about as follows: The Election results were declared on June 24th. Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson—who had made the secret military preparations for the war on Germany, encouraged the Curragh Mutiny, and had become Military Adviser to the Northern Ireland Government—was assassinated in London on June 22nd. Whitehall informed the Provisional Government that it had information connecting the assassins with the Anti-Treaty Republicans holding the Four

Courts. It refused to make this information available to the Provisional Government on the grounds of security.

It asked General Macready, Commander of the British Army in Dublin, to make preparations for a capture of the Four Courts. Macready indicated that he knew of no evidence connecting Wilson's killers with either Four Courts Republicans or De Valera, and suggested that British military action would drive Treatyites back into alliance with the Republicans. The implication seemed to be that the source of the assassination was Collins. And Macready presumably knew that Collins had engaged with the Four Courts Republicans in acts of war in the North.

On June 25th Macready was informed that the British action was called off. But Churchill said that, if Collins did not act against the Four Courts, he would be regarded as being in breach of the Treaty and the process of installing the Free State would be stopped.

Macready was instructed to resume preparations for an assault.

On June 28th Collins launched an assault on the Four Courts with artillery borrowed from the British Army, apparently assuming he could deal with that isolated group separately. But the result was that he precipitated war with territorial commanders around the country, particularly in Munster. This was a war of territorial conquest.

Griffith died on August 12th. Collins was killed accidentally on August 22nd in a random ambush in West Cork, a strong enemy territory into which he had ventured in an apparently wild escapade. Events had got out of his control. It seemed that he had become a marginal figure in the Provisional Government he had formed.

It made him an idol when he was killed, and set about a ruthless conquest of the country by any means that were expedient, casting aside whatever ideals had been motivating Collins.

The Four Courts leaders, taken prisoner at the end of June, were held prisoner for five months. On December 8th the Government—now the Free State Government—took four of them from their cells and killed them as an act of terror 'to encourage the others'. Churchill praised the deed.

The Free State regime was constructed by O'Higgins and Cosgrave. Negotiation with Republicans was ruled out. Only surrender would do. Surrender was not achieved. Arms were dumped on 24th May 1923. De Valera gave his *Address to The Legion of the Rearguard* and, within a few weeks, launched the revival of the defeated military resistance as an effective political force.

The comparison of De Valera with de Gaulle — two leaders who held that the will of a beaten people is not the last word in a democracy — to which this article was intended to be a few preliminary paragraphs — must wait for another occasion.

Brendan Clifford

PS

This article was begun with the notion that it would consist of a few paragraphs about the Irish Election of 1922, to serve as a preliminary to a consideration of the decision of the elected French Parliament in June 1940 to submit to a set of circumstances which it did not have the power to alter. It got out of hand.

(Continued from p. 32)

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At 6 o'clock Sir James Craig accompanied by members of his Cabinet, visits Downing street, remains in consultation with the British Premier for an hour and leaves for Belfast at 7.45 p.m. In a statement to the Press Association, Sir James says he is returning home "well satisfied" and adds that the six-county area, having self-determined its form of government "it now merely remains for Mr. de Valera and the British people to come to terms regarding the area outside of that to which I am Prime Minister."

July 19th: The British Press regards Sir James Craig, containing as it does an insistence on the Partition of Ireland as a denial of self-determination to Ireland as a whole, as a serious blow to the negotiations.

July 20th: Full meeting of the British Cabinet is held. The Session lasts two and a half hours, and it is stated in the Press that the subject under consideration was a formal offer of settlement to Ireland.

July 21st: Fourth meeting between President de Valera and the British Premier takes place at 11.30 a.m. The official statement issued at 2.45 p.m. states:-

"Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. de Valera had a further conversation at 11.30 this morning, which lasted about an hour.

"A basis for a formal conference has not yet been found. Mr. de Valera has arranged to return to Ireland tomorrow, and to communicate with Mr. Lloyd George again, after further discussion with his colleagues."

July 22nd: President de Valera and his party leave London for Ireland.

E.N.D.

A Century of Greek Independence: Fact or Fiction?

By Pat Walsh

The question of Greek independence, won in 1821, arose again in conjunction with the British desire to engage neutral Greece in the Great War against Ottoman Turkey. On January 24, 1915, the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, formally requested that the Greeks enter Britain's Great War. Sir Edward Grey offered a vague promise of "*important territorial concessions in Asia Minor*" in return for Greek military assistance in the Balkans and against the Ottomans. Britain thus attempted to draw Greece into the Great War on irredentist grounds, as it did with Italy four months later.

Basil Thomson of the British intelligence services, and later Scotland Yard, later wrote a book called 'The Allied Secret Service in Greece'. In the early pages he described the political situation in Greece at the start of the European War:

"Greece was in a state of internal peace which has been rare in her history. In 1913 she had emerged victorious from two consecutive Balkan wars in which her King had led her so successfully in the field that her territory had been greatly enlarged. But her people were war-weary, and since the quarrel between Austria and Serbia seemed in no way to concern them, their feeling was for a neutrality benevolent toward England and France." (The Allied Secret Service in Greece, p. 37)

The Greek King Constantine politely refused Britain's offer and his government declared its intention to remain neutral in the war. But Britain was determined to enlist as many neutrals as possible in the Great War. So England attempted to circumvent the King and his people by making offers to the Greek Prime Minister, Venizélos, of territory in Anatolia. Through this policy Britain encouraged the opening up of a great internal division in Greece.

Right from the outbreak of the Great War the Greek Premier, Eleftherios Venizelos, argued for an unqualified and unconditional Greek entry into the War on the side of the *Entente*. Venizelos, who had been an insurrectionist in Crete, wanted to use the War to advance Greek interests against the Turks and he seems to have been made aware of the British plans to extend the conflict to the Ottoman Empire, even though it was neutral at this time (Churchill was forming a plan to involve the Greek Army in a naval attack on the Dardanelles at this moment and it seems to have been communicated to Venizelos). Venizelos believed that Greece would never again be presented with such an opportunity like the European War – the chance of fighting with so many powerful allies – to gain a "*Greater Greece*" in Asia Minor. He had as his ultimate dream the *Megali* idea – a large Greek Empire across the Balkans and Asia Minor and a new Byzantium.

King Constantine, however, under the Greek Constitution, had the final say on matters of war and peace and he attempted to defend his neutrality policy. Constantine, a trained military man, saw that a Greek adventure in Anatolia would be extremely unwise and, unlike his Prime Minister, he listened to military advice on deciding upon military matters. The Chief of the General Staff, General Metaxas, who had compiled a report on taking and holding Western Asia Minor during the Balkan Wars believed that such an enterprise would be beyond the Greek Army. The General concluded that the basis of a Greek colonial venture would be the *effete* commercial classes of Greeks and Armenians in the vicinity of the town of Smyrna,

who were surrounded by seven million Turkish peasants. The long term prospects of survival of such a colony were not good. So King Constantine, taking the advice of his Chief of Staff, informed the Entente that in line with his policy of "*benevolent neutrality*" he would not fight Turkey unless Greece itself was attacked.

As a result of his stand on neutrality King Constantine was denounced as an agent of the Kaiser by British propaganda, including in Greek newspapers owned in England. Because he was married to the Kaiser's sister Constantine was handily depicted as the Kaiser's man, although "Tino" had, in fact, resisted his brother-in-law's efforts to court him.

The *Entente* claimed they had the right to interfere in the internal affairs of Greece due to the Treaty of London (1863-4) between England, France and Russia on the one hand and Greece on the other. This recognised the independence of Greece – but now it was claimed that it also entitled the guarantors of that independence to interfere in it.

England had a long history of interference in the affairs of the Greeks and regarded this interference as a matter of routine by 1914. Arguing for further interference during 1916 Ronald Montague Burrows, Professor of Greek and Principal of King's College London, noted: "*As we created Greece at Navarino, so we recreated it in 1863, and the letter of the original guarantee must be construed in the spirit of the Treaty of 1863, and of the interference in the internal affairs of Greece which that Treaty crystallized.*" (*The New Europe*, 19th October, 1916. *The New Europe* was a weekly periodical which sought to develop ideas from various contributors amongst the Allied nations about the type of Europe they would construct after the defeat of the Central Powers. It was founded by R.W. Seton-Watson, a famous British academic.)

Professor Burrows was adviser on Greek affairs to the British Cabinet and simultaneously to Venizelos during 1915. *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* has this entry for him: "*He taught at the University of Manchester (1908-13) and was principal of King's College, London, from 1913 to 1920, the period when he devoted much time to modern Greek affairs. His plan for bringing Greece into World War I was adopted by the British Cabinet in 1915. A confidant and adviser to the Greek statesman Eleuthérios Venizélos, he was chosen to be the Greek provisional government's semi-official representative in London (1916).*"

Greece had been part of the Ottoman Empire until the Greek War of Independence in the 1820s. Britain (with Lord Byron) had intervened in this war on the Greeks' behalf in the decisive naval engagement, destroying the Turkish fleet at Navarino, and making a Greek victory possible. Greece was "Made in England" and as a consequence was England's to do with what it wished.

In 1832 the Greeks had wanted a Liberal Republican State but they had been straight jacketed by a monarchy complete with foreign King by the guarantors who, at that time, not long after the French Revolution, did not want to promote liberal democracies in Europe. So the Greek King, to a great extent, was the representative of the three great Powers of Europe,

because his position was derived from their power over Greece, and they were always inclined to believe he should be their instrument (or not be king at all).

Prof. Burrows referred to the fact that the Greek King Otho had been forced into accepting a Constitution by Britain and when he had refused to abide by it he had been deposed in 1862. In 1863 England put Prince William of Denmark (father of King Constantine) on the throne of Greece and defined the political status of the Greek State as “*a monarchical, independent and constitutional state*” in a Treaty with Denmark.

Interestingly, at the time of the Crimean War, Greece, under King Otho, was in favour of going to war with Turkey on the side of Russia. But France and England, who were in alliance with Turkey against Russia, would not allow it. King Otho was told that strict neutrality was the only policy consonant with the interests of Greece. The Allies landed troops at Athens to compel obedience to their will. The Greek sovereign was put on notice for daring to adopt an independent Greek policy.

The difference between 1855 and 1915 was that in the former time the English and French compelled the Greeks to be neutral whilst in the latter they attempted to compel the country to make war. In both cases Greece was taken to have no independent existence, or an independent existence only when it suited the Great Powers.

Professor Burrows, who regarded the Greek State as a creation of England, urged the British Government to keep up this tradition of interference, which, he argued, had been given formal status by international Treaty. The *Liberal Daily News* concurred with this view declaring in its leader of June 23rd 1916 that because England had freed the Greeks at Navarino, drafted their Constitution, and become the country’s guarantor, it was “*warranted in taking any measures for the protection of their ward.*” (a ward is a kind of young, immature figure who needs to be guided in the right direction by those, more responsible, who are charged with his protection).

Both Burrows and Compton Mackenzie (British Intelligence and famous novelist) were in favour of the British Government recalling the Ambassador, and declaring open support for Venizelos against King Constantine. The Prime Minister Asquith was for intervention in Greece if a popular movement existed that Britain could point to in order to justify intervention. Lloyd George was of the opinion that Venizelos needed British might to be applied in the general region in order that a popular movement against the King could be cultivated and to swing the Greek people behind him.

Sir Edward Grey, however, was paralysed by his reliance on the Tsar and his “*Russian Steamroller*” vital to the military encirclement of Germany. The French were pushing for direct military action to coerce Greece but Grey was mindful “*that to encourage a revolutionary movement against the King of Greece would be much resented by the Emperor of Russia and might in consequence have unfavourable influence on Franco-British relations with Russia.*” (September 1, 1916, Trevelyan, p.289)

This course, if Sir Edward Grey, the British Foreign Secretary, had been prepared to take it, would have logically resulted in a Venizelist *coup d’état* and probably a Greek civil war. But the cautious Edward Grey did not feel predisposed to risking such a course in 1915.

Instead a “*pacific blockade*” was imposed on the Greeks to make them change their mind on neutrality. *The Daily Telegraph* advised the British Government that what the Greeks needed to understand their position “*is strength, not too refined in character, and a downright masterfulness which is first cousin to brutality.*” Greece must be “*under no illusions as to her position, if she chooses to oppose our projects and must be*

fully aware that a blockade would be ruinous to her trade, to her shipping and above all to her corn supplies.” The Allies mean to have their way “*and will use all legitimate means to secure the objects at which they aim.*”

Sir Roger Casement, who had worked under Grey in the British Foreign Office, commented in the *Continental Times* of 13th December, 1915:

“Byron came to aid Greece in a war of independence; ‘the countrymen of Byron’ to-day are doing their utmost to plunge Greece into a war of unexampled peril and disaster to all her future. If Byron could say in his day ‘tis Greece but living Greece no more’, his fellow countrymen to-day are assuredly determined, that the strict fulfilment of the poet’s words shall come to pass a century later. Not content with occupying Greek territory and marching large forces through it in defiance of the protest of the Greek Government, these friends of Greece and of the small nationalities proceed to assail the very existence of the country they have lawlessly invaded and threaten it with everything short of open acts of war, if it will not ‘aid their projects’.”

Professor Burrows, Compton Mackenzie and Sir Edward Carson (famous lawyer, leader of the Unionists in Ireland and British Cabinet Minister) came together in London during October 1915 to try to organise a renewed effort to get Greece into the War. Mackenzie has an account of it in his book *Greek Memories*:

“Burrows... suggested that I should have an interview with Sir Edward Carson who had resigned from the Cabinet over the Salonica muddle in October 1915. Burrows told me that he was now inclined to interest himself in the Greek question... I no longer had any hesitation in putting the state of affairs in Greece before Sir Edward Carson. Burrows took me along to the Law Courts where we found Sir Edward Carson in a dark little room, his wig lying on a table beside him. His large swarthy face looked larger and swarthier for the dimness and dinginess of the surroundings. A sombre and impressive figure, he sat there nursing a knee and listening to my appreciation of Greek affairs.

‘Well,’ he said in the end, ‘I might overthrow the [British] Government over this if matters grow worse in Greece.’ He mentioned the number of members who were ready to vote with him when the time came. I am under the impression it was one hundred and fifty-three, the number of the miraculous draught of fishes. ‘But, Sir Edward,’ I went on, ‘the situation might develop rapidly at any moment... What is required is a positive assurance that the British Government will support Venizelos...’

‘Well,’ said Sir Edward Carson, ‘if you find the situation becoming graver you can communicate with me through Professor Burrows, and I shall probably decide to act.’...

