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The Tussle Over The Protocol

Edwin Poots believed that the world was created by God six thousand years ago, therefore he was a bigoted, reactionary Ulster Unionist, incapable of making terms with Catholic modernity. His policy was to legislate the Irish Language Act with Sinn Fein, settle down the Six Counties during the next few years, and unify the Unionists in the hope of presenting a Unionist majority when the Protocol comes up for ratification by Stormont on its fourth anniversary.

He has been removed from the DUP leadership after less than a month as a conciliator of nationalism, and he is to be replaced by Jeffrey Donaldson, who came to the DUP from the old Ulster Unionist Party when it made a formal commitment to implement the 1998 Agreement.

The UUP drove itself onto the rocks under the leadership of Lord Trimble, advised by Eoghan Harris and Lord Bew of the Official IRA.

Donaldson had jumped ship from the UUP to the DUP in 2004, followed shortly afterwards by Arlene Foster. Nevertheless, they were 'moderates' by Dublin reckonings.

Donaldson proposes to be disruptive where Poots proposed to be conciliatory. But it seems that he does not believe that God made the world 6,000 years ago, therefore he must be sound basically. His election was welcomed by Dublin on that ground—Dublin meaning the *Irish Times* these days.

The *Irish Times* was set up to be the British newspaper in Ireland, and therefore it survived over the decades as a major newspaper with invisible means of support. It flourished during the forty years of intensive Anglicisation, when Ireland

continued on page 2

Jack O'Connor and the Border Poll Response to an Address to the AGM of the Labour Party, Trade Union Section, on International Workers' Day, 1st May 2021

Jack O'Connor has been Chairman of the Labour Party since 2017, a respected former Trade Union leader, a former General President of SIPTU (2003-17) and a past President of the ICTU (2009-11). For that reason, his views on the matter of a Border Poll matter. And the extensive coverage of his 1st May speech in the Irish national press underlined that.

Unfortunately, Jack O'Connor's full speech is not available on the *www.labour.ie* site, so relevant sections of it are cited at length below.

O'Connor cites

"the uniqueness of the Trade Union Congress as the only all island mass organisation in civil society which has successfully transcended all divisions throughout its 127-year history, having retained the allegiance of virtually all

continued on page 2, Column 3

The Mother and Baby Homes Controversy

In early June, Professor Mary Daly, a leading historian and a member of the three-person Commission that produced the Report on Mother and Baby Homes, defended that Report at a webinar organised by Oxford University.

Daly's action provoked anger because the members of the Commission had turned down two previous invitations to

report to an Oireachtas Committee regarding the Report. Arising from the row, a third invitation, strongly endorsed by Taoiseach Martin and Tanaiste Varadkar, was issued; and this too was declined by the Commissioners. Professor Daly clearly attaches more importance to a British university than to the institutions of Irish democracy, something that anyone familiar with the historians who have

advised the Government on the Decade of Centenaries, of which she is one, will not be surprised by.

The controversy has since moved from the impropriety of Daly's Oxford speech to the manner in which witness testimony was treated in the Report and the Report's conclusions on where ultimate responsibility for the harsh treatment lies—the Commissioners placed the blame on the males who impregnated the women in the first place and on the women's immediate families,

continued on page 7

CONTENTS

	Page
The Tussle Over The Protocol. Editorial	1
Jack O'Connor And The Border Poll. Mark Langhammer	1
The Mother And Baby Homes Controversy. Dave Alvey	1
Readers' Letters: Ivor Kenna's Last Letter. <i>The Anglo-Saxons</i>	
Israel: The Only Functioning Democracy In The Middle East? Wilson John Haire	5
The O'Connor Column : Not In The Irish Times ! Unpublished Letters:	
1. <i>Britain And The 1918 Election.</i> Manus O'Riordan	
2. <i>Professor Mary Daly's Oxford University Admission.</i> Niall Meehan	
3. <i>President Condemns IRA War Of Independence Executions.</i> Brian O'Donogue (grandson of Frank Busteed, Cork)	
4. <i>Op-Ed On Housing Solutions.</i> Philip O'Connor	6
Clearing The Air. Donal Kennedy	11
Es Ahora. Julianne Herlihy (Elizabeth Bowen: A Review of Patricia Laurence's Biography, Part 14)	12
Unionism In Crisis. Pat Walsh	14
The UK Times, Its Belfast Courts Reports, And Its Official IRA Veteran STRINGER. Manus O'Riordan	15
What Is Meant By Socialism In Northern Ireland? Wilson John Haire	18
Peter Taylor's 'Northern Ireland'. Brendan Clifford	21
Biteback: West Cork History Festival: What Is It? Unpublished Letter to 'Southern Star', <i>Jack Lane</i>	24
Political Economy: Dublin Port Rail Link To Mayo Suspended; Modern Monetary Theory!	25
Destroying The EU And Replacing It With A Clone! <i>Fergus O Rahallaigh</i>	25
Does It Stack Up? Michael Stack (Wages And Salaries; Tourist Industry)	33

Labour Comment, edited by **Pat Maloney**:
How Collective Bargaining Can Benefit Staff, Employers
And The Economy
Kevin Callinan (Forsa General Secretary)
(back page)

was Britain's second vote in Europe. But Britain abandoned it when it concluded that it had done as much damage as was prudent to the European project from within and decided to resume national sovereignty.

This was a matter of fine practical judgment. Misdirecting Europe from within required that something should be contributed to the European development too, and that ran the risk of becoming entangled in Europe beyond the point of no recovery. For the watchful and purposeful minority that has been an active element in the British body politic, that point was reached with the consolidation of the Euro. Britain therefore left the EU. And the *Irish Times* was cut adrift from its source.

About a century ago, when a degree of Irish statehood became a certainty, the *Irish Times* had to become two-faced. Its response to Brexit demonstrated how much this had damaged its sense of what England actually is. It bombarded the Brexiters with arguments about economic advantage

and jibes against narrow nationalism. But central to English existence for half a millennium has been an exclusive sense of national destiny as the only thing worth living for. It is narrow or broad according as expediency suggests, and its abiding horror is of losing the unique sense of itself which it acquired in the mid-16th century, and of becoming subject to the understanding of others in a way that would enable them to manipulate it. In manipulative relations, England must be the manipulator.

The EU now challenges it on that ground. It aims to detach Northern Ireland from it by means of the Protocol. An influential group within the Tory Party is determined that this will not happen. Jeffrey Donaldson—who seems to have been all his adult life a professional politician, and whose first job was as private secretary to Enoch Powell—is a member of that group. He is much more British State-orientated than Edwin Poots—a farmer—more amendable to local accommodations.

Jack O'Connor

continued

organised workers in both. Your event is also taking place against the centenary of the establishment of Northern Ireland on Monday May 3rd. In this regard I invite you to focus on the debate around a Border Poll which is intensifying against the background of Brexit, the potential of Scottish independence and the shifting demographics of Ulster”.

Referring to “*the verbiage emanating from the three parties of the Nationalist/Republican tradition*”, O'Connor notes that:

“On one hand Sinn Fein is repeatedly calling for a poll imminently, while offering very little in terms of detail on a vision for the ‘New Ireland’. Meanwhile, both Fine Gael and Fianna Fail are emphasising a requirement for a process of deliberative consultation before it is called, without bringing forward any legislative proposal for a forum to facilitate it. It would seem all of them are relying on the debate about whether or when the poll should be called as means of avoiding commitment on any detailed vision of Ireland post-unification”.

O'Connor lauds former Labour leader, Brendan Howlin, for his repeated calls for the establishment of a forum or assembly to consider what a United Ireland would mean. In particular, O'Connor rails—

“against any proposition that a vibrant sustainable democracy can be constructed on the basis of a sectarian headcount, most especially one which results in a 50% plus 1, conclusion”,

arguing it would result in a “*carnival of reaction*”— that:

“amidst all the controversy around flags, anthems and emblems, the real material interests of the great majority of the people which are encapsulated in the term ‘Economic Equality’, will be kicked down the road once again”.

Not without merit, O'Connor notes that the Nationalist/Republican parties “*cannot decide when the border poll is called*” and calls-out a failure to—

“ address the responsibility of offering a coherent, credible, and attractive vision of the ‘United Ireland’, which is supposedly the ‘raison d’etre’ for their existence.”

O'Connor chides the Labour Party and movement for its own reluctance to challenge ourselves

“with thinking through the parameters of a constitutional arrangement which could potentially gain the allegiance of the ‘Irish Irish’, the ‘British Irish’, (i.e., ‘Unionist’) and the New Irish, addressing

legitimate apprehensions and providing a basis upon which we can collectively share our beautiful island”.

He lauds “*a thoughtful and well-crafted paper*” entitled, ‘*The political, economic and legal consequences of Irish reunification*’, delivered to Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge by Deputy Jim O Callaghan TD, Fianna Fail, on 23rd March, notably O’Callaghan’s requirement for a totally new constitution.

O’Callaghan’s proposals specify a requirement for ‘Unionist’ ministers in all Governments post-unification. He also advocates the retention of the arrangements acknowledging both UK and Irish Citizenship which currently apply, as well as a strengthened ‘East -West’ dimension.

O’Connor fully endorses O’Callaghan and goes further:

“I believe that a new constitution should specify a significant minimum requirement in terms of the number of ‘Unionist’, (i.e., elected representatives of the ‘British/Irish’ people of Ulster), ministers and the proportion of cabinet seats they would occupy, so as to avoid any suggestion of ‘tokenism’. In addition, I would argue for the retention of a devolved administration in the area which currently constitutes ‘Northern Ireland’, reformed to facilitate the development of an ‘opposition’, but subject to a requirement for a cross community administration with distribution of ministerial portfolios’ on a strict 50:50 ratio as between the democratically elected representatives of both identities. These provisions should be underpinned by a requirement for majorities in both communities in the entire Island, in any referendum to amend them”.

All these measures are essential to offer reassurance against the danger of any form of sectarian majoritarianism in reverse, which must be absolutely primary. However, as a secondary consideration, they could open the way to a bespoke agreement, involving both Britain and the EU, in which the North would continue to enjoy the ‘best of both worlds’ status on trade, with the UK subvention being phased out over a prolonged period in order to enable economic growth to help bridge the fiscal gap.

O’Connor recognises that:

“any formula along these lines as ‘institutionalising sectarianism’, but it’s simply about recognising the reality on the ground”

before going on, perhaps unwisely, to cite Belgium, as a comparable modern, culturally and ethnically diverse, European Country to be followed! He notes—

“With Cabinet positions distributed strictly on a 50:50 basis (although the

Flemings outnumber the Walloons again by almost 2:1; constitutional arrangements, which require a 2/3rds majority to amend by referendum; sophisticated systems of checks and balances including the extensive devolution of power to regional parliaments”.

IS BELGIUM THE MODEL TO FOLLOW?

O’Connor presumes that —

“a Constitutional Convention with equal representation from both traditions and possibly the ‘New Irish’ as well, would be established to draft a new constitution, after polls in both jurisdictions approved unification”.

O’Connor’s wide-ranging speech is padded-out to take account of the “*identity*” question, concerns around housing rights, high quality health care universally available and free at the point of use, pensions, and rights to representation at work for the purpose of collective bargaining on pay and conditions of employment. Fair enough.

O’Connor urges the Trade Union Movement and the Left, as custodians of the legacy of Connolly —

“to reach out to Trade Unionists North and South and to others on the Left, to promote the idea of a Common Platform to this end, eschewing any semblance of sectarian majoritarianism”.

“The proposition of such a Platform... must offer a detailed vision of an entirely new Republic of ‘Shared Ireland’ in which all of us irrespective as to whether we are ‘Irish Irish’, or ‘British Irish’ or ‘New Irish’ and our children and their children of the generations not yet born can live in peace, harmony and prosperity based on the principles of mutual respect, individual liberty, and economic and social equality. As democrats we understand that the real strength of a Democracy lies not in head counts, but in its capacity to value and protect the interests of minorities”.

So, what is to made of Jack O’Connor’s pitch?

O’Connor makes a fair point that a ‘*prospectus*’ for a united Ireland is essential, much in the way that the SNP-led Scottish Government produced ‘*Scotland’s Future*’, a detailed proposal of more than 600 pages in 2013, in advance of *Indy-Ref1*. No such equivalent has been attempted, either by the Republic’s Government or by pro-unity proponents. O’Connor is correct in calling for this. Otherwise, how will voters know what they are voting for? And the proposal for a Forum or constituent or constitutional assembly to develop a legislative proposal is uncontentious in principle, providing that it is representative.

It is surprising that the Chair of the Labour Party should divert so significantly from the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, where a simple majority in a Border Poll suffices. A simple majority was good enough to take the UK out of the European Union.

And, after over 100 years of existence, if the Northern Ireland entity cannot retain the confidence of even 50% of its votes, does it deserve to exist?

I say ‘*No*’.

In reality, to produce a Unity majority, a Border Poll in Northern Ireland would require some Protestants to vote for it.

And the key constituency (in my opinion) of the Catholic middle class cannot automatically be taken as certain to vote for unity. That constituency, even during the conflict, consistently showed a large minority in favour of remaining in the UK. What appears to ‘swing’ this constituency is the aggravating aspect of Northern Ireland and the vitriolic rhetoric of some within Protestant politics.

What about retaining the “*prison*” of the Northern Ireland entity?

Jack O’Connor – despite his long and distinguished service in the labour movement – appears not to have noticed the degree to which ‘Northern Ireland’ represents a prison, a cage, a severe containment against the development of left of centre politics here.

The entity of Northern Ireland is not a state. It is a quarantined region of the UK state where no-one can elect the Government. Labour and democratic socialists cannot vote out a rotten, radical-right (arguably anarchist-right) UK Government. We cannot vote for a UK Labour Party alternative. In case Jack hasn’t noticed, Northern voters can only vote for losers (ie. parties that will not form the Government).

By way of analogy, I don’t know if Jack enjoys a flutter, but I invite him to imagine going into the bookies in Belfast to back a few horses in the Westminster horse race of a Saturday. He could study the form, submit his docket, offer his money, only to be told at the counter that his bet couldn’t be accepted. Why, he’d ask? Because, he’ll be told, one or two of the horses he’d backed might win! How long does Jack think such a bookie should last?

The Northern Ireland entity is more accurately described as a ‘Bantustan’, with its own ‘homeland’ parliament. A rather

well-subsidised Bantustan, for sure, but a Bantustan nonetheless.

And the people of Northern Ireland, over a hundred years since the UK's women (and working-class) got the vote, have yet to join the universal franchise.

In the event of a unity vote, that's the prison Jack O'Connor wishes to recreate and jail us within in a new Ireland.

For many Labour people here, myself included, a Border Poll is about achieving statehood, about joining the franchise, about getting a real vote, and using it to elect a better Government. For the first time. It's about escape. Escape from limbo, escape from permanent stasis, escape from a UK state that has no intention of admitting us to the franchise and escape from the sectarian or communal grind that infects every single issue in the north.

Access to governmental politics isn't some sort of abstract democratic notion. The State is a player. It sets the tax rate, determines economic and social policy, decides if our young people go to war, and provides a strong, inexorable gravitational 'pull' away from communal positions. The patronage of the State and its arms-length bodies orientates people towards it.

The question of "*Who Governs?*" and "**In whose interest?**" predominates. And within that ambit, there's little room for inter-communal 'grit', no traction or nonsense about flags, marches or cultural and identity wars.

Jack O'Connor further argues that the Northern Ireland Assembly should be "*reformed to facilitate the development of an 'opposition'*". The only person arguing this line is the *Traditional Unionist Voice's* Jim Allister! In case Jack is unaware, the Assembly was designed within the Good Friday Agreement not to have an Opposition. The arrangements are designed as a series of largely autonomous Departmental fiefdoms where Ministers are nominated by their Party based on party strength.

It takes for granted that there are broadly two electorates in Northern Ireland. And, on election day, there are two elections. There is no 'Cabinet' as ordinarily understood. An over-arching Executive does its best to knit an overall *Programme for Government* together, but often struggles.

The devolved arrangements work best when external pressure (from the UK or RoI Governments, the USA or the EU) is applied. Left to its own devices, Stormont deadlocks. It could work if all parties adopted a consistently low-key and anodyne approach. This

is hardly likely in current circumstances. Otherwise, Stormont is more "*shared-out power*" than "*power-sharing*". It is inherently unstable and (like Belgium) is not a system of government that should be recommended to any other unfortunate nation or jurisdiction.

BELGIUM AND NORTHERN IRELAND – DOES STABILITY NOT COUNT?

The proposition to retain the current Stormont devolved Assembly arrangements after a Border Poll vote for unity defies belief.

The first step for the Irish Left and Union movement is acceptance that a single unit of devolved government at Stormont has not worked and will not work. It failed in 1972, 1974, 1975, in 1982-86, and in the 1996 Forum. Despite the best efforts of all and sundry, it failed four times between 1998 and 2003. Nine failures in 30 years.

Since then, I've lost count of the collapses, including the three-year prorogation from 2017-2020 after the RHI debacle. Smell the coffee.

A single regional Stormont Assembly doesn't work. 'Northern Ireland' is perhaps the least suited region in Europe for devolved Government. That solid fact has been positively tested to destruction. Let's accept this and move on to pragmatic measures with some hope of success.

DEVOLVING POWER – TO COUNTIES:

If, within a new Ireland, more devolved administration is required, the easiest way to do this is for additional powers and resources to shift to Local Government.

Devolution to local Councils cuts with the grain. Most people, North and South, Protestant and Catholic, have an affinity with their County. The County is an Elizabethan era administrative concept, but devotedly accepted by all.

A simple model would be to forget about Stormont and instead reform Local Government, based largely on County units. This could be popular. Northern Ireland's current eleven Council configuration could be reduced to seven, with an urban Belfast City Council and six County Councils, similar to the configuration in the Republic.

In the North, barring a minor hiccup after the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement, Councils have been largely stable institutions. They could receive significantly more powers and resources, with in-built protections to ensure political fairness and equality.

As for Belgium, on Sunday 20th June 2021, Belgium broke its own standing record (from 2010-11) for the longest political crisis and period without an elected Government. It was 592 days since the previous government, led by former Prime Minister Charles Michel, collapsed over inter-party tensions

on migration in December 2018.

The Northern Ireland government collapsed on 16th January 2017, after Martin McGuinness resigned in protest over the Renewable Heat Incentive scandal and clocked up over 1,000 days without government, eclipsing even '*poor little Belgium*' before restoration in 2020. At the time of writing, with the DUP in some disarray, the Assembly looks set for a further collapse under the weight of the challenges of an Irish Language Act and in respect of the Brexit Protocol. And Jack O'Connor wants to retain this bastion of instability?

