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IRISH POLITICAL REVIEW

January 2022

Vol.37, No.1 ISSN 0790-7672

and *Northern Star* incorporating *Workers' Weekly* Vol.36 No.1 ISSN 954-5891

ETA And Sinn Fein

"If ETA can say sorry, why can't Sinn Féin?": that is the title of Fintan O'Toole's *Irish Times* Column on December 7th.

O'Toole, a creation of West British patronage by way of Major McDowell's *Irish Times*, has lived most of his life in an affluent Anglophile wonderland. Five years ago he was almost shocked out of his fantasy world by Brexit, which showed that England, far from being the pioneer of a post-nationalist world, lived in a strong sense of nationalist destiny that, in the 'Free World', was second only to that of the United States.

Britain did not join Europe to lose itself—as Ireland did. It joined in order to restrict and misdirect European development, and then it left the EU in the hope of regaining the position of an independent nationalist Imperialism which it had lost in its bungled second war on Germany.

And its misdirection of Europe has borne successful fruit, both home and away. The EU has lost its Christian Democratic soul both in internal affairs, and in foreign policy, where it has been reduced to Atlanticist toadyism. A good example of this was its positive policy towards Iran—which it feared to carry through in face of American threats.

O'Toole was disillusioned by Brexit. But, in his disillusionment, England remained invisible to him. His understanding is structured by Anglophilia—an irrational conviction about what England is. That is the ground of his understanding, and the loss of fancy bits of the superstructure does not plough it up.

The English State is a very remarkable contrivance. One might easily get lost in admiration of it—anywhere but in the Six Counties.

Britain was the most effective liberal democracy in Europe in 1921 when it Partitioned Ireland, held the Six Counties in the United Kingdom, excluded them from the actual political life of the state, and set up a system of sectarian communal dominance in them.

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Tullamore in the *Irish Bulletin*

The two final volumes of the *Irish Bulletin* are to be published this year. What the *Irish Bulletin* was and the major role it played in the War of Independence is explained below. So far, four volumes have been issued by the *Aubane Historical Society* and the *Belfast Historical and Educational Society*, imprints associated with the group that produces *Irish Political Review*.

By way of showing the value of the first four volumes this article will examine the record of events in a Midlands town, Tullamore in County Offaly, during the War of Independence, working from the index of the fourth volume. Hopefully, it will have an antidote effect to some of the biased historical material emanating from official sources during this Decade of Centenaries.

Some context must first be provided. Regarding the War of Independence, which

Russian Gas!

Nord Stream 2 is a gas pipeline under the Baltic Sea between Russia and Germany. It is over 1,200 kilometres long, starting in Russia close to St Petersburg and ending near Greifswald on the north German Baltic coast.

It has been constructed and will be operated by Nord Stream 2 AG, a joint enterprise between Gazprom and five major European energy companies (EN-GIE, OMC, Shell, Uniper and Wintershall DEA).

If you get your news from the mainstream media, you could be forgiven for thinking that Russian gas supplied to Europe is all transported through a Ukraine pipeline, for which it receives substantial transit fees, and that Russia has constructed Nord Stream 2 for the malicious purpose of bypassing Ukraine and depriving it of those fees.

In fact, a variety of pipelines – eight in all prior to Nord Stream 2 – transport Russian gas to various parts of Europe (see

continued on page 3

began in January 1919 and ended when a Truce came into effect on July 11th 1921, it is often somewhat inaccurately stated that the Irish *fought for their independence*; a more truthful summation would be that the Irish electorate *voted for independence* from British rule, while the British Government did all in its power to suppress the democracy that had come into being. Not only did a large majority of the electorate vote for the party championing independence, Sinn Fein, in the General Election

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How England Sacrificed Belgium (1914)

James Connolly
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German Apology Sinking of Irish Pine, 1942

Joe Duffy Show

Organised Labour!

Social Welfare

Dr. Laura Bambrick, ICTU

In Appreciation of Manus O'Riordan

Wilson John Haire

**Due to pressure of space, the Index to *Irish Political Review* for 2021,
and other items have been held over.**

Communal tensions within the Northern Ireland structure were restrained for almost half a century by a combination of intimate policing and bribery.

The Protestant community was set up to rule the Catholic community. Ruling meant keeping the Catholics quiet. There was no real business of State to be done within the Northern Ireland structure. All the major services of State, including the Welfare State, were supplied by Whitehall and "*the Imperial civil service*". The Northern Ireland Parliament was a forum for communal feuding—the Tory, Liberal and Labour Parties of the state being absent from it.

Was the war declared by Rory O'Brady in 1970, and maintained for over half a century, right or wrong?

That is the *kindergarten* question. The grown-up question is: How was it possible for a war, not only to be declared—we recall that O'Toole himself declared a kind of war or revolution at the gates of Trinity College one day when the fancy took

him—but was fought in earnest against the British Army and Intelligence machine for 28 years?

It was the relentless aggravations of local communal government that made the War possible. Partition was by comparison a remote, abstract grievance. It could not have fuelled a war. And, when the War ended to the satisfaction of the community that had fought it, Partition was still in place. What had changed was the structure of government. It was still communal, but it operated under a veto by the minority community, which had governing departments as of right.

What resemblance was there between this and the Spanish situation?

Spain was hammered back together as a nation-state by a Fascist movement—an authoritarian nationalist movement with a social dimension. The Basque country was not excluded from the democratic political life of the state as the Six Counties was—democracy had failed in the state of Spain, and, since, as Edmund Burke said,

the basic requirement of a people is to be governed, a mode of government that worked was established.

During the Fascist period we had some contact with ETA. They approached us because, they said, we were the group least likely to be penetrated. We produced some things for them.

Their aim was to establish a Basque state out of territories that overlapped the Spanish and French states. It was not an achievable aim, but that was not something to be quibbled over when Fascism was in question. There are situations in which the force that is being resisted determines the value of resistance, rather than the realism of resistance programmes.

The Fascist regime in Spain was not overthrown by democratic revolution. It arranged things so that, on the death of the Dictator, there was a transition to democracy by way of a restored Monarchy.

Franco, unlike Cromwell, did not try to make his dictatorship hereditary. He was a statesman, and he left a restored nation-state behind him.

We lost contact with ETA as Spain democratised, and it appears that it lost confidence in itself. It did not make terms with the new regime, it just ceased to be active against it. And if a remnant of ETA, in the democratic era, now apologises for it having existed in the Fascist era, that is an expression of a sense of essential futility.

If Sinn Fein/IRA confessed futility, as O'Toole urged it to do, that would be a false confession. It carried through its War, for 28 years, to a negotiated settlement with the State against which it had made war. It then gave permission to the other state to delete its assertion of sovereignty over the North; and it made itself the major party in the democratic life of that other state.