Perhaps if the disastrous events of the First of December in Athens had happened a fortnight earlier Sir Edward Carson would have succeeded in overthrowing the Government without those tortuous negotiations which Lord Beaverbrook relates so vividly in the second volume in *Politicians and the War.*” (*Greek Memories*, pp. 315-7)

Mackenzie’s sentence about “*the disastrous events of the First of December*” was a reference to the Battle of Athens of December 1916 when a large force of French and British troops were landed there after the King had protested the positioning of 10 battalions of Allied Artillery on neutral Greek territory. When Greek soldiers drove them off, with over a hundred fatalities to the French and British, a state of official war was only just avoided.

To save the capital from being flattened by the guns of the Royal Navy King Constantine complied to the Allied four

demands, and a new Ministry under the leadership of M. Zaimis, and with *Ententists* included, was appointed to carry on the administration of the country until the election of a new Chamber. The chief of police was replaced to the Allied satisfaction and the Greek Army began to be demobilised. The demobilisation of the Greek Army had an immediate effect as irregular bands of Bulgarians invaded Cavalla. Instead of the Allies resisting this the King was condemned for being unwilling to defend his country with his demobilized army, with the suggestion that the Allied Army could do this for him.

In response to the Greek acquiescence to their demands the Allies lifted the blockade they had imposed on Greece but restricted the importing of foodstuffs into Athens - thereby keeping the people on slender rations, with the understanding that they were existing in freedom, only under Allied sufferance, and needed to choose a different option.

The General Election, which the *Entente* demanded by the guns of their battleships, was due to be held in September 1916 and this time the issue was clear. It would have given the Greek people an open choice between neutrality and war (discounting the threat levelled at them from the Royal Navy).

Perhaps it would have been like the 'Treaty' election of 1922 in Ireland with the Greeks bowing to the threat of force. But we will never know. Rather than contest the election Venizelos stole out of Athens with the help of the French Secret Service, to Crete, and became the head of a rival Greek Provisional government established by the Allies, in Salonika. In doing so he determined that he could only return to Athens with an Allied Army.

On November 19th 1916 the British announced a full blockade of Greece and demanded the withdrawal of Greek troops from Salonika, the handing over of road and rail networks in the area and supply bases in Greek territorial waters. The Royal Navy blockade of Greece was designed to force Greece into the War, or else bring about a regime change in the country that saw Venizelos in charge at Athens, so that he would bring the

Greeks into the War against Ottoman Turkey. But the blockade failed in its ultimate objective to get the people to abandon their King and force the Greeks into regime change.

So, in May 1917 the British and French decided on a three stage programme to ensure Greek entry into the War. It was agreed that the semblance of freedom of action should be left to the Greeks so that the Allies would not be seen to be involved in a direct military coup against King Constantine. The Allies decided to seize the wheat crop of Thessaly, upon which the entire Greek population depended for bread; and the Corinth Isthmus, cutting off the Greek Army from the capital and to deliver an ultimatum to Constantine demanding the immediate entry of Greece into the War. And it was decided that direct force would then be applied to the situation in Athens if Constantine refused to comply.

The King decided to save his people by sacrificing his throne on 11th June 1917. There were scenes of turmoil in Athens as large crowds tried to prevent the King's departure but Constantine was left with no alternative and he urged his people to remain calm and resolute in the face of the invasion forces. The Allies treaded carefully due to events in Russia. They would not allow a Republic. But they would not have Constantine's eldest son, Prince George, as replacement for his father either. So Prince Alexander, the young second son of Constantine, whom they believed to be more malleable, was given the throne. Venizelos entered Athens with the French Army and Greece formally joined the War on the Allied side.

That was the start of the modern Greek tragedy. For the following five years Greece was used as a catspaw to impose a punitive settlement on the Turks. It appears that although Greece had won its independence in 1821 this independence was conditional on the interests of the great powers that had assisted it, particularly Great Britain. Greek sovereignty was also something which was far from an established fact. Greece was, a century after independence, very much viewed as an instrument to be used in geopolitics and war.

The Truth behind the Myth of the 'Tiananmen Massacre'

by Dr. Dennis Etler

Although it has been well established that no "massacre" actually took place in Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989, the term is still widely used to refer to the violence that did occur in Beijing that fateful night. As is well documented the violence was instigated by agents provocateurs, mostly unemployed youth who were set adrift as China transitioned from the command economy of (Chairman) Mao Zedong era to the socialist market economy of the (Chairman) Deng Xiaoping era. Mobs of these disaffected young people were set loose, firebombing PLA vehicles, incinerating their occupants and torching whole convoys of army vehicles sent to secure order in the capital. There should be no doubt in any thinking person's mind that agents of the U.S. CIA and the Taiwan based Guomindang were involved in recruiting them. But what led to this insurrection that the West refuses to let go of?

After the Cultural Revolution, but before Deng's economic reforms kicked in, China was betwixt and between, without any ideological moorings. The old ways of doing things were discredited but new approaches to organizing the economy and society were not yet fully developed. Western liberal ideas of

"freedom" and "democracy" found support among a growing segment of students and intellectuals. Many others were fearful of losing the social and economic benefits, known as the "iron rice bowl" that they had become accustomed to when the state fully controlled China's economy. The times they were fast changing. The Soviet Union and the socialist bloc were imploding and China seemed to be the last Communist state standing. If China succumbed it was unlikely that the other surviving socialist states, North Korea, Vietnam and Cuba would last much longer. Thus, the U.S. was chaffing at the bit, hoping to push China over the precipice like what was happening in the USSR and Eastern Europe. They were looking for a Chinese Gorbachev, and they found him in former Chinese Premier and then current General Secretary of the Communist Party of China Zhao Ziyang. As will be seen the U.S. was well placed to foment what would later be called a "color revolution" in China. So, let's delve a bit deeper into the cast of characters behind the scenes of what would eventually be called the 'Tiananmen Square Massacre.'

James R. Lilley, top CIA Asia operative, was U.S. ambassador to China before, during and after the Tiananmen incident. George Soros, instigator of later "color revolutions" had a

China based NGO called the *Fund for the Reform and Opening of China* that supported the protests and General Secretary Zhao Ziyang - a neo-liberal in waiting who would later be called China's Gorbachev. Ambassador Lilley had a fascinating history, being born in China to a U.S. oil executive stationed there in the pre-WW2 years. He had a Chinese nanny and was thus a native speaker of Chinese. Returning to the United States before the U.S. entered WW2 he subsequently went to Phillips Exeter Academy prep school and Yale University. His fluency in Chinese and upbringing led him to the CIA where he became its top Asian operative. "As a CIA operative, Lilley worked in countries across Asia, including Laos, Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and China. In Laos, he worked to undermine the Communist insurgency, and he helped to insert a number of CIA agents into China. By 1975, Lilley was appointed to the position

days - to promote cultural and intellectual exchanges with Zhao's Institute for Economic Structural Reform. In 1988 the National Endowment for Democracy opened two offices in China, gave regular seminars on democracy, sponsored select Chinese writers and publications and recruited Chinese students studying in US. In February 1989, two months before the CIA launched its Tiananmen destabilization campaign, President Bush paid his first and only visit to China.

"When the student protests erupted in late April the NED mailed thousands of inflammatory letters from Washington to recipients in China and aroused public opinion through Voice of America (VOA) shortwave radio broadcasts, in Mandarin, across China on the days of the protests. In Nanjing, university students had boom-boxes turned high as the VOA described events in China. "Deng had CIA strategist Gene Sharp arrested



Zhao and Reagan

of national intelligence officer for China, which made him the highest-ranked expert on China in the American intelligence community. Early in the administration of Ronald Reagan, he was appointed to the National Security Council, where he served as the senior expert on east Asia. From 1981-1984, he served as Director of the American Institute in Taiwan, which serves as the unofficial diplomatic liaison to the government of the Republic of China.." So much for Lilley.

George Soros' anti-communist credentials are also well-documented and his sponsorship of neo-liberal causes, think tanks and NGOs well known and documented. "Soros is a well-known supporter of progressive-liberal political causes. He played a significant role in the peaceful transition from communism to capitalism in Hungary (1984-89) and provided one of Europe's largest higher education endowments to Central European University in Budapest. Soros is also the chairman of the Open Society Foundations." As documented by Godfree Roberts in '[Tiananmen Square, 1989 - Revisited](#)': "In 1986 Soros endowed his *Fund for the Reform and Opening of China* with one million dollars - a huge sum for China those

and expelled to British Hong Kong, whence he directed the insurrection, as he recounts in his memoir, *Non-Violent Struggle in China*. Another CIA operative, VOA's Beijing chief, Alan Pessin, provided encouragement, provocation, strategic guidance and tactical advice in round-the-clock broadcasts and students who were there still talk of the VOA's promised land of "freedom and democracy". [...] So much for Soros.

Zhao Ziyang, former Chinese Premier and General Secretary of the Communist Party of China at the time of the Tiananmen protests was China's Gorbachev. Zhao in his memoir stated that "China should adopt a free press, freedom to organize, an independent judiciary, and a multiparty parliamentary democracy." He also called for "the privatization of state-owned enterprises, the separation of the Party and the state, and general market economic reforms." Some of his economic program was implemented, but his complete economic and political package of reforms would have led to the formation of a multi-party social democracy to replace the unitary socialist state ruled by the CPC. So much for Zhao.

Thus it can be seen that Lilley, Soros and Zhao formed a perfect triumvirate both inside and outside the CPC that was extremely well-placed and well-versed in destabilizing and overthrowing established socialist states, by hook or by crook. To think that when the Soviet Union and other socialist states ruled by Communist parties were imploding the likes of Lilley, Soros and Zhao Ziyang were not actively conspiring to bring down the PRC and convert it into a vassal state of the U.S. is beyond the bounds of credulity. So what would have been the result if the CPC had not intervened and quelled the unrest and Zhao Ziyang and his supporters, both foreign and domestic, had been able to implement their “pro-democracy” agenda? According to David Shambaugh, a so-called “China expert,” China would be a better place if Zhao’s neo-liberal economic and political reforms had been enacted. To quote, “Had Zhao remained in power and been able to pursue this twin-reform strategy, it is an open question whether he and China would have wound up with the same fate as Gorbachev and the former Soviet Union, or whether this strategy would have worked in China, where it did not in the U.S.S.R.” But, as far as the U.S. and the West in general is concerned the strategy did work in the USSR. And, they would have done everything possible to have made sure it worked in China as well if Zhao had implemented his counter-revolutionary agenda. Luckily the “éminences grise” of the CPC were able to thwart the machinations of Zhao’s puppet-master George Soros of color revolution fame.

What would China be like today if Zhao Ziyang had retained power? It would be a compliant vassal of the U.S. in East Asia.

As Shambaugh et al. state, China would have a “much more open civil society and media (i.e. controlled by U.S. neo-liberal NGOs and corporate conglomerates); tolerated some dissent (i.e. anti-communist quislings); enfranchised the eight “democratic parties” (i.e. allowing them to be infiltrated by

foreign agents) and empowered the National People’s Congress and provincial people’s congresses (i.e. destroying China’s system of consensual democracy); established a Hong Kong-style professional civil service (i.e. allowing anti-communist sinecures to metastasize within the state apparatus); separated Party from state (i.e. ensuring the collapse of Party control and the establishment of an oligarchic “representational democracy”); made the military beholden to the state and constitution rather than a tool of the Communist Party (i.e. allowing for a military coup whenever the U.S. felt it necessary); more strictly controlled opportunities for corruption and strengthened the non-Party control mechanisms (i.e. by making corruption an integral part of the system as in the U.S. and other Western democracies); encouraged greater “inner Party” feedback mechanisms (i.e. encouraging factionalism); and (finally) proceeded with gradual direct government elections up to and including central-level officials (i.e. allowing politicians to be bought and sold to the highest foreign bidder). In other words a neo-liberal’s wet dream. China would have descended into the hell that overtook the Soviet Union and remained as underdeveloped as the world’s largest democracy, India.

Thus, if the Tiananmen protests had succeeded and the program of Lilley, Soros and Zhao had been fully implemented, the state led economic miracle of the last 30 years would have been still born and China would have been neutered as a potential rival of the U.S. as it is increasingly becoming. That is why the U.S. and its captive media still rue the day that the CPC came to its senses and derailed the U.S. inspired counter-revolutionary movement that the Tiananmen protests had become. And that is why the Western media and politicians continue to harp on its suppression 30 years later.

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Shapurji Saklatvala MP: The Anglo-Irish ‘Treaty’ A Conqueror’s ‘Treaty’

by Manus O’Riordan

Shapurji Saklatvala had been born to a Bombay Parsee family in 1874 and emigrated to England in 1905, where he joined the Independent Labour Party in 1909. He went on to join the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) in 1921. In the October 1922 General Election he was selected as the official Labour Party candidate for the Battersea North constituency, and elected. Saklatvala travelled to Ireland to address both the 1920 and 1922 Delegate Conferences of the Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress.

On November 28, 1922, the London Letter of the *Irish Times* would relate:

“The Prime Minister (and Tory Party leader, Andrew Bonar Law) himself moved the second reading of the Free State Constitution Bill, and explained why it must be passed by December 6th, and why it was almost impossible to alter it. He pointed out that the Treaty, on which it was based, had been accepted by the late Parliament and by the country at the late elections. The only question was whether the Bill conformed to the Treaty, and on this point they were fortified by the opinion of the late Law Officers and the present Law

Officers... (The Labour Party leader) Mr Ramsay Macdonald entirely agreed with the Prime Minister. To criticise the Bill, he said, was useless; to sympathise was dangerous. He was struck by the many constitutional experiments the Irish Government proposed to make, and sincerely hoped they would be successful... Mr Ronald McNeill (the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, a native of Cushendon, Co Antrim, Unionist MP for Canterbury, and the later Lord Cushendon - MO’R), from his seat on the Front Government Bench, explained briefly his attitude towards the Bill. He still regarded the Treaty as a disastrous and indefensible transaction, but he recognised that the mischief had been done beyond repair, and they had no choice but to carry it to a conclusion. The present Government had no responsibility in the matter. If he thought otherwise, he would be opposing the Bill from his old place below the gangway. Captain Craig (Captain CC Craig, Ulster Unionist MP for South Antrim, and brother of Sir James Craig, Prime Minister of Northern Ireland - MO’R) proclaimed the neutrality of the Ulster members. They would neither vote for nor against the Bill. Mr Saklatvala, the Parsee Member for Battersea, moved the rejection of the Bill on the grounds that nothing but a Workers’ Republic would satisfy the aspirations of the majority of the Irish people. The motion was seconded

by Mr Newbold, the Communist, and both he and the mover were urged by Colonel Wedgwood (Labour) not to press for the rejection of the Bill. The motion for the rejection of the Bill was not pressed, and the Bill was read a second time.”