UNIONIST REPRESENTATION AS OF RIGHT?

The first lesson for Jack O'Connor is there are few if any Unionists in Northern Ireland. Protestants, yes – Unionists, no longer.

This distinction was well understood by Charles Haughey who once commented that it would be very difficult to absorb a million Unionists within a united Republic, but a million Protestants would be less problematic.

If the north was better understood, it would be clear to Jack and other southern commentators that the Protestants aren't very interested in you. As a body with a degree of '*national*' coherence, the "PUL" (Protestant Unionist Loyalist) community will not be interested in your accommodations. They want to be left alone.

The retention of Stormont, or the idea that the constitution should specify a significant minimum number of 'Unionist' representatives in Cabinet (or 50% representation within a Constitutional Convention) as of right will simply be brushed off. Unionists don't care about you and will brush-off well-meant accommodations of this nature. Those you seek to assuage, won't be assuaged. They want to be left alone, They want to be left 'unfettered' - a term often articulated by David Trimble.

The problem today is that being "*left alone*" isn't an option. The only thing that works on Unionists is to create facts. And Unionists take defeat surprisingly well. Post-prorogation in 1972 there were monster quasi-fascist Vanguard rallies which ultimately came to nought. After the seminal Loyalist victory to resist the Sunningdale accord in 1973-4, it took only a year before Unionists sneaked back into a Stormont Convention. After the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985 and the significant Loyalist protests arising out of the period, within two years Unionists were in Duisberg (Germany) trying to cobble together a new Stormont. Following the 1998 Good Friday Agreement it took a bit longer, but by 2006 the main anti-Agreement body of opinion, the DUP, found a fig-leaf in the *St Andrews*

Agreement to enable them to kneel before the new realities.

There is no need for special protections. The best protection is a Proportional Representation electoral format that will allow residual Protestant community parties to enjoy a new status as "king-makers" in a new Ireland Parliament. And, after a period of protest, they'll be in it, representing their constituencies and taking their salaries.

By all means create equality protections, don't discriminate, treat everyone fairly, without fear or favour. There may be protest, even some mayhem, but it will be localised, nihilistic and anarchic, limited largely to working-class PUL communities. Given time, it can be policed in ever decreasing circles. Bearing in mind that all loyalist paramilitaries are deeply infiltrated by police and state agencies, whatever resistance arises will be both incoherent and temporary.

COMMON PLATFORM FOR TRADE UNIONISTS?

On its centenary, it is widely accepted that Northern Ireland is a failed entity. For many years, southern (and northern nationalist) opinion was that Partition was the central problem. Partition, though, did not generate a 25 year-long conflict. It was the aggravating entity of Northern Ireland that did that. Opinion in the Republic of Ireland has traditionally focused on Partition, without taking full account of how aggravating the entity of Northern Ireland is. It doesn't understand this, is impervious to it and Jack O'Connor is not alone in this.

Northern Ireland is abnormal by design, an imperial construct to retain purchase on the island as a whole. Until Brexit, it is arguable that the UK's purchase of the whole island was going swimmingly.

The idea of a border-poll provides the opportunity to end the constraints of 'Northern Ireland'. It would be a great pity and a remarkable "own goal" to host a border poll for the purpose of retaining Stormont and re-establishing the aggravations of Northern Ireland entity. Jack O'Connor is a decent man, with a long and proud record of serving working people, North and South - but there would be no better way to fan the flames of sectarianism than that he proposes.

As a common platform for the labour and trade union movement, Jack O'Connor's suggestions are dangerous and should be set-aside.

Mark Langhammer (Labour Party member, registered in the Party's Trade Union section.) June 2021

Ivor Kenna's Last Letter

It is with great regret that we learn of the death in London of Ivor Kenna of the Finsbury Communist Association, an Anti-Revisionist and campaigner for national rights, He died on Thursday, 3rd June.

As Flo Kenna has told us: "He really enjoyed your publications".

Ivor was born on 28th July 1931, so he just missed his 90th birthday.

Flo and her husband were true comrades: they were married for sixty years.

A sad loss.

The Anglo-Saxons

I was very interested to read Brendan Clifford's quotation from Sir Charles Dilke: "*The Anglo-Saxon is the only extirpating race on earth*". The Anglo-Saxons extirpated the Maoris, until the Maoris stopped them, the Australian aborigines to some extent, the Tasmanians complete, the North American nations, to some extent.

New Zealand, Australia, Tasmania and North America are in temperate climates, suitable for Anglo-Saxon settlement.

Nearer home there were white Christian nations to deal with. If the inhabitants were prepared to become English-speaking they would play a useful role in the British Armed Forces alongside Englishmen in conquering as much of the world as possible.

The Cornish were to be treated as English (see John Angarrack's book *Our Future Is History*).

The Scottish and Welsh languages were banged out of their speakers by such devices as the Welsh Not.

Ireland was more of a problem. Seventeenth century English population experts such as Petty seriously discussed getting rid of the Irish out of Ireland by any means necessary and settling English people there.

Later on in the 1840s, potato blight spread remarkably quickly to Ireland and North-West Scotland, leaving England untouched.

The Penal Laws did have some success in turning Catholics into Protestants.

Henry of Navarre, who turned Catholic to become King of France said "Paris is worth a mass".

Irish people who turned Protestant were of the opinion that material possessions and higher social status are worth not having a mass.

Ivor Kenna

Israel: The Only Functioning Democracy In The Middle East?

The hoary old claim about being the only Middle East democracy was repeated in the Guardian on 30th May 2021.

You seize someone's country, ethnic cleanse it, set up your invented nation, bring about a political system only for the settlers, continue to harass the native population, demand recognition for your falsehood, and then call it a democracy.

Northern Ireland (the Six Counties) was called a democracy during its monopoly Unionist period. True, if you overlooked the 6-county out of the 9-county Ulster setup, which gave Unionism a never-ending majority, at the time, and true if you were a unionist in opposition to the main body of Unionism, but pointless for the few Nationalist MPs at Stormont.

Much like the former South African white minority government. They had an Afrikaner opposition opposing an Afrikaner government. This was irrelevant to the numerically huge black population.

Israel sees itself as a democracy because it has several Jewish Israeli parties in opposition to whatever Israeli government happens to be in power.

If Northern Irish Catholic, black South African, and Palestinian couldn't, or can't, change a political system through voting, then, the idea of democracy is worthless. The Palestinian, living within Israel, can at times have the casting vote that could put a Jewish Israeli party into power but they won't be doing anything substantial for themselves as a people.

In the latest Israeli Jewish elections, Mansour Abbas, leader of the United Arab List, who represents a good chunk of the Palestinian within the Jewish State, is to join the new Israel Jewish government led by the Lapid/Bennett axis. A powerful PR exercise for the Jewish State, meaningless for the Palestinian of Gaza, and all Palestinians.

Wilson John Haire, 3rd June, 2021.

The O'Connor Column

Not In *The Irish Times* !

None of the letters below were published! We leave it to readers to judge on their merits!

(1) BRITAIN AND THE 1918 ELECTION (SUBMITTED MAY 28):

Tánaiste Leo Varadkar makes the bizarre claim that "the British government had accepted the result of the 1918 election" (Irish Times, May 26th). In line with the mandate secured in that election, Dáil Éireann first met on January 21st, 1919. The following June, Desmond FitzGerald TD was appointed Dáil Éireann's Director of Publicity, but had to go on the run on September 11th, 1919, when Dublin Castle declared Dáil Éireann to be "*an illegal assembly*".

On December 18th, 1920, the *Irish Times* reported:

"Richard O'Keefe, of Woodstock, Co.

Kilkenny, was charged before a district court-martial held at Cork. The evidence showed that outside the house of the accused was found a notebook, containing the oath of allegiance to Dail Eireann. The accused was sentenced to six months."

Desmond FitzGerald edited the underground Dáil's *Irish Bulletin*, from its inception in November 1919, until his arrest on February 11th, 1921. He would go on to become Minister for External Affairs and, later, Minister for Defence, in Cumann na nGaedheal governments. On the occasion of his passing, the *Irish Times* strangely commented on the first Dáil - but without a fada - on April 10th, 1947:

"Mr FitzGerald had the distinction of having been elected to three separate Parliaments; the first Dail, which was an illegal body; the first Dail under the Treaty and the British House of Commons. Under the policy of abstention then in force he did not take his seat in Westminster."

No question of referring to the Third Dáil! It is not clear when, if ever, Bertie Smylie, Irish Times editor 1934-1954, ceased to view the First and Second Dáils as "illegal", in line with the British government's refusal to accept the results of the 1918 and 1921 elections.

Manus O'Riordan

(2) PROFESSOR MARY DALY'S OXFORD UNIVERSITY ADMISSION (SUBMITTED JUNE 4):

In Jennifer Bray's comprehensive report (June 4th), former Mother and Baby Home Commissioner Professor Mary Daly admitted a central flaw in Commission methodology, at an Oxford University history seminar. Prof Daly indicated that the Commission had prior awareness of the problem.

According to Prof Daly, incorporating a survivor's Confidential Committee narrative into deliberative parts of the report would have necessitated checking it with persons and bodies potentially identified, giving rise to delays and possible legal difficulties. Painful articulation of testimony by survivors and victims to the Confidential Committee was effectively for nothing. The Commission's original, though thwarted, plan to erase recordings of testimony compounded the hurt inflicted on these survivors.

The Confidential Committee chapter, tagged on to the end of the Commission Report, in any case fails in its intention to obscure identity. It is also, according to some survivors, inaccurate. I addressed a serious error to the Commission in January. I wrote on behalf of a survivor whose identifiable Confidential Committee testimony changed her denomination from Church of Ireland to Roman Catholic. As a pregnant unmarried teenager she was sent

in the 1980s to Denny House, formerly the Magdalen Asylum. The institution was run under the auspices of the CofI Archbishop of Dublin.

She reported that her parents invited their local clergyman into the family home. He 'ranted and raved' at the humiliated teenager in front of her family, shouting that as a sinner she was unwelcome in his church. The Commission Report changed to 'local Parish priest' her reference to a Church of Ireland Canon.

The woman concerned then received Commission documents confirming correct identification of her testimony, contradicting a Commission assertion that she was confused. One document states that the fictitious 'priest' arranged her 'entry' into an unnamed 'mother and baby home'. In fact it was arranged by a Protestant adoption society and the Canon. Equally amazingly, the woman's 'exit' is falsified as arranged by 'nuns'. Denny House information in the Commission's possession, on the woman's stay there, is also wrong in several material respects. As per Professor Daly's rationale, it was never presented to the woman concerned. Instead, official propaganda misinforms the Commission chapter on Denny House. The woman's allegations with regard to her treatment are unreported.

In 189 pages of the Confidential Committee section of the Commission Report, I calculated the number of times the terms below appeared: Nuns - 249; Priest (RC) - 76; Catholic - 12; Protestant - 0; Church of Ireland - 0; Anglican - 0; Presbyterian - 0; Methodist - 0. A reason for this is because Confidential Committee tick-boxes, below testimony summaries, stipulated religious involvement only by 'priest' and 'nuns'. As other denominations are officially excluded the Commission error is systemic.

The woman concerned reported that these serious mistakes "take away my identity". Another Protestant Bethany Home survivor received documentation wrongly associating him with a Roman Catholic institution. One more, who spoke to the Commission's Investigative Committee of being sent by the Magdalen Asylum to a life of unpaid agricultural labour from age five, is not adequately reported.

Misinformation reduces aspects of the Commission's work to a shambles. Had the Commission checked report commentary with survivors, something Prof Daly admits was avoided, we might have a report able to withstand robust scrutiny.

Niall Meehan

(Faculty Head, Journalism & Media, Griffith College, Dublin)

(3) PRESIDENT CONDEMNS IRA WAR OF INDEPENDENCE EXECUTION (SUBMITTED JUNE 12):

I refer to the above and wish to set the record straight in regard to a number of points made in the article (by Ronan McGreevy, May 27).

Three attempts were made to save the lives of Mary Lindsay and James Clarke, and those of the five captured volunteers.

The first was by the 6th Battalion, Cork No 1 Brigade IRA, the second by Mary Lindsay herself, both in letters to the British Military at Victoria Barracks, Cork.

The third was an appeal from prominent Cork citizens including the Catholic Bishop of Cork to spare the lives of the captured volunteers who had been sen-

tenced to death, which would also have resulted in the sparing of Lindsay's and Clarke's lives.

Unfortunately, all were ignored by the British.

Furthermore, had Fr. Shinnick told the IRA himself (he sent a messenger) who had informed the British of the planned ambush i would suggest that they would have called it off and no lives would have been lost. As Mrs. Lindsay was a known loyalist and had connections with the military.

Frank Busteed claims that his mother Mrs. Nora Busteed was visited by four Auxiliary officers within days of the execution.

Lindsay and Clarke were executed by a firing squad, on the orders of but not by Busteed himself.

Finally, Frank Busteed mentions in the 1974 book on these events (Execution") and in his testimony to Ernie O' Malley over 20 years earlier, that his mother Mrs. Norah Busteed was interrogated by four Auxiliary officers within days of these executions, on the night of March 14th 1921.

She died the next day. Her 'death cert states 'Heart failure'.

War indeed can be terrible.

Brian O'Donoghue
(grandson of Frank Busteed), Cork.

(4) OP-ED ON HOUSING SOLUTIONS (SUBMITTED ON JUNE 14):

I was impressed by the op-ed in today's Irish Times by Rory O'Donnell, former director of the National Economic and Social Council (NESC), on the burning issue of housing ('Shared understanding of needs vital to Ireland's housing future').

The NESC was the central strategic institution of the social partnership system created by Charles Haughey in 1987 in collaboration with union leaders, business organisations, farmers, voluntary organisations and the heads of the main government departments. It literally strategised Ireland out the catastrophic economic conditions of the 1980s and into the take-off known as the "Celtic Tiger" of the succeeding fifteen years. Despite the financial collapse of 2008-10, the solid industrial, social and educational foundations created through that project remain the basis of Ireland's economic wellbeing today. Although central aspects of the

partnership system were dismantled by a Fine Gael-Labour coalition a decade ago, some of its infrastructure has survived, not least the NESC itself, which remains the key body for policy making through social dialogue and continues to produce valuable reports which carry the weight of consensus recommendations signed up to by the main social and institutional interests.

In the heat of the global financial crisis a decade ago, it became fashionable to rubbish social partnership and all its works, with allegations that it was complicit in the financial collapse by having generated a "groupthink" in national policy. Policy making, it was asserted, should be left to "experts". In fact bodies such as the NESC worked to try to counteract the very dangerous "you can have it all" groupthink which dominated the media and politics on

the eve of the financial collapse. The scape-goating of social partnership was a travesty then and remains a travesty today.

It seems obvious that what is needed in the housing crisis, the major challenge facing us today, is not a political circus of vying partisan half-measures but a comprehensive strategy embracing all aspects of the problem. These range from broad economic and investment policy considerations, price controls and security of tenure for tenants, affordability of housing and social provision and a realistic framework for the development industry, to clarification of any constitutional aspects arising. Surely an agreed consensus solution achieved objectively through equal input by all stakeholders and interests focused on finding a real, sustainable and equitable solution is what is urgently and obviously needed?

Philip O'Connor

Mother and Baby Homes

continued from page 1

rather than the Church-State relationship.

Influential figures in politics, the media and academia have been calling on the Government to repudiate the Report. In the way that vulnerable people have been caught up in it, the controversy reflects badly on both the Commission and the Government, but the problem runs deeper than the work of the Commission or even the Government that drew up its Terms of Reference.

The Mother and Baby Home story is drawing attention to a lacuna that has festered in the background of Irish politics

since the 1970s: the absence of a stable conservative core. In response to the Northern conflict—specifically in the form of the Arms Crisis of 1970—the political elite, unjustifiably, cut itself loose from the national independence tradition, its own tradition. In the 1990s the religious ethos that had infused much official policy also fell apart without being processed in a rounded manner. In place of traditional conservatism, we got historical revisionism, alignment with Britain, market fundamentalism, a withdrawal of the State from

areas like public housing and, latterly, an embracing of identity politics: altogether an ahistorical mish mash.

From the time that investigations by a well-intentioned amateur historian into the site of the old Mother and Baby Home in Tuam, County Galway, started to attract headlines, the issue has been used as a battering ram for breaking down the remaining structures of traditional Ireland. The battering has come from two sources, anti-nationalist and pro-British ideologues, who follow the lead pioneered by writer/journalist Bruce Arnold, and from the force of revolutionary feminism. Both groups of campaigners are now making similar demands.

They want as many as possible of the sites of dis-used Industrial Schools,

Magdalene Laundries and Mother and Baby Homes to be used as monumental museums, and they want the archives of these institutions to be used as educational resources for informing children about the “*past crimes*” of the Irish State. An atmosphere of national self-flagellation has been created, and since Irish history has already been transformed into a disjointed and incoherent school subject, there is little fear of the Church/State story being placed in its historical context. Given all this, the overriding political need is for opposition to the anti-national agenda of the Mother and Baby Home campaigners. Preferably such opposition should be based on conserving the traditional republican narrative of Irish independence.

As well as Mary Daly there were two other members of the Commission: Yvonne Murphy, a former judge who chaired it, and Dr. William Duncan, a former Deputy Secretary General of the Hague Conference on Private International Law, in which capacity he had responsibility for the Hague’s Children’s Conventions.

This article will cover three aspects of this large subject: how the investigation was mismanaged, Professor Daly on history and politics, and Bruce Arnold’s *Irish Gulag*. First, though, it is necessary to briefly outline the story of *Church and State*, a secularist magazine produced from 1973 onwards by the group that publishes *Irish Political Review*.

CHURCH & STATE MAGAZINE

In recent editions, *Irish Political Review* covered the Mother and Baby Homes controversy by backing Niall Meehan’s work on the issue. Meehan has campaigned on behalf of the survivors of Protestant institutions like Bethany Home and Denny House and, along with John Martin in *Irish Political Review*, has drawn attention to connections between Bethany Home and various directors of the *Irish Times* in the forties.

The group that produces *Irish Political Review* was involved, from 1973 to 1999, through its publication, *Church & State* (now titled *Church & State – An Irish History Magazine – And Cultural Review of Ireland and the World*), in propagating secularist ideas, including opposing the concept of illegitimacy and highlighting institutions like the Magdalene Laundries. An article from an unmarried mother in the Winter 81/82 edition, an extract from which is quoted at the end of this section, helped to break the silence on how unmarried pregnant women were being treated at the time.