The only futility we can see in all of this is the futility of the brainwork of the *Irish Times*' prime intellectual. He cannot admit—his patrons would not allow him to say—that the only State there ever was in the North was the liberal-democratic British State, and that this British State insisted on imposing a sectarian system of subordinate communal government on that region of itself. The Protestants did not ask for it; the Catholics did not want it; Westminster decided both of them had to have it.

"ETA and the IRA were... blood brothers". So were Churchill and Stalin. It is

said that Churchill suffered nightmares over the oceans of blood that he spilled in the militarily pointless area bombings of Dresden and Hamburg at the end of the Second World War, after Stalin had broken the back of Nazi power. But he never said sorry. And, as John Milton said, England sets the precedent of correct behaviour in such things.

The IRA launched a War in 1970 for an unachievable object—the ending of Partition. If it had held to that aim, it would have been no more successful than ETA. But it brought its aims into correspondence with the actual reasons why the Catholic community was in revolt against the *status quo* after August 1969, and, instead of being driven into the ground, it brought the war to a negotiated end on terms that were advantageous to its community.

That is how wars should be fought—and it is how they used to be fought before England initiated all-or-nothing, Messianic total war in 1914, which left Europe in a mess.

Russian Gas!

continued

gazpromexport.ru/en/projects/transportation/). One of these, Nord Stream 1, which takes more or less the same route through the Baltic and has the same capacity as Nord Stream 2, has been operating since 2011. More recently, in early 2020, Turkstream, a major pipeline which crosses the Black Sea from Russia to the part of Turkey that's in Europe, began delivering gas to Bulgaria. It was completed with a minimum of controversy.

Had Russia wished to bypass Ukraine and deprive it of transit fees, alternative routes were available before now. Since the *coup* in Kiev in 2014, there have been disputes between Russia and Ukraine about gas supply and gas transit to Europe. But, in 2019, Gazprom signed a 5-year contract with Ukraine to transfer 40 billion cubic meters (bcm) of gas a year. On 24 November, Business News Europe reported:

“Currently Gazprom has been sticking scrupulously to the deal that will earn Ukraine’s pipeline operator, the Gas Transmission System Operator of Ukraine (GTSOU), some \$2bn in fees this year. But the Russian gas company is sending exactly the amounts stipulated in the deal and no more, despite the gas shortage crisis in Northern Europe.

The ‘Black Diary’ controversy

Letter to Tim Sullivan

Dear Tim,

Please accept or refute Paul Hyde’s case - his argument that there is no independent witness testimony to the existence of any bound diaries while Casement was alive.

His many biographers and commentators over the past century have not produced such testimony. Neither have you and in view of that your sniping at Hyde is tiresome.

Hyde’s argument is a game-changer – get used to it.

Jack Lane

In September, Russia and Ukraine began negotiations for a new contract, Ukraine has proposed a 15-year contract for the transfer of 55 bcm a year,

(*)

The rationale for constructing Nord Stream 2 is that, over the next 20 years, production of natural gas in Europe is set to decline and Europe will have to import more gas, even if consumption remains relatively constant.

According to a fact sheet by Nord Stream 2 AG, it was estimated in 2018 that Norway would supply 25 bcm less gas per annum, UK 25 bcm less and the Netherlands 40 bcm less – and that there would be a total shortfall of 120 bcm. This would have to be met by extra imports: realistically, either Russian gas by pipeline or Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) by tanker.

With a capacity of 55 bcm per annum, Nord Stream 2 is geared to enable a big slice of these extra imports to be Russian gas, if European customers choose to purchase it.

The chairman of Gazprom, Alexey Miller, said the following about the project (see nord-stream2.com/company/shareholder-and-financial-investors/):

“Nord Stream 2 will double the throughput of our direct, state-of-the-art gas supply route via the Baltic Sea. It is important that those are mostly the new gas volumes, which will be sought after in Europe due to the continuous decline in its domestic production.”

(See nord-stream2.com/en/pdf/document/95/ for facts and figures about the project.)

It may be that these estimates for Europe’s future gas needs were inaccurate in 2018, and are even more inaccurate

today – I’m not in a position to judge – but they can’t be totally out of this world, otherwise five major European energy companies would not have invested large sums of money in the project.

Germany intends to cease using nuclear power for generating electricity in the next few years, and to cease using coal for generating electricity over the next 20 years. Today, around 12% is generated from nuclear power and 24% or so from coal. While the intention is to replace most of this by renewables, it is likely that the present level of generation from natural gas, about 12%, will have to be increased to maintain an adequate base load – and therefore Germany will have to import more gas than it does today.

Merkel lent support to this proposition in July 2021, when she said:

“We cannot — as some have demanded — get out of nuclear power and coal and then withdraw from natural gas as fast as possible, ... That’s not going to be possible” (quoted in *Politico* on 21 July 2021, see politico.eu/article/vladimir-putin-german-chancellors-nord-stream-russia-energy-angela-merkel/)

This adds to the case for Nord Stream 2.

The construction of the pipeline is now complete and its twin lines are both ready to transport gas at a moment’s notice. But it can’t do so until its operation is approved by the German energy regulator. This certification process has been delayed by the fact that Nord Stream 2 AG was registered in Switzerland, and has to be registered in Germany in order to get approval. On 16th December, Reuters reported that the president of the regulator has stated that “there will be no decisions in the first half of 2022”.

(*)

At the back of all this is the US opposition to the project. In December 2019, the US Congress passed a Bill imposing Sanctions on individuals and companies involved in the construction of the pipeline, with the objective of preventing the project being completed. It describes Nord Stream 2 as a "*tool of coercion and political leverage*", which was a perfect description of the Bill itself. It was passed with an overwhelming bipartisan majority in both houses, a rare event during the Trump administration. President Trump supported it enthusiastically and signed it into law.

The reaction from Europe to the Bill was quite forceful: the Merkel Government condemned the measures in the Bill, describing them as "*meddling in our internal affairs*"; Olaf Scholz, then Finance Minister, now Chancellor, called the sanctions "*a severe intervention in German and European internal affairs*"; and the EU condemned what it called the "*the imposition of sanctions against EU companies conducting legitimate business*" (see [dw.com/en/germany-eu-decry-us-nord-stream-sanctions/a-51759319](https://www.dw.com/en/germany-eu-decry-us-nord-stream-sanctions/a-51759319)).

The sanctions were successful to the extent that individuals and companies working on the project were frightened off and construction on the project ceased for a period. Little work was done in 2020 but arrangements were eventually made that allowed construction to be completed by September 2021.

(*)

When President Biden came to power in January 2021, he was anxious to improve US relations with Germany, which meant that something had to be done about the disagreement between them about Nord Stream 2.

On 19th May, in a State Department Report to Congress, Secretary of State Blinken waived the sanctions on Nord Stream 2 AG, the company constructing the pipeline, and its CEO, Matthias Warnig.

On 7th June, in evidence to the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee, Blinken said that "*the physical completion of the pipeline*" was "*a fait accompli*".