This was a dishonest caricature of Saklatvala’s speech. In that same issue the debate was reported *in extenso* «from our special correspondent», under the heading «IRISH CHARTER IN THE COMMONS», including an introductory paragraph that read:

«The Leader of the Opposition gave the bills his blessing, and assured the Government of the Labour Party’s help in passing them. He was not, however, able to suppress Mr Saklatvala, the Indian member for Battersea, who moved their rejection.” This was repeated as the lead - front page - feature of the *Weekly Irish Times* on December 2. The original November 28 report also had this final introductory paragraph: «It is stated (says a Lobby Correspondent) that Mr Saklatvala’s action in moving the rejection of the bill gave great offence to the Labour Party, and although it is true that the Member for Battersea explained that he spoke for himself, the bill is regarded as so essentially in line with the Labour Party’s policy, that this qualification is not regarded as excusing him.”

The *Irish Times* devoted fifteen paragraphs to reporting the the Ulster Unionist Captain CC Craig’s speech in the Commons, the majority of those paragraphs, under the subheading “SOUTHERN LOYALISTS”, being a recital of their supposed grievances. Under the heading “REJECTION MOVED. LABOUR PARTY’S INVIDIOUS POSITION”, the *Irish Times* further recorded:

“Mr Saklatvala said he opposed the bill because the Treaty had been procured by coercion and duress. He stood for the principle of self-determination. A Republic was bound to come in Ireland. (Ironical Ministerial cheers.) He appealed to the Speaker to save him from those who were pretending to be his friends. (Laughter.) The Labour Party would have to free Ireland when they came into power. He moved the rejection of the bill.”

While it gave the lie to the *Irish Times* London Letter, this slim paragraph was a wholly inadequate record of Saklatvala’s argument, which is why it is reproduced in full hereunder.

On December 7, 1922, the London Letter of the *Irish Times* was happy to report: «It is stated today that Mr Newbold, the Communist Member for Motherwell, is no longer to receive the Labour Party’s whips. It is wise of the Labour leaders to dissociate themselves formally from a member who has shown in every speech that he has made that he is out of sympathy with their views on some of the main topics of the day. The first obvious breach was shown when he seconded Mr Saklatvala’s motion for the rejection of the Free State Constitution Act; but almost more annoyance was caused by his statement during the all-night sitting yesterday that he regarded the League of Nations ‘with disgust and abhorrence’.”

While Newbold had been elected on October 1922 with the support of the Motherwell Labour Party, and had taken the Labour Party whip on entering Parliament, the fact that he had stood as a Communist Party candidate, and not as an official Labour Party one, made it easy to now remove that whip from him. But Saklatvala **had** been an official Labour Party candidate, and could not be so easily dislodged. In the November 1923 General Election Saklatvala was again nominated unanimously by the Battersea Labour Party, but lost his seat. In the 1924 General Election he was denied a Labour

Party endorsement, and on this occasion he officially stood as a Communist Party candidate, being the only CPGB candidate elected to Parliament.

Under the heading “COMMUNIST VISITOR: MR S SAKLATVALA MP IN DUBLIN”, the *Irish Times* reported on April 20, 1925: «Mr S Saklatvala MP, the Indian Communist Member of Parliament for North Battersea was the principal speaker at a meeting in Upper Sackville Street, Dublin, organised by the Irish Workers’ League... About 500 people listened to the speaker.”

Saklatvala was not, of course, an MP for the Communist Party of India, but for the CPGB. But the *Irish Times* preoccupation with his ethnicity was deployed in an attempt to whip up what we might call its «Red Indian Scare». The following day, April 21, under the heading of «Communists and Ireland», it editorialised:

“The visit of Mr Saklatvala, Member of Parliament for North Battersea, to Dublin has crested only a languid interest among the general public. He is an Indian Communist, whose ideal of Government is the Soviet one, and his trip to the Free State last Sunday was undertaken, apparently, with a view to the encroachment of Bolshevik principles in this country. Mr Saklatvala was accompanied by Mr Robert Stewart of Dundee, also a Communist. A meeting was held in Sackville Street, under the shade of a crimson banner which was sent by the Russian proletariat to its Irish comrades; and after Mr Saklatvala had spoken for two tedious hours, Mr Stewart announced that before the end of the next month he would have founded an organisation in the Free State for the purpose of promoting a Workers’ Republic. Both speakers declared that they were advocating the principles of the late James Connolly. The revolutionary method, said Mr Saklatvala, was the only course that could befriend the labouring classes. If workers wanted the land, said Mr Stewart, let them take it, and legalise their action afterwards. The workers of Dublin had heard that sort of thing before last Sunday. They know precisely what it is worth, and the amusement with which they listened to Mr Saklatvala’s vapourings was significant of their attitude towards him and his like. Dublin has had a taste of Communism and wants no more.”

In the Irish General Election of September 1927 Saklatvala came over to campaign for the Irish Worker League candidate, Big Jim Larkin, who won a Dáil seat, but was then debarred from taking it up, as an undischarged bankrupt. Saklatvala was also to witness Fianna Fáil, with 57 seats, closing the gap on Cumann na nGaedheal’s 62 seats. The political fight back to undo the shackles of the Treaty was gathering momentum, and Saklatvala wrote to the Indian National Congress leader Gandhi:

“I was just walking down the main street of Dublin last night. I saw around me a new Ireland with a new Irish soul arising out of the ashes of their 1916 rebellion for independence. I can send you no better message from the Irish heart than the one that I saw in this street, carved on the Parnell monument, and once uttered by Parnell himself: “No man has a right to fix the boundary to the march of a nation. No man has a right to say to his country, ‘Thus far thou shalt go and no further.’ We have never attempted to fix the *ne plus ultra* to the process of Ireland’s nationhood, and we never shall.»

No doubt, the *Irish Times* was delighted when Saklatvala’s own parliamentary career came to an end when he lost his seat in the May 1929 General Election to the Labour Party candidate. And under the headings of “INDIA CLOSED TO MR SAKLATVALA: CANNOT ATTEND NATIONAL

CONGRESS”, the *Irish Times* gleefully reported on November 20, 1929:

“Mr S Saklatvala, the former Communist MP, has been refused permission to attend the Indian National Congress. This decision was conveyed to him in a letter from Mr Arthur Henderson, the Foreign Secretary, replying to his request for an assurance that the policy of the late Government in refusing to accept his Indian visa had been rescinded. Mr Henderson wrote: “I at once referred the matter to the India Office, and the following is an extract from their reply: ‘I am directed by Mr Secretary Benn to state that he is not prepared at the present time to agree to grant an endorsement to India to Mr Saklatvala’s passport’.”

William Wedgwood Benn, father of the late Tony Benn and grandfather of Hilary Benn MP, had been been a Liberal Party MP from 1906 to 1927. He was re-elected as a Labour MP in 1928, and was the Labour Government’s Secretary of State for India, 1929-1931. That Government’s Foreign Secretary, Arthur Henderson, had been leader of British Labour Party 1914-1917 and also, from 1915 to 1917, a member of Britain’s Wartime Coalition Government. He therefore shared responsibility for the execution of the 1916 Rising leaders, including the war crime involved in the execution of the severely wounded and incapacitated James Connolly, founder of the Irish Labour Party.

In Frankfurt-on-Main, in July 1929, Saklatvala had linked up with Peadar O’Donnell, Editor of the IRA newspaper *An Phoblacht*, when they were both delegates to the World Congress of the League Against Imperialism. The *Irish Times* would report on October 5, 1931, that «Mr Saklatvala spoke at a meeting which was held in Kilkenny on Friday night in connection with the anti-imperialist movement.”

Cosgrave’s Cumann na nGaedheal Government was at that stage on the point of amending its own Free State Constitution on October 14, 1931, so as to bring in more anti-Republican repressive legislation, and was very much engaged in whipping up a “Red Scare” centred on Peadar O’Donnell’s Saor Eire social agitation. Both Fianna Fáil and the Labour Party opposed the Bill, but two Labour TDs - Richard Anthony and Dan Morrissey - defected to the Cosgrave side in that vote, with Morrissey later going on to become a Fine Gael Minister in the 1948 Costello Government. On October 15, 1931 the *Irish Times* had reported that Dáil debate *verbatim*, including the following from Dan Morrissey:

“It has been stated that Communism does not count in this country - that it is not active. I know that it is active in my county. I know that within the last couple of weeks branches have been started in Tipperary. I know that within the last fortnight we had an Indian gentleman, whom I had the pleasure of meeting here ten or twelve years ago, an ex-member of the British Parliament, Mr. Saklatvala, speaking down in Roscrea in my constituency with Mr. Peadar O’Donnell. I have no doubt whatever in my mind and I am sure none of you have that it was because of love of Ireland or because he wanted Ireland prosperous and free that he came across here.”

To which Fianna Fáil’s Seán MacEntee responded, in praise of Saklatvala: “At any rate he stood by Ireland when Morrissey did not.” In the General Election four months later, Fianna Fáil drove Cosgrave out of power. Big Jim Larkin was an unsuccessful candidate for his Irish Worker League, although he would win a seat on Dublin City Council the following year. In its General Election coverage on February 17, 1932, and under the heading of “YOUTHFUL ‘RED FLAGGERS’” the *Irish Times* availed of the opportunity to sneer: « Mr James Larkin, senior, was very active during the day, and was accompanied

around the polling stations by Mr Saklatvala, and early in the day some amusement was caused by the passage through the main streets of a vociferous army of youngsters, plentifully bedecked with red sashes and red jerseys and carrying red flags. The other candidates sported the Free State Tricolour.”

How far the *Irish Times* would take its own anti-Communism was shown in «Herr Hitler’s Way», its editorial on March 4, 1933: “Events in Germany are moving rapidly towards a dramatic *denouement*. The general elections take place to-morrow, and, although opinions vary concerning the result, there seems to be a fairly general belief that Herr Hitler will score another of his spectacular triumphs... The new Chancellor has taken the fullest advantage of the popular resentment to pursue a ferocious campaign against Communism in every shape and form... Thousands of individuals have been taken into custody... Nazi storm troops have given short shrift to any Communists who have been foolish enough to cross their path. Omelettes cannot be prepared without the smashing of eggs... In reasoned warfare against the Communists Herr Hitler will have the support of all civilised nations. At the moment he is Europe’s standard-bearer against Muscovite terrorism, and although some of his methods certainly are open to question, nobody doubts his entire sincerity. If he can stabilise Germany, he will place the whole world in his debt. At all events, he has earned his chance; we have little doubt that the German people will give it to him to-morrow.”

In September 1934 Saklatvala again visited Ireland to attend the Delegate Conference of Peadar O’Donnell’s Republican Congress in Rathmines Town Hall. In January 1936 Shapurji Saklatvala would die of a heart attack at his London home.

House of Commons Debates: (1) On the King’s Address to Parliament, November 23, 1922:

Shapurji Saklatvala MP (Labour Party and Communist Party): “In reference to Ireland, I am afraid that I shall strike a jarring note in the hitherto harmonious music of this House. I am well disciplined and trained in the general principle of the Labour movement, namely, that the happiness of the world depends on international peace, and that international peace is possible only when the self-determined will of the people of each country prevails in each country. I deplore greatly those elements still existing in the Irish Treaty that are not compatible with that great and wholesome principle. It is no use denying the fact, for we shall not in that way create peace in Ireland. As a House we say that we are giving this Irish Treaty with a view of bringing peace to Ireland, but we know that it is not bringing peace. Either we are actuated by the motive of restoring thorough peace in Ireland or we are doing it as partial conquerors in Ireland. Everyone knows that the Treaty has unfortunately gone forth as the only alternative to a new invasion of Ireland by British troops. As long as that element exists the people of Ireland have a right to say that the very narrow majority which in Ireland accepted the Treaty at the time, accepted it also on this understanding - that if they did not accept it the alternative was an invasion by the Black-and-Tans of this country. The Irish Treaty all along continues to suffer in Ireland from the fact that it is not a Treaty acceptable to the people as a whole.

If it were possible in some way in the preamble of the Treaty or by an Act of this House to allow the people of Ireland to understand that their country’s constitution is to be framed by them as a majority may decide, and that the alternative would not be an invasion from this country, but that this country would shake hands with Ireland as a neighbour, whatever shape or form that Government took, it would be quite a different story. Otherwise, whatever we may do, however many treaties we may pass, however unanimous the British may be in their behaviour towards Ireland, Ireland will not be made a peaceful

country. As in 1801 England gave them a forced Union, so in 1922 England is giving them a forced freedom. We must remove that factor. Unless we do so we shall not be giving to the Irish the Treaty of freedom which we have all decided mentally that we are doing. When I say so, I put forward not my personal views but the views of 90 per cent of those Irishmen who are my electors. They have pointed out to me that, whereas under the threat of renewed invasion the Dail only passed the Treaty by a majority of barely half a dozen votes, Irishmen who are not under that threat - Irishmen who are living in Great Britain - have, by a tremendous majority, voted against it. As long as those factors continue to exist, the Irish Treaty is not going to be what we - in a sort of silent conspiracy - have decided to name it. The reality will not be there. The reality is not there. “

(2) On the Irish Free State Constitution Bill, November 27, 1922 Shapurji Saklatvala MP:

“I realise the unpopularity I am courting in taking this step, but it was distinctly understood between my electors and myself that they did not wish me to back up a Treaty which was based upon coercion, and was signed under duress. I do not now speak on behalf of the Labour party in the House. I wish that to be made perfectly clear. I maintain that, perhaps as a purist, I adhere in the Amendment to a principle that the Labour party has laid down, namely, the principle of self-determination. It is not to be understood that I do not share the wishes or the prayers of my chief, nor is it to be understood I have not the same desire as my colleagues, but I must frankly admit that I do not share their hopes. I believe that the only cure will come when either this Government or a future Labour Government tells our friends in Ireland that they have a right to a genuine and bonâ fide, self-determined voice of their own. Unless that is done, neither the Treaty nor the Constitution nor the Bill now before the House is likely to do what we all, against our convictions, hope that they may do. We talk of a Treaty. Hon. Members on all sides of the House have written and spoken in unmistakable terms in expressing their views that the unfortunate part of the Treaty was that the signatures were obtained under duress. I feel that that duress was undoubtedly there, and the unfortunate fact was that it need not have been there. If matters had been left to the free will and the good sense of the people, the result would have been quite different from what it has been.