Church & State was an influential magazine that opposed the institutional power of

the Churches, mainly the Catholic Church, in the political sphere, when no one else would touch the issue. Its influence, along with the *Campaign to Separate Church and State*, can be seen in the way that two reforms that it lobbied successive Ministers for Education for—the enactment of a basic *Education Act* and formal consultation of the parents of a locality in deciding the type of schools to be established in new areas—were both implemented by Government.

However, after nearly three decades of such agitation, the magazine altered course. In the late 1990s we had to face the reality that, as globalised economic liberalisation was gathering pace, and as Irish society was becoming increasingly atomised and consumerist, our actions might have been helping to clear the ground for such trends. A few years earlier, the collapse of faith in traditional nationalist culture had occurred among the governing elite. Superficially it might have seemed that the group, having opposed the depiction of Ulster Unionist culture in the ideology of mainstream nationalism, would have welcomed that development. Actually, we were horrified at the idea of a country renouncing its own history. Recognising these developments, but without diluting the principles behind what we had been doing, the name of the magazine was added to and its focus became the defence of Irish history against the onslaught of academic revisionism.

That background should help to explain our position on the Mother and Baby Homes. On the one hand we recognise Catherine Corless as a courageous campaigner whose basic aim is to see the survivors of the institutions treated with decency – our position in that respect has not changed from the time that *Church & State* pressed for secular reform. On the other, we consider that the campaign has become a bandwagon; some of the campaigning exemplifies what in the US is called *liberal overreach*: pressure is being applied for the whole of traditional culture to be overturned in a manner that is simply opening up an unbridgeable chasm between progressive and traditional camps in society. In these circumstances the interests of the survivors are being lost sight of and larger agendas are coming into play.

The woman who contributed the article to *Church & State* in 1981, has continued to campaign on the issue—some of her story was used with other case histories in an *Irish Times* article (“*Stories of concealed pregnancy in Ireland: 1973-2013*”,

compiled by Rosita Sweetman, 6 Feb) after the Commission Report was published. The following extract which relates to her time in the maternity hospital (not included in the newspaper piece), provides a rare account of young unmarried mothers fighting back.

“That day I was lying in bed, the girl next to me was an itinerant; she had just had her second. A priest walked up the ward to her, very purposefully, stopped at her bed and in as loud a whisper as he could muster, told her that it was a disgraceful sin that an unmarried itinerant woman should bring a second child into the world. She pleaded with him to be quiet. He wouldn’t. My heart went out to her, I knew how she felt, and I joined her in the battle.

When I told the priest to fuck off and leave her alone, she was a bit amazed, but something snapped in her and she turned on him and said, “*Yeah, fuck off for yourself ye ‘oul bollocks. You don’t have to feed them or rear them. I don’t see why you should be so upset*”, and crowned it by throwing a slipper at him, on his way out. A few of the tougher women cheered as he left” (Church and State, No 10, Winter 1981/82, p. 14).

In the early 1980s, when opposing the political power of the institutional Catholic Church was an urgent necessity, *Church & State* campaigned effectively on that ground. In the meantime, the political landscape has changed radically. The power once held by institutional religion has completely evaporated. Contemporary political priorities must be based on the very different threats to national democracy—threats like historical revisionism—that obtain today.

A final point that should be stated about the message that *Church and State* tried to convey during its secularist phase: it focused on alternative strands within the Catholic tradition. That emphasis was present in the magazine from the beginning. It included the influence of Gallican ideas on the Irish Church in the eighteenth century, the stance taken by Thomas Moore and others in the Veto controversy in the early nineteenth century, the tolerant anti-sectarian stance of the Young Ireland movement in the 1840s, and the resistance to Catholic Ascendancy mounted by the All-for-Ireland League in Cork in the early twentieth century. The rejection of the entire national tradition under the influence of revisionism meant that Irish society was not receptive to that message. The transition away from religious authority has tended to be anti-national when it should have been a further stage of national development.

HOW THE COMMISSION WAS MISMANAGED

The more the controversy over the

Mother and Baby Homes Commission has dragged on, the more obvious it has become that the work of the five year long inquiry has been mismanaged.

Critics have honed in on a weird methodology used by the Commission to summarise witness testimony. To carry sociological weight, the testimony needed to be transformed into “data”. This was done by giving tick box answers to 220 questions for each testimony. At the least, this seems a questionable method of extrapolation. Apart from the methodology, the answering of tick box questions seems to have been open to misrepresentation. A number of serious inaccuracies were exposed by the archivist, Catriona Crowe, in a long article for the Summer 2021 edition of *The Dublin Review Of Books*. Inaccuracies were also brought to light by Niall Meehan, as in the following extract from a *Facebook* post.

“I wrote to the Commission in February about a pregnant teenager shamed in front of her family by a clergyman in the 1980s. The Confidential Committee report turned this Church of Ireland Canon into a “local parish priest”. The Commission replied to the effect that the woman concerned was confused.

Documentation sent to the woman demonstrated that the Commission and its report were mistaken. A tick-box summary of her testimony stated that a ‘priest’ organised the woman’s entry into a mother and baby home and that, even more extraordinarily, ‘nuns’ had assisted in her exit. The mistake was systemic, since the tick boxes accommodated only Roman Catholic involvement with pregnant unmarried women. The C of I clergyman here, referred to as ‘*Church of Ireland Taliban*’ by his 1980s victim, has form in this area. I encountered evidence of similar activity in the late 1940s.

Judge Murphy’s statement assures us that, contrary to an impression given by Prof Mary Daly in Oxford last week, Confidential Committee testimony did inform findings in the Commission report. There is little evidence of that in the report chapter on Denny House, where the 1980s teenager was sent. She endured a life of scrubbing stairs, being called a ‘sinner’, and persistent attempts to force her to give up her baby for adoption. The report chapter contains none of this, opting instead for institutional propaganda.

I sat through harrowing testimony given to the Committee’s Investigation Committee from a late 1940s survivor born in Denny House, then the Church of Ireland Magdalen Home. None of his testimony appears in the Denny House chapter either, not even something he discovered many decades later, separation at birth from a twin sister” (Niall Meehan Facebook Page, 11 June).

Given that level of distortion, it would

be difficult to give credence to any of the findings of the Commission. In defence of the body that she chaired Yvonne Murphy drafted a letter that was reported on in the *Irish Times* as follows:

“While the value of the confidential committee report “should not be underestimated” it could not be taken “as a definitive history of mother and baby homes and associated topics. As already set out, only a very small number of former residents gave testimony.”

Some statements to the confidential committee gave details that were “at variance with the testimony available to the commission from other sources. This was also true of some of the testimony given to the commission of investigation by both former residents and people who were involved in running the institutions.”

None of this was “to suggest in any way that witnesses set out to mislead the commission; it is an indication of the potential shortcomings in such evidence, given many years after the event; this testimony required people to recall a traumatic period in their lives”, she said” (IT, 11 June).

This line of argument explains why the Commission attached a low priority to witness testimony, a stance that provoked strong criticism from the groups representing survivors, but also from figures like Fine Gael Senator Regina Doherty. On that point it is difficult to decide which side has the stronger case. Murphy, a former Judge of the Circuit Court, can hardly be faulted for attempting to weigh up the evidence impartially, yet depreciating the statements from the survivors had the effect of seeming to mistreat them a second time. That the Commission became side-tracked by such issues reflects poor political judgement, either by the members of the Commission or by the Minister who authorised its Terms of Reference.

The most substantial criticism levelled against the Report is Catriona Crowe’s point that its Executive Summary, in apportioning blame for the harsh treatment, makes a large claim “*at odds with a substantial body of historiography*”. She firstly quotes from the Executive Summary:

“Women who gave birth outside marriage were subject to particularly harsh treatment. Responsibility for that harsh treatment rests mainly with the fathers of their children and their own immediate families. It was supported by, contributed to, and condoned by, the institutions of the State and the Churches. However, it must be acknowledged that the institutions under investigation provided a refuge – a harsh refuge in some cases – when the families provided no refuge at all.”

Crowe then comments:

“Astonishingly, the commission does not even hint here at an awareness of the nexus of power and ideology created in independent Ireland by the Catholic Church, with the full and enthusiastic assistance of the state. The commission’s view seems to be that sexual morality was disseminated from the bottom up – Church and State responding to the popular will, and even softening its worst excesses. This is a vast claim, at odds with a substantial body of historiography, and yet nowhere in the report does the commission explain how it came to this view.”

This is the nub of the matter, the history of the Irish Church/State relationship. To judge, as Crowe puts it, that “*sexual morality was disseminated from the bottom up*”, is to travesty the historical development at the back of the Commission’s area of investigation. The Commission Report has a number of flaws. That its greatest flaw is a failure to realistically interpret history is very significant. The decision made at the highest level of Irish official policy making, sometime in the 1970s, to take a sledgehammer to the nationalist historical narrative has, by the evidence of this flawed Report, come back to haunt Irish society with a vengeance.

PROFESSOR DALY AND THE RELATION BETWEEN POLITICS AND HISTORY

The story of the Irish Mother and Baby Homes and related institutions needs to be assessed on its own terms. That one of the three members of the Commission who investigated it, Professor Daly, happens to be a leading Irish historian, and a member of the *Experts Advisory Committee* that advises the Government on the Decade of Centenaries, is a side issue. Nonetheless, I consider that, indirectly, the Professor’s revisionist viewpoint has a bearing on the flawed historical interpretation used in the Commission Report.

Daly is an experienced historian; in *Sixties Ireland* her competence in marshalling complex evidence is clear. But a weakness of that work is the treatment of political history. She attaches weight to the verdicts of sociologists and economists but fails to identify the underlying story behind the politics of the 1960s, especially when it comes to Church/State relations, as I show in the next section. In her historical writings she adopts an air of detachment but in an RTE interview about the *Decade of Centenaries* some years ago she was more forthright. From that interview it was clear that she views history through a lens that prioritises social history at the expense of political history.

Speaking about the War of Independence

she opined that one reason why the IRA was able to prosecute its campaign was that the First World War had closed off the safety valve of emigration leaving a surplus of young males with nothing to do. That statement shows that she sees the military campaign as the central event, and barely notices that a large majority of the existing electorate *voted* for national independence by voting Sinn Fein.

It was the consistent voting behaviour of all sections and age cohorts of the Irish electorate, outside of unionist areas in December 1918 and in the two local elections of 1920—and the efforts of the British security forces to suppress that expression of democratic will—that sustained the Republican war effort from 1919 to 1921, not the supply of unemployed young males. In the same way, activities like the separation of the Local Authorities from the British administration, the collection of contributions for the Dail Loan, and the conduct of the Republican courts, all entailed wide community involvement. They testify that the Republican Army was connected to a functioning democracy, albeit one under great stress, but Professor Daly is blind to that side of the independence struggle.

Daly's thinking is echoed in a statement made by the Chair of the Expert Advisory Group, Maurice Manning, when he said "*the 1916 commemorations could be regarded as a success, as they were not politicised*" (IT, 29 December 2016). The depoliticisation of 1916 was indeed the purpose behind the construction of the Glasnevin Memorial Wall in 2016. Placing the names of all who died in the Rising—bizarrely including those of the British soldiers, intermingled on the same memorial—had the effect of presenting the event exclusively in terms of the loss of human life. A foundational political event was made to appear regrettable and tragic.

Squeezing politics out of history is also the purpose of a recent publication by another member of the Expert Advisory Group, Professor Eunan O'Halpin. His book has the title, *The Dead of the Irish Revolution* and performs the same function as the Glasnevin Wall. And, of course, focussing on the tragedy of human loss is the stock in trade, in his various books, of the anti-Republican RTE broadcaster, Joe Duffy. Perhaps this novel Irish approach to understanding history should be exported to other countries that have had revolutions or independence struggles that entailed loss of life. I'm sure the French, Cubans and Americans would relish having their historical narratives reduced to incoherence.

Having a skewed understanding of the central role of politics in history is not the only problem with the Professors advising the Government on the Decade of Centenaries. As is well known by anyone with Republican sympathies, they are also partisans in the revisionist culture war against Irish nationalism. In the context of the Mother and Baby Homes controversy, the direction that the partisan historians wish to bring society is best seen in an extreme expression of it, Bruce Arnold's *Irish Gulag*.

BRUCE ARNOLD'S *IRISH GULAG*

Arnold's book was published in 2009 at a time when anti-nationalism was in full flow, before the Centenaries and before Brexit. The course of events in recent years has moved in a contrary direction. Arnold was appalled by the stance taken by the Irish Government during the Brexit negotiations, so much so that he contributed an article to the pro-Brexit *Daily Telegraph* to vent his frustration. In the article he states:

"This is tough right now, being a proud and loyal British subject who has lived in, and loved, Ireland for more than 60 years... Yet again we face a crisis of democracy, with little Ireland and the huge EU refusing to recognise the democratic decision of the UK to leave the European Union. The ridiculous country in which I live is helping Europe in this abuse" (Daily Telegraph, 31 July 2019).

Despite having lived in Ireland for that time and having contributed through journalism and art appreciation to Irish public life, he remained "*a proud and loyal British subject*". In fairness to him, he does not hide that allegiance in *The Irish Gulag*. The main theme of the work, which is about the Industrial Schools (that subject is different to the Mother and Baby Homes but, through the Church/State relationship, they are connected), is explained in the blurb thus:

"For a long time, the Church was blamed for the sufferings of children in Irish industrial schools. The Irish State wanted it this way. This is because the State was culpable. Its exercise of control, through the Department of Education was negligent to a criminal degree. It has not been made answerable."

The gist of Arnold's argument is that, while the institutions were created under British rule, the system was made more humane over time by various Acts of the Westminster Parliament after Ireland had seceded, and that these reforms were not followed in Ireland. The book is a polemic against the existence of Irish independence as shown in the following extracts:

"Speaking generally, the new de Valera Government was determined to dismantle the remaining constitutional links with the United Kingdom. Speaking specifically about the Irish children in penal care, the net effects of political separation was to allow the creation of cruel and unbending regimes in the industrial schools and reformatories, accompanied by inadequate State inspection and control" (p. 38).

Referring to the commitment in the Proclamation to "*cherish all the children of the nation equally*", he says:

"No constructive purpose was served by the repetitious hypocrisy of the child-cherishing mantra. Those who fought for Irish freedom knew that such rhetoric would attract public support for their campaign of violence. Their true intentions were revealed when they came to power" (p. 39).

There are plenty more statements along similar lines that could be quoted. Arnold states at the beginning of the book that much of its material is drawn from articles which he wrote for the *Irish Independent* between 1998 and 2009. So, in making a polemical case against Irish independence, he was facilitated by one of the country's main daily newspapers.

Arnold reserves his most vehement criticism for a Committee that produced a Report on the Industrial Schools in 1970, the *Kennedy Committee*. The Committee, chaired by District Justice Eileen Kennedy, is charged by Arnold as presiding over a "*whitewash*" (p. 70) and focusing on the future rather than on past negligence. Without evidence he fulminates that its work, "*appears to have been a deliberate and comprehensive fraud*" (p. 76). Actually, according to the most widely known book on the Industrial School system, *Suffer the Little Children* by Mary Raftery and Eoin O'Sullivan, the Kennedy Report "*resulted in the effective dismantling of the system [of Industrial Schools]*" (p. 364), and provided "*one of the most damning indictments of the operation of any State system ever produced in this country*" (p. 378). Arnold is able to make exaggerated and misleading claims about the Kennedy Committee because he takes no account of the powerful opposition it faced at every level of its investigation.

The story of the Kennedy Committee has never been fully recounted, even by Raftery and O'Sullivan, because the political conflict surrounding it seem not to be understood, even at this remove (see my articles on this topic in *Church and State*, No 134 - Autumn 2018 and No 135, First Quarter 2019). Essentially, the formation of the Committee was the result of a

momentum for reform built up by Charles Haughey, Donogh O'Malley and Brian Lenihan inside Fianna Fail during the 1960s. That momentum came to a shuddering halt in the General Election of 1973 when Fine Gael and Labour came to power partially on a wave of popular sentiment whipped up by the Catholic Church. The new Government appointed Richard Burke as Minister for Education and Burke immediately set about dismantling the *Development Committee* in his Department, the group of officials that had driven educational reform. The triumph of Fine Gael and Labour in 1973 set back the cause of reigning-in Catholic Church power by over twenty years. Blaming the Kennedy Committee for that is tantamount to suppressing a decade of political history

The relevance of all this to the Mother and Baby Homes issue is that Mary Daly is critical of the Kennedy Committee, not in the extreme manner of Bruce Arnold, but in a way that ignores the politics of the situation. She says:

“The report was a serious indictment of the existing institutions, yet once again the criticism was qualified: ‘were it not for the dedicated work of many of our religious bodies, the position would be a great deal worse than it is now’” (Sixties Ireland, p 177)).

All sides in the conflict over the institutions needed to pay lip service to the work of the religious bodies. Anyone with a scintilla of political sense will understand that, yet Professor Daly quotes it as a significant statement. She continues:

“Although the Kennedy Report recommended closing industrial schools and placing children in either foster homes or in smaller family-style group homes, the pace of change was extremely slow. Buckley is correct in concluding that ‘the Kennedy Report also ignored many issues and did not effect change to the extent that history has recorded’” (ibid, p. 177).

Again, the slow pace of change was not caused by the Kennedy Report. It was caused, among other factors, by the message the electorate sent to the political system in 1973: *enough of the attacks on the Catholic Church!*

In conclusion, hopefully the Government will act quickly to initiate a method of extending redress to the survivors of the institutions investigated by the Mother and Baby Homes Commission. In doing so it should insist on the religious bodies making appropriate contributions and, if those bodies refuse to participate, their refusal should be taken as their lasting memorial in Irish society. The priority should be to bring the long saga to a close.

Unlike the Kennedy Committee, which

Professor Daly is critical of, the Commission of which she was a leading member, failed to lay the basis of a consensus on the matter it was charged to investigate. Against fearsome opposition and backed by successive Fianna Fail Ministers, Eileen Kennedy delivered a blueprint for practical reform that led to the closure of the Industrial Schools. For the future, Mary Daly and her associates should learn from the experience of producing the Commission Report; they may even wish to re-evaluate their ideas about the role of politics in historical development.

Dave Alvey

Clearing The Air

The genius of Picasso has imprinted consciousness of the the atrocity of the aerial bombing on Guernica on 29th April 1937 on liberal democrats of the free world.

Perhaps most successfully amongst the most vociferous champions of freedom and democracy, *The Times* or its stable mate *The Sunday Times*, would have you believe that Hitler's *Condor Legion* pioneered such villainy.