On 21st July, Angela Merkel went to Washington to meet Biden. At a Press Conference afterwards, Biden accepted that Nord Stream 2 was "*an additional project*" to cater for increased imports. In a joint statement, they insisted that Russia

must be pressured into granting Ukraine a 10-year transit contract to follow the existing one which ends in 2024.

(*)

Is Nord Stream 2 ever going to become operational? Eventually, probably YES. Whether or not it becomes operational, it will still be there – it's not going to be dismantled and sometime in the future if, as expected, the demand in Europe for Russian gas increases (and/or if other pipelines are out of action) it's almost certain that it will be used to transport gas to Europe.

David Morrison
19 December 2021

Tullamore in the *Irish Bulletin*

continued

of December 1918, but that pattern was repeated in the Local Elections of January and June 1920 and in the General Election of May 1921. In other words, the electorate was not cowed by the terror campaign of the British military and police, a decisive factor, along with the resistance of the IRA, in forcing his Majesty's Government to agree to peace negotiations.

Nor was democratic activity in that 1919-1921 period confined to voting in Elections. A parliamentary assembly, Dáil Éireann, was created in January 1919 and Government Ministers were duly appointed. The Dáil Government succeeded in raising a Loan (£380,000 was raised in Ireland, \$500,000 in the US of which \$300,000 was made available to the Dail), and Government business was entered into: among other actions envoys to other countries were accredited, a system of Republican Courts was established, a related police force was made operational, and the Republican Army was made subject to Dáil authority. After June 1920, outside of unionist areas in Ulster, all Local Authorities in the country broke with the British administration and recognised the Dáil as their central agency. That process is described by Dorothy Macardle as follows:

"As a result of these elections [the June 1920 Local Elections] every County Council, every Rural District Council and every Board of Guardians in Leinster, Munster and Connacht gave allegiance to the Government of the Republic, while thirty-one Councils in Ulster did the same. The response of the British Government

was to stop the grants (paid out of Irish taxes and administered by the local Councils) to institutions for the sick, the destitute and the insane. The people, however, paid their rates fully and regularly to the Republican Councils..."

(*The Irish Republic*, p. 352)

THE IRISH BULLETIN

The Irish Bulletin (IB) was a daily news publication produced by the Publicity Department of the Dáil from November 1919 until November 1921. It was aimed at the national and international press and consisted of short descriptions of each day's news, together with occasional polemical commentaries in line with the stance of the Dáil Government.

Under the control of its first Editor, Desmond Fitzgerald (Garret's father), it operated a strict policy of publishing the facts and only the facts, a policy that paid immense dividends in those years and, arguably in later years in the *Irish Press* newspaper and in works like Macardle's, *The Irish Republic*. Such was its reputation, that the foreign press came to view it as an authoritative news source for Irish developments and, in the later stages of the War, even mainstream newspapers in Britain and Ireland began quoting from it.

Perhaps the highest compliment paid to the *Bulletin* was a statement made in exasperation to the British House of Commons by the Government's top official in Ireland, Chief Secretary Hamar Greenwood, when he described it as a "*tainted source*" (Hansard, 20 November 1920, quoted in *Periodicals and Journalism in Twentieth Century Ireland*, 2014, p. 90, essay on the *Bulletin* by Ian Kenneally). Greenwood believed that the British press and members of the Opposition had come under the spell of the *Bulletin*, according to Kenneally.

The key figures in its production were Desmond Fitzgerald, Erskine Childers, Frank Gallagher and Kathleen McKenna. Childers took over the Editorship when Fitzgerald was arrested in February 1921; McKenna managed the printing end throughout the life of the publication. (She had previously performed espionage work for the Dublin IRA, according to the historian, Michael Hopkinson). Robert Brennan and Dorothy Macardle were also involved, in editing and reporting, respectively.

Some idea of the quality of this team can be gleaned from their subsequent achievements. Gallagher later became the first Editor of the *Irish Press* and a highly regarded figure in Irish journalism;

Brennan was the first business manager of the *Irish Press* and later headed up the Irish legation in the US; and Macardle wrote *The Irish Republic*, the definitive Republican account of the 1916-23 period.

Regarding the critical question of democratic legitimacy following the Local Elections of June 1920 referred to above, the case presented in the IB is similar to Macardle's. In the edition of 10th June 1920, a headline proclaims: "**Irish Towns Occupied By British Military While The Irish People Declare For Independence**". There follows a list of 44 towns and villages recently occupied by contingents of the British military. These troop deployments were in addition to the military establishments already in place. Notably, Tullamore is the only Offaly town chosen to be occupied. A concluding paragraph reads:

"During the period in which these occupations took place, efforts were being made by the rural population in Ireland to elect representatives to the County Councils and Rural District Councils all over the country. In spite of this military terrorism the Republican Movement captured the majority of the council seats in twenty-nine of the thirty-two counties." (IB, Volume 2, p. 605)

THE STANDARD ACADEMIC ACCOUNT OF THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

What is now considered the standard work on the history of 1919-21, the *Irish War of Independence* (Gill and Macmillan, 2002) by the late English historian, Michael Hopkinson, takes a different view from those of Dorothy Macardle and the *Irish Bulletin*. For Hopkinson, the Elections, the Loan Drive, the Republican Courts, efforts to sustain new democratic institutions in the face of coercion by vastly superior military forces, all deserve a mention but ultimately count for little in the final tally of what was achieved. Ultimately, he sees the War as a source of future tension in Irish society:

"The War's effects, however, went far beyond statistics. In many ways the conflict resembled a civil war, and shared responsibility with the later conflict for many of the divisions within Irish society which persisted for the rest of the century" (p. 202)

Hopkinson here extends the Civil War backwards; he is arguing that the War of Independence should be seen in the same tragic terms as the conflict over the Treaty. Stretching it, to say the least!

Another unfortunate effect of the War for him is that the wrong element of society achieved political power. He says:

"The fruits of the War were bitter. Large elements of Irish society were effectively excluded from Irish politics; Sinn Fein represented only a part of the Irish nation" (Hopkinson, p. 202).

Hopkinson begins the final paragraph of his book by referring to lingering unease "*about the methods used to win this limited independence*" (ibid), and then, somewhat illogically, underlines the success of the IRA campaign:

"Passive resistance tactics had shown no signs of achieving their object by 1920 and IRA actions had been instrumental in causing the collapse of British administration as well as impressing the British government. Without IRA actions, the likelihood is that any substantial British concessions would have been delayed for much longer. The primary reason for the abrupt slide to widespread violence in the second half of 1920 was the British government's refusal to offer settlement terms which could have proved at least as acceptable then as they did a year later." (ibid, p. 202)

So, in the final analysis, the military aspect is primary for Hopkinson and the assertion of collective will expressed through the Elections and the efforts to establish the rudiments of a functioning State—efforts that loom large in the traditional nationalist account—have simply disappeared from his field of vision.