We have heard to-day quotations and illustrations of similar enactments for colonies and dominions of the Empire. Is there any real parallel between those Constitutions and the hopes and desires of the people of the countries concerned and the hopes and desires of the Irish people? Was Australia not rejoicing and waiting almost to a man and woman for the day when her Constitution would be confirmed by this House? Was not South Africa, after a great war and defeat, gratefully awaiting the day when the Treaty would be passed and the little minority of the republican in a constitutional manner would be permitted to express themselves as a minority? The people of Canada, too, were determined to have their Constitution and to work it. The case of Ireland is different. It is no use our pretending that it is not so. We cannot adopt the policy that by driving deeper into the soil the roots of a cactus, and by carefully covering it with soil, roses will grow later on. I pay my homage to the great spirit that reigns in this House today, and to the great spirit that pervades the people who sent Members to represent them in this House. I admire that spirit at its full value. In spite of all the bitter differences in the past, we are determined to come to a genuine and sincere unanimity upon this question. Were we settling the matter in dispute between ourselves here, that spirit would give us a permanent solution: but our unanimity does not

affect the disunity in Ireland, and that point does not seem to be before this House as emphatically as it ought to be.

Was there ever an instance in the history of treaties where immediately after a treaty had been signed, two out of the five signatories had to repudiate their signatures as not having been put down with a bonâ fide and conscientious intention? The hon. Member for Spen Valley (Sir J. Simon) was pointing out to us the great improvement, which has taken place since the Treaty. I am sorry to hear argument of that kind being advanced on rather imperfect observation. The imperfect observation which I wish to point out is not referred to in the spirit of the hon. and gallant Member for Burton (Colonel Gretton). It is quite in another direction. In the first instance, what is the constituent assembly which has sent us this document? Soon after the Treaty and, apart from anything that was ever contemplated at the time of the Treaty, a truce was entered into between the two factious parties in Ireland creating an artificial Dail to tackle the problem of the Treaty. I take no sides with either of the Irish parties, but I maintain that truce - or that promise to observe a truce - was not fair to the people, of Great Britain, and it was certainly more than unfair to the people of Ireland. Under the truce it was decided to call an artificial constituent assembly, and when the moment came, even that truce was not observed, and the so-called constituent assembly cannot on any bonâ fide and sincere principle of self-determination, be accepted as a truly and properly elected Dail representing the people of Ireland in the ratios and the proportions in which they stand. I was present at the last great Labour Conference in Ireland; I attended its sittings in Dublin and I saw there written down in black and white and heard proclaimed from the platform - A plague on both your houses - on both parties, both the pro-Treaty and the anti-Treaty party. I have heard it declared that Irish Labour, well organised, is determined to work for a workers' republic. These are the views which are being expressed, and the Labour party in Ireland is bound to come into its own, however much hon. Members may jeer or laugh. The Republicans are there; it is no use denying that they are there in very large numbers, and it is extremely doubtful, if coercive measures were not taken, whether they would not prove themselves to be the majority of the people of Ireland. These facts cannot be ignored, and they cannot be buried or covered up. We are assured by the Prime Minister that, according to Mr. Cosgrave, Ireland is only waiting for the Constitution to be carried through this House, and that they are going to work it out. Mr. Cosgrave knows that he had to shoot four human beings a week ago, and he has had since to take another life by violence - that of Erskine Childers. He knows that the prisons of Ireland are to be filled with thousands of men, and even some women, without charge and without trial. He knows that Ireland is to be prepared to receive this Constitution, not with joy and illuminations, but with martial law, penalites and threats, imprisonment and ships waiting to depopulate the country. [Interruption.] I will ask you, Mr. Speaker, to save me from those who are pretending to be my friends. I appeal to the Prime Minister and I appeal to the House.

Once, in 1801, our predecessors and your forefathers thought they had worked a great political trick and a mighty political charm when with great unanimity in Dublin and London they brought about the Act of Union. For 120 years that Act of Union has only produced distress to Ireland and disgrace to this country. I, as your friend - not as your critic nor as your opponent - feel that I am in conscience bound not to be a party to another and a greater mockery. Until the Labour party in this country comes into power, until genuine self-determination is permitted to the people of Ireland, there is going to be neither peace nor fidelity to the Treaty, nor the carrying out of the Free State Government, nor any of the “tosh” we have been hearing of late. I am speaking in a most difficult position. I know I seem

to be the friend of my enemies and the enemy of my friends, but time and history will prove my case. I shall not be at all sorry or ashamed to say that even if you were all unanimous, I stood aloof and away from you. Within five years this House will find the necessity for undoing this unanimous or semi-unanimous Act after more distress and more suffering. Let me predict that it will be the Labour party sitting on those benches which will have to afford real freedom to Ireland. Instead of merely expressing a pious opinion, I take my courage in my hands and true to my convictions I move this Amendment in order to create an opportunity for myself to vote against the Bill.”

Walton Newbold MP (Communist Party and Labour Party): “I beg to second the Amendment.

Colonel Josiah Wedgwood MP (Labour Party):

“I hope the hon. Member will not proceed to a Division on this Amendment, because the only result will be that he will find himself in the Lobby with a large number of Members with whom he really has no possible point of agreement. The fact of the matter is that we have Die-hards on both sides. Perhaps it is well that we should learn early in the life of this Parliament that Die-hards come together anyhow. We want, at any rate, to

understand what happens when our wishes are carried out. I ask the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Saklatvala) to consider what would happen if he got his way and if this Bill were rejected. It would then appear that Great Britain, having signed the Treaty, is determined by the voice of a new Parliament to cancel the Treaty. I agree with the hon. Member that there was a great deal that was undesirable in the way in which the Treaty was brought about, but whether those methods were desirable or undesirable, we cannot now possibly go back upon the Treaty which was signed, or fail to carry out to the letter the terms of the obligations into which we entered. The speech to which we have just listened, a very eloquent speech, ought to have been delivered not here but in the Dail. Many speeches similar to it were made in the Dail, and the result of those speeches, I may point out, has been civil war in Ireland. There is a definite question which this House has to consider at this moment, and the attitude taken up by the Labour Party on that question is that whether the Treaty be bad or good, whatever be the circumstances attendant on the signing of the Treaty, that Treaty has been signed, and we, whether on the Government Benches or the Opposition Benches, are determined to see that Treaty carried out.”

Shapurji Saklatvala had been the only British MP prepared to speak out, as an anti-imperialist, against the so-called Anglo-Irish “Treaty”, defining it as an act of British imperialist coercion.

The Road to Bretton Woods: Britain goes off the Gold Standard (Part One)

by Peter Brooke

PART ONE: BRITAIN GOES OFF THE GOLD STANDARD

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the hegemonic power in Western Europe was, overwhelmingly, the United States. The political continuity of all the European countries involved in the war, with the exception of Britain, had been broken and all of them - Britain included - were, or believed themselves to be, dependent on US financial support to reinvigorate their wrecked economies. The American administration under Roosevelt and his Treasury Secretary, Henry Morgenthau, had recognised this as a likely outcome and had begun planning very early on for a new European, indeed world, economic order. On 14th December, 1941, a week after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, Morgenthau entrusted the job of planning such an order to his ‘director of monetary research’, Harry Dexter White. Roosevelt, Morgenthau and White were all agreed on the aim of the exercise - to establish the largest possible free trade area throughout the world, based on the gold standard. They would all have reckoned that the major obstacle to realising this ambition - assuming victory over Germany and Japan - was not Russia but Britain.

MACDONALD AND SNOWDEN - NO HALF MEASURE = NO MEASURES AT ALL

Traditionally of course Britain had been the pioneer and champion of international free trade and the gold standard. But Britain had betrayed its calling when it went off the gold standard in 1931. This was no small event. The American economic historian James Ashley Morrison calls it ‘one of

the greatest policy innovations in the history of the global economy.’¹ Given that the gold standard had been suspended during the war and had only been restored in 1925 that may look like an exaggeration but the fact that it could be said is of itself significant. It was certainly felt to be radical at the time. It was in order to avoid having to do it that Ramsey MacDonald and his chancellor Philip Snowden wrecked the Labour government and their own reputations in the historiography of the British Labour movement, entering into coalition with the Tories and the more fiscally conservative liberals in order to ‘save the pound’ by slashing government spending, in particular unemployment benefit.

It is absurd to accuse them of simple class betrayal. Robert Skidelsky argues that it was in fact their socialism that left them, as they imagined, with very little choice. He explains their dilemma in terms that still have a certain resonance for Socialist and Marxist politics today. Socialism and capitalism were incompatible. So if Socialism was impossible, the logic of capitalism, understood - as Marx understood it - in terms of the rigorous, supposedly scientifically established classical Ricardian economic theory, had to prevail. At the Labour Party Conference of 1930 in Llandudno, just a year before Snowden

1 James Ashley Morrison: ‘Shocking intellectual austerity: the role of ideas in the demise of the gold standard in Britain’, *International Organization*, Vol 70, No 1 (Winter 2016), p.203. American in origin and formation, Morrison is now Assistant Professor in the Department of International Relations at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

introduced what Morrison (p. 191) calls 'the most austere budget in British history' (Morrison has no fear of hyperbole): 'MacDonald provided his audience with an excuse that was sure to appeal to them'²

"So, my friends, we are not on trial; it is the system under which we live. It has broken down, not only in this little island; it has broken down in Europe, in Asia, in America; it has broken down everywhere as it was bound to break down."

"Thus the tables were neatly turned: it was the breakdown of capitalism, not the failure of the Government, that was responsible for the suffering and distress; and if the Government seemed impotent, was this not because it had no mandate for the only cure - socialism? Of course, the other Parties had their solutions - public works, protection - but these were no substitute for socialism and no Labour Government could be expected to subscribe to them:

"And I appeal to you, my friends, today, with all that is going on outside - I appeal to you to go back on to your socialist faith. Do not mix that up with pettifogging patching - either of a Poor Law kind or of Relief Work kind."

MacDonald's speech was greeted with 'thunderous applause'. Skidelsky continues:

'Throughout, MacDonald referred to public works as 'relief works' - to differentiate them from socialism, which was permanent reconstruction. If confusion lay at the heart of this analysis, it was the confusion of democratic socialism itself - the confusion that allowed a socialist party to take part in the ordinary political process, and yet sought to absolve it from responsibility for framing radical policies to meet concrete problems.'

Protection was the 'pettifogging patching' recommended by a wing of the Conservative Party (and in the event implemented by the National Government under MacDonald as titular Prime Minister); 'public works' was the policy associated with the Liberals, elaborated on their behalf by J.M.Keynes and his then colleague, Hubert Henderson, in their pamphlet (May 1929) *Can Lloyd George do it?* Keynes had been one of the few economists who opposed the return to the gold standard in 1925, but he didn't object to the gold standard in principle. It was the timing and the rate at which it was set that he criticised.

HOW THE GOLD STANDARD WORKED

Under the gold standard the government sets a fixed ratio between its currency and gold so that, for example, 'if the US sets the price of gold at \$500 an ounce, the value of the dollar would be 1/500th of an ounce of gold.'³ Upon delivery of, say, \$500 the government engages to give the bearer an ounce of gold. Hence the worthless piece of paper one has in one's hand is 'backed' by a commodity which will, one assumes, always be valuable. Of course there is always a relationship between paper money and gold - one can always buy gold and central banks even now maintain large reserves of gold as a store of reliable value. But independent of the gold standard the price of gold will fluctuate like any other commodity. Under the gold standard the

2 Robert Skidelsky: *Politicians and the slump - the Labour Government of 1929-1931*, Penguin Books, 1970 (first published in 1967), pp.270-1.

3 Nick Lioudis: *What is the gold standard?* Article posted on the Investopedia website.

ratio between a given quantity of paper money and a given quantity of gold was, supposedly, fixed.

A main purpose of the exercise was to limit the ability of government to issue paper money at will. To quote Herbert Hoover, 'We have gold because we cannot trust governments' (the reader will recognise one of the arguments most frequently used against Modern Money Theory). But perhaps more importantly the fact that a given quantity of money carried with it the promise of a given quantity of gold provided an internationally recognised medium of exchange. A currency attached to the gold standard stood in a fixed and known ratio to all other currencies attached to the gold standard. This however presupposed confidence in the government's ability to make good its commitment to give gold in exchange for its currency. If people engaged in international trade began to lose that confidence then they would be reluctant to use that currency. There would be a 'run' on the currency, meaning that they would try to get rid of it - it would fall in value and the Central Bank would have to intervene to shore it up by buying it at the gold standard rate, thus further depleting its own stock of gold.

The ratio between the amount of gold the government held and the money it issued was therefore important. No-one expected it to be a one to one ratio (that was called the 'gold specie standard' and refers back to the time when money, as coinage, *was* gold) but the extent to which the government could issue money beyond that one to one ratio depended on confidence in the overall strength of the economy. Thus if Britain was importing more from France, say, than it was exporting then it would have to pay for those imports in francs, which would mean it had to 'buy' those French francs which would mean that the gold that had been supporting sterling would now be supporting the franc. Similarly government expenditure beyond the perceived ability of the gold reserve to sustain both government spending and the needs of the non-government sectors of the economy would produce a loss of confidence in the currency. Symbolically this would be represented as a government failure to 'balance its books', to marry its expenditure to what it was receiving in taxes. I call that 'symbolic' taking into account the observation of the Modern Money Theorists that taxes don't pay for anything. What they do is to take money out of the non-government sectors to create more fiscal space for government spending. Competition between government and non-government for limited resources runs the risk of pushing prices up resulting in inflation.

UNEMPLOYMENT

One of the resources in question of course is manpower. It was the perception of Keynes (and Oswald Mosley and Ernest Bevin) that unemployment placed in the hands of government a substantial resource. It could be used by government on projects not being provided by the non-government sectors. This was one of the bases for the 'counter-cyclical' economics associated with Keynes - that government could and should spend more, not less, in times of depression, and less not more in times when the economy was booming. Job creation was one of the policies adopted by both the United States and Germany in the 1930s - the two countries that proved best prepared to withstand the financial pressures of the war. At the risk of jumping ahead of my argument I might mention here that Roosevelt and Morgenthau, knowing they were going to have to engage in an unprecedentedly large amount of government spending, set about collecting and hoarding all the gold they could lay their hands on, making it illegal for private individuals to possess more than \$100 worth of it. Neither Morgenthau nor, in Germany, Schacht, would have regarded themselves as 'Keynesians'. There was a time, as we shall see, when Keynes might have regarded himself as a 'Schachtian'.

According to the classical 'laissez-faire' doctrine an economy reached 'equilibrium' when prices stayed at a fairly constant level and it was assumed - an assumption severely questioned by Keynes - that under those circumstances there would be full employment, somewhat loosely defined (it generally seems to have meant 5% unemployment). Left to its own devices the economy would have a tendency to settle on equilibrium but through a process of swings towards 'boom' (too much money in the economy with production failing to keep up with it resulting in inflation) and 'bust' (the production of goods outpacing the ability of people to pay for them, producing deflation). This was, put very crudely, the 'business cycle' but it was, left to its own devices, thought to be self correcting. Booms produce busts, busts produce booms and the whole would wobble back into their normal condition which was equilibrium. Part of the process required that firms would be free to vary their costs of production according to the demands of the market. The only cost that was in the power of the individual producer was wages. But owing to the power of the trade unions, backed by government legislation, wages were 'sticky' - they could only be reduced with great difficulty. How, then, could they be forced down if that was considered necessary for the overall good of the economy?