Notso. Benito Mussolini, bankrolled by British Intelligence in 1915, and dubbed a *Knight of the Bath* by King George V in 1923, had attacked Abyssinia in 1935 and was attacking civilians from the air, earning plaudits from Winston Churchill and Evelyn Waugh amongst other enlightened Britons.

I believe that the United States bombed Nicaragua a few years before. And, as long ago as 1st June 1921 whole city blocks in Tulsa, Oklahoma were razed by aerial bombardment and hundred of black residents (supposedly full citizens of the Land of the Free) were murdered by their white neighbours in the Home of the Brave.

Britain, having awarded itself huge territories following the First World War, could not afford to control them with land forces. military or para-military "Police". Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill in 1922 arranged for them to be 'policed' from the air using the RAF, a body promoted as a terrorist force by Noel Pemberton-Billing, MP for Hertford. The Pemberton-Billing's Method was describe a few years ago in *History Today*, a magazine founded by Churchill's peculiar side-kick, the renegade Irishman Brendan Bracken. Captain W.E. Johns, creator of the "*Biggles*" books I devoured as a boy, emerges as an aviator who got his kicks out terrorism which should have been punished by any impartial tribunal.

On 21st November 1920, when

Churchill was Minister for War, a combined air and ground force operation was mounted in Dublin, when the pilot of an RAF plane signalled to Auxiliary "*Police Cadets*", who then opened fire on unarmed spectators and football players in Croke Park.

It emerged this June that those terrorist aviators have been patrolling Irish air space these past twenty years by agreement with the Irish Government, unknown to the citizens, unauthorised by Dail Eireann, and unknown to the Irish Air Corps, Army or Naval Service.

I alluded to the part British Intelligence and Royalty played in the rise of Mussolini and the admiration he won in polite society for his rape of Abyssinia.

British Intelligence was also crucial in the creation of Spanish Dictatorship. General Franco was posted to the Canary Islands by the Republican Government lest he do his country a mischief.

Major Hugh Pollard of British Intelligence flew a light plane from London to the Canaries in July 1936, picked up Franco and flew him to Spanish Morocco where the treacherous mutineer took over the Spanish Foreign Legion and unleashed a revolt which established a 40 year dictatorship. When Franco was installed in Madrid in 1940 Pollard became MI6's man in the British Embassy.

Pollard arranged with British Pathe to film a fake newsreel in 1920, stills from which have been reproduced in various books posing as 'History' and a certain newspaper posing as 'Irish' in Dublin. Dublin cinema audiences laughed the fake newsreel to scorn in 1920 recognising the Vico Road by Killiney Bay, a brief or tramride in the city's suburbs, billed as an encounter near Tralee, about 250 miles away.

The then Captain Pollard of Dublin-Castle's Black Propaganda unit had also produced a counterfeit issue of Dail Eireann's respected *Irish Bulletin*, which was similarly dismissed for the fake that it was. What Pollard lacked in finesse he made up for with his hatred for the Irish people.

Anyhow I headed this piece *Clearing The Air*. It is time for Irish Airspace to be policed by forces under the authority of Dail Eireann. And Irish political and historical comment to be cleared of counterfeit monopoly.

Much of what is published by financially well-endowed individuals and institutions, even Oxbridge, might as well have been transcribed from the bogwalls of *The Bull* in Ambridge [of BBC Radio 4's *The Archers*] or supplied by a passing quadruped!

Donal Kennedy

Hugh O'Donnell Roe

**“... Tir-Eoghain’s Hugh, Tir-Connaill’s Hugh, like brothers hand in hand
Stood, fighting Ireland’s foes – alone – two chiefs in all the land.
Mo brón! the East and West were dead, the South was fast asleep,
And bravest ships must sink at last, where winds in fury
Sweep,
Pressed on the English foemen then – ay, ten to every Gael,
My God! ‘twas hard to see their flag wave high above Kinsale.
The night came down, the Fiery Cross was crushed and dropping low,
Away to Spain for swords and men sailed Hugh O’Donnell Roe!...”**

Brian O’Higgins c. 1602.

(The lament of a Tir-Connaill clansman when the news arrived in Ireland that Red Hugh O’Donnell had met death at the hands of the English in Spain.)
Gill’s *Irish Reciter*, Edited by J.J. O’Kelly. M.H. Gill & Son Ltd. Dublin. 1907.

“I have never before felt so completely a leader!”

Elizabeth Bowen to Sean O Faolain during a lunch in
Jammot’s Restaurant, Dublin in 1941 or ’42.
VIVE MOI. An Autobiography. Sean O’Faolain.
Edited and with an Afterword by Julia O’Faolain
(his daughter). Sinclair-Stevenson, London, 1993.

Elizabeth Bowen

A Review of Patricia Laurence’s biography

Part 14

Martin Mansergh in that now infamous letter to *The Irish Times*, 3rd May 2004 under the heading, ‘*Conspiracy theorists display narrow notions of Irishness*’, displays an analysis close to hysteria. His famed, as he himself says, diplomatic coolness goes out the window. Instead, his reply is freighted with an emotional fragility hardly ever seen in political circles, never mind diplomatic ones. He is, in my opinion, very stupid in many of the things he says. What he says in defence of the paper which has employed him, ‘*The Irish Times*’, has been ably refuted by Jack Lane of the Aubane Historical Society so it would be futile for me to further comment on things that have been published already by the latter.

What draws my own ire is his misuse of the word “*gloating*”, which he attributes to Lane/Clifford over the demolition of Bowen’s Court. Where has he seen this? Because it is not to be found anywhere in their tireless work about Elizabeth Bowen and her Big House. After it was demolished even Bowen herself was delighted that “*it was a clean end; it did not live on to be a ruin*”.

It Is Time

So for rural people – and surely Martin Mansergh cannot but accept that he is now also a rural man – even a farmer – if of a gentlemanly sort – that what is left behind is a field. And a fine field is a grand thing to the Irish eye. In fact in the Gaelic language there are ‘*thirty-two words for field*’: a new book just published names them all. And even lovelier to the Irish eye, with ancestral hunger in our psyche, is a field full of crops!

Even the American city-dweller Patricia Laurence writes:

“If one walks up the cobbled road – once a great avenue – to Bowen’s Court, the ruined demesne walls emerge, leading nowhere except to a beautiful expanse of *field* and trees.” (Italics – JH)

So what is Mansergh’s problem? He *canáns* about Bowen being buried in her family graveyard, beside St. Colman’s Church built also by the Bowens. But, as I wrote in the *May Irish Political Review*, her Will stipulated that it was to be either there, or in Kent with her late mother, that Bowen wanted to be buried. The Aubane Society noted that it wasn’t County Cork that was the attraction – but her part of it. So what is Mansergh so bothered about – seeing the Aubane commentary as nothing else

but – and get this – “*cultural hatred*”. This is unhinged stuff and reflects really badly on Mansergh himself.

As if this wasn’t enough, he then writes of “*recent revisionist German history*” – when it is the Irish variant that we are all familiar with. But his next target really flummoxed me: and knock me down if it wasn’t an Irish writer who was a Catholic Curate in Millstreet, Father William Ferris, who wrote about local and national history. He was stationed in that town in 1933-’34 and wrote a lovely book about it in 1937 titled: ‘*stráid an muilinn, A History of its people by its people.*’

Ferris had to use a pseudonym, Timothy Broken, to avoid being blocked by the local Bishop of Kerry because he claimed that the great St. Brendan the Navigator was born in BallymacElligott and not in Fenit, which was and is the accepted Diocesan and historic tradition. The fear of the crozier in this case was well deserved because Fenit is definitely the birth-place of that greatest of saints – who kept a boat I was sailing in near Spain from sinking with his intervention – whatever my skipper still maintains!

Martin Mansergh then writes about a 1948 book, ‘*The Story of Man*’, written by Father Ferris, and goes on to quote from it in a very misleading way, while declaiming that it should never have been “*republished*”. Of course he is talking about that very informative book, ‘*A North Cork Anthology*’, published by the Aubane Historical Society in 1993 and edited by Jack Lane and Brendan Clifford. Mansergh’s misleading quotation – while being factually true – leaves out the naming of all the wars England had: either being solely involved in, or those they participated with other European colonial powers.

Who could quibble with part of Mansergh’s quotation from Father Ferris’s book?

“Around England’s name centres practically the whole terrible story of modern warfare.”

English militarism has been one of the most active elements in society for at least four hundred years – if not more. As Father Ferris rightly concluded:

“English Empire building has meant practically constant warfare...”

And certainly any ceremonial event in the UK has a huge aspect of military participation. One only had to witness the recent funeral of their Prince Philip, Consort of their Queen – to hear the crack

of boots, horse's hooves and guns and soldiers galore, and see the whole spectacle on TV with its military precision—not to be awed frankly by such an event.

In that *'Irish Times'* letter, Martin Mansergh scorns those who might read his father's books and states:

"As for his qualities as a historian, I would prefer that to be judged by people who understand his work."

That rebuke, certainly in my opinion, is that of an imperialist who strikes out at the *"mere Irish"* – in this case the Aubane people who clearly, according to Mansergh, would not understand the work of those – in this case his father – who reside in Chatham House or Cambridge University.

This brings to mind the incident, a very revealing one at that when, in a RTE Radio interview on *'Morning Ireland'*, Mansergh lost his temper with the other interviewee – an event which Miriam Lord in the next day's *Irish Times*, 23rd February 2008, reported on with great humour:

"And down the line, from his country pile in Tipperary, there came an earsplitting rebuke. "You should have respect for your betters!" Senator Eugene Regan, Fine Gael may well be a wealthy senior counsel living by the sea in leafy south Dublin, but nonetheless, a peasant must always know his place."

Kevin Rafter in his biography remembers asking senior Fianna Fáil figures what they thought of Martin Mansergh.

"There were suspicions about his background, some of which still linger, even if now made known in jest. One former Minister when contacted about this biography replied with a laugh:

"He was educated at Oxford University, right? Well, then you'd have to ask, who does he work for?"

And Rafter sees this very perceptive reply as:

"Intellectualism still frightens some sections of Fianna Fáil."

Doesn't that remark from an Irish journalist and broadcaster, devoid of insightfulness and knowledge, just beat everything? Is it any wonder then that the Manserghs of this world can talk down to us and not only get away with it but are praised by the media *et al.*

No wonder that forelock-tugging has become our national sport! Here in Cork, in the leafy south-side, builders are putting up housing developments called 'Aylesbury' and 'The Downs'. And the monied Irish can't have enough – maybe they might

read that book I have already mentioned *'Thirty-Two Words for Field: Lost words of the Irish Landscape'* (Manchán Magan, Gill Books, Dublin, 2021), but I wouldn't hold my breath any time soon about that happening.

Kevin Rafter, while making elementary mistakes like calling the British Legation in Ireland the *"British Embassy"*, certainly had no idea of what the Ministry of Information was really about. I would have to conclude that Rafter culled a lot of his information here from Martin Mansergh, who called it more or less a cultural/press office with a continuing flow of press releases favourable to Ireland's neutrality. But it was never this, even before the mighty Brendan Bracken, instructed by Churchill, got rid of the weedier elements – one of whom was Sir Harold Nicolson and put in men (and some women) who knew what war required and were able to deliver.

But really in Rafter's book, there was the surprising admission that Nicholas Mansergh himself was active in Ireland during the war, and now there can be no doubt that his assignation was that of a spy and not a small-change one either. Here is this account:

"Mansergh also went on a 14-day, fact-finding mission to Ireland in March 1943. It was his first visit home in 12 months. The role was not to spy – his position would have been known to the civil service, and political figures, whom he met – but rather to gather information to inform British policy on Ireland. His confidential report contained interesting information on Irish political opinion in 1943. The conclusions were formed after meeting an array of individuals such as Eamon de Valera, the editors of the main national newspapers and his bank manager in Co. Tipperary" (Underlining – JH)

The report – which was submitted to the Ministry of Information on the 6th April 1943 and marked 'Confidential' – observed that Lord Haw Haw's broadcasts were *"listened to with no little attention"*, and that *"no one believes that the Germans have committed atrocities in occupied Europe"*.

Nicholas Mansergh met the Taoiseach who concluded, according to the former, that post war Europe would have *"overwhelming problems... especially with regards to the outstanding case of frontiers..."* This trivia would not need to be marked 'Confidential', but really Rafter prints such innocuous stuff because this was what Martin wanted to be put out there.

So Nicholas Mansergh was a spy – really weren't they all to some greater or lesser extent? They were either spies or propagandists – Louis MacNeice being one of the worst of the latter. And, for their work, they all got their imperial geegaws – very junior ones – like an OBE for Nicholas Mansergh, a CBE for Elizabeth Bowen. For their own toffs: Harold Nicolson got a knighthood and, even more impressive, he received the English Sovereign's very own bauble – the *Order of Merit* (OM) and to top all that he received the KCVO (Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order), which he very wryly writes about in his Diaries:

1st January 1953.

"My K.C.V.O. is published in the Birthday Honours and I get masses of telegrams. One that pleases me is from Balliol."

3rd January 1953.

"We got to a party at Bunny (Drummond's), Eustace" (Lord Percy of Newcastle) "is there and he is amused at my knighthood ... But why is it that I hate so much being congratulated on my K.C.V.O. I know that the elevation is not supposed to be an assessment of my contribution to life, but rather a present from the Queen for a service rendered to the Monarchy..."

26th February 1953.

"I go to Buckingham Palace for my investiture and audience." (Then the Queen does her bit with the sword) "I kneel down and the Queen lays the sword, gently but firmly, first on my left and then on my right shoulder. I then rise and she gives me her hand to kiss. She then gives me the box containing the star, and says with a pleasant smile, 'This is a personal present.' Then she motions me to a chair and we sit down..."

In contrast, Nicholas Mansergh gets to be "Master of John's College, Cambridge..." The appointment, according to his son Martin, *"was a break with tradition as Mansergh was neither a college bursar nor tutor, positions held by previous Masters"*. According to one college report at the time, the Tipperary academic was a *"strong man"* and popular company in the senior common room: although it was forecast that he was *"unlikely to excite controversy"*.

The English State always has places for their strongmen, and particularly those who will go along with the party line, whatever that may be.

I just want to return to that letter of Martin Mansergh to the *Irish Times*, 3rd May 2004, and at the very end, he sharply delivers another rebuke that is at odds with

what he and his father have already stated about the war government of Taoiseach Eamon de Valera. He now sneers about the “aggressive ideological dogmatism that was more prevalent in a less confident Ireland of 50 or 60 years ago...”

But these years were the highpoint of Eamon de Valera’s policy of neutrality, which both the Manserghs have written so positively about – now one wonders what really was Nicholas Mansergh’s position – and really one doesn’t have to speculate much because he was after all

an “English civil servant” at the Ministry of Information – but, Martin, if you think that back then Ireland was “less confident” as a State, you really don’t know very much.

Or going back to that Fianna Fáil Minister who wondered where Martin Mansergh’s true loyalties lie – is the latter signposting something that many in the party have wondered about all these years?

Julianne Herlihy ©

To be continued.

prospects for Unionists, if Trimble did not sign up to the Agreement. Such a high risk gamble on Blair’s part seems to have called Trimble’s bluff and induced him to sign up to something he was not at all in favour of.

Because Trimble signed the Agreement while disagreeing with it, the effective leadership of the Ulster Unionist Party passed to Jeffrey Donaldson, whose conscience had made him head for the car park when the UUP signed up.

Donaldson and his supporters in the UUP wanted assurances on the future of the RUC and IRA decommissioning before a Sinn Fein entry into government and the release of any prisoners. The Orange Order backed Donaldson in refusing to support the Agreement. Trimble claimed that the only difference between his position and that of Donaldson was on the effectiveness of mechanisms that were to be used to exclude Sinn Fein if decommissioning did not take place. Trimble relied on Tony Blair’s letter whilst Donaldson wanted an effective rewriting of the Agreement before he would support it.

Unionism in Crisis

Unionism is in crisis. It has been in crisis for around 50 years now. But it hasn’t gone away y’know.

The speedy demise of Edwin Poots as DUP leader has given great satisfaction to nationalists of various hues. There is, of course, the traditional satisfaction of the communal grind in which all bad is wished upon them’uns. But today there is also a form of satisfaction generated out of antipathy to those who adhere to traditional ways of looking at social life and who have not transitioned to new identities in the same way as nationalist Ireland has.

Nationalist Ireland has somersaulted in a way Ulster Unionism is incapable of. All that was bad 50 years ago is for the good today. A little bit like how Britain transformed itself from running an industrial slaving system to policing the world against minor slavers; how it went from being the globaliser of the racial hierarchy to multi-culturalist defender of ethnic minorities; how it fiercely repressed homosexuality to now championing Gay Pride and condemning any country who dared to not change traditional ways of looking at marriage and the family to ones more in the interests of global capitalism.

Protestant Ulster seems to know what it is – as do Russia, China and the Muslim world. Nationalist Ireland has abandoned its bearings in favour of California.

Edwin Poots attempted to stabilise things in the brief period of his leadership. He was caught in a bind. The DUP had moved towards its heartland in an attempt to get the Protestant vote out in a coming crucial election. That is what communal politics is all about in Northern Ireland, despite any fine words that might dress

up the system. He failed because opposition was mounted on two fronts to his attempt to stabilise things. The ‘moderate’, Donaldsonites, combined with the ‘fundamentalists’ to unseat Poots.

Edwin Poots attempted to allow the British to deal with the thorny Irish Language Act issue. That policy had its advantages for the DUP. It meant they were not seen to be collaborating in bringing in an *Irish Language Act* – and the issue was put off until October, when marching was over. The heat would be taken out of a situation in which loyalists were using the Protocol and the Bobby Storey Funeral against the DUP, fragmenting the Unionist vote. Sinn Fein would have liked the DUP collaborate in an *Irish Language Act* but were content to let the British do the dirty deed on the DUP if necessary, as they had done with the issue of abortion.

But the fundamentalists were not content with this. They had seen off Paisley, overturned Robinson’s 2013 Castlereagh speech policy of feeding the crocodiles/Fenians. They now combined with the moderates to see off Poots, and presumably the new First Minister he appointed will have to go too.

Pat Leahy, Political Editor of *The Irish Times*, apparently believes Jeffrey Donaldson, the new DUP Leader, to be “a man Dublin can do business with”. When he was a part of the UUP, Donaldson’s Leader, David Trimble was cajoled and bullied into signing the Good Friday Agreement by Tony Blair. *The Irish Times* (07.06.98) claimed at the time that the British Prime Minister threatened to hold an all-UK referendum on the future of the North that would have supposedly led to dire

The effect of this was that everything that Trimble did and said after Donaldson walked out on Good Friday was thereafter determined by Donaldson’s obstruction to the Agreement and resulted in a hardening of opposition to the Agreement within the Ulster Unionist Party itself and the Protestant community as a whole.