Placing the emphasis on the IRA campaign allows him to attach major importance to the geographical spread of Republican military activity. He says: "*It remains true that the conflict was predominantly confined to Dublin and Munster*" (p. 200). Elsewhere he includes North Longford, the area where the IRA was led by Seán McKeown and Seán Connolly, as an area comparable in its level of IRA activity to parts of Cork.

The advantage, from Michael Hopkinson's perspective, of stressing the geographical unevenness of IRA activity is an insinuation that for large swathes of the country the War of Independence had very little reality. It is on this point that references in the *Irish Bulletin* to Tullamore—a town which in the Hopkinson perspective saw very little action—become important.

The following paragraph is Hopkinson's only reference to Offaly.

"Offaly saw more action [than Laoise] but on a small scale: for instance, two RIC constables were killed at Kinnitty on 19 May 1921. The Offaly Second Brigade in 1921 came under particularly heavy criticism from GHQ [the IRA leadership]. In April, Mulcahy commented: 'Unless each individual officer in Offaly No 2 shows

that he appreciates his responsibilities he shall have to go,' and in July a report said that the enemy has contempt for the Brigade in general'..." (p. 146)

REFERENCES TO TULLAMORE

The volumes of the *Irish Bulletin* constitute a historical resource that can be used by anyone interested in the War of Independence. The value of publishing the old typescripts of the Bulletin in book format is that the contents are a lot more legible, and each volume has an Introduction that provides the necessary political context and, critically, indexes are included in the end pages. Volume 1 has a Name Index (referencing people) and a Place Index. The other three volumes have Name, Place and Miscellaneous Indexes.

Like any historical resource the *Bulletin* needs to be understood for what it was: a news publication seeking to record events close to the time they occurred. To get a rounded picture of, for example, Tullamore during the War, it would be necessary to consult other sources in addition to the *Bulletin*.

The 34 references to Tullamore in the Place Index of volume 4 give, I believe, valuable insights into what was going on in the town in the period of the War. In the following paragraphs each sentence that begins with a date corresponds with a reference in the Place Index.

"At 4am on the morning of Thursday 11 December 1919 in Tullamore, military and police forcibly entered the houses of Mr P Daly and Mr M Lynam, both of whom were found to be in possession of revolvers. Both were arrested. On Tuesday 23 December 1919 Patrick Daly and Malachi Lynam were court-martialled (tried by a court of the British military). On Tuesday 6 January 1920 both men were each sentenced to six months hard labour."

On 11th April 1920, under a heading of "*Armed Assaults*", the following is reported:

"At Tullamore, King's County, military with fixed bayonets charged a procession of townspeople demonstrating against the decision of the English Military Government to allow the prisoners to die." [83 Republican prisoners in Mountjoy entered the 9th day of a hunger strike on that day.]

On 17th May 1920 a report states:

"At Tullamore, King's County, ten men whose names did not appear in the press were sentenced to 3 months imprisonment each on a charge of "unlawful assembly" in connection with land agitation."

On 5th June 1920 a force of military in

full war kit had arrived in Tullamore and camped on the lawn in front of the jail and courthouse. As noted above, Tullamore is one of 44 towns and villages occupied by British troops during May and June 1920. The *Bulletin* contrasted these military occupations with the results that came in for the Local Elections of June 1920.

On 17th June 1920, under a heading: "A Republican Legal Diary – Thirteen Days Of Preservation Of Order In Ireland— Busy Republican Courts And Empty British Courts", the following entry is listed:

"King's County, June 13th at Tullamore, Republican police held up and confiscated a quantity of intoxicating drink which was being taken for sale at a Gaelic Athletic festival."

On 2nd July 1920 under a heading: "English Judges Of Assize In Ireland— Who Are Paid "Not To Criticise Anyone", a *Bulletin* editor writes:

"The following statement of Lord Justice Ronan at the opening of the Assizes on July 1st, exemplifies the mental attitude of these judges:

"There is no law in this country. There is no order in this country. Gentlemen, as far as I can see the state of this country is very sad. It is not for me to criticise anyone or to say what is the cause of it. I do not want to get into the troubled realm of politics."

The Editor continues,

"If the learned judge got "into the troubled realm of politics" he might have to admit that there was no British Law and no British Order in Ireland, except the Law of the Sword and the Order to Loot..."

On 8th July 1920 British military erected barricades on the bridges leading to Tullamore. In the *Bulletin* of 13th July 1920 under a heading: "No Law And Order In Ireland – Three Weeks Of The Administration Of Republican Justice – Sinn Feiners Suppress Lawlessness – While British Judges Make Speeches, the following is listed:

"King's County, June 19th. At Cappincur, Tullamore, Republican police were informed that several valuable articles had been stolen from a horse trainer. The same evening the property was recovered."

Other similar notices for Offaly were probably handled by the Tullamore-based Republican Court and we see the following:

"King's County, June 21st. At Lough Owel, King's County, a daring burglary was carried out by armed men on the residence of the Misses Cullen. Republican police have been informed and the

district is being searched."

"King's County, July 3rd. Three hours after the theft of money from an old man, Republican police had arrested the culprits. They were subsequently tried, convicted and heavily fined."

On 3 August 1920 under a heading: "Withdrawal of 132 British Magistrates From The British Service", one of the retiring Magistrates is listed as: "Mr J P Egan, Tullamore".

A letter dated 7th August 1920 from a British officer published in the *Bulletin* refers to Tullamore. The letter advises the recipients that membership of the IRA will shortly become an offence in itself and that evidence of such membership should be collected. The officer, Major J. A. Churchill, records his position as the Commanding Officer of the 1st Battalion Camerons, 2nd King's Shropshire Light Infantry and 1st Battalion North Staffordshire Regiment, Detachment at Tullamore and Maryboro (now Portlaoise).

On Thursday 19th August 1920 this item is reported:

"While marching through Tullamore, King's County, English troops smashed the windows of the residence of Mr P J Lydon, an ex-soldier of the British army."

On 8th September 1920 an incident that occurred on 18th August is reported:

"British troops at Tullamore, King's County, smashed many windows with trench tools while marching through the town."

In the *Bulletin* of 12th November 1920 a boxed feature article with the heading: "One Day's Restoration Of Order", contains the following item:

"Sabotage, Incendiarism and Looting at Castleisland (Co. Kerry), Drumsna and Johnston's Bridge (Co. Leitrim), Tullamore, (King's County)."

In the same edition, detail of the incendiarism is provided:

"English Constabulary at Tullamore, King's County, set fire to the licensed premises of Mrs Teresa Dyer, Chairman of the Tullamore Poor Law Guardians. £100 worth of stock was destroyed before the flames were extinguished. This is the second attack on Mrs Dyer's house, which was partially destroyed by the same forces some weeks ago."

In the *Bulletin* of 1st and 2nd December 1920 a burning of properties that took place on November 1st is described:

"Military and constabulary burn the following premises: [some towns in Kerry are referenced] the Forrester's

Hall, Transport Workers Hall, the Sinn Fein Club, two private houses, the office of the Offaly Independent (completely destroyed) and eight private houses (partially destroyed) at Tullamore, King's County."