In his 1925 pamphlet *The Economic consequences of Mister Churchill*, Keynes pointed out that the increase in the value of the pound as a consequence of the return to the gold standard at the pre-war rate, would result in an equivalent decrease in the income gained from exports. This would necessitate a reduction in costs, principally wages. He asked how this could be achieved, given the determination of the unions to resist it:

*'In no other way than by the deliberate intensification of unemployment. The object of credit restriction, in such a case, is to withdraw from employers the financial means to employ labour at the existing level of prices and wages. The policy can only attain its end by intensifying unemployment without limit until the workers are ready to accept the necessary reduction of money wages under the pressure of hard facts ... Deflation [as a result of the restriction of the money supply to maintain the value of the currency - PB] does not reduce wages "automatically". It reduces them by causing unemployment. The proper object of dear money is to check an incipient boom. Woe to those whose faith leads them to use it to aggravate a depression.'*⁴

The pamphlet was published just as the miners and the TUC were preparing for a general strike. In the event, the Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, agreed to give the coal industry a subsidy of £10m to enable wages to be paid at the existing rate, thus further - given the policy of maintaining an overvalued pound - reducing the credit available to other parts of the economy. As we know this only postponed the problem. The General Strike, followed by a long effort on the part of the miners alone, took place in 1926, ending in defeat for the miners and a reduction in wages. And the widespread discontent which brought Labour back to power in 1929.

The leading French liberal economist, Jacques Rueff, was in London in 1930 as financial attaché in the French embassy. Rueff had been adviser to the French Prime Minister, Raymond Poincaré, who had followed Churchill's lead in putting the franc back on the gold standard at a high rate. Rueff was subsequently, in the 1930s, Deputy Governor of the Banque de France and later adviser to Charles De Gaulle (advising him to exchange the dollars France was holding for gold, one of the elements that led to the collapse of the gold standard in 1971). In a note prepared for the French Ministry of Finance,

4 Quoted in Robert Skidelsky: *John Maynard Keynes, the economist as saviour, 1920-1937* Vol II of Skidelsky's biography, London, Macmillan, 1994 (first published 1992), p.203.

submitted in October 1931⁵, Rueff explained the British crisis as a consequence of the inflexibility of wage settlements. This resulted in an uncompetitive industry, resulting in a large unemployment problem, and an unfavourable balance of payments, which resulted in an outflow of gold made worse by the government policy of paying unemployment benefit, which left the Bank of England with only a very narrow margin for manoeuvre in the event of a major financial crisis - in the event the collapse of the Credit Anstalt in Vienna earlier in the year. Rueff admitted that the problem could be alleviated by a devaluation of the pound (to increase the money available to the domestic economy) and the introduction of protective duties to reduce the attraction of imported goods, but this would do enormous harm to the international reputation of sterling and therefore to the international economy as a whole which was largely dependent on sterling as a reliable, and desirable asset.

ERNEST BEVIN'S PROPOSED SOLUTION

The view that the solution was at hand with a combination of devaluation and protectionism and that the only obstacle was the 'usurious' interest of the financial sector, was put forcefully by Ernest Bevin. According to Skidelsky (*Politicians and the Slump*, pp.406-8):

'Ernest Bevin had by this time emerged as the dominant personality in the trade union movement, with an intelligence and breadth of vision far beyond those of his colleagues, with the possible exception of the general secretary, Walter Citrine, with whom he worked closely. His economic education had been considerably extended by his membership of four bodies - the Mond-Turner group, the Macmillan Committee, the E.A.C [the government sponsored Economic Advisory Council - PB], and the trade union economic committee, started in 1929 after suggestions that the General Council was ignorant of wider economic issues. The experience and knowledge he gained through these bodies gave him an essential background for creative economic policy making, and the necessary assurance to challenge Snowden's recipe for economic recovery.'

'His view of money as a means of exchange, a device to meet the needs of industry and trade, to enable men to manufacture, buy and sell goods, was unexceptionable, but he concluded from this that the international money market was a system of collective usury, 'a word he frequently used with the full Aristotelian flavour' [quoted from Alan Bullock's biography, vol i, p.427 - PB]. From this it was not hard to conclude that the financial crisis:

"has arisen as the result of the manipulation of finance by the City, borrowing money from abroad on ... 'short-term' ... and lending it on long-term ... As is usual, the financiers have rushed to the Government ... attributing the blame for the trouble to the social policy of the country and to the fact that the budget is not balanced." [Bevin quoted in *ibid.* p.480].

'This in itself should make the Government wary of accepting the banker's advice, but quite apart from that Bevin had come to believe that the existing currency system based on gold was bound to break down; hence the bankers' policy "which aimed at restoring the free working of the system" offered no remedy.'

'Bevin's own remedy, which he expounded in the summer of 1930 and in his addendum to the Macmillan Report, assumed that the old nineteenth-century laissez-faire system was gone for good, instead the aim should be to create a regional grouping based on the Empire'

5 Rueff's letter is reproduced in Marc Flandreau: '1931: la chute de la livre sterling et la crise internationale vues par Jacques Rueff', *Politique étrangère*, Vol. 63, No 4, Winter 1998-9,

“in which there would be a rough balance between supplies of raw materials and foodstuffs on the one hand and manufactured goods on the other, a group of nations practising Free Trade between themselves, but putting up tariffs, if necessary, against outsiders, a group as self-contained as possible but with sufficient bargaining power to exchange products with other nations on fair terms.” [ibid., p.441]

‘At home the plight of the great export industries offered a magnificent opportunity for extending Government control:

“He was prepared to agree to a protective tariff, but only on condition of the thorough reorganisation of the industries to be protected, not as a substitute for reorganisation, behind which inefficient industries could find protection from the need to put their house in order.” [p.445]

‘Since such a programme could not be carried out with the existing gold standard, Bevin advocated devaluation and urged the Government in his addendum to the Macmillan Report, to consider “an alternative basis” for the economy.

‘Such measures would, in Bevin’s view, resolve the “fundamental paradox” of a Labour Government trying to save a capitalist system from the difficulties which the Labour movement itself had created [through trade union activity preventing the ‘automatic’ adjustment of wages to suit the perceived needs of the overall economy - PB]. Thus his opposition to the policy which the bankers were trying to foist on to the Government stemmed not only from the sectional interest of his own union members, but also from a long-term view of future development.’⁶

In advocating devaluation and a retrenchment on the Empire, Bevin was advocating more or less what happened. What didn’t happen, though it happened in the United States and in Germany and was advocated by Keynes, Lloyd George and Oswald Mosley, was a government funded public works scheme that would have addressed directly the problem of unemployment.

HOW THE BANK OF ENGLAND BROKE THE GOLD STANDARD IN AN EFFORT TO SAVE IT

Considering what a fateful development departure from the gold standard was, and what a shocking reversal of the very reasons for the formation of the National Government, Skidelsky, in his book on the slump (p.422), treats it rather breezily:

‘The National Government failed to achieve the specific object for which it had been formed. Credits of £89m had been obtained on 28 August [from the USA and the Banque de France - PB]; on 8 September Snowden introduced emergency measures of extra taxation and economies designed to balance the budget by 1933. But a mutiny of naval ratings at Invergordon on 16 September destroyed the confidence temporarily created; the flight from the pound could not be stemmed and on 21 September Britain was forced off the gold standard.’

A much more entertaining account is given by Morrison (pp.192-7):

‘The standard narrative is that “Britain was forced to suspend convertibility on September 19.” But it was not “Britain” that suspended convertibility - it was, essentially, the Bank of England. And the Bank was not “forced” but chose to do so. This choice was the final manoeuvre in a campaign Harvey waged to save conservatives in Parliament from electoral defeat. Harvey, simply put, suspended the gold standard to save it.’

‘Harvey’ was Ernest Harvey, Deputy Governor of the Bank of England. Over the Summer the Governor, Montagu Norman,

had been incapacitated by illness. In August he travelled to Canada - in fact to negotiate a loan from the Federal Reserve in New York, a project that had to be concealed from the press since it indicated lack of confidence in the pound. Norman was pressing for a radical increase in the bank rate of interest which would have imposed an even tighter constraint on the money supply and on the government’s ability to spend. MacDonald believed that his abandonment of the Labour Party and formation of the National Government with a view to saving the pound needed to be ratified by a fresh election.

‘Harvey feared the effect of Norman’s return on the ensuing election. He knew that Norman would insist on raising Bank rate ruthlessly. Harvey assumed this would provoke a backlash against the gold standard. Suspending convertibility in that circumstance would irreparably damage the credibility of Britain’s commitment to the gold standard.’

‘Harvey thus implored the government “to announce ... that in view of the National Emergency a General Election is not contemplated at the present time.” Although the credits might last a fortnight, “It would be impossible with existing resources to maintain the Gold Standard during the period necessary to conduct a General Election.” On 18 September, however, MacDonald resolved to hold an election in October.’

‘Harvey concluded (incorrectly) that this decision made the suspension of the gold standard inevitable. It was only a question of whether the suspension occurred before or after the election - and who was in power at the time. Assuming (incorrectly) that an October election would deliver Parliament to the radicals, Harvey decided to orchestrate a “temporary” suspension while the gold standard coalition still controlled the government. Such a sudden suspension, Harvey calculated, would force the politicians to postpone the election. This would buy time, “giv[ing] the British government opportunity to turn around ... its internal affairs.” After resolving the fiscal crisis, the (Conservative-controlled) coalition government could then restore the gold standard and hold the election when Britain had returned to a more conservative mood.

‘That afternoon, 18 September, the Bank elected to initiate the suspension of the gold standard. It shockingly resolved to allow gold to fall below the export point. This decision not only violated the understanding established with the Bank of France it also gave the illusion that the credits had been exhausted, which accelerated sterling sales.’

Norman on his return was furious at what his deputy had done but nonetheless it was thought politic to go along with the fiction - according to Morrison maintained by all subsequent historians - that Britain had been ‘forced’ off the gold standard by the panic selling of sterling on the international market which, it must be said, was certainly taking place. However:

‘Suspension did not ensure the gold standard’s demise. After all, convertibility had been restored after the wartime suspension. The London Times even reported, “the suspension provided for in the Bill ... is limited to a period of six months.” What made things different this time?’

“There are few Englishmen who do not rejoice at the breaking of our gold fetters,” Keynes wrote one week after the suspension. Following Keynes, [economic historians] Eichengreen and Temin argue that democracy triumphed over the gold standard: “The world economy did not ... recover when [political and economic leaders] changed their minds; rather, recovery began when mass politics ... removed them from office.”

‘The opposite was true in Britain. The general election came one month after the suspension. It was “clear during the campaign,” the Times reported, that the currency question was “the only issue.” Leading Conservative Stanley Baldwin framed it as the “acid test of democracy.” Defying Harvey’s

6 An elaboration of Bevin’s views in a pamphlet co-written by G.D.H.Cole and published in 1931 can be found on my ‘Labour Values’ website at <http://www.labour-values.com/bevin/crisisindex/>

cynical expectations, Britons rose to the challenge, granting the National Government the largest electoral mandate in modern British history. Pledging currency stability, the Conservatives won 470 seats. Labour, which forswore a commitment “to force sterling back to the old gold parity,” lost 215 of its 267 seats. Here, “mass politics” overwhelmingly endorsed “gold-standard ideology.” The “cultural hegemony of economic orthodoxy” was displaced only after an unexpected experiment established new ideas.

‘Financial markets had reacted to Harvey’s surprising announcement “with comparative calm.” Hesitant to resume convertibility prematurely, the Treasury recommended “a waiting policy” to “allow sterling to settle at whatever level circumstances suggest is most appropriate.” In the first week, sterling slid from the fixed rate of \$4.86 to \$3.40. The government then proposed a managed float: “the Bank of England should as a provisional policy endeavour to keep sterling within certain limits, by buying sterling at the lower limit and selling foreign currencies at the higher.” This worked better than expected, and the Treasury were pleasantly surprised at their ability to “save the pound from the danger to which ... other currencies, similarly situated, have succumbed.” After falling to a nadir of \$3.23 the pound stabilised within a band between \$3.40 and \$3.80. The suspension was nothing like the “very great disaster” predicted by these same officials. They had no choice but to update their beliefs. As a chagrined Norman subsequently put it, “We have fallen over the precipice ... but we are alive at the bottom.”

‘The decision to forestall a return to gold created space for the Treasury to experiment with new ideas about “the role of the exchange rate in the regulation of the economy.” As the Treasury investigated the possibilities, it became clear that no one had done more to develop the alternatives than Keynes. In October, his staunch critic in the Treasury - Frederick Leith-Ross - reached out to him. When Keynes’s push to remake the international monetary system met with intransigence abroad, he proposed that Britain form an imperial currency bloc with a fixed-but-adjustable parity vis-à-vis gold. This would allow Britain to achieve the true purpose of monetary policy: domestic price stability.’

FORMATION OF THE STERLING BLOC

This was to be the next stage in the cracking open of the moral and economic ideal Britain was supposed to represent in the world, replacing free trade with the previously rejected policy of ‘imperial preference.’ According to Skidelsky (Keynes ii, p.434) one immediate result was the emergence of the ‘sterling bloc’ - ‘the group of over twenty nations, mainly primary producers, who had devalued their currencies in line with sterling in order to preserve their entry to the British market.’ He continues: ‘This collective devaluation had also freed the debtor group of nations from the thrall of the creditor nations, led by the United States and France, which remained on the gold standard.’ Obviously from the point of view of the ‘creditor’ nations this mass devaluation was an act of theft, defaulting on the loans these countries had received. Britain had begun what is often described as the ‘beggar-thy-neighbour’ period of competitive devaluations through the 1930s. The United States and France were soon off the gold standard. ‘The number of countries on the Gold Standard dropped from 48 in 1931 to zero in 1937, as governments suspended gold convertibility to enhance competitiveness through exchange depreciation. These moves coincided with dramatic increases in trade protection and the formation of exclusive trade and currency zones, which had corrosive effects on the multilateral

system.’⁷ According to a description by an American Foreign Affairs theorist, Steven Lobell:

‘By 1931, Britain was no longer a free trader. In February 1932, Neville Chamberlain, Joseph Chamberlain’s son, advanced his father’s dream of Empire Free Trade. Chamberlain introduced the Import Duties Bill which could reduce tariffs in favor of countries of the Empire with whom preferential trading agreements could be made. The Import Duties Bill called for (1) imposition of a general customs duty of 10 percent on almost all imports, (2) exemption from the duty of goods from within the Empire, pending the Imperial Economic Conference to be held in Ottawa, (3) exemption of certain other goods, which were placed on a free list. In August 1932, at the Ottawa Conference, Britain formally adopted a commercial policy of imperial preferences. The Ottawa Conference produced a network of twelve bilateral agreements among the Commonwealth countries, granting special trading privileges to British Commonwealth countries. Britain offered imperial preferences in return for concessions by the Dominions for British manufactured goods (the exchange was primarily foodstuffs from the Dominions for British manufactured goods). The result was that Britain’s exports to the Dominions received preference, but chiefly by increasing the tariff against foreign goods.