Because of this, Trimble fought a half-hearted campaign in favour of the Agreement he had signed up to and then continued to try and re-write it ever after, as Donaldson wished.

The *Irish Political Review* made the following comment about the ‘sham fight’ that was being developed within the UUP in which the Ulster Unionist Council became the continuous arena of struggle between Trimble and Donaldson:

“We have assumed throughout... that Trimble and Jeffrey Donaldson were performing a double act. Trimble felt he had to sign on Good Friday, lest something worse befall Unionism. He had to pretend (or let others pretend for him) that he wanted to work the Agreement, but was prevented by hard-line Unionist opposition led by Jeffrey Donaldson. It was remarkable how nationalists on all sides were taken in by it, and effectively set the Agreement aside in order to make concessions to help Trimble in his shadow-boxing with Donaldson. (In shadow boxing there is only one boxer in the ring, and in this case it was Donaldson. Trimble was assumed to be the opponent. His opposition to Donaldson was contributed by nationalist imagination, without a shred of hard evidence from Trimble that he wanted to see the

Agreement implemented.)

“We will not speculate about states of consciousness, which are usually beside the point in political affairs. Conduct is what counts in politics. And the assumption that Trimble and Donaldson performed a double act to enable Trimble to sign the Agreement under great pressure on Good Friday, and to prevent its implementation thereafter, is in accordance with Unionist conduct.

“We will not speculate about how this was arranged between them, or whether any formal arrangement was needed. But, when the Agreement institutions were suspended, Donaldson came on television to explain that Trimble had to threaten to collapse them by resigning because Sinn Fein had not met its commitments under the Agreement. At that juncture, the viewer with a short memory — and television is conducted in a way that presumes its viewers have no memory — would supposed that Donaldson was a disillusioned supporter of the Agreement. But Donaldson’s argument against the Agreement for a year and a half was precisely that it did not make prior disarming of the IRA preconditioning of Sinn Fein participation in the Executive” (*Irish Political Review*, March 2000).

At the end of each meeting of the Ulster Unionist Council there was the same result — give or take a couple of percentage points — 57 to 43, 55 to 45, 54 to 46, etc. always to Trimble, as the 860 odd members of the UUC held the whole process to ransom with the British Prime Minister’s connivance. On 11th February 2000 with the Ulster Unionist Council scheduled to meet again and Trimble, under pressure from Donaldson’s manoeuvrings, and likely to fulfil a promise to resign, the NI Secretary Peter Mandelson suspended both the Assembly and the long over-due establishment of the Executive.

That is the man *The Irish Times* believes Dublin can do business with. Does it at all wonder why the DUP has opted for Donaldson now instead of Poots?

The big problem for Unionism this decade has been the prospect of a Catholic majority, resulting in the installation of a Sinn Fein First Minister in Stormont, with the implication that carries for the Union. Should the crocodiles be fed to sate their appetite, or not fed to temper their insatiability? That is the question that has tormented Unionism.

The Irish Language issue can easily be sorted. It can be sorted within the British context. After all, the Irish revivalists could only dream about a situation in which they were as successful as the British Welsh with their language. But the anti-Irish

Ulsterish Unionists seem incapable of Britishness — the ability of outmanoeuvring their opponents on such a basis.

Westminster seems to have had enough of Ulsterish defence of the Union. The Johnson Government is the first Unionist Government of the UK for long years. It is Chamberlainite (Joe Chamberlain) in its social reform unionism. It is redefining Britishness as NHS, diversity and levelling up. It is defending the Union on this basis, and who is to say it will not be successful? It has scattered the pathetic opposition and it will be interesting to see if it will burst the Scottish nationalist bubble. If it can do this, Ulster Unionism will be in the game again, after it fell foul by interfering in the British party political struggle and got shafted by Johnson.

The Ulster Protestants are the least British element in Northern Ireland. The other community is far more British. If it

appears anti-British it is because it has been antagonised for nearly a century by Ulsterish politics, and cut off from the British political system. What is Britishness today? When one thinks NHS, diversity, levelling up, which community does one think of? Certainly not the Ulster Protestants.

The Britishness of the Northern Catholics presents a bigger danger to the independence of the Irish State (the real one). Leo Varadkar has now bought into the “*failed state*” narrative advanced by Sinn Fein. He has indicated he wants to create a *new state*, just like the Northern Republicans.

In its centenary year, the perverse political entity of ‘Northern Ireland’ still fulfils the purpose it was established for. Let us give it its due. Far from being a failed ‘state’, it has been a tremendous success for those who set it up. It certainly has not outlived its usefulness.

Pat Walsh

The UK *Times*, Its Belfast Courts Reports, And Its Official IRA Veteran Stringer

Henry McDonald had a good day this June 20th. The Belfast stringer for the Ireland edition of the *Sunday Times* saw page 2 carry his report, “*Westminster spells out Irish language law plan. Stormont legislation will not impose bilingual road signs in schools or job quotas, unionists told*”. Page 4 carried his report, “*Loyalist press shoppers to boycott supermarket foods from Republic*”. And page 6 gave him top billing for his more detailed narrative, “*The comings and goings of the DUP: A lightning revolt sealed the fate of leader Edwin Poots and plunged the party into a crisis.*”

McDonald’s report took up two thirds of that page. For a more serious Unionist analysis, the bottom third was allocated to Newton Emerson’s column: “*Language act collaboration shows how Boris is building bridges with Sinn Fein. It shows London viewing Sinn Fein as a player to be included and the DUP as a basket case to be managed.*” Emerson further observed:

“Sinn Fein issued a statement revealing the existence of the British government’s offer, and saying that it would accept as the DUP was negotiating in ‘bad faith’. The revelation was made with almost casual imperiousness... clearly intended

to emphasise that it was operating at a higher level the DUP... Mary Lou McDonald travelled to meet Lewis and Poots. In previous weeks she had called for ‘the British and Irish governments’ to intervene. It ended up looking as if the British government considered Sinn Fein on a par with the Irish government.”

Lacking Emerson’s *gravitas*, but being a part-time novelist, Henry McD tried a little colour:

“The DUP party officers were ushered into the HQ’s severe meeting room, which is painted white, but yellowing with age. On the walls are framed portraits of the DUP’s glory days: pictures of Paisley and his successor, Peter Robinson, imperious in power. The only other decorations are a portrait of the Queen and a Union Jack in the corner.”

Only slightly colourful, but quite harmless really. And HMcD needs to remain somewhat harmless, given his more problematic relationship with the weekday UK *Times*. For McDonald has baggage. The fact that he was a member of the Official IRA, however, poses less of a problem than, as a product of the Eoghan Harris ‘School’ of Stickie journalism, he is prone to make similar Harrisite misjudgments that can create difficulties for a newspaper.

This past November 20th, under the heading of “*Old McDonald’s bought the farm on Guardian career*”, Colin Coyle wrote in the Ireland edition of the *Sunday Times*:

“Henry McDonald, the *Guardian*’s man in Ireland for over two decades, is one of about 70 journalists taking voluntary redundancy at the newspaper. McDonald, who has written two novels, will continue to freelance.”

Within months he was a Belfast stringer for *Times Newspapers* themselves.

On 29th October 2005, under the heading of “*The story behind the story*”, the *Irish Times* shone the spotlight on how, in *Guardian Newspapers*’ Sunday paper, *The Observer*, that October 23rd, McDonald had reported the death in a Moscow car crash in the early hours of the previous morning of former Fáiil TD Liam Lawlor and the driver for a Russian developer with whom Lawlor was engaged in business negotiations, while a Prague-based business translator and legal assistant, Julia Kushnir, survived the crash:

“*The Observer* claims, under the byline of its Belfast-based Ireland editor Henry McDonald, without providing any supporting information, that Lawlor ‘visited brothels and sex clubs in the Czech capital’ and laundered cash for Dublin criminals... (and further asserts) that ‘Lawlor may have been travelling with a young prostitute’.”

When the facts emerged as to the true identity of Ms Kushnir, McDonald refused to comment, nor did *Sunday Independent* editor Aengus Fanning, husband of Eoghan Harris’s ex-wife and deputy editor Anne, where a similar “prostitute” libel had been published.

On October 30th, *The Observer* was obliged to publish the following letter from a Dublin reader:

“I was outraged at your front page story on the death of Liam Lawlor. He did not die with a call girl, as your correspondent Henry McDonald reported. He died in the company of his secretary in a tragic accident, the magnitude of which was amplified for his family and supporters by your lurid and totally inaccurate coverage. Your report is even more baffling as it was reported on Saturday evening’s news that Mr Lawlor died while on business with his secretary. Your comment that he was known to have visited prostitutes is utter rubbish and has no basis in fact. Your newspaper should be ashamed. I hope you give as much prominence to an apology as you did to your original story.”

And also the following letter from a Carlow reader:

“I hope your British readers are aware of the controversy caused by the reporting of the death of the former member of the Irish parliament, Liam Lawlor. *The Observer*’s Irish edition claimed Mr Lawlor, who had died in a car crash just the day before, was accompanied by a prostitute at the time of the accident. Notwithstanding the insensitivity of the reporting and the hurt it would have caused Mr Lawlor’s family, it has now emerged that the story was completely untrue, and the lady in the car was actually working as an interpreter for Mr Lawlor. The vindictive reporting has been described as grossly offensive, cruel and lacking in foundation and fact by the Irish Minister for Justice, Michael McDowell. The Irish Prime Minister, Bertie Ahern, spoke of his disappointment of the race to the bottom by Sunday newspapers. As a long-time reader, I always considered *The Observer* to hold a sense of decency. Last week’s paper showed that perhaps I was wrong. Your lack of sensitivity has been widely condemned on Irish radio and television. *The Observer* has now earned a reputation in Ireland as a cheap, sensationalist newspaper.”

There was no redress for McDonald’s character assassination of Lawlor, but Ms Kirchnir sued for libel. McDonald cost *The Observer* €100,000 in libel damages. (Similarly with the *Sindo*.) Having now migrated this year to *Times Newspapers*, the weekday UK *Times* has been choosy as to what it wants to be served by McDonald and what it doesn’t. It was particularly enthusiastic about McDonald’s report this May 4 concerning the legal finding on the death of a McDonald family friend and neighbour. Under the heading, “*Veterans cleared of murdering Official IRA’s Joe McCann*”. McDonald related:

“Two former paratroopers have been formally cleared of murdering an unarmed Irish republican leader during the bloodiest year of the Troubles. The veterans’ trial at Belfast crown court collapsed after the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland confirmed it would not appeal against a ruling to exclude statements they had given about the shooting of Joe McCann in 1972. It was the first trial in years to involve charges against former military personnel who served in the Troubles. Four other cases involving the prosecution of veterans are at the pre-trial stage. McCann was shot dead aged 24 as he allegedly tried to evade arrest by a plainclothes police officer in the Markets area of Belfast 49 years ago. The two veterans, known as Soldier A and Soldier C, admitted firing shots but told the Royal Military Police at the time that they believed they had done so lawfully... At the time of the shooting McCann was one of the most wanted men in Northern Ireland. Security sources claimed he had been responsible for the

deaths of more than ten British soldiers although this is disputed by his former colleagues in the Official IRA.

McCann was one of two chief suspects over the attempted assassination of John Taylor, the Ulster Unionist home affairs minister, in February 1972. Justice O’Hara told the two veterans, who are in their seventies and were dressed in suits and ties: ‘In the circumstances, Mr A and C, I formally find you not guilty of the charge of murder.’ News of the trial’s collapse was met by cheers from a small band of supporters, some of whom wore Parachute Regiment berets. Johnny Mercer, who quit as veterans minister last month over delays to laws protecting veterans from prosecution, was in court. He criticised the decision to prosecute and said: ‘The knock-on effect is that you’ve two men in there for the last ten years and their families who have been dragged through this horrific process, for what? It has to end.’

The McCann family expressed disappointment... Michael Agnew, deputy director of public prosecutions, said: ‘The complex and wide-ranging challenges of prosecuting legacy cases are well recognised. Where such cases fall to be considered for potential prosecution the PPS will continue to impartially apply the test for prosecution, without fear or favour, as it does in all other cases.’ Questions will be raised about how this case was allowed to drag on for so long and what impact it will have on the more than 200 veterans at risk of criminal investigation for alleged offences in Northern Ireland (Larisa Brown writes)...”

The London *Times* was even more enthused by the following day’s report, headlined “*Joe McCann killing: Collapse of ‘farcical’ Paras trial prompts calls to protect Troubles veterans*”, and having the joint byline of Larissa Brown, Defence Editor, and Henry McDonald, Belfast:

“A landmark case against two former paratroopers collapsed yesterday because of a lack of fresh evidence, strengthening calls for new laws to protect Northern Ireland veterans. Soldier A and Soldier C were acquitted of the murder of Joe McCann, an Official IRA commander, in 1972 - the bloodiest year of the Troubles during which more than 450 people were killed... Johnny Mercer, the former veterans minister who quit over the government’s treatment of investigations into the Troubles, said that the handling of the case had been ‘farcical’. There are concerns that hundreds of former soldiers, many in their seventies and eighties, could be brought before the courts. Four other cases are already at the pre-trial stage.”

This was the basis for the editorial in that same issue of May 5th, “*The Times view on the Joe McCann case: Justice Served*”. This has now become a British

Army campaigning issue for the paper. But the London *Times* was less happy with a report from another Belfast court a week later, this time a coroner's court. While a print edition of the Ireland edition of the *Sunday Times* is published, the weekday UK *Times* no longer prints an Irish edition. It does, however, present a facsimile version, which, on May 12th, carried this headline on its page 9: "*Troubles verdict 'corrects history'*". The headline for *Times* online Irish news read: "*Ballymurphy verdict: British soldiers shot innocent civilians*". Brown and McDonald jointly reported:

"Families of Ballymurphy victims shot by the British Army welcomed an inquest verdict on their deaths yesterday, saying it had finally cleared their names and 'corrected history'. A coroner concluded that ten civilians killed in west Belfast almost 50 years ago after an army operation were 'entirely innocent' and the use of force against them was unjustified. None were members of any paramilitary organisation, had a weapon or posed a threat, the judge said. The killings took place in the Ballymurphy housing estate during three days of violence in August 1971. Relatives of the deceased clapped as Mrs Justice Keegan, the coroner, read out her judgments at the International Convention Centre in Belfast. After the verdict, families criticised plans by the government to bring in new laws to prevent the prosecution of soldiers and terrorists over deaths during the Troubles, saying all victims deserved justice... *The Times* revealed last week that ministers plan to bring in a statute of limitations, which will result in no veterans or terrorists facing prosecution over incidents during the Troubles, except where there are allegations of war crimes, genocide or torture. Last night government sources confirmed the plan despite widespread condemnation in Ireland, with critics claiming it amounted to an 'amnesty'."

What is most noteworthy, however, is that **not a single word of this report was carried in the print edition of *The Times***. Tender British eyes needed to be protected from such findings. In a follow up report on May 13th, "*PM apologises to families over Ballymurphy shootings*", Brown and McDonald again jointly reported:

"Boris Johnson apologised 'unreservedly' last night to the families of the victims of the Ballymurphy shootings after a coroner ruled they were innocent... Johnson, who had come under pressure to apologise in the wake of the findings, also restated previous comments that he wanted a way forward in Northern Ireland that focused on reconciliation and ensured 'future generations are not burdened by the past'. His apology came as it

emerged that hundreds of former soldiers, many in their seventies, face having to give evidence to about 50 inquests into deaths during the Troubles in the coming months. Veterans expect to be quizzed over incidents they were not involved in as those examining deaths during the Troubles try to work out decades later who was present in specific incidents decades later."

Even though Brown and McDonald did their best to link up with the paper's amnesty campaign, once again, not a word of this report was printed by *The Times*. It was only on May 14th, unshackled from McDonald, that a short stand alone report from Brown, "*Families anger over PM's 'botched' apology for Ballymurphy killings*", appeared in print. The families' anger compelled Johnson to express a more formal apology in the House of Commons on May 19th, but not a single word was published by the *Times*, either in print or anywhere online, of this statement to Parliament.

As it turned out, McDonald had himself been rather too enthusiastic in his contribution to the May 5th report on "*the 'farcical' Paras trial*" for the murder of Joe McCann. The online version of that report now carries two health warnings: "*This article is the subject of a legal complaint*"; and "*Amended 24 May 2021: this article was amended to remove some personal information and to include more of Mr Agnew's statement on behalf of the DPP.*" Prior to those amendments, McDonald's input had remained intact:

"Lawyers representing the former paratroopers have called for an independent inquiry into their 'morally indefensible' prosecution. Devonshires solicitors said that there was a "strong indication" of a 'desire to use the criminal justice system to settle old scores' by charging Soldiers A and C with murder. Philip Barden, a senior partner at the firm representing the ex-soldiers, both in their 70s, said afterwards that the firm had made clear in legal submissions in 2016 that earlier evidence from their clients would not be admissible. Barra McGrory, the Northern Ireland's director of public prosecutions, went ahead with the case. He had represented the Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams and Adams's colleague Martin McGuinness while running a private practice and also played a role in securing amnesty for hundreds of people suspected of being IRA members. Barden called for an inquiry by a senior judge 'to ensure that the decision to prosecute these veterans was not political', adding: 'We need to know why those directing historical prosecutions elevated Joe McCann's case as a priority and didn't focus on those many people who witnessed loved ones gunned

down by terrorists.' The former veterans minister Johnny Mercer said that there must be an urgent independent inquiry to establish whether the PPS's decision was made 'properly and correctly'..."

Prior to the May 24th amendments, there had been a far more specific health warning: "*This Article is the subject of a legal complaint from Barra McGrory QC.*" Indeed! More again from the Eoghan Harris "School" of Stickie journalism.

On 13th February 2009, McDonald had favourably blogged concerning his mentor's call at that early juncture for Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael to unite in forming National Government:

"One of those calling for such a government is a member of Ireland's second chamber, the Seanad, who has himself crisscrossed the old traditional divides of left/right republican/nationalist over the last four decades. Eoghan Harris, an independent senator, has been a spin doctor and political adviser to an eclectic band of parties ranging from the hard-left Workers party all the way across to Fianna Fáil under Bertie Ahern. In between, his media strategy helped elect Mary Robinson, the first female and liberal president of Ireland, back in 1991. He even crossed the border to come to David Trimble's aid when the then Ulster Unionist leader tried to sell the Good Friday agreement to a sceptical unionist electorate. Harris argues that the republic's present plight is akin to a nation at war and that, in wars, parties unite to form national coalitions."