On 10th November among a list of 'shot up' villages and towns reference is made to an attack on a "private residence at Tullamore, King's County".

In the *Bulletin* of 17th December 1920 under the heading, "Raids", the following item is recorded: "Offaly – six houses in Tullamore and eight in Geashill". Later in the same edition, under the heading, "Arrests", the following is carried: "Co. Offaly: Messrs M Meleady, Ballydaly, F Mooney, Tullamore, J Finlay, Killeigh, all arrested at Ballydaly."

In the edition of 23rd December 1920 under the heading, "Raids" is: "Co. Offaly – two houses in Tullamore".

In the edition of 29th December under the heading, "The War Against Irish Women—Terrorism During The Last 6 Weeks", the following was stated:

"On Wednesday December 1st Constabulary wrecked the shop-fronts in nine business houses in Tullamore, King's County. Five of the nine premises are owned by women."

The *Bulletin* of 14th January 1921 carried an item under the heading, "Acts of Terrorism". It read:

"In Tullamore, Offaly, English Constabulary arrested a dozen men and marched them at the point of a bayonet outside the town where they were provided with shovels and compelled to fill in trenches on roads injured in the course of the guerrilla warfare."

In the same edition it was reported that John Daly of Tullamore was arrested. In the edition of 21st January 1921, another arrest, that of Patrick Lloyd, Charleville Parade, Tullamore is listed. In the same edition under a heading, "Buildings Commandeered", the following is stated:

"Military seized Tullamore Courthouse, Offaly and ejected the staff of the County Council whose offices were in the building. The Insurance and Agricultural Committees had also their offices in the building. All were compelled to leave."

The *IB* of 21st January 1921 contains a report describing how Constabulary in Tullamore arrested many youths and forced them to tear down Sinn Fein posters. And the edition of 21st January 1921 refers to three men being arrested: A. O. Brennan, Michael Grogan and Ed Conroy; and seven houses raided, twenty in Offaly.

On 22nd January 1921 Lawrence

Rigney, Patrick Molloy and P. Hogan, all of Tullamore, were arrested. The attacks on the property of Mrs. Teresa Dyer are noted in a list of attacks on elected representatives in the edition of 16th March 1921.

When the final volumes are published it will be interesting to see if they contain any further references to Tullamore.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The most important data relevant to Tullamore during the War—the results of the Local Elections of June 1920—are not referenced in the Index although they are listed in the *Bulletin* of 15th July of that year. (As the results for the whole of Ireland were published in table format in that edition, referencing all of that data in the Index would have weighed it down overmuch.)

Whereas other events related to the War involved individuals in different capacities, the June Elections entailed the participation of a large percentage of Tullamore’s population.

The urban and rural Council Elections of January and June 1920 deserve special attention in that, unlike in the General Election of December 1918, the response of the British administration to Sinn Fein’s democratic mandate was then known. Between 1918 and 1920 it became clear that Lloyd George’s Government had no intention of conceding Irish independence simply because the electorate had voted for it.

On the contrary, London had decided to meet the challenge of a Sinn Fein majority with coercion and military intimidation. The voting system was also changed to Proportional Representation in an effort to skew the vote but, such was the scale of electoral support for Republican candidates, the change worked in the Sinn Fein’s favour.

The results for Offaly were that Sinn Fein won large majorities in all four Councils as shown in the accompanying table which is taken from the IB:

The results for Tullamore, as much as those for most of the rest of the country, show that the local population, notwithstanding the intimidatory effect of RIC, Auxiliary, Black and Tan and British Army aggression, was that the voters were remaining with Sinn Fein. Objectively, this represented an endorsement of both the Dáil Government and the resistance campaign of the IRA.

The events of greatest historical significance among those referenced in the Index are probably the attacks on the property of Mrs. Teresa Dyer, Chairman of the Tullamore Poor Law Guardians. Mrs. Dyer would herself have been elected in the June Elections and her position would have been critical for the operation of what are now called social welfare services in the town. The attacks against her were included by the *Bulletin* Editors in a list of 40 violent acts perpetrated by the Crown forces against elected representatives that was published in the edition of 16th March 1921. The treatment of Mrs Dyer was also listed under a heading, *The War Against Irish Women — A Selection Of Acts Of Terrorism During The Last Six Weeks* in the edition of 29th December 1920.

The information relating to the operation of a Republican Court served by Republican police in the environs of Tullamore illustrates how a legal administration owing allegiance to the Dáil was operating. The expulsion of Council staff from offices in Tullamore Courthouse provides an example of how the Crown forces were discommoding democratic institutions attempting to implement their mandates.

That symbolically important buildings like the Foresters’ Hall, the office of the Transport Union, the Sinn Fein office, and the premises of the *Offaly Independent* were torched shows that Tullamore suffered a similar fate, if on a smaller scale, to Cork City and Balbriggan as a result of incendiary tactics by the British forces. The number of arrests, raids, the attack

on a peaceful protest, attacks on property, compulsory duties imposed on males at gun point, the digging of trenches to disrupt the road network and actions of the Republican police, all testify to IRA activity in Tullamore. Possibly, such activity or the danger of such activity was a factor in causing the town to be occupied by the British military in June 1920.

CONCLUSION

The Irish War of Independence by Michael Hopkinson, a work much praised by academics who subscribe to the revisionist school of Irish history, is deeply flawed in the way it focusses on the military dimension while largely ignoring the political side. Hopkinson fails to appreciate the significance of the Elections that occurred between 1918 and 1921 and is dismissive of the administrative and legal initiatives carried out under the authority of the Dáil Government. Though claiming to understand the War of Independence, he is blind to political developments that caused the Irish side to gain the upper hand.

The work has other flaws, one being a failure to acknowledge the overall importance of the *Irish Bulletin*. As is his practice, he mentions what need to be mentioned regarding the *IB* in order to cover his academic responsibilities and then resorts to subtle innuendo to discredit it. In the *Introduction* he says:

“The limited and heavily localised nature of the fighting is now appreciated, and it is broadly agreed that the IRA’s achievements were more in the Intelligence and publicity spheres than in the purely military.” (p. xviii)

Here his purpose is to downplay IRA military effectiveness rather than to recognise the success of Republican propaganda. Later in the book he comes close to conceding the importance of the *IB* only to undo that impression by reverting to subtle put-downs:

“The chief organ of republican activity was the Irish Bulletin, first published in November 1919, appearing five times a week and circulated internationally. Its

King’s County Total	SF	Rep. Lab	Nat.	Lab.	Ind.	Un.
Birr No. 1	29	26	3			Republican
Edenderry No. 1	15	13			2	Republican
Roscrea No. 2	10	5	4		1	Republican
Tullamore	24	19	5			Republican

From Irish Bulletin 15 July 1920

interminable list of atrocities and repressive acts provided a major source for journalists writing in many other publications at home and abroad. So big was its reputation that the British brought out a fake edition in late March 1921.