‘The Ottawa agreements were followed by seventeen trade agreements (1932-1935), creating a vast Sterling Area. The Sterling Area was a group of countries that chose to follow the pound sterling. These were countries that were heavily dependent on the British market, did most of their trade in sterling, and/or fixed their own currencies’ exchange rate in relation to the pound, and held some or all of their reserves in sterling. The countries included Finland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Iceland, Portugal, the British Empire (excluding Canada and British Honduras [but including Ireland - PB]), the mandates, Egypt-Sudan, Thailand, and Argentina.’⁸

This was broadly the system Morgenthau and White hoped to break in the post-war reconstruction of a ‘multilateral’ trade system. The story of how they succeeded through wartime negotiations conducted with Keynes as representative of the UK will be told in the next episode. It is a story given added piquancy when we learn that White was secretly channelling confidential information to the Soviet Union, while Keynes’s extremely interesting but unsuccessful counter-proposal was partly inspired by Hjalmar Schacht’s management of the German economy in the 1930s and Walther Funk’s plan for the reorganisation of Western Europe after the fall of France.

7 Kerry A.Chase: ‘Imperial protection and strategic trade policy in the interwar period’, *Review of international political economy*, Vol.11 No. 1 (Feb 2004), p.179.

8 Steven E. Lobell: ‘Second image reversed politics: Britain’s choice of freer trade or imperial preferences, 1903-1906, 1917-1923, 1930-1932’, *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.13, No.4, Dec. 1999, p.680. Lobell, Professor of Political Science in the University of Utah, is a ‘Neo-Classical Realist’, concerned with understanding the conditions necessary to maintain American hegemony in the world.

A Narrative of the Anglo–Irish negotiations in 1921 (Part one)

**These reports are from the daily newspaper of
the Dáil, the Irish Bulletin**

**SUPPLEMENT TO IRISH BULLETIN. VOLUME 5,
NUMBER 16. WEDNESDAY, 22nd JUNE 1921.**

THE PRESIDENT ADDRESSES THE NATIONS OF AUSTRALASIA.

The following interview was given by President de Valera to Mr. Chris. O’Sullivan, representing the United Cable Service, (Australasia):-

Mr. O’Sullivan drew the attention of the President to Mr. Lloyd George’s recent speech at Portmadoc. On this the President said:-

“The British Premier’s admission that two-thirds of the Irish people desired an Independent Republic ought to end finally the pretence that the Republic was demanded only by a handful of extremists. That admission has been made several times already. No other course was open in view of the thrice-repeated decisive demonstrations of a national plebiscite in which not two-thirds but three-fourths of the people proved their adherence to the Republic. Still, notwithstanding the demonstrations and notwithstanding the admissions, the pretence that the Republic was desired by a small minority is being kept up.

“As regards the right of the Irish people to independence, if Mr. Lloyd George would only face the facts in this as he has faced them in regard to the strength of Irish opinion in favour of the Republic, an understanding between the British and Irish people would be much easier to arrive at.

“Ireland has never voluntarily by the will of its people become a partner either in the so-called United Kingdom or the British Empire. The only union between Britain and Ireland has been that of the grappling hook. To style as “secession” Ireland’s demand for liberation from an association into which she has been forced against her will, and which she has violently resisted for the seven and a half centuries, during which her will has been defeated by force, is clever propaganda, but it will not help to bring about peace between the two countries.

“Ireland is not a British colony, and Ireland has put no estoppel to her right to independence by any contract with Britain such as the contract between the states of America at the time of their union.

The American Parallel.

“Mr. Lloyd George’s comparison of his own with Lincoln’s attitude is intended to justify in the eyes of the people of the Northern States of America his present war on the Irish people, but if I were a citizen of these States I would be very sorry to think that Lincoln’s justification was no better than Mr. Lloyd George’s, and I have yet to learn that the North

murdered their prisoners-of-war or employed a bandit corps of ex-criminals to ravage and loot and murder in secret.

“If Mr. Lloyd George wants a parallel from American history for our fight for the Republic, he will find it, not in the Civil War, but in the War of Independence following 1776. And if he seeks an example of attempted secession, he will find it, not in the case of Ireland maintaining her right to separation from Britain, but in that of the six counties of East Ulster which he wishes to see torn away from the remaining 26 counties of our country, just as the English statesmen of Lincoln’s day wished to see the states of the South torn away from the American Union, and with the same underlying motive as Mr. Lloyd George’s – to foster weakness by creating division.”

The Necessity for Guarantees.

Mr. O’Sullivan asked why Ireland would not accept a status like that of the British Overseas Dominions, to which Mr. de Valera replied:-

“No such status has ever been offered to Ireland, and until it becomes possible to transplant Ireland to the Antipodes or to another hemisphere, no such status is realisable. To secure in practice such freedom as Australia, New Zealand, Canada enjoy, Ireland, owing to Britain’s proximity, must be guaranteed as a sovereign, independent state; and those who think that we are entitled to the reality of Dominion status ought to perceive that if that is so, we are entitled to the Republic and must have it if we are to secure like freedom. The fact is that while adherents of the Empire in Australia, Canada, New Zealand might, in a sense, put forward a plea that they enjoy something more than independence, we in Ireland in claiming the Republic seek simple independence and nothing more.”

“Hasn’t Britain good grounds for thinking that an independent Ireland would be a danger to her?” was the interviewer’s next question.

“No,” replied the President directly, “This fear is based on the assumption that an independent Ireland is likely to be hostile, but commonsense and everything else point to the reverse. Ireland has been at enmity with England in the past because England was actively injuring Ireland. As long as the aggression continues the enmity will continue as an effect from a cause, but the one would disappear with the other. The cementing forces of community of interest have never been permitted to operate between Ireland and England because of the violent agitation caused by English aggression and its reaction – Irish resentment. Remove the agitation and you will produce a condition which has been impossible through all the centuries that have passed.

The Dominion Premiers and Ireland.

Mr. O’Sullivan inquired as to the answer that would probably be given to Dominion Premiers, if, as suggested

recently, they were asked by Mr. Lloyd George to intervene in the present conflict, and Mr. de Valera observed:-

“As I cannot anticipate what form their intervention might take or what lines of suggestion they might adopt, I cannot say what our answer would be.”

“Well, what solution do you propose?”

“A neutral Irish state whose inviolability would be guaranteed by, say, the United States and the States of the British Empire, and any other that could be secured as signatories. We claim the complete control of our destinies, but what we claim for ourselves we desire for others also. A free Ireland would never allow its harbours to be made the basis of an attack upon England by an outside power. A native Irish defence force would be many times as effective in keeping out an invader as any force that England would put here, whilst in the case of danger England’s own forces would still be available. Any pledge that Ireland will give, Ireland will keep. And with an Independent Ireland beside her Britain would be more, not less, safe than she is from foreign attack. Pride of possession, even of what does not belong to her, obscures not merely England’s sense of justice, but her commonsense.”

“Do you hope for anything from the Imperial conference?”

“Only this; the English Government is waging a cruel and unjust war upon our people, not in her own name alone but in that of the whole British Empire. I cannot believe that the peoples of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa who had themselves to fight for the freedom they now enjoy and who would fight to the last against any attempt on the part of Britain to circumscribe it, would willingly join in the suppression of liberty here. They are not slave states but free nations. They have a right to be heard when action is taken in their name, and when deeds are committed reflecting on the honour of the association of which they form a part. I believe that peoples of the Dominions are not unfriendly to the people of Ireland. The conference gives an opportunity for demonstrating that friendship, or at least for repudiating any share in the British Government’s barbarous warfare against us.”

The “Ulster Difficulty.”

“Isn’t the difficulty you have with North-East Ulster the real difficulty?” Mr. O’Sullivan asked.

“Not at all” replied the President, “the real difficulty is that the British Government claims that the people of Britain should have a voice in our affairs, and since they are 41 millions, as Mr. Lloyd George says, and we are but 4, that they should have a controlling voice. To us that is just as if Germany, having won the recent war, had annexed Belgium and met all the subsequent claims of the Belgian people with the plea that as they are not so numerous as the Germans they must submit forever to have their destinies dictated by the Germans. The East Ulster difficulty is a mere consequence of our major difficulty with England and would disappear with the settlement of it. The people of East Ulster are Irishmen, living on the same island with us, and want to remain Irishmen. In so far as they seek a measure of local autonomy, our difficulties on that head would be comparatively easy of adjustment.”

An Unconquerable People.

“In view of the immense forces opposed to you, do you expect to achieve your aim?” was the interviewer’s last question.

“Yes,” came the answer. “With the will to endure all things rather than abandon their ideal the Irish people are unconquerable. The spirit of those who march to the scaffold with the proud consciousness that they are dying for the highest human ideals, with a prayer for the achievement of these ideals for their country on their lips, is the spirit of all Ireland and will be broken only with the destruction of the last of our people.”

VOLUME 5, NUMBER 29. IRISH BULLETIN. MONDAY, 11th JULY, 1921.

AN INTERNATIONAL ISSUE.

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We print below a number of messages and statements given by President de Valera to representatives of foreign newspapers during the last week. They bring out various aspects of national policy which it may be useful at the present moment to recapitulate.

The President insists that “barbaric violence” should cease to be the deciding factor in what is an international dispute between two countries which nature intended to live as peaceful neighbours. He holds out on Ireland’s side a sincere and earnest desire for peace and expresses the hope that on England’s part a desire exists equally sincere and earnest.

To the American people he makes a special appeal not only for sympathy but for active aid in a struggle which affects America deeply not only as the home of so many millions of Irishmen, but as the country which in the world-war pledged itself to sacrifice everything to defeat the rule of force.

In two messages to the people of Denmark and the people of Norway, respectively, he asks for sympathy in our struggle from small nations whose progress and prosperity have depended in the past entirely on their possession of national independence. He looks forward to the day – not, it is to be hoped, a distant day – when Ireland, one of the oldest of the European nations, shall take her place with the rest as a free State.

He emphasises in another message the immense international importance of a peaceful issue to the age-long conflict between Ireland and England:-

“Should our hopes come to fruition, Europe and all humanity will hear with profound relief that the use of force to overcome the national rights of Ireland has been abandoned after seven centuries by one of the greatest military powers in the world and will trust that through that example the most formidable danger to a permanent peace among the nations of the world may be removed.”

Lastly he lays stress once again on the complete absence of dissension in the people for whom he speaks, and asserts, what all familiar with events in Ireland know to be true, that this unity of effort will remain unshaken.

E N D.

An Appeal for Active Aid from America.

In an interview with the correspondent of the New York "World" on July 9th, President de Valera made the following statement:-

"Ireland, whilst using such force as she could command to resist force, has always relied on the justice of her cause and on moral sanction.

"All who deprecate the use of brutal force and desire the peaceful arbitrament of international disputes have now an opportunity of using their influence with effect.

"The fundamental principles which were set aside in Paris are again at stake. The world cannot afford to look on unconcernedly. We believe that the people of America will not thus look on, but will lend their active aid to secure the solution of this secular problem on the only basis on which it can be solved – the acknowledgement of Ireland's natural right to be free.

EAMON DE VALERA."

A Message to the People of Denmark:

In response to a request for a message from the editor of "Politiken", Copenhagen, President de Valera sent the following, dated July 9th:-

"I am convinced that the people of Denmark, who know the priceless value of national freedom, cannot fail to understand and sympathise with our determination to achieve a liberty which will enable us, as it has enabled them, to develop and realise to the full our individual national life. It is our earnest hope that the hour of that achievement may now be approaching.

EAMON DE VALERA."

Norway and Ireland.

In an interview with Mr. J. S. Jonasen, correspondent of the "Dagbladet" Christiania, and other Norwegian newspapers, President de Valera made the following statement:-

"Ireland hopes that the time may now be not far distant when she, one of the oldest of the European nations, may take her stand at last among the free peoples of Europe. We feel convinced that in our effort for liberation we may count on the sympathy of the Norwegian people whose own history is a record of passionate devotion to national freedom.

"Should our hopes come to fruition, Europe and all humanity will hear with profound relief that the use of force to overcome the national rights of Ireland has been abandoned after seven centuries by one of the greatest military powers in the world and will trust that through that example the most formidable danger to a permanent peace among the nations of the world may be removed.

EAMON DE VALERA."

No Dissension.

In reply to a request from the Editor of the "New York American." President de Valera sent the following message on July 9th:-

"The people of Ireland earnestly hope that the present suspension of hostilities will be a prelude to the final cessation of an age-long attempt to crush a legitimate national aspiration by force.

"To your question as to a rumour of dissension among us, my answer is, that there is none. We are a united people acting on a well-defined principle. Those who hope for disunion as the outcome of the present situation will be disappointed now, as so often before.

EAMON DE VALERA."

"Barbaric Violence."

In reply to a direct cablegram from the United States of America referring to the "Tremendous interest throughout America in Irish peace prospects," and requesting a signed statement, the President cabled the following on July 6th:-

"We trust that the British Prime Minister's letter may prove the first step in substituting the civilised basis of right and reason for that of barbaric violence in the arbitrament of the question at issue between Ireland and Britain.

"Should the conference now initiated lead to an ultimate understanding and a lasting peace between the peoples of these islands, which has been in a state of war, or suspended war, with each other for over seven centuries and a half, they will set a worthy Christian precedent for the entire world.

"British prestige will be restored, and Young Ireland will live in history as having saved, by its courage and by its steadfastness, the ideals for which millions were led to offer up their lives in the Great War.

EAMON DE VALERA."

"No Lack of Goodwill."

The President in an interview on July 7th with the representatives of the "Chicago Tribune," and the "New York Herald," replying to a question as to what he felt about the prospects of peace said:-

"It all depends on whether the British Government really desire and have the will to seek a peaceful solution – that is, one based on right and justice. If they do, they will find no lack of goodwill on the part of the Irish people or of their representatives."

The Unity of the Irish Nation.

"America has heard much of an irreconcilable element – does it exist?" asked the interviewer.