But McDonald failed here to mention how, through the course of the 1980s, he had soldiered shoulder-to-shoulder with Harris in that same "*hard-left Workers party*". And, of course, they both have followed similar ideological trajectories since. Five years earlier, in the *Irish Times* on 21st December 2004, Kevin Myers penned the following hymn of praise on "*reading Henry McDonald's highly engaging memoir of (his still young) life, Colours - From Bombs To Bloom*":

"I happened to be present in Divis flats when serious rioting had broken out around there following the shooting by paratroopers of the Official IRA leader Joe McCann that morning in the Markets area, where Henry McDonald was from. Henry knew McCann well: the gunman used the McDonald home as a safe house, to eat and dye his hair as a disguise. Perhaps surprisingly, Henry describes his childhood in the Markets, even in the middle of the Troubles, as 'idyllic'. In his teenage years, he joined the Official IRA, which preached some Marxist mumbo-jumbo and which favoured a Moscow-style Marxist workers'

paradise and which was powerful in the Markets. He has come some long way since then, making a journey a few other Belfast nationalists have made, usually via the now-defunct official republican movement. Gradually they dissociated themselves from most of the trappings of republicanism before they, in a similar series of ideological ecdyses, shed the various layers of Marxist epidermis. As a group, they now tend to be pro-American free marketers, and like Henry, supported the US-led invasion of Iraq."

And this is the journey that led to McDonald's input for the *Times* denunciation of Barra McGrory's murder charges against the Paras who had shot Joe McCann, with the *Times* simultaneously refusing to print anything McDonald submitted on the Ballymurphy massacre verdict, no matter how well he had tried to tailor it to the paper's agenda.

But, notwithstanding the self-censoring of its Irish news by the UK *Times*, a glimmer of light can occasionally creep into its print edition. The Thursday issue has a regular "*Lawyer of the week*" feature. On May 13, that feature was headed "*Philip Barden, who acted for the two British Army veterans acquitted of murdering an Official IRA man*", but this was followed on May 20th with a feature headed "*Sean Doran QC, who was counsel for the coroner in the Ballymurphy inquest*". It began:

"Sean Doran QC was counsel to the Ballymurphy inquest. The coroner Mrs Justice Keegan found that ten people killed in west Belfast in military operations in August 1971 were 'entirely innocent of any wrongdoing'."

While this did make it into the English print edition of the *Times*, it was, however, excluded from the Scottish edition, which opted instead to feature a "*Scottish lawyer of the week*". And no edition of the UK *Times*, whether print or online, carried the news that, on June 16th, the same Justice Siobhan Keegan made more history in being appointed Northern Ireland's first female Chief Justice.

The London *Times* campaign for a British Army amnesty has as an essential component the keeping of its its readers in wilful ignorance of crimes committed by such troops. The consequences of this approach were inadvertently touched on in a *Times 2* feature on May 20th about the talk show host Graham Norton, a self-described camp Protestant from the West Cork town of Bandon. Interviewer Helen Rumbelow raised the subject:

"How does he view the debate about the

legacy of British colonialism, including how little is taught in British schools of the historic treatment of Ireland? 'What's interesting is my mother. She was raised in Northern Ireland, in the British educational system. She knows nothing about Irish history. I mean zero. And that to me is extraordinary, that you're living in the place and no one is telling you anything about it.' I say that my first visit to Ireland, with its monuments marking English brutality, was a deeply shaming experience.

'That's the answer to your question. That's why British people aren't educated about this stuff, because it's unpleasant. British people would not want to sit in classrooms all day, every day, being told, 'Oh, by the way, you are part of a tradition that has raped the world.' So yeah, they don't tell people that.' ..."

And that sums up a lot.

Manus O'Riordan

What Is Meant By Socialism In Northern Ireland?

With the idea that Northern Ireland has two distinct national groupings then socialism is going to take on the national attributes of that nationality. No one socialism is going to serve as an umbrella for both communities. Even communism, which was seen as serving the multi-republics of the Soviet Union, and now China, doesn't work in this British-created pseudo-state. Republican socialism is not going to be accepted by Protestants who see themselves as British, which entails the British monarchy. There is a Protestant socialism somewhere buried in the Ulster Volunteer Force but Catholics are not going to want any of that. There are small splinter groups such as People-Before-Profit, but it will be voted for according to who the candidate happens to be – Catholic or Protestant. There are bridges but you will need a pass before going over them – that pass says you accept the NI pseudo state as a Catholic, or, the pass might say, as a Protestant, I accept the Republican/Nationalist version of things. The Alliance Party claims to have Protestant/Catholic membership but that is only within the Northern Ireland pseudo-state. Though it doesn't claim to be socialist there is a price to be paid for Catholic/Protestant unity.

And on another level there is the school system in which certain schools have both Catholic and Protestant pupils, some of the Irish language may be taught along with the pseudo language of Ulster-Scots. I was brought up with Ulster-Scots and though I personally like it and find it poetical, its use of English as a dialect is not so difficult to understand as the Geordie dialect of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. These mixed schools can't bring unity among the two communities, it can only promote the acceptance of Northern Ireland as something real.

I joined the communist youth Young Workers' League (YWL) as far back as 1949, and later the Communist Party of Northern Ireland (CPNI) with the idea that it unified Catholic and Protestant. The tag of NI attached to CP should have told me this was nonsense. The Communist Party of Ireland was broken up into two pieces in 1941. The Southern section became the Irish Workers' league in the then neutral Eire, as it was known then. That would have made it Catholic-controlled and an Irish party. In the North the CPNI became a Protestant party. During its 1930s time, as an all Ireland party, the CPI, it had a number Protestant members, some of whom became prominent in the trade union movement after attending the International Lenin School, in Moscow, which trained communist cadres, in the 1930s.

Though the CPI liked to think it was a party for all, its shell was Irish nationalism. The Soviet leadership obviously accepted the nationalism of the CPI. When the Long War broke out in the early 1970s in NI, they continued to accept the Irish nationalist side of things. I tried during that time to explain the Two-Nations theory to an English communist journalist living for many years in Moscow, speaking and writing in Russian. He was visiting London, and had reviewed a theatre play of mine for a Moscow paper. Now he had contacted me in order to give me the review, that he had translated into English. I took the opportunity of discussing the Two-Nations with him. On the Two-Nations he forecast it would be something unacceptable to the Soviet leadership, and he wouldn't be writing about it.

The head of the 1930s CPI was Sean Murray, a former IRA commandant. My father was a member. He was an Ulster

Protestant with dreams of severe reforms for the pseudo state. He left the CPNI because of its nationalist agenda, and became a Protestant communist. I, his son, became a Catholic communist.

We go along well in discussing the Soviet Union and communist China but, with my communism drifting into discussions about De Valera, the '16 Rising, and the War of Independence, our conversations tailed off, only to be resumed when I touched on 1912 and the Ulster Covenant. So, Sean Murray, who was editor of the Irish Workers' Voice and general secretary of the CPI, up until 1941, was no longer a policy maker in the new CPNI. He was given the grand titles of General Secretary and Chairman of the CPNI but the real policy-makers were the new breed of Protestant trade union leaders who felt their duty was to the mainly Protestant workforce, when NI had heavy industry like shipyards, aircraft and engineering factories.

Murray had his bare office above the CPNI bookshop in Church Lane in Belfast with little else to do but read the newspapers and give the odd lecture on Marxism to the YWL. On one occasion he was allowed to represent the both the CPI and the Irish Worker's League at an international communist meeting abroad but generally he sat in his lonely office reading the newspapers. There were breaks when everyone was together but that was in a pub owned by a communist (a boozers labourer as a communist? Will miracles never cease!) When some members of the YWL began coming into his pub he threw up his hands in despair and said the CP was going down the drain. The well-paid, well-clad, well-paid trade union leaders could afford to pile the drinks on to the General Secretary of the CPNI, who was on permanent unemployment benefit, and would soon be on a meagre state pension, which he didn't draw for long when he died from the effects of alcoholism.

But there was never any money in the CPNI itself. If, as a young person, you were sent on a course to Sheffield (the then communist capital of England) you scraped the boat fare together through begging from your parents. Getting on to the shores of England you hitch-hiked to Sheffield. In Sheffield you could get free board and lodgings from a comrade. We never resented having to do this. It was an adventure. If the future communist cadre to Sheffield was a teenage girl then somehow we got the money together to let her take the train in England.

The Irish Workers' League was mostly ignored by the high-flying CPNI Northern

trade union leaders. We had a delegation from their youth section one occasion. Most of the Protestant members of the YWL didn't turn up to greet them. It was left to the few Catholics in the YWL to show them around and entertain them. Desmond Greaves, leader of the Connolly Association in England unconsciously summed up what they thought of Southern Ireland with his constant picture in the Irish Democrat newspaper of a donkey looking over a stone wall. Greaves, as far as I can remember, ignored the then industrial might of the North, in his all-Ireland vision.

Personally, the communist party was my university, one of the great periods of my life. You were taught to express yourself by talking and writing. You learnt about literature and classical music. You attained a world outlook. You were given self-esteem as a young worker. You learnt how superficial the class system could be. You argued and discussed with anyone no matter what their rank was. The standing joke was: If you want to become middle-class join the communist party.

There certainly was plenty of middle-class people in it. Ireland, Usually North and South they were usually well separated from the working-class areas especially in Belfast, had its own working-class and middle-class ghettos. So, you would rarely met them. This wasn't so much the case in London. That changed in Belfast with CP members mixing a lot, visiting one another's homes, even intermarrying, Catholic and Protestant in Belfast, Jewish and Catholic in London. Also, In Belfast, you met different nationalities through the CP. Sudanese and Iranian communist students would come to your meeting and speak of their experiences in their own countries. You might then get a member of the French communist party, a lecturer at Queens University, coming to talk. Something young factory workers wouldn't normally experience in Belfast.

Of course there were problems in the CPNI. A member of the YWL, a Protestant, began to ask about the history of the old CPI. Then we all wanted to know something of the history of the old CPI of the 1930s. At meetings we would raise the questions which usually met with a glare and stony silence. Only the face of Sean Murray would light up but he acted like a prisoner of the CPNI and said nothing. there was only that flicker of sudden joy across his face that told us that he was the only ally we had, though he would always be mute. You began to

feel that there had been a coup d'état back in 1941, and now Protestantism ruled. At the AGM the YWL still wanted to know the history of the old CPI. This time we were threatened. We eventually learnt there was a gangster family from East Belfast as members of the CPNI. We should have known because they were too well dressed for the austerity of the times. At the AGM they sent their wives over to tell us to shut up, with the message: We'll send our husbands over next.

That didn't put off the young Protestant, he was now up the Falls Road learning Irish, and thinking of ways to change the YWL into the Socialist Youth League, with the title also translated into Irish. He kept insisting he was a Protestant but he was slowly turning towards Irish Nationalism. He thought that keeping Protestant and taking on nationalism could unite the North. We few Catholics in the YWL were only too happy to welcome him aboard. Next he booked a meeting with the IRA in the form of Dessie O'Hagan. O'Hagan had already been probing the YWL. He thought of himself as a socialist. Soon we got a new member, a teenager of course, who called himself ex-IRA. We began to think he was a plant. Unusually for that time in the early 1950s, he owned a camera. He managed to photograph most of us. It was usual to give suspects as much work as possible like selling the Daily Worker in the centre of the city, knocking on doors for the signing of the Stalin-Five-Point-Peace-Plan. He did it all without question and even arrived one week-end with tins of paint to re-paint our gloomy meeting room. He was an apprentice painter and walked out with the company's paint. When he suggested carpet for the meeting room we had to say no in case he was arrested for stealing.

Then came the meeting with Dessie O'Hagan at an Irish dance in St Mary's Hall. Six of us – five Protestants and myself. The girls wouldn't join us, thinking we were stupid and living in the past, trying to make trouble when there was no trouble. We still went ahead with the meeting. A hostile group formed but O'Hagan, in charge, dispersed them. We just talked about socialism when what he wanted to know was did we have any contacts in Moscow, or other communist capitals in Eastern Europe. He was probably looking for guns. When we left two of our group began to ape those doing the Irish dance, as if they were monkeys. The Protestant who organised the meeting got very angry with them. I already knew what some of them were like.

(Later when living in London he joined the Connolly Association and stuck with it for the rest of his life. It was one people, one Ireland for him. He laughed at the idea of there being two nations in the North. Highly intelligent, he went from being a joiner to being a lecturer in economics at various universities)

But before that in 1957, he had organised a NI delegation to take part in The International Festival of Youth and Students in Moscow. He recruited some socialist youth, when he could find them, and any young person of note who happened to be in the news at the time, like some athletes, university student leaders, and a few Republican youth, and the Irish Belfast band The McPeakes. It was a free treat – air fares paid, accommodation and food, visits to theatres and the Bolshoi Ballet, and a tour of the former Tsar palace in Leningrad. He also brought out a newspaper for the occasion, to publicise it. Jack Bennett, a Protestant and Republican sympathiser, working as a journalist for the Belfast Telegraph, helped with getting it together.

All went well until the nationality line-up in Red Square. It amounted to 34,000 young people, from up to a hundred nations with their national flags. The Irish Tricolour was produced for the NI delegation by my friend, the organiser. A number of young Unionists refused to march behind it and called for the Union Jack. Soviet government officials quickly intervened and said those who didn't want to march behind the Irish Tricolour would be driven to the airport immediately. That quietened things and the Tricolour-led delegation moved off, reluctantly, out of step, and carelessly.

(1957/1958 was the time of the Asian flu. Four million throughout the world were to die from it, yet, as I remember it was generally ignored. Victims of it suffered as chronically as the present Covid-19)

It was an absurd situation then in NI. You got to know the name of the RUC special branch eternally shadowing you and you also knew the names of the IRA leadership, and they all knew about the membership of the YWL and the CPNI. It was like one big dysfunctional family. But those family members, the Republicans, inept as they were at the time, were the ones who were interned every time a member of the British monarchy visited NI, for a week or two weeks, while they were there. RUC special branch didn't bother the adults of the CPNI, only the YWL. They advised us to go to Australia

where young people get on in life, and live a long time. Another one might say to you: When you get your communist country you'll need us even more, if those fuckin' fenians are still around. I later heard that when the Northern war started the unknown members of PIRA gunned them down. I don't know if this was wishful thinking on this person's part but the odd thing was, no matter how bad things were then, there was always the odd SB who was really only doing his job and apologised when he had to follow you, while others would grab you and rip your shirt and almost strangle you with your tie. But there was no stopping us. No one dropped out.

Take the peculiar notion that communism would bring us altogether in NI. The CPNI had premises in the heart of Protestant East Belfast. We held social evenings there sometimes and showed East European films on occasions, screened by the party's Lagan Films. Before that started a 18 year old Catholic from the Falls Road would sit down at the piano and start to sing Johnston's Motor Car. This didn't go down very well with the Protestants who were the majority there. Think of about 37 Protestants, and three Catholics, including myself. The trade union leaders glared but said nothing. That left two Catholics, including myself, looking very embarrassed. Even the legendry Betty Sinclair, who had done jail in the 1930s for being a member of the nationalist-led CPI, stood there with her eyes tightly closed, saying nothing, but downing her wine very quickly. The thing about harmony and getting together was to say absolutely nothing about our two identities. The thing was to shut up and think of Moscow. Of course, by being silent, you felt being under the thumb.

The next time we had a social evening our Falls Road lad found the piano locked. He managed to get it open and off he went again in Johnston's Motor Car. Our premises were beside an Orange Hall and we vaguely heard knocking on the wall, or thought we did in our stress. At least that's something we shared with the Protestant members, except for the pianist. A few weeks later we tackled him about playing and singing that song. He told we two Catholics that we had no guts in standing up for ourselves. We thought him premature. We weren't against it but it was too soon. It was a waiting game. He dismissed the Catholic mothers who told their sons to wait. Tíocfaidh ar la has been around for a long time. The Protestants didn't trust us but then they had a good reason not to. We hid our feelings, we hid away,

and as Catholic children our war games were guerrilla war ones, which we weren't aware of playing. Mothers monitored our political feelings and preached restraint. Well, you thought that was the nature of women to be like that. But the time came when they also sacrificed themselves.

No such restraint in other areas. The woman running the CPNI bookshop would have sectarian outburst at times. Always about Catholics. Alongside, on the bookshelves with Marx, Lenin and Stalin there was a title : The Catholic Church Against the Twentieth Century. Her one objection about it was they didn't put Roman in front of the Catholic, in the title. She was studying Stalin on nationalities and what makes a nation. Her idea was that Roman Catholics should go South expressed as.

If they don't like it up here then let them go down South.

When complaints were made to the EC the answer was: It's only Annie. She was also on the EC of the CPNI. Her son was secretary of the YWL for a while and had to be persuaded to give up his membership of the British Territorial Army.

Then there are people who eventually do the wrong things, but they are such good people to be friends with you strive to learn how they went wrong, in your eyes anyway. One such person was the late Derek Peters. I came across him in the Duke of York pub, off Donegall Street in Belfast. He was singing Republican and communist songs. A friend and I wondered who he was. We, being members of the YWL, were always looking to up the membership. He was quite a tall and muscular person, reminding us of the RUC personnel patrolling the streets. No matter how big you are there is always somebody bigger. We later found out his father was a member of the RUC but in the meantime we were wondering why he wasn't in the communist party when he was singing Soviet and Italian partisan songs.

The Duke of York pub was owned by a self-confessed fascist, not a thug one, but an intellectual one. He was always off to Franco Spain. This pub was neutral ground. All sorts of political opinions were there and you could sing them. Members of the Orange Order met there as well as Catholic Action. You might get a hymn from them and everyone applauded including the Orange men. It was the Casablanca of Belfast. I got to know Derek very well and was invited to take part in his Tyrella all night beach parties, in reach of the Mourne Mountains. He was a freelance

salesman, and at about 20 years old, he had sold redundant aircraft left over from WW2 to companies all over the world. He also represented major food companies. His parties, in winter, he held at his large home. He had this gift of making more money than he wanted and beside that he was interested in communism. He became very active in the movement, got interested in Catholic civil rights, and was anti-colonial.

In the 1950s I left for London with a close friend to work. I got a message from him saying he was now a radio operator on a freighter which had come to the East End London docks. We made our way there and had some drinks while he played Irish records. Later we made a tour of the East End pubs. A year later he said he was back in Belfast selling again. I didn't see him again until I visited Belfast in the 1970s.