For all the volume of propaganda, the greatest effect was almost certainly achieved by visiting British journalists, and most notably Hugh Martin in the *Daily News*." (ibid, p. 45)

The mistake here is the implication that the IB and visiting journalists were somehow in competition. The strategic purpose of the *Bulletin* was to bring the facts to the attention of the international media, not to compete with journalists. Hugh Martin did indeed become a supporter of the *Bulletin* and his contribution was not forgotten by the team that produced it. Writing for the

Irish Press in the 1930s, Dorothy Macardle informed her readers of the important role Martin had played. On learning that he was in poor health and fallen on hard times, she supervised the organisation of a fund as a way of assisting him.

In conclusion, the published volumes of the *Irish Bulletin*, particularly their Indexes, provide a valuable resource for countering revisionist propaganda. Contrary to the prevailing narrative of the War of Independence, as expressed in the work of Michael Hopkinson, the story of Tullamore during the War is shown from many references in those volumes to be a story of resistance and, in the face of systematic repression, of steadfast attachment to the tenets of democracy.

Dave Alvey

It gave them the opportunity to involve the whole Cabinet in any final decision and avoid any avoidable splits. It was to be a safety net, a backstop.

De Valera insisted that Collins be included against his wishes because of the reputation he had acquired in the British mind and to show that the Cabinet was united, singing from the same hymn sheet.

DE VALERA'S STRATEGY

De Valera did not go at this stage for tactical reasons. The delegation was to test to the limit what was possible. He was conscious that any agreement reached had to be acceptable to the Cabinet and avoided the fate of President Woodrow Wilson, who had signed the Versailles Treaty only for Congress to reject it. It was said at the time that he should have sent delegates to Versailles and judge what they had achieved before committing his country to it. De Valera no doubt noted this.

Such an outcome would be a disaster in the Irish context and to be avoided at all costs. This was de Valera's guiding principle.

John M. Regan has summarised his strategy well: "Against his maximum offer of external association de Valera had for tactical reasons to test to the point of destruction the British resolve not to go back to war. That in effect meant bringing the British to the point of fixing bayonets rather than merely rattling their sabres. To achieve the absolute extension of the British will to compromise de Valera constructed the Irish position in such a way as to enable him to conclude the talks personally at the eleventh hour. In these circumstances this was not only logical: it was good politics too." (The Irish Counter-Revolution 1921-36.)

COLLINS' STRATEGY

After the initial weeks of negotiations another view seems to have begun to take shape in Collins' mind. His sympathetic biographer Tim Pat Coogan explains that by mid-October "some time between 11 and 24 OctoberDominion status was as far as he was prepared to go." (p.242.)

He was working closely with Griffith whom he had admired for many years and as he was always quite happy with Dominion status that must have been an influence on Collins. But as head of the IRB there must have been intense debate within it for him to consider such a position.

IRB records might throw light on this development if available but being a conspiratorial body these are not available as they were destroyed by the Secretary.

Coogan quotes his correspondence

Report of Zoom talk, 6/12, 2021 by Jack Lane

"The Treaty that never was"

There is an easy way to establish whether or not there was a Treaty agreed in London on 6th Dec 1921 – is there an agreement in existence headed "A Treaty between the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom" signed automatically and appropriately by the respective Heads of State, President Eamon de Valera and His Britannic Majesty King George V?

Such a Treaty does not exist and could not exist.

What was signed at 2am on 6th December 1921 did not meet a single precondition for a treaty and entailed much worse.

- It was signed under a threat of immediate war.
- The Irish Republic was not recognised.
- The British Government demanded and got an oath of allegiance from the Irish negotiators.
- The Irish Government was specifically prevented from seeing or agreeing to its final terms before the document was signed.
- The word 'Treaty' is not mentioned anywhere in the text – instead it is referred to as an 'instrument' throughout.

It is oxymoronic to call such a thing a Treaty.

Yet we are told by some that the document signed was not only a Treaty but the founding document of the Irish State. How could that be when the existing Irish state sent delegates to negotiate the agreement?

Lane briefly looked at the main events and personalities behind it – and try to see the wood for the trees.

The first event to be considered was on 15th July 1921 when de Valera met Lloyd George to follow up the Truce. Lloyd George offered Dominion Status. De Valera refused to consider it as he was Head of an existing Republic voted for on a number of occasions and defended in war. He did not even take the document offered. Lloyd George said this refusal meant war and that he could send a soldier for every man woman and child in Ireland. De Valera said he would have to be able to keep them there. Lloyd George backed down and his bluff was called. He blinked, 1-0 to de Valera. Then there was deadlock.

The next development came on the 27th July with the breaking of the negotiating deadlock by de Valera with his concept of External Association. It was an ambiguous concept to reflect an ambiguous situation that allowed for development by political skill in a positive or negative direction.

It became the basis of all the future negotiations on the Irish Government's side. The idea was that Ireland would be associated with the Commonwealth (Empire) but not a member of it.

The next event was on the 8th October with the appointment of delegates for a full conference. De Valera designated them as plenipotentiaries. But he ensured that the Cabinet also gave them very clear instructions, the most important being:

"(3) It is also understood that the complete text of the draft treaty about to be signed will be similarly submitted to Dublin and reply awaited."

of 4th November: “*Not much achieved, principally because P.M. (Lloyd George) recognises our over-riding difficulty – Dublin. Plays on that.*”

And on 15th November: “*I prefer Birkenhead to anyone else. He understands and has real insight into our problems – the Dublin one as much as anyone else. Dublin is the real problem.*” (p.242).

So Collins had come to see the British Government as his ally against his own Government! Coogan seems very blasé about this.

These were legitimate opinions to have but they should have been made clear to the Government that he was a member of but they were not.

This was a bad omen.

MOMENT OF TRUTH – 3 DEC.1921?

The moment of truth for this difference of opinion should have occurred at what turned out to be the last Cabinet meeting on 3rd December which discussed Lloyd George’s ‘*final offer*’ that again insisted on Dominion Status with some additional powers and an Oath of Allegiance. This meeting is not highlighted by many but it was crucial for what did not happen.

Coogan says:

“The most eloquent statement of the day was embodied in Collins’ silence. As Childers notes in his diary ‘M.C. difficult to understand. Repeatedly pressed by Dev but I really don’t know what his answer amounted to’.”

And, in his biography of de Valera, Coogan says that “*Collins had somewhat masked his hand*” (p. 207).