"I am not quite sure that I know what you mean," said the President. "Some call the people of North-East Ulster 'irreconcilables,' and some apply it to our Republicans; but we must be careful not to allow ourselves to be led away by names, or by the creations of the propagandist. We should keep a firm grip on the facts as they are. There are people with strong convictions who are ready to sacrifice their lives and all they have for their convictions. They thus stand the most searching test of the sincerity with which they hold them, and it is most unfair to characterise such devotion by such misleading names.

“As for Dail Eireann and my colleagues in the Ministry, we have never at any time had even slight differences either in point of view or in policy. We are all united, and we work together in the most complete harmony, basing our position and our actions on the sovereign will of the Irish people, as ascertained and declared in repeated plebiscites.”

“Is there,” the American journalist asked, “anything in the constitution of the Irish Republic which makes it impossible to present to the Irish people any proposition coming from the British Government with respect to some new political relationship between the peoples of the two islands?”

“No,” was the clear reply.

Autonomy for North-East Ulster.

“What measure of autonomy are you willing to grant North-East Ulster?” was the last question, to which Mr. de Valera replied:-

“Such autonomy as they themselves desire and is just.”

SUPPLEMENT TO IRISH BULLETIN, VOL. 5, NUMBER 37 THURSDAY, 21ST JULY, 1921.

Irish Leaders go to London.

The other important events during the week were political. The Irish delegation, comprising President de Valera, Vice-President Arthur Griffith, Commandant R.C. Barton, T.D., and Mr. Austin Stack, T.D., Minister for Home Affairs, accompanied by the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Count Plunkett, Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Mr. Erskine Childers, T.D., left for London on July 12th, receiving en route demonstrations of support from large gatherings of Irishmen and women resident in Great Britain. At Euston Station a crowd of several thousands met the Presidential train and gave the delegation an enthusiastic welcome. The Irish leaders then drove to the Grosvenor Hotel where they established their headquarters.

Preliminary Conversations.

At 4.30 p.m. on July 14th President de Valera visited Downing Street and preliminary conversations with the British Premier were begun. As stated by the President in his letter to Mr. Lloyd George on July 8th, the object of these conversations is to discuss “upon what bases such a conference as that proposed can reasonably hope to achieve the object desired.” Mr. de Valera was accompanied to Downing Street by Mr. Art O’Brien, official representative of Dail Eireann in London, and by Commandant Barton, but the conversations with the British Premier were held privately. For two and a half hours the leaders of the two nations discussed the situation and the conversations were adjourned until the following day. Speaking at a public dinner the same evening, Mr. Lloyd George, who for two years has protested that the Republican leaders represented a minority in Ireland, spoke of President de Valera as “the chieftain of the vast majority of the Irish race.” On Friday the 15th the conversations were resumed at 11.30 a.m. and lasted until 1 p.m., after which an official statement was issued that they would “be resumed at a later date, probably on Monday.” On the evening of the 15th the British Premier sat for two hours in conference with Sir James Craig who then summoned his cabinet from Belfast.

Only One Demand.

Several British newspapers, commenting on these preliminary conversations, suggested that President de Valera had considered the acceptance of some form of Dominion Home Rule, and on Saturday, July 16th, the President issued the following statement:-

“The Press gives the impression that I have been making certain compromise demands. I have made no demand but the one I am entitled to make: that the self-determination of the Irish nation be recognised.

E N D.

VOLUME 5, NUMBER 38.

IRISH BULLETIN. FRIDAY, 22ND JULY, 1921 THE PEACE OVERTURES. A THIRD CHRONOLOGICAL RECORD OF EVENTS.

In the issues of the IRISH BULLETIN of Thursday, June 30th and Tuesday, July 12th 1921, chronological records of events relating to the present peace overtures were published. A third of these chronological records is given below covering the period of conversations in London:-

July 12th: Irish Delegation reaches London and is enthusiastically received by Irish residents. The members of the delegation are: President de Valera, Vice President Arthur Griffith, Mr. Austin Stack, Minister for Home Affairs and Commandant R.C. Barton, I.R.A. The Lord Mayor of Dublin; Count Plunkett, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Mr. Erskine Childers, T.D., accompanied the Delegation.

President de Valera in an official statement issued after his arrival in London said:-

“There is no reason why the people of these two islands should continue in enmity. It is simply a question of recognising justice as the necessary foundation for peace.”

At Orange demonstrations in Belfast members of the North-East Ulster “Parliament” denounce the British Premier for initiating the peace conversations, and condemn the truce as a surrender to a “murder gang.”

July 13th: The following official statement is issued from the Irish Delegation’s Headquarters:

“The meeting between Mr. Lloyd George and President de Valera will take place at 10 Downing street, on Thursday at half-past four p.m. (14th July 1921).”

President de Valera makes the following statement to Mr. Bisham Holmes, London correspondent of “La Nacion,” Buenos Ayres:-

“Ireland is linked by many historical ties to the nations of South America. These nations, remembering their own struggles for national freedom in the past, cannot fail to sympathise with this similar struggle of ours and pray with us for an equally happy issue.”

July 14th: The following message by President de Valera was given to a representative of "Le Journal," Paris:-

"The Irish people striving for freedom and remembering their ancient friendship with the French people, greet them on the day of their National Festival of Liberty."

French tricolour is placed beside the Irish Republican flag at Irish Delegation's Headquarters in honour of French National Festival.

At 4.30 p.m., President de Valera, accompanied by Mr. Art O'Brien, Dail Eireann representative in Great Britain, and Commandant Barton, I.R.A., visits Downing Street and sees the British Premier alone until 7 p.m. Later an official statement is issued in the following terms:-

"Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. de Valera met, as arranged, at 4.30 p.m. this afternoon at 10 Downing St. They were alone, and the conversation lasted until 7 p.m. A free exchange of views took place and relative positions were defined. The conversation will be resumed tomorrow (Friday) at 11.30 a.m."

Mr. Lloyd George, speaking at a dinner at the National Liberal Club refers to President de Valera as "the chieftain of the vast majority of the Irish race," and expresses the hope that the present discussions will end the "old, old bitter feud."

I.R.A. liaison officers appointed to join with British officers in supervising the keeping of the truce. Consultations held in several districts between British Commanders and Republican Commandants.

President de Valera in an interview with representatives of the press says he is sorry he cannot give them more information, but he feels confident they will understand that the delicacy of the situation makes it inopportune for him to issue statements or give interviews. He declares himself in favour of "open covenants openly arrived at" but says that this is not always possible. The President adds that both from the British and the Irish standpoint the outlook for peace is better than it has ever been in history.

July 15th: Conversations are resumed. The President arrives at Downing Street at 11.30 a.m. and remains in

consultation with the British Premier until shortly after 1 p.m. The following official statement is subsequently issued:- "A further conversation took place this morning between Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. de Valera, and will be resumed at a later date, probably on Monday."

Sir James Craig visits Downing street at 3 p.m. and remains until 5 p.m. No official statement is issued, but Sir James Craig after the interview sends the following message to his followers in Belfast:-

"You may rest assured that I will see to it that the Empire in whose cause our heroes nobly laid down their lives is not weakened by any action of mine. They trusted us to give nothing away, and their trust will never be betrayed."

President de Valera in a statement to the representatives of "Le Matin", Paris, says:-

"The official communiqués accurately cover the subject of the conversations.

"The attitude of the British Government has been defined on the one side, and the demand of the Irish people on the other. That demand has been time after time expressed in an unmistakable manner. There is no change whatever in that demand. It is simply the right to free national self-determination, and if peace is to come, the negotiations must be conducted between nation and nation."

July 16th: Mr. Desmond Fitzgerald, T.D., released last evening from the British Internments Camp at Curragh, Co. Kildare, travels to London and joins the President's party.

The following official statement is issued from the Headquarters of the Irish Delegation:-

"'Le Matin,' Paris, of yesterday, 15th July, attributed the following statement to President de Valera:-

'For some days past we have renounced the words 'Independent Republic,' but only if we have the substantial equivalent for it.'

"President de Valera has never at any time made this statement or any statement like it."

In reply to a cablegram from the Womens'International League for Peace, President de Valera wires:-

"Recognition of the principle of free National Self-Determination will end national wars and make it possible ultimately to build up a real league of nations."

July 17th: The President issues the following statement:-

"The Press gives the impression that I have been making certain compromise demands. I have made no demands but one – the only one I am entitled to make, that the self-determination of the Irish nation be recognised."

The Catholic members of the Delegation attend High Mass at St. George's Cathedral, Southwark at 10.30 a.m., and at the same hour the Protestant Members of the Delegation attend Matins at St. Paul's Cathedral.

In the afternoon the President visits Oxford by motor-car.

July 18th: The following statement is made by President de Valera to Mr. Petano Heathcote, special representative of the "Echo de Paris":-

"Ireland's one demand is for the unqualified right to choose freely how she shall be governed – in other words, for independence. Her only request is to be left free from British aggression and interference."

Discussions at Downing street are resumed at 4.15 p.m. The official statement issued at 6.45 p.m. states:-

"The conversations between Mr Lloyd George and Mr. de Valera were continued today at 4.15 p.m. and lasted till 6 o'clock. They will be resumed on Thursday."

(Continued p. 14)

Reflections on the War of Independence - the Drishanebeg Ambush Centenary Commemoration Address

by Jack Lane

(This Ambush called variously the Drishanebeg Ambush, the Glebe Ambush and the Millstreet Train Ambush took place on 11 February 1921 and was then unique in being a successful ambush of a troop train travelling from Cork to Tralee with the capture of much military hardware. There was one Auxiliary casualty, Sergeant "John" Boxold, and none on the Volunteer side. Frederick Edwin Boxold, Service No. 6446521, is buried at Killarney New Cemetery, where a headstone has been erected in recent times by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. He was born at Preston, Lancashire, in 1886. Within 20 metres is the grave of his fellow Royal Fusilier, Pte. A. George, killed in the Headford Junction ambush almost seven weeks later.)

I want to thank the Committee for organising this event and inviting me to speak. A good indication of their efficient and professional approach was to ask me to speak here some months ago. That is much appreciated. I also want to thank the Committee for doing this and making such an event as we have today.

I think many of you will agree that this type of event was unimaginable a few years ago. Irish history writing by our academics and commentators went through a very bad period for a number of years.

There was an attempt to give us a bad conscience about the war of independent and these types of commemorations were seen as in bad taste. The only disagreement I have with the commemorations is that they should be called celebrations but never mind.

There was an attempt to create a narrative of the War of the Independence that was designed to give us bad conscience about the whole thing because it was alleged to be a sectarian episode; that it was war against Protestants. This was incredible to anyone who had any knowledge at all of the people who fought that war or the events of the war. It was an attempt to try to prove that our state was deformed at birth, so to speak.

When I used to read such stuff I often used to think to myself of the volunteers who waited here on that cold day on 11th February 100 years ago and to try to imagine that they could possibly have something else in their minds rather than the disarming and defeating the troops on that train.

The last thing that they would have considered was anything to do with Protestants. Such a notion was too absurd to even imagine. And furthermore if the Volunteers had any such sectarian notions they should not have ever engaged at all with the good Catholics in the RIC Barracks in the town.

Weasel words.

This other narrative was full of weasel words. There were appeals to acknowledge that any accounts of ambushes like Drishanebeg should emphasise what is called our shared or inclusive history.

How any war where each side seeks to defeat and destroy the other could be shared or inclusive is mind boggling.

It defies common sense. And as the centenary commemorations are not yet over we will hear these weasel words again and again.

If we could make an analogy to best illustrate this – if one of us was assaulted on the way home here this evening and we

turned up in court black and blue tomorrow could our assailant defend himself before a judge by saying '*But your honour it was shared experience for both of us. It was an inclusive event?*' A rapist could try the same about his victim – "*It was a shared sexual experience, it was very inclusive, your honour.*" We can judge the reaction.

Did the uniformed arsonists who burned Cork city create a shared experience with the people of the city!

Another typical criticism of this type of commemoration was they should emphasise reconciliation. Yes indeed reconciliation is fine but reconciliation between what and what? The real reconciliation that was and is needed is reconciliation between the facts of the situation then and the way our historians and commentators should account for them.

But our historians and commentators seem to be on another planet sometimes. Reconciliation should be calling a spade a spade and not going in for weasel words.

The purpose of this kind of talk, these weasel words, is to explain *away* rather than explain situations. It makes nonsense of things, a mockery of our history. It is an insult to our intelligence

Fortunately these notions and this kind of narrative are on the back foot at the moment. And a person who has made a great contribution to this and could almost be described as a local woman was Meda Ryan from West Cork, because she attended Drishane Convent over the road.

What really put this new narrative on the back foot was the Government's decision to hold an event to commemorate the RIC's role in the war of Independence last year. I think many people finally woke up to what all these weasel words actually meant. This would have made our history a joke – commemorating a force that fought to prevent the state coming into existence. There was an outcry and the obscenity was abandoned. Our history was liberated from a lot of nonsense.

There may be some people who believed or were led to believe that the RIC were just policemen doing a policeman's job - but they were not. They were never policemen. It was another weasel word to call them policeman. The British Government itself made this perfectly clear during the war. In early 1919 it was proposed by some MPs in Westminster that the RIC be allowed to join the Police Union of the UK and the Chief Secretary, McPherson, refused point blank and explained that:

"It was decided by the Government that the Royal Irish Constabulary could not be permitted to join the National Union of Police and Prison Officers, in as much as the Royal Irish Constabulary is a semi-military force directly under the control of the Crown, and subject in many respects to the same conditions of employment as the army and navy forces." (March 6, 1919, Hansard, Volume 113, Series 5, column 626.)

That's calling a spade a spade!

For my sins I wasted my time by writing a letter to the *Irish Times* pointing this out but it was not published – surprise, surprise!

They were part and parcel of the Crown Forces; in fact they were central to the Crown Forces as described very accurately at the time. The Tans were recruited as a special reserve for

the RIC; the Auxiliaries were a Division of the RIC. So in commemorating the RIC we were commemorating all of these. They were all part of the RIC. The RIC being locally based acted as bloodhounds for the others as they did not have a clue about the country – where to go or who to find.

There were decent men in it of course but they resigned during the war and there was no planned commemoration for them and the one planned did not specify them though they *should* have been commemorated. They bravely resigned en masse and some mutinied.

So this planned commemoration was also a commemoration of the Tans and Auxiliaries, but it was a step too far and had to be withdrawn and played a significant role in the defeat of that Government in the subsequent election. It had become embarrassing that any Irish government would have proposed such a thing. (However, a similar event on a bigger scale is planned for this July.)

That episode is important because it changed the tone of the public discourse on the war for the better and how the events of the War should be commemorated. And it was therefore a very good thing to have happened. Some of the old nonsense had to take a back seat. It cleared the air and so once again the plain facts could be stated and prioritised properly. Spades could be called spades again.