It was wartime. I met him at the Arts Club. It became 2 in the morning and he was the person to ask about getting the right taxi. To take the wrong one and you could end up dead as a taig. He phoned the right one. A few years later in London I heard that his boat/yacht had been torched by PIRA. It seems he had joined the UDA. He was a non-violent person, a clichéd gentle giant so he was more or less deciding he was Protestant after all. He was in favour of the Two-Nations theory and my guess is that pushed him into the UDA. I had already seen this happen with a couple of Protestants I knew. They were uncertain of their outlook, mixing it too much with Irish nationalism, and now they knew their worth. It took me sometime to work it out. Derek had been a Republican song singer back in the 1950s, who had been a communist, and probably still was, but in the critical situation going on in NI he was forced to make a stand on something, his own identification.

A better outcome than what I heard about former members of the CPNI and the YWL. - one fleeing from a former member as he tried to bring him down with an Uzi sub-machine gun.

As for the communism of the CPNI, I believe the UVF inherited that. And one or two who fought in PIRA and thought this was for socialism, died young. Maybe they will get their Tíocfaidh ar la one day. In the meantime the socialism of the 1930s, as practised in the CPI, has returned again, with its headquarters in Dublin.

Wilson John Haire.
27.4.2021.

Peter Taylor's 'Northern Ireland'

Peter Taylor, a well-connected English journalist who has been reporting on Northern Ireland since the early 1970s, began his Centenary programme on BBC 2 (*Ireland After Partition*, 14 June) as follows:

“Why is an Englishman still looking at the Irish Question, after following it, studying it, reporting it for 50 years? The answer is because the Irish Question has still never been resolved. And this year is the centenary of Partition, the legislation that divided the island into two separate states in 1921, separated by a Border. People tend to forget that the Partition was meant to be a temporary solution that contained therein the mechanism for a United Ireland, though still under the British Crown...”

The intention of the drafters of the legislation was to give to Irish American opinion the notion that Britain had legislated for all-Ireland Home Rule, and to give Sinn Fein the notion that Britain had separated its fate from that of “Ulster”, and that Nationalist Ireland was free to whittle away the “*Northern Ireland state*”.

The uncertainty deliberately placed over the Six Counties in their status as Northern Ireland was the reason why the region could never settle down.

An all-Ireland Home Rule Government—never mind an all-Ireland state—could not have been established without war, because ‘Ulster’ would certainly have fought—and the Ulster that would have fought was well-connected into the Military Establishment of the state.

The Six County division was agreed by Ulster Unionism in 1916. UUP policy in the 1918 Election was for the Six Counties to remain simply a part of the British state, with the 26 Counties being dealt with separately. It wanted no separate government for itself.

If Partition had taken the form of excluding the Six Counties from legislation for the rest of Ireland, leaving the Nationalist Party, or Sinn Fein, to campaign for a transfer from the UK to the Irish state, without the complication of a local pseudo-state in which Protestants had to govern Catholics in order to remain British, it is not imaginable that a 28 year war would have resulted. And the likelihood of achieving a united

Ireland could hardly have been less.

Taylor knows very well that *Partition* and *Northern Ireland* are not two names for the same thing. And he also knows, as a successful journalist, that the British state is determined that the distinction between the two should not be made.

He says: “*In those early days I wanted to explore the roots of sectarianism in Belfast, and how they began*”. So he took part in a Round Table scheme to give a holiday at Butlin’s Holiday Camp in Wales to six Protestant and six Catholic children. And, *Eureka!*, after some initial caution they got on fine:

“So the obvious question is, well why can’t they do that back in Northern Ireland? Because Northern Ireland is Northern Ireland, and that was the tragedy.”

Because Northern Ireland is Northern Ireland! Simultaneously meaningless, banal, and cryptic.

Did he have to bite his tongue to prevent it from completing the statement: because, in the uncertain framework of state called Northern Ireland, one of them is in the business of governing the other, and the other resents it?

Applying the stereotype, he asked one of the little boys (a Catholic): “*Have you talked about religion with the other children*”. The boy replied: “*No. It hasn’t been mentioned. I don’t care about religion*”.

So religion wasn’t the issue!

It should have taken very little investigation to discover that Catholics don’t discuss religion, except for a few who are being “*religious*”. They may say—or may have said in those days—*Le cunamh Dí* when expressing an intention to do something, but it was a mere convention. They went about things with their own power and understanding.

And that little boy understood that when he returned to Belfast he would not be seeing his new Protestant acquaintances again, even though religion was not the cause of it.

Taylor played a clip of an interview with William Whitelaw, the first Secretary of State, about his meeting

with Seán McStiofáin in July 1972: “What was depressing was that I found no sign at that meeting that they really were prepared seriously to contemplate the political realities as they were”. What these *political realities* were was not gone into.

The political realities were that Whitehall had decided that the Six Counties should remain within the British state but should be governed outside its democratic political system, by a subordinate local election which had no actual Power of State. That Stormont had no actual Power of State was demonstrated in 1972 by the Government of which Whitelaw was part. Taylor remained prudently silent about this.

The secret meeting was futile. The Provos were in earnest and the State was playing dumb. But—

“Loyalist anger at the secret talks turned to fury... hen, on the day that became known as Bloody Friday, the IRA indiscriminately planted bombs right across Belfast, killing 5 civilians, 2 soldiers, and a policeman. The horrific images of that day have remained indelibly imprinted on my mind.”

Taylor saw no need to mention the administrative massacre known as *Bloody Sunday*.

After this the Loyalist “*murder campaign*” intensified:

“They began to target Catholics simply because they were Catholics. They had a grim purpose in assassinating Catholics ‘to get the community to put pressure on the IRA to stop’. I was really taken aback when I talked to a series of Loyalist paramilitaries, and I was amazed at just how candid they were.”

The late David Ervine interviewed:

“Were you prepared to kill?”

Ervine: “Without question.”

“You knew what you were letting yourself in for?”

Ervine: “Without question.”

“With your eyes wide open?”

Ervine: “Totally. My decision. And made by men, and me alone.”

Jim Light of the UFF was then interviewed:

Taylor: “What did you do?”

Light: “I went out with a group of other Volunteers from the UFF, and we picked up a Catholic, and we took him away and executed him.”

Taylor: “Murdered him?”

Light: “Yes.”

Taylor: “Shot him dead?”

Light: “Yes.”

Taylor: “Why was he selected?”

Light: “He was selected for no other reason than that he was a Catholic.”

Taylor: “No reason to believe he was involved in the Republican movement?”

Light: “No.”

Taylor: Just an innocent 17 year old student?”

Light: “Yes.”

Taylor: “Who pulled the trigger?”

Light: “I pulled the trigger.”

Taylor: “You pulled the trigger?”

Light: “I did. Yes.”

Taylor: “Without any hesitation?”

Light: “No, actually, no I wouldn’t say I had any hesitation at that time.”

Taylor: “I still find that interview utterly appalling”. He bows his head.

“You have to interview people who’ve done very unpleasant things, to put it mildly. And the same applies to the IRA. But you must never forget why you’re talking to them because of what they’ve done”. [Picture of a corpse at a street corner alongside a pool of blood.]

Nobody forced Taylor to be a journalist reporting War in Belfast. That is what he chose to do. In a bygone era a journalist by vocation would not have let his sensitive blood run cold in the presence of the war which he chose to report. He would have attempted to explain how it came about that civilised human beings found it reasonable to do such things.

The IRA declared war on the State, taking no account of the pseudo-state which the Government had humbugged the Protestant community to accept as a ‘safe refuge’. The War was about their fate but they had no acknowledged part in it. Their pseudo-state was whisked away on the instant, and they were regarded as weirdos by the political party on which their future depended, but which had ostracised them. So they worked out the logic of their situation and adopted the tactic of killing Catholics at random as a way of damaging the IRA.

But the killing was not entirely random. A friend of mine, Liam Lynch—an obvious Catholic who had spent a period as a Trappist—was picked up in the University area and taken away for shooting. While on the way to execution he persuaded them to go by way of his lodgings, where he showed them a bundle of *Two Nations* leaflets, and was reprieved!

Applying the morality of settled statehood to individual conduct in such a thoroughly unsettling condition of public affairs as the British State brought about in the Six Counties is Imperialist escapism.

The oldest truth of politics is Aristotle’s “*Man is a political animal*”. He is shaped by the Constitution—that actual kind of State—in which he is produced. And if the State is a democracy, “*the business of the legislator... is not to make it too great a work, or too perfect, but to aim only to render it stable*” (*On Government*, Book VI, Ch. V). And “*the virtue of a citizen has necessarily a reference to the state*” (Book III, Ch. IV). But this is on the supposition that “*the community of citizens composes the state*”—which, of course was never the case with Northern Ireland, which was never either a state or a community of citizens. It was two communities, both detached from state networks, each aspiring to a citizenship which differed from that of the other, but given a pseudo-democracy to quarrel in pointlessly.

Then there was Sunningdale. Taylor says:

“I remember returning to Belfast in 1974, when Harold Wilson became Prime Minister, and holding my breath as I watched Loyalist workers bring Northern Ireland to a standstill in a catastrophic political strike. It was designed to bring down the Sunningdale Agreement. The Strikers won. Sunningdale collapsed. And it became clear that the real power, the power on the streets, was the power of loyalist strikers. They were the brake on the process that they feared was leading to a united Ireland.”

A clip of an interview was shown at this point.

John Taylor was the leader of the Vanguard movement formed in protest against the abolition of Stormont in 1972. He issued a Manifesto called *Ulster A Nation*. His attempts to hold mass rallies against the course of events had been fiascos.

The Trade Union Strike of May 1974 was not against “*Sunningdale*”. It was against the implementation of one element of the Sunningdale Agreement, the establishment of a Council of Ireland with representatives from Dublin and Belfast. When the Dublin Government signed the Sunningdale Agreement, the understanding in Ulster Unionist circles was that this revoked the assertion of sovereignty over the Six Counties made by the Irish state. However, the Dublin

Government asserted early in 1974 that the assertion of sovereign right over the North continued. And the SDLP, in Office with one of the Unionist Parties at Stormont, had itself photographed in joint session with the Dublin Cabinet, and announced that the establishment of a United Ireland was now inevitable under the Agreement.

The Council of Ireland was due to be set up in May. A Protestant Shop Stewards' Group announced that it would call a General Strike in May, unless the setting up of the Council was deferred, or alternatively, a Stormont Election was held and it was shown that there was still popular support for the Council despite the re-assertion of the Sovereignty Claim by the Dublin Government.

Nothing was said about the more important dimension of Sunningdale: the actual Power-Sharing Government which had been set up and was functioning.

The SDLP refused to negotiate on the issue. Its leader, Gerry Fitt, said that a Strike against the setting up of the Council would be a Fascist action, comparable to Hitler's assumption of power in 1933, and should be suppressed forcibly. The Secretary of State (of the British Government), Merlyn Rees, who was the shepherd in charge, also refused to negotiate. The Strike went ahead. The leader of the British TUC was brought in to break it by leading a *Back To Work* march, but the workers would not follow him.

It was demanded that the Government—the real Government in London—should break the Strike. The only way of trying to do that would have been to put the Army in to do the work that the workers were refusing to do. Harold Wilson did not see his way towards attempting that. He also refused to negotiate with the Strike Committee. What he did was abolish the whole Sunningdale set-up.

In the immediate aftermath of the Strike, the Secretary of State put the idea about that Britain was going to withdraw from the Six Counties. He organised Conferences with Loyalist Volunteer groups in the Netherlands and advised them that they should be ready to take affairs into their own hands as Britain withdrew.

This was known at the time as a policy of "*Ulsterising the War*"—making it a war of Protestants and Catholics.

That was also a period of shadowy goings-on within the state proper. Wilson declared that the Labour Party

had become "*the natural part of power*", and there were signs of a *coup d'état* being prepared against him by senior Conservatives and members of British Intelligence. The situation was defused, but when things settled down, Margaret Thatcher was in the offing.

Taylor misrepresents the 1974 Strike and doesn't mention the "*Ulsterisation*" policy of the Government in the aftermath.

The IRA decided to extend its operations to England. As Billy McKee of Belfast put it to Taylor:

"Our people were suffering. The English people were coming and telling us. They knew nothing about this situation. It was time they were made to find out..."

The response was a message from MI6, through an intermediary in Derry, that Britain was ready to discuss "*structures of disengagement*". This led to a meeting between Michael Oatley of British Intelligence and Billy McKee:

"*McKee*: "He said that the British Government wished to meet the leadership of the IRA. I asked him, well, what was on the agenda, and he says, 'Withdrawal'. But he says 'We need your help'."

Taylor: "Are you sure he said 'withdrawal'?"

McKee: "He said 'withdrawal' alright."

Oatley (interviewed many years later): "When I was asked what I'm prepared to discuss, I said I'm prepared to discuss anything you like."

Taylor: "Including structures of disengagement?"

Oatley: "Whatever that may mean. After all, you have to bear in mind that we are dealing with Irishmen who have a wonderful facility for language, and subtlety, and marvellous poets and lawyers. Everything will be open for discussion".

At the same moment in that period, a statement was made by the famous historian A.J.P. Taylor, that British withdrawal from the Six Counties was in the process of happening. He presented it as if it was a historic fact. And that, I think, is the reason why I have never been able to read him, even though he wrote a lot about Germany. Von Rank held that, for a historian to be trustworthy, he must have made a judgement on an actual situation which was not completely off the mark. Taylor's judgment on British withdrawal—which I believe on the front page of *An Phoblacht*—seemed to me at the time to be wildly off the mark.

I never saw it as a practical possibility at all. But it might well be that Taylor had it on the very best authority, from the horse's mouth itself, and that we are here in the murky region of the "*very British coup*" that was nipped in the bud but led to the Thatcher era.

(Von Ranke's notion that the historian should try to present a historical situation as it actually was has now been generally rejected by academic historians in Ireland. The latest rejection of it I noticed was by A.T.Q. Stewart. The history of Northern Ireland, especially, is written to a formula.)

I don't know if a hard distinction can be made between "*military*" and "*paramilitary*" anymore in the way that words are used. But, using them in the old-fashioned way, the Provisional IRA was undoubtedly a military organisation. When the Ulster Defence Association first appeared it seemed to have the makings of a military organisation. And the UWC Strike was undoubtedly a Trade Union action, conducted by Shop Stewards in support of a coherent and limited political aim. But both the devolved Government and the state Government refused to negotiate with it, and the official media (the BBC) did not even report what the Strike demands were.

The Government preferred to destroy the whole Sunningdale apparatus than to deal with the Council of Ireland aspect of it, with a view to preserving the rest. The essential Strike demand was that the establishment of the Council should be deferred in the light of the reassertion of the sovereignty claim by Dublin, or until a Northern election referred that there was still majority support for the whole deal despite Dublin's reassertion of the sovereignty claim.

Sunningdale fell because the Labour Party in Government, having as a Party boycotted Northern Ireland for half a century, was bewildered by the turn of events on the ground and threw in its hand. That is to say, it refused to negotiate over the limited UWC demand, but it conceded the Vanguard position.

Vanguard had little or no part in getting the Strike going, but in the second week, when the strategy of the Government seemed to be to create chaos, it was active in support of the Strike, and in preventing chaos—which was a novel role for it.

After Sunningdale was scrapped, the UWC ran out of political perspective.

Unpublished Letter to Southern Star

West Cork History Festival: What Is It?

On a number of occasions I have attempted to engage Simon Kingston of the West Cork History Festival in discussion. I encouraged him to broaden out from repetitious advertising of revisionism, particularly in depicting West Cork during the War of Independence. I treated him as well-meaning if foolish in his approach.

I now see I was sadly mistaken.

Simon Kingston's recent *'The Critic'* review of Kevin Myers' memoir reveals a fully paid up member of the outer-edge Eoghan Harris / Kevin Myers / Ruth Dudley Edwards school of pro-British Irish 'history'. See <https://thecritic.co.uk/issues/april-2021/the-bracing-blast-of-a-dissident/>

Myers is held to represent "*a draught of fresh air in the often conformist fug of Irish journalism... [who] pointed to the direct connection between the savagery of the Provos and the "physical force" tradition of earlier Irish republicanism*". Furthermore, Myers—

"made a major contribution to the deconstruction of the image of the noble "Old" IRA and its valiant fight against the evil Brits. Notwithstanding the efforts of useful idiots like Ken Loach, a much more honest account of the Irish revolution had emerged, including its grubby, sectarian, elements."

Myers engages in "*skewering the furious quietism of the Southern Protestants of later decades ... personified here by the Irish Times editor Douglas Gageby*".

Unfortunately for Mr. Kingston, Kevin Myers, Eoghan Harris and their historian of choice, the late Peter Hart, are discredited. The notion of a 'sectarian IRA' exists only in the minds of true believers, for whom facts constitute (to quote Eoghan Harris) a form of 'media masturbation'. Myers and others condemn southern Protestants for not joining in their fantasy history. Protestant republicans like former Irish Times Editor Douglas Gageby are treated with furious venom.

I am pleased that the Aubane Historical Society was in a position to present an alternative, more objective, view of the War of Independence for festival goers. We distributed *The Embers of Revisionism*, by Niall Meehan and Brian Murphy, at the first festival. We followed up with a debate that took place on the *Southern Star* letters page, initiated by Tom Cooper, and other material. This pamphlet is available from the Society and is also online. Unlike the witterings of our over-promoted opponents, our analysis meets objective tests.

One final point, Mr. Kingston originally claimed that the Festival was run by a broad though unseen 'Committee'. I was sceptical. I am therefore also pleased that Mr. Kingston admits in his Myers review that: "My wife and I run the West Cork History Festival".

Jack Lane

Aubane Historical Society

Some elements from it were drawn into the Government's "withdrawal" ploy of "Ulsterising" the War. And that was when it seemed to me that paramilitarism proper took off on the Unionist side—a paramilitary body being a body that operates alongside an Army. The Army was seeking Loyalist paramilitaries, and it found them. In other words, there was extensive collusion.

A fortieth anniversary commemoration of the UWC Strike was held at the Queen's University in 2014. Participants included Glenn Barr, a Strike leader; Civil Servants Sir Kenneth Bloomfield and Maurice Hayes; and political activists Austin Curry, Tommy McKearney and Harry Honaghy. None of them mentioned what the Strike demands were. They speculated only on what was *behind* the Strike, what was its *real purpose*. The actual purpose specified in the Strike demands was ignored. But it was the coherence and political reasonableness of the demands, backed by actual Trade Union organisation, that got the Strike going. These might have been negotiated over, but the Government would not negotiate. If it had undertaken to negotiate, there would have been a different crisis.