David McCullagh of RTÉ in his recent biography of de Valera gives the real reason for Collins’ behaviour:

“Unknown to de Valera, the Cabinet was not the only body considering the draft Treaty. Collins had given a copy of the British draft to Seán Ó Muirthuile, secretary of the IRB, to put before ‘the lads’ – the Supreme Council. According to Ó Muirthuile, the oath proposed by the British was unacceptable, but a new version was drafted that expressed allegiance to the ‘Irish Free State’, with fidelity to the British Monarch in a subsequent clause. At best this was an appalling breach of confidentiality by Collins; at worst, it suggests he regarded the views of the Supreme Council as being of greater value than those of the Cabinet; the oath contained in the final treaty was in the IRB’s form rather than de Valera’s.” (p.239)

FINALE

McCullagh’s ‘worst’ assumption was correct. Collins’ first loyalty was to the IRB, not to the Cabinet or to his Government, and his subsequent behaviour fol-

lowed from that. He did not attend the next meeting with the British. Lloyd George saw his opportunity in this division, met Collins on his own, made all sort of promises and established a rapport with him at these meetings and got him onside.

So the scene was set for the debacle that followed.

THE de VALERA ALTERNATIVE

What is worth considering is the possible outcome of the de Valera strategy as John Regan noted it.

What was the situation in December 1921 compared to July 1921? Had it changed and in whose favour?

What cards did each now hold and how might they play them?

What was the crucial issue now – the difference between being in the Commonwealth and accepting the rôle of the King as King of the Commonwealth but not as King of Ireland?. But the issue presented as such on the rôle of the King seemed a quibble to most of the public at home and abroad.

Would Lloyd George declare war over it?

And he would have had to declare war now for the first time, as heretofore it had formally been only a policing and law-and-order matter. Would public opinion wear it, especially in America which now obsessed British government policy, as there was a serious conflict where the US were determined to remove the British Navy from its position as ruler of the seas – which was the backbone of the Empire. Trotsky predicted a war over this. The US had defeated Germany for Britain which paid the price of being a debtor nation to the US. Who pays the piper calls the tune. And Britain was under US cosh ever since. This was the real beginning of the end of the British Empire. This was not a time to upset American opinion over the rôle of the British Monarch in Ireland! There are not many fans of monarchy in America at the best of times and certainly not among Irish Americans who were a strong political force there!

What was the military situation? The Empire was facing problems across the globe and it was stretched to the limit militarily and over stretched. More so than before, when they had had to recruit Tans and Auxiliaries for the war in Ireland. That situation had in fact further worsened for Britain.

The Irish Volunteers had increased to something like 70,000 according to James McKay and there was a big increase in ordnance supplies as described by Emmet O’Connor:

“More munitions were imported in the five months of the truce than in the previous eleven months ... There is no doubt that from early 1921 the IRA was developing an effective supply network, in Germany and the US at least; foreign supplies were becoming more important in the eyes of local brigades and GHQ; and there was an increasing demand for heavier weapons. Had the war continued, it is probable that more attention would have been given to the importation of big shipments of the latest weaponry, and we can only speculate on the military and political consequences ... It was of course ironic that the most elaborate and successful importations occurred after the truce.”

Birkenhead explained later in the Lords, July 23rd, that they did not have the troops to restart the war.

The attitude of a typical citizen soldier of the IRA was that of Seán Moylan, in his Dáil debate speech which concluded:

“If here is a war of extermination waged on us, that war will also exterminate British interests in Ireland; because if they want a war of extermination on us, I may not see it finished, but by God, no loyalist in North Cork will see its finish, and it is about time somebody told Lloyd George that.”

The Dáil adjourned after this speech.

Was Lloyd George bluffing again? We have evidence almost from the horse’s mouth – his Private Secretary, Geoffrey Shakespeare. He was to bring the infamous letter to Craig and described it as one big bluff. He found it incredible that the Irish were taken in. “*Let candles be brought in*”.

Only one thing is certain about de Valera – he would have maintained maximum Cabinet unity and that was the crucial thing to achieve in the circumstance.

So the essential difference was how an agreement was to be reached on whether or not it would ‘stick’ or not with the Cabinet.

SUBSEQUENT HISTORIES

To throw further light on what was in play it is also worth looking at what happened to Lloyd George subsequently to understand his weakness at this point. He would be thrown out of power by the Tories a few months later because he wanted to renew war with Turkey, led by Ataturk, which was refusing to accept another Treaty, that of Sèvres that sanctioned the breakup of the Ottoman Empire, but he found no support for this war at home or abroad.

In the 1930s de Valera went to Downing Street and had total success again by calling the British bluff and ignoring the threats and intimidation over the economic War. 2-0 to de Valera. Collins could be said to have lost 2-0 over the successful Downing St.

ultimatums to sign the Articles of Agreement in December 1921 and to launch the 'civil war' in June 1922.

THE ROLE OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN HISTORY

What the whole episode highlights is the rôle of the individual in history, an issue that's not a fashionable consideration with historians nowadays. It is not taken as a serious factor. Abstractions, 'structures,' themes etc. are much more comfortable and fashionable to deal with — such as a non-existent Treaty.

In Collins and de Valera there were two very different personalities.

De Valera spooked the British then and at every turn throughout his life. They could never fit him into their mental framework, he was beyond them, an enigma. So he became another demon in their large repertoire of same.

One exasperated British official in the 1930s described him as having a "devious straightforwardness" — exactly the quality needed to counter British statesmen such as Lloyd George, the Welsh Wizard.

They could get the measure of Collins. They made him into a celebrity and a 'gunman' and these concepts they could easily cope with. He was a very recognisable "broth of a boy." By comparison de Valera was just an alien being to them. And he soon saw the results of his misjudgement over the Treaty when he tried to step on a stepping stone. They turned on him in the early months of 1922 when to his great credit he very sensibly tried to ameliorate, in fact ignore, the so-called Treaty, and made a Pact with de Valera to form a government that sought to ignore the 'Treaty' divide by replicating the Dáil make before the split.

And they then showed their contempt for him. Lloyd George described him now as like a "wild animal," "shallow," "all over the place," "jumping and hopping about", and many similar comments from others and even Eamon Duggan, a supporter, described him as "very highly strung and overwrought and sometimes left their own meetings in a rage with his colleagues."

There is no evidence of anything like this that could be said about de Valera.

They made Collins break the Pact before the Election it was designed for which distorted the result, interpreting it as a plebiscite on the "Treaty" which was not the original plan of Collins and de Valera, and then forced him to declare war on the Republicans a few weeks later.

Ireland's Hated Hero

Amongst the many scurrilous BBC programmes, which may be accessed on YouTube is one entitled

"*Ireland's Hated Hero*".

Its subject is the late Eamon de Valera (1882-1975).

Telly Savalas (Kojak) had a catchphrase — "*Who Loves Ya, Baby?*"

In that spirit I did my own investigation into what proportion of those of his compatriot contemporaries really hated Dev.

Certainly not his beautiful and intelligent wife, whom he married in 1910, to the chagrin of her many admirers, and stuck with him until her own death in 1973, having borne him many children who remembered him with love and pride.

That was his private life. In public life let's see how he fared.