So what were the main facts that caused the war in the first place? It did not start because we felt like a war - WWI provided enough war for everyone and they did not want more. Anyway, that was supposed to be 'the war to end all wars.' But it resulted in more wars than ever before right down to the wars of the present day. My grandmother used to say that the world went mad in 1914 and has never been right since. There was a profound truth in that because the declaration of that war on Germany and then Turkey was the most important and most disastrous event in modern history.

The Elephant in the room - the British General Election of 1918

The most basic fact of all about the war of independence is that it need not have happened at all. The most important event of all was the British General Election of 1918. That is the overwhelming fact that can never be over emphasised. The handle on which all the rest turns. That was the most democratic of all elections up to then because for the first time adult men had the vote and many women.

The electorate here elected about 75% of the seats for candidates who stood for Independence. The result could not be cleaner. No need for recounts or legal challenges that we heard so much about in other elections. Even if Donald Trump was around he could not say a word of objection.

This was more important than the 1916 Rising which would have been considered a failure if not endorsed by that election. It's simply the most important event of all.

Now a strange thing is that I have never come across a specific book on that election. A lot of references to it but just passing references. There have never been so many historians in our Universities and never so many books about the war but none on this election and its significance for Ireland.

There are dozens, hundreds, about the war for Irish Independence but a book called 'The vote for Irish Independence' is a book yet to be written.

A good example of this treatment of that election occurred last year when UCC produced one of the biggest books I ever saw called "The Atlas of the Irish revolution." It has the famous portrait of Roger Kiely from Cullen on the cover. Probably

because he looked so handsome. But his name never appears in the book. It weighed in at over 11 lbs., over 5 kilos with just under a 1000 pages, introduced by President Higgins. Glowing reviews by everybody; prizes galore, contributions by over 100 historians, the cream of the present crop, over 160 chapter headings according to subjects.

But not a single chapter/subject heading or subheading devoted to the 1918 Election. Just passing references as usual that played down its significance in every possible way – again explained away rather than explained. So despite all the work and cost our historians will not see the wood for the trees and so do many more. And therefore they miss out completely on cause and effect. Any historian worthy of the name will prioritise the facts, as well as provide them, but not in this case.

The 1918 General Election remains the elephant in the room. Everybody knows it's there but eyes are averted from its real significance. Without due regard for the 1918 Election the story of the War of Independence is Hamlet without the Prince.

Why did people vote that way?

Did they just get the notion into their heads? No. People were told that a World War had just been fought and won for 'the freedom of small nations'. The greatest war ever fought. People generally believe what governments tell them over and over again and what they claim to be fighting a war for. And not only that, the people's own party, the Irish Parliamentary Party, was in total agreement with the government on this. On the promises made about a quarter of a million Irishmen from home and abroad fought in that war and anything up to 50,000 were killed. About 10 million others were killed. Think about that!

And spare a thought for all the Germans, Turks and others the Irish killed. They are rarely mentioned. If the Irish in the British Army killed at least one each of the 'enemy' we are talking of hundreds of thousands being killed for "the freedom of small nations" – for the freedom of Ireland!

Mick O'Leary from Inchigeela killed 8 Germans in one incident (he killed one of them, he explained, because he did not like the look of him) and got the VC for it from King George at Buckingham Palace. If he was in any way typical the numbers they killed are huge indeed.

And what had the Germans and Turks ever done to Ireland to deserve killing them by the thousand? The only intervention by the Turks was to give money towards the so-called famine and German scholars almost created the Gaelic revival and they certainly never hindered Irish freedom.

The whole thing was an obscene, monstrous fraud. This affected everybody in the country. Naturally people expected that after such massive sacrifices of dead and injured and promises made that getting independence would be a walk in the park. They did not vote for more war. They had enough of that.

Also, the whole world was for national independence. The Americans joined the war to ensure the same with their declaration of '14 points' which boiled down to the rights of nations to self determination. The new Russian government left the war for the same reason and encouraged national independence in all the colonies of the European Empires and they are all now independent states in the world. National freedom was the flavour of the era, its *zeitgeist*. The British, the Americans and the Russians were all for it.

And we sometimes forget that there had been an example of another country voting for independence and getting it a few years earlier in Europe – without any war, without a shot being fired. And that happened not a million miles away. In 1905 Norway voted to be independent of Sweden which had ruled it

since medieval times and it was conceded without a shot being fired. It was accepted that this was the civilised way to deal with this type of issue – self determination.

The British response - contempt

But what was the British government's attitude to the Election- their Election? Not only did they ignore the result - there was total contempt for it. The Irish will get over it. And the British had good reason to believe this. They had put down such notions by the Irish before. This was spelt out clearly. A Major Street wrote a book to make the point. The Irish would come to their senses and forget this notion that they could run an independent country; so the elected government was proscribed and hunted down.

Some people keep insisting today that there was a peaceful way to deal with this but there was not. Where is the evidence for that possibility? No doubt most people wished there was a peaceful way and if wishes were horses we would all go for a ride.

The unexpected happened. The Irish did not vote for war but they took to war to defend the government that they had voted for. I think we surprised ourselves. The Irish took themselves seriously. Citizen soldiers emerged all over the country. And the war was sanctioned by more elections during the war – the urban and rural local elections during 1920 and an even more impressive result is general election in June 1921 when Sinn Fein were returned unopposed in every single seat in the 26 counties. And after about two and half years of war and these elections in support of it the British conceded a Truce to people they had just recently described as a “murder gang.” An admittance that they could not militarily win despite being the greatest power the world had ever seen on whose Empire the sun never set.

But there is no more experienced state for waging war than the British. That was how it had become the most powerful Empire the world. And for Britain wars don't end when the shooting stops if the objective has not been achieved. It simply takes another form. There is more than one way to skin a cat. Politics become war by other means and this happened here. For example, WWI did not end on 11 November 1918. There was a food blockade of Germany that starved about ¾ million of the German population; that's how the war finished and planted the seeds for the next one.

After the Truce the British government decided that at all costs Ireland was not going to be ‘lost’ as they would put it. The secret of Irish success had been the unity of all the forces military and political. And it's not rocket science to decide how that could be frustrated and stymied – create a division in that unity. And that technique was a tried and tested one – split the opponent's forces; split the Independence movement.

Lloyd George

And the British had a particular genius in charge for a task like that in David Lloyd George, the *Welsh Wizard*. And wizard he was. He was fit for anything - war, threats of war, terror, promises, lies, cajolery, flattery, trickery, guile, bluff, etc. You name them Lloyd George had them all and would use them all and play them all like the notes of a musical instrument. He was an artist at it. There was ditty composed about him, by a fellow Welshman I believe, who knew him well and he assumed that when he passed to the other side he would go straight to hell and the ditty went:

*Lloyd George no doubt
When his life runs out
Will ride in a flaming chariot
He'll sit in state on a red hot plate
Between Satan and Judas Iscariot
And on that day the Devil will say*

*'My place of pre-eminence fails
So I'll move a bit higher
Away from the fire
To make room for this fellow from
Wales.'*

That's who the Republican government was faced with.

Negotiations ended after five months under the threat of ‘*immediate and terrible war*’ by Lloyd George unless what is called the ‘*Treaty*’ was signed.

And who has not heard of the Treaty? But read it and the word treaty is not mentioned in any of its 18 clauses or in the Annex list.

What is a Treaty?

For a start it is very odd for something that is called a treaty not to say itself that it is a treaty -because it was not a treaty. Paper never refused ink but calling it a treaty is another weasel word. It was called officially *Articles of Agreement between Great Britain and Ireland*. But not every agreement is a treaty. The Republic of Ireland was not mentioned or recognised as a party to the agreement.

A Treaty is an agreement between two or more independent states mutually recognised as such and freely entered into. This was not the case here. Ireland was treated not as an independent Republic which it was but as a subservient Dominion of the British Empire and threatened with war if they did not sign, ‘*immediate and terrible war*,’ and what Lloyd George had in mind was the method used to defeat the Boers. Blockhouses and the first concentration camp were invented by Britain, to win that war. Also one side was asked to take oath of allegiance to the other. Such threats and oaths are not part of any treaty worthy of the name. The British Empire never made a treaty with one of its Dominions because they were not equal to the Empire. It would be oxymoronic to suggest any such thing as a treaty. A good example of a real treaty is the Treaty of Rome.

TDs in the Dáil, including Seán Moylan, and particularly Dr. Francis Ferran* questioned calling it a Treaty and pressurised Griffith into consulting Lloyd George about it and other issues for clarification. And he did so via Austin Stack and Lloyd George confirmed it was not a Treaty. But like the RIC being called policemen, the name sticks.

Griffith explained to the Dáil:

“MR. GRIFFITH:

The questions, I think, which the Deputies refer to were sent across by Mr. Stack. They are:

‘(1) whether he had any communication, direct or indirect, from the British Government, in connection with the Treaty?’

The only communication I had was this produced here, except one where he (Lloyd George, J.L.) stated it was not a Treaty, and I got the official title: ‘Articles of Agreement between Ireland and Great Britain’.”

(Dáil debate, 10/1/1921).

Birkenhead defended it on the same basis in the House of Lords, see e.g., the debates there on 16/12/1920 and 23/7/1923.

The Earl of Midleton and others were aghast at the idea of a treaty with a Dominion. The British Empire does not have treaties with subordinates.

So what was this agreement? It was repeatedly called an ‘*instrument*’ in the text itself– never a treaty. An instrument for what? An instrument like a hatchet to split the Republican forces. It was what it said on the tin!

The imposition of this instrument by the threat of war led to a conflict within the united Irish forces. And already the doomsters are at it to give us a bad conscience by describing this conflict as a civil war.

And again paper will never refuse ink about a so-called 'civil war' that followed this threat of renewed war. But it is was not a civil war no matter how often it is said - no more than the 'Articles of Agreement' was a Treaty or that RIC were policemen.

What the conflict was about was how to respond to the threats that went with the *Articles of Agreement*. The reaction to it is what we read about but the cause is what matters. The cause was and is a bigger issue than the conflict itself.

Here today is not the context to pass judgement on how different people reacted to the threat of renewed war. They were all faced with what would now be called an existential threat and these are not easy to deal with. I do have sympathy with all politicians facing such dilemmas and dealing with millions of people in the process.

Trying to get these Articles accepted depended on those threats of renewed war. Liam Mellows put it very well - acceptance was dependant on the fear of the people not the will of the people. Votes based on fear and terror have no moral authority whatsoever. And the Dáil could debate the Agreement forever but could never ratify or approve it.

The winners of the debate had to traipse over to Dublin Castle and become the unelected *Government of Southern Ireland* to approve it and thereby deny the legitimacy and authority of the Dáil. That was perfectly clear in the *Articles of Agreement*. Therefore the Dáil never did approve or ratify these Articles because it simply could not.

De Valera was clear on this:

"We have said from the start that there could be no question of ratification of this Treaty. It is altogether ultra vires in the sense of making it a legal instrument." ([Dáil Éireann, 20 Dec. 1921](#))

And the Free Staters, in their hearts, agreed. Kevin O'Higgins said:

"I first wish to say a few words as to my personal views. I do believe and agree that ratification of the Treaty is technically a breach of the mandate of this Dáil and is technically ultra vires." ([Dáil Éireann, 7 Dec 1921](#))

And after the 'debate' both sides agreed on a new Constitution and a Pact to fight the next Election but the British rejected both as a concession to independence and pushed matters to war to insist on the terms of the Articles of Agreement being applied. Again, cause and effect must be respected.

What is a civil war?

There have been many. There has been civil war in several countries - England, America, Spain, Russia, China etc. What were these about? They were wars between people of a country who wanted totally different systems of government for their countries. In England, there was the Puritan Parliament (of Cromwellians) versus a monarchy; in the U.S.A. an American federation of states or a Union; in Spain a republic or fascism, etc.

In other words completely different systems of government.

But here that was not the case. Because both sides here were Republicans and had fought together for four years to establish a Republic and wanted a Republic and all agreed to have a Republic later.

The threats created a real dilemma. And people reacted differently to the threat of renewed war. That does not make it a civil war. Different policy conflicts do not make a civil war. But 'civil war' is used with abandon by our commentators.

Civil war wrecks societies – Irish society was not wrecked by this divide.

But calling it a civil war has a purpose, a psychological purpose. It is again a very good way to give us a bad conscience about ourselves. Like the effort to give us a bad conscience about the war of independence itself.

The subliminal purpose is that we could not really cope and went in for a form of faction fighting or 'the fighting Irish' syndrome took over once we were on our own. We could not cope.

It is in effect an insult, another weasel word, and a way to dismiss the real issue and its source originating in the *Articles of Agreement* - and nowhere else.

Why do we celebrate this Ambush in the war of Independence?

The Volunteers in this Ambush helped set up a state that lasted for over a 100 years, 102 and one month old to be exact. That is an achievement in itself. States have come and gone in that time. Empires have come and gone. And some have been destroyed before our eyes in recent years. No state is guaranteed an easy life. International relations between states are dog eat dog. Some peoples have not yet achieved statehood despite great efforts and they would dearly love to be in our position today - ask the Scots, Basques, Catalans Palestinians, Kurds - and many other stateless nations that we do not hear much about.

But not only has it survived it is a state that has maintained a democratic system intact for all that time. It never succumbed to totalitarianism of the right or the left; has not been destroyed by war and invasions; has not waged war on anybody; has sought the very opposite. It avoided the world Depression of the 1930s, industrialised itself in that decade, supported by Keynes, avoided the destruction of WWI. And Churchill had plans ready for chemical warfare here.

The vast majority of states today did not exist in 1919. You will find that the number of states that can claim such an unbroken record of continuous democracy for over 100 years are few and far between – you will not need all your fingers to count them. And the Economist Intelligence Unit tells us we were the eight most democratic country in 2020.

This is therefore a very successful state. It had and has of course all the problems that states have - crimes, corruption, scandals, horrors, economic problems, etc.; some are unique to us; and some are the problems of success. But every state dealing with millions of people has these types of problems and we have dealt with them as well or as badly as anybody else. All states have permanent, ongoing problems to solve.

But our commentators report our problems as if they were unique to us and tend to use them as a condemnation of the state itself and give us the impression that maybe we took a wrong turning in going for Independence. That we are some sort of failed state as the jargon has it. We are not. We have met the test of any state – we have survived and thrived and we have done so thanks to the men and the women who helped them carry out this Ambush 100 years ago and the ongoing conviction of the people for independence that they showed in the Election of 1918.

For that we are right to commemorate and celebrate what they did. And this is why I am delighted to be part of these celebrations.

*Dr. Francis Ferran was TD for the [Sligo-Mayo East](#) constituency and re-elected in 1922. He died while imprisoned in the Curragh by the Free State in 1923.