However, there is a sense in which it was impossible for the Government to negotiate. The Labour Party had taken over only a few weeks earlier. The Tory Government had been defeated in a *Who Governs The Country?* Election. It might be said that the Miners, led by Joe Gormley, had won the election. So Labour came to Sunningdale Northern Ireland on a rhetorical high and set about governing it ham-fistedly, in a way that lent credibility to the British withdrawal rumours.

The Sunningdale structure which was set up by the Tories needed deft handling. It was in some measure a confidence trick that might be brought off by skilful Imperial supervision—such as that of Edward Heath, the last Prime Minister with actual experience of Imperial statecraft, and his Northern Ireland Secretary, William Whitelaw—the same who had met Seán MacStiofáin two years earlier, was the last genuine aristocrat to hold major Office in a British Cabinet. They were replaced by a Labour Government whose understanding of Northern Ireland was no more than empty anti-Unionist rhetoric, with Stanley Orme, a member of the Connolly Association, as senior Minister under the

Secretary of State, Merlyn Rees, who, from first to last hadn't a clue about what was going on.

At the 40th anniversary event I tried to interest the meeting in the aims of the Strike, which I had supported as a supporter of Sunningdale. It was a waste of breath.

I also tried to question the two Under-Secretaries about the role of the different orders of the State in which they served—the Imperial and the Devolved—and

how they interacted in the Government response to the Strike. But their minds were closed to the distinction, and to the fact that during the whole time there was only one actual Government, the 'Imperial' Government, and that it had, two generations previously, severed all electoral connection with the populace of Northern Ireland.

Taylor skips over all of this.

Concludes on page 27

Political Economy

Dublin Port/Mayo Rail Link Suspended Due To Port Congestion

Freight coming into Dublin Port used to be put on freight trains to Ballina, Co. Mayo, using a rail spur, which had been paid for by the publically-owned Dublin Port Authority only ten years ago. That service has been suspended because of space problems at the port: 14.6 hectares have had to be given over to checking incoming freight from Britain since Brexit. This means freight traffic has been pushed onto the roads, with air pollution consequences.

A solution would be to build a bridge across East Wall Road to the Irish Rail yard, creating a link that could be utilised by all three container terminals at the port. Mr O'Reilly said the port sent this proposal to Irish Rail in March. "This is a big project, requiring a lot of planning and investment.

Instead of harassing farmers about farting cows, the State might improve its rail network to meet its Emissions Targets!

(Further information: *Dublin Port rail link suspended due to congestion*, Irish Times 21.6.21)

Modern Monetary Theory!

"The difficulty lies not so much in developing new ideas as in escaping from old ones." John Maynard Keynes

This week, the Irish Fiscal Advisory Council has shown it is wedded to old ideas by trying to bully the State into cutting spending and raising taxes. Meanwhile, the world is moving into an era of greater government spending, backed to the hilt by new central bank financing, in order to fix infrastructure.

Public investment in infrastructure is needed to make a country not only competitive but also to improve the quality of life for its citizens. This means subsidising homes for thousands of people, improving public transport and investing in many other public amenities that raise the quality of life in our country for the many, not the few...

Public investment and commercial innovation go together...

... the fiscal council revealed itself to be hostage to old ideas. The old world was one where finance was hard to get; central banks were leaning against the government. Financial markets, always sceptical of increased government spending, were self-appointed vigilantes holding the whip hand, constantly ready to mug

any public project deemed too ambitious. The guiding principle of that era was a nebulous idea called "credibility". If the country was deemed to be "not credible", financial markets would signal a speculative attack on the bond market, selling bonds of the afflicted country, driving up interest rates, making default more likely, triggering a "doom-loop" of higher interest rates, capital flight, reductions in spending and higher taxes, driving yet more capital flight.

That world is over...

The euro zone, our euro zone, is now driven by people who believe in a different playbook... Data from Eurostat shows government debt-to-gross domestic product (GDP) ratios across Europe, capturing the Covid-related jump last year. Euro zone debt-to-GDP jumped over 14 percentage points, from 83.9 per cent in 2019 to 98.7 per cent in 2020. Meanwhile, the aggregated euro zone government deficit has surged from 0.6 per cent of GDP to 7.2 per cent over the same period.

Ireland's reported figures place us either somewhere in the middle of the pack (according to the Eurostat data) or near the top of it (according to Department of Finance figures released at the beginning of the year).

... bond yields have not risen as they would have in the past... because the central bank (an arm of the central administration) is buying the government

IOUs (another arm of the central EU administration).

So one official agency, the State, is issuing debt; another, the European Central Bank (ECB), the body charged with creating the euro zone's money, is exchanging these promises for real cash, filling its vaults with euro zone government promises.

As a result, Ireland is borrowing at a rate of 0.19 per cent for 10 years, constituting an enormous opportunity to finance the country. Although not saying so directly, the ECB is monetising debts in contravention of the Maastricht Treaty. The world is changing.

The implication of this is enormous. It means that we are on our way to a fiscal union within the euro zone and that road will be paved by central bank largesse...

Taken literally, not reading between the lines, this gives the distinct impression that never again will the ECB risk a 2014-style euro zone bond crisis. It implies that the bank will not lead the EU into another bout of self-harm by wielding power over which states survive and which do not.

That's over. Democracy, not plutocracy, is in the ascendancy, and the ramifications are profound. Public investment and spending can and should be enhanced..." (David McWilliams, *We must escape the clutches of old economic ideas*, Irish Times 29.5.21).

Destroying The EU And Replacing It With A Clone!

Brexit was never in my view simply about UK withdrawal from the EU. It was that but it also is about something else, the destruction of the EU as it currently is. In a way the famous *Yes Minister* scene contained an essential truth. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=37iHSwA1SwE>

The present version of the project is to 'leave' but to remain in various ways, including in the role for Northern Ireland, but also, critically, in creating a defence and foreign policy framework for future relations.

'Defence' creates a framework for industrial policy—a military-industrial complex based on favoured national champions (in aerospace, computing etc. etc.), but all inter-Governmental and spreading out into the rest of the economy. Critically, big chunks of business are extracted from the EU Single Market regime and become governed by inter-Governmental arrangements, including being outside the ECJ regime.

This becomes, or is situated in, a larger, foreign policy framework: the US/UK/NATO anti-Russian policy and also the anti-China policy of the US.

The project is perhaps an idea of an inner European core that is more or less equated with NATO (including the UK and the US obviously), with eastern European states in sycophantic attendance (as will indeed be Ireland and all in the name of democracy and freedom). The great projects of the destruction of Russia and China remain in view and central to the (Hobson/Lenin) imperialism.

Fergus O Rahallaigh

Does
It
Up

Stack
?

Wages and Salaries

Remuneration is what some people call it – especially where there is a Remuneration Package being provided, such as travelling expenses, low cost meals, and an electric car at lower tax rates and so on. One big employer in a food wholesaling business provides a 'free' food package every Friday to each employee. It is not taxed. The employer accounts for the missing food as food gone beyond the 'sell by' date and the same employer generously gives a large gift of such food to a charitable institution.

So it can be difficult to compare the remuneration package between one job and another. The rate of pay does not always give the full picture. Especially if a person is employed as Head of Procurement. Somebody in the Health Service Executive (HSE) last year procured 10 million euros worth of Chinese Ventilators from a certain Irish company. The Irish company's business normally was event organisation but the owner identified a business opportunity with Covid-19 and so he ordered from China and sold to the HSE 10 million euros worth of ventilators and, miracle, his company was paid up front (the HSE is noted for not paying up front).

And coincidentally, another company, owned in the same group, sold in the same week as the ventilator transaction, a Maserati Gran Turismo and a 2017 Ferrari 488 Spyder to a Dublin dealership who as it happened had two customers who bought them very cheaply. After all, the cars were second-hand! But the market value for a four year old Ferrari might be about 250,000 euros. Nice one, if you admire that sort of carry-on. The ventilators were found to be unsuitable and the HSE is reported to be taking legal advice but the entrepreneur had gone abroad and is not traceable.

No question seems to be asked of the two HSE employees who have the Maserati and the Ferrari. *That's life*, seems to be the attitude. It seems the HSE is a sort of high-class bucket shop for some of its employees.

At the lower end of the scale, there are the *Situations Vacant* advertisements in *The Irish Examiner* wanting *sous chefs* at 32,000 euros per annum. Some days the occupation changes and the pay is nearly always 32,000 euros. What is peculiar is that these adverts continued to run for the past year during lockdown when all the restaurants, hotels and gastro pubs were closed. Mysterious! All those *sous chefs*

TOURIST INDUSTRY

Bórd Fáilte advertisements have persuaded us all that we live, in Ireland, in a beautiful country. We do indeed and it is quite enjoyable when one has a job or drawing the Old Age Pension or is a Public Servant. But, as one Kerry farmer said on T.V. recently, "*you can't eat the scenery*". Informal rules have been invented by the Department of Local Government (yes, I know, its called something else every time a new Government is elected) and communicated to County Council Planning Departments, about how not to give Planning Permission for houses on the seaward side of a public road or on land which is in a pNHA – a non-statutory listing of land of scientific interest, or on land listed in a green area to "avoid urban sprawl", or within fifty metres of a sea front, or on land which might be liable to flood . . . the list is long and spurious. (Much of the Netherlands is below sea-level and is doing very nicely – thank you.)

We all know of Holiday Resorts which break all of the above rules. Particularly we know of Holiday Resorts on the south coasts of England, Isle of Man, Guernsey, Jersey, France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Greece – all of which have areas of high tourist value on their south coasts. Except Ireland. Portugal has vast areas of environmentally protected land just north of the Algarve coast on land which is not economically significant. But all along the Algarve Coast from Faro west to Lagos – there is intensive tourism development with huge employment and housing for local people.

It is the same with Spain's south coast. They know the economic value of the sea and the scenery and they exploit it to the full for the benefit of their local population. So too with the entire south coast of England from Dover to Land's End. It is all exploited, and pleasantly so, for the tourists and staycationers and next to London itself, the English south coast is their most valuable tourist asset.

Ireland on the other hand has virtually no south coast tourism. Youghal and

Tramore were in the past great resorts for tourists and staycationers but not anymore. Youghal had in 1946 fourteen hotels and more guest houses than could be counted and several caravan parks. Now today, Youghal has only four hotels – the Walter Raleigh Hotel, the Marine Hotel, the Old Imperial Hotel together with several guest houses and no caravan site nor campervan site nor camping site. Recently, a medium sized hotel, the Hilltop Hotel was demolished in June.

Landowners all along the Irish south coast are prevented by County Council Planners from developing tourist accommodation of any kind. This *diktat* is not enshrined in any statute or regulation. It is said to come from Brussels and, if it does, it is having the same competitive impact on Irish tourism as the fishery regulations from Brussels are having on the Irish fishing industry. And similarly now, with the Agricultural industry. Anything that comes from Brussels to Ireland has to do with competition and is always to our disadvantage.

When Irish camping and caravanning are reduced to a trickle of business it means more business for other EU countries. Kelly's Hotel at Rosslare Strand on Ireland's east coast is outstanding for its service, its cuisine and its ambiance. It is outrageous that there is only one hotel remotely like it on Ireland's south coast and that is the Cliff House Hotel at Ardmore.

There will be no new hotels. The Planners are making sure of that – they are working for Brussels and not for Ireland. Another excuse for not giving a recent Planning Permission was "*your proposed building is near a ringfort*", and when the same couple applied again for Planning Permission on a different site, the rejection excuse was "*to allow this house in a lane near Askeaton would increase the traffic on the n69*". (The n69 was some distance away.) Any excuse will do, it seems, unless, as it has been whispered, some money changes hands.

And who gets paid? Well, in my hearing a prominent developer who had a glass or two of wine told a group who were discussing the difficulty of getting TDs to do anything – "*why go to a TD when it is middle management have the power. Pay a middle manager and you'll get results*". The situation has got well out of control because the former middle managers are now the top managers and where does it stop? Everyone knows the system is rotten.

Democracy has nothing to do with the process, in any event. Nor has the law – statutory laws and regulations are regularly ignored. Arbitrary *diktats* come from the multi-Minister Eamon Ryan’s Department of Local Government and depend on his view of the world as he sees it from his bicycle. Flora and fauna seem to him to be more important than people who want jobs and houses especially in rural Ireland.

All of this does not stack up.

Michael Stack ©

Peter Taylor's 'Northern Ireland'

from page 24

There was to some extent an actual “*Ulsterising*” of the War in the mid-seventies. There was a strain of Republicanism that was willing to accept Ulsterisation but the leadership insisted on continuing the War against the State.

Taylor returned to the scene in 1976:

“What I saw in Belfast was what amounted to ethnic cleansing, with the IRA pushing Loyalists out of Loyalist areas, increasing Republican/IRA territory, and Loyalists doing all that they could to stop the push. And what it did really was mirror the much wider picture of the IRA pushing for a United Ireland and Loyalists doing everything they could to stop it.”

Certainly that two populations were pushing directly at one another in that period. That is what politics in Northern Ireland consisted of. Communal conflict was of the essence, and, in the absence of any Constitutional medium in which it might be done by roundabout means, it was done directly. But this was very much a Northern Ireland phenomenon, and not a mirror of a wider conflict between North and South.

Brendan Clifford

June 2021 Irish Foreign Affairs

Pro-democracy activism.

Brendan Clifford

Roger Casement’s “The Nameless One”

Pat Walsh

The road to Bretton Woods, (Part two: Fighting for Britain against the US)

Peter Brooke

King Constantine’s Statement to Neutrals, 14 January 1917. *Pat Walsh*

An narrative of the Anglo–Irish negotiations in 1921 (Part two) *Irish Bulletin* (Newspaper of the Irish Government)

TRADE UNIONS continued from page

lower and middle-income earners tend to spend more of their wages than they save.

Countries that facilitate trade or sector-wide collective agreements also prevent unscrupulous businesses from unfairly undercutting their competitors on the basis of low pay alone. That’s why Fórsa’s report will urge the Irish Government to harness the productive power of sectoral bargaining to underpin pay and working conditions for all workers in a particular trade, profession or sector, regardless of whether or not they are union members.

The experience of the global pandemic is the latest in a series of developments – including the climate action imperative and OECD, EU and US proposals to clamp down on tax avoidance – that are rapidly reshaping the way the world does business.

Ireland could be at the forefront of efforts to ensure that decent, secure employment, with manageable work-life balance and strong workplace democracy, is central to this inescapable new frontier for global competitiveness.

A high-level working group, established under the Labour Employer Economic Forum (LEEF) – Ireland’s highest-level forum for policy discussions between employers, unions and government – is currently examining how collective bargaining could be developed in ways consistent with competitiveness.

With an interim report due in the summer, the group is also reviewing the adequacy of Ireland’s workplace relations framework and wage-setting mechanisms, as well as legal and constitutional impediments to reform. I believe it could be the vehicle that brings Ireland back into the European fold.

At the very minimum, the LEEF process must bring Ireland in line with its current responsibilities under international law. The right of workers and employers to bargain collectively currently features in the European Social Charter, which has been ratified

by the Irish Government. The right to freedom of association is also enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights.

Over the last decade, a series of legal actions has eroded Ireland’s already-weak collective bargaining and wage-setting infrastructure.

Joint Labour Committees and Employment Regulation Orders, which regulated sectoral employment conditions, have effectively been dismantled, and recent legislative reforms are now before the Supreme Court after being struck down in the lower courts.

“The proposed EU Directive deserves strong support from Irish business and Government because it would trump the 2007 ‘Ryanair’ Supreme Court ruling and allow elected Governments to legislate to improve rights to collective benefit.

Prior to that, the 2007 ‘Ryanair’ Supreme Court ruling undermined our legal framework, and has effectively been interpreted as a constitutional block on legislation to strengthen collective bargaining rights.

If for no other reason, the proposed EU Directive deserves strong support from Irish business and Government because it would trump this ruling and allow elected Governments to legislate to improve rights to collective benefit.

Collective benefit means stronger protections and better wages for working women and men. But the research shows that it can also improve productivity, boost demand, enhance innovation, and deliver greater stability for businesses and their staff.

Retaining our outlier status on low pay and collective benefit would instead leave Ireland isolated and more exposed in a rapidly-changing post-Brexit world. (Business Post-30.5.2021, Kevin Callinan is Senior General Secretary of the FORSA Trade Union)



How collective bargaining can benefit staff, employers and the economy

Kevin Callinan, Fórsa General Secretary

Ireland is one of the EU states trying to water down the collective bargaining elements of the proposed EU Directive on Minimum Wage. It's an ill-advised move on our part.

IRELAND is an outlier among long-standing EU nations when it comes to collective bargaining coverage, and new research to be published by Fórsa tomorrow-Monday 31st May, suggests we're close to non-compliance with international law on the right to be represented by a trade union.

This at a time when long-held positions are shifting on both sides of the Atlantic. "Union guy" Joe Biden's administration is starting the process of beefing-up collective bargaining rights, and EU Commission president Ursula von der Leyen recently promoted the idea in her State of the European Union address.

Sad to say, the Irish Government remains out of kilter with the new mood. It's among a group of EU member states seeking to downgrade a European Commission initiative to tackle low pay, income inequality and the gender pay gap by increasing collective bargaining coverage across the continent.

The proposed EU Directive on the Minimum Wage, which has been positively received by co-rapporteurs from the main centre-right and centre-left European Parliamentary blocs, would require Ireland

and other EU member states to take action to increase to 70% the number of workers who benefit from collective bargaining.

"'Collective benefit' better captures the potential value of collective bargaining, the process through which employers and unions negotiate collective agreements on pay, working conditions and other terms of employment."

Coverage in Ireland is currently around 33.5%, placing us second-lowest among the 14 countries in EU membership since before 2004.

In Fórsa, we think 'collective benefit'

better captures the potential value of collective bargaining, the process through which employers and unions negotiate collective agreements on pay, working conditions and other terms of employment.

That's because its benefits accrue to both staff and their employers, while underpinning better outcomes for society and the economy as a whole.

For instance, many of Europe's most competitive economies, including those that score as well or higher than Ireland in the World Bank's 'ease of doing business' rankings, have collective bargaining coverage of 80% or more. They include Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, Finland, Austria and Sweden, where robust collective bargaining arrangements are credited with strong consumer demand, economic stability, industrial peace, flexibility and innovation.

OECD countries with integrated and sophisticated collective bargaining systems generally enjoy higher wages across the economy, with lower levels of income inequality. In other words, collective benefit puts a brake on the huge reward disparities and gender pay gaps associated with countries where worker engagement and representation are weak.

This helps businesses large and small by boosting demand, not least because

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