1917 July By-Election: elected Member of Parliament for Clare.

1918 December General Election: elected Teacta Dala (TD) for Clare and was re-elected as TD for Clare in each succeeding General Election: 1921, 1922, 1923, 1927 (June), 1927 (Sept), 1932, 1933, 1937, 1938, 1943, 1944, 1948, 1951, 1954, 1957

Thus Dev was elected for Clare 17 times and led Sinn Fein twice to victory and Fianna Fail nine times to victory over a 40 year period.

From 1921 to 1929 De Valera was (an Abstentionist) MP for DOWN, an Eight-Seater in the "Parliament of Northern Ireland"; he was elected under the Proportional Representation system.

From 1933 to 1938 Dev was Abstentionist MP for SOUTH DOWN, elected under the First Past the Post system

He retired from Dail Eireann and as head of the Government in 1959 on his election as President of Ireland for a Seven Year Term, was re-elected in 1966 and served a Second Term which he completed in 1973.

56 years unbroken public service in Ireland.

In 1918 as well as winning in Clare, he wrested the East Mayo seat from Irish "Nationalist" Leader John Dillon.

In 1932 De Valera was elected President

of the Council of the League of Nations.

In 1936 De Valera was elected President of the Assembly of the League of Nations.

He failed in his attempt to have the League honour its Covenant which required all its members to defend each other from aggression when Japan attacked China in Manchuria, and Italy attacked Abyssinia. He offered Irish Defence Force soldiers as part of a League defence of Abyssinia. Japan and Italy were permanent members of the Council of the League, as were France and Britain. France and Britain reneged on their Covenant promises. Britain made Mussolini pay for the Rape of Abyssinia through the fees charged by the British Government-owned Suez Canal Company for the passage of his troops and materiel through the Canal.

From 1921 to 1938 De Valera was an elected, though abstentions member of the "Parliament of Northern Ireland" at Stormont.

P.S. In February 1933 in an Editorial the *Irish Times* warned its readers of the disasters that would result if Dev won a second term with Fianna Fail.

In March 1933 an *Irish Times* Editorial rejoiced at the accession to power of Adolf Hitler,

It has never forgiven the Irish voters for continuing to vote for Dev rather than the paper's own favourites.

Much of what has been written about De Valera's character and politics is false or falsified. His achievements, which were great, have been deliberately ignored or downplayed by lesser mortals. He was unfazed by the temptations and threats of Lloyd George and Churchill, and neither the "*Roar of the Greasepaint nor the Smell of the Crowd*" (to quote the musical by Leslie Bricusse and Anthony Newley) turned his head.

The *Illustrated London News* has photographs of Dev's fans welcoming him at Euston Station in 1938 which could be stills from *A Hard Day's Night* (made in 1964) and his fans in America filled sports grounds and Madison Square Gardens more than twenty years before John Lennon was born. In 1948 he got a hero's welcome in the world's most populous democracy — the newly liberated India.

I'll return to the subject of Dev in other articles and confound the begrudgers!

Donal Kennedy

The O'Connor Column

Haughey: *and still the hyenas howl!*

When the one-man para-judicial Moriarty Tribunal delivered its 'opinion' on Haughey in late 2005, an editorial in this journal viscerating the media response declared in its headline: "*Haughey: the hyenas howl!*" So it is again with the media response to the appearance of Gary Murphy's massive biography, *Haughey*, which presents the man and politician . . . as a man and politician!

But Dublin4 is not amused! Apart from reviews by such decidedly non-Dublin4 types like Bertie Ahern in *The Sunday Times* (28 Nov.) and Shane Ross in *The Irish Independent* (28 Nov.) – both politicians themselves – the coverage in Dublin4 outlets has been "*devastatingly*" negative!

The common theme is that Murphy has let a corrupt crook off the hook! Colm Tobin was first off the mark and set the tone in, of course, the *Irish Times* (27 Nov.), followed by Michael Heney ('*The Smartest Boy*', drb, Dec. 2021), Ferriter (*Irish Times* again, 3 Dec.) and John Bruton in the *Examiner* (8 Dec.) – the Cork outlet now a wholly-owned subsidiary of *The Irish Times*. Derivative versions of the same followed from Matt Cooper (*Sunday Business Post* 28 Nov.) and others.

The radio regurgitated the same narrative, with Murphy being praised for his meticulous coverage of Haughey's life, but the focus remaining the same – on Haughey's youth, background and upbringing, the Fianna Fáil/Fine Gael class divide (a useful airing), on him as "*corrupt*", on the Arms Trial as still not resolved, on his extra-marital relationship, the GUBU period etc.

In all the coverage there has scarcely been a mention of surely the most important period the biography covers – 1987-92 when Haughey actually ran two powerful Governments!

It seems that the Haughey narrative has barely moved on from Moriarty. Unlike his critics, Murphy has sought to move it on, both in his biography and in radio interviews he has done on it.

As a biography, Murphy's work is unbeatable, and sympathetic, which is obviously what is infuriating his reviewers.

Dublin4 has decided to bury the book if it at all can. In its "*books for Christmas*" feature, under the title "*biographies*" the *Irish Times* admits the biography might have attractions for political *afficiandos* and then hurries on to other titles, while under "*history*" it doesn't mention it at all –

while shamelessly promoting and pouring excessive praise – as "*history*"! – on the dreary memoirs of those stallions of its own stable, Derek Scally and Fintan O'Toole.

None of the "*leading writers*" in their Christmas selections mention *Haughey*, while again for Tobin it is O'Toole's book that shines. Dublin4's *literati* selected O'Toole's work as "*An Post Book of the Year*" – *quelle surprise!*

But in the "*non-fiction*" bestseller list at the start of December, it had to be recorded that Murphy ranked first and O'Toole eighth! The silent majority is voting with its debit card!!

The reaction to the Haughey biography gives an interesting insight into how the Irish media landscape is evolving. Since its takeover by Mediahuis, Independent Newspapers has undergone a subtle but remarkable shift. The Harrisian element seems to have been sidelined, with Eilis O'Hanlon the last of the trenchant still standing. The Group's daily and Sunday editions seem to have abandoned their previous all-pervasive and visceral crusade against Sinn Féinism and its hush-puppy fellow-travellers. Mary Lou and others get fair coverage.

Mediahuis is accommodating to new realities. A predictably savage review of Haughey by Alan Shatter in the *Sunday Independent* (27 Nov.) – essential to cater for the last of the Blueshirt core constituency to which he appeals – appeared alongside a long article by Murphy himself, setting out what he had tried to achieve with his biography. The *Indo* also carried Ross's surprisingly favourable commentary.

On the other hand, the relentless campaign by *The Irish Times* against President Higgins' decision not to attend the Armagh celebration of the founding of "Northern Ireland", and its continued pot-shots at him, is part of that paper's noticeable orientating to try to prevent a Sinn Féin involvement in government.

There are flaws in Murphy's book, mainly due to his decision to eschew over-analysing and coming to decisive conclusions on indi-

vidual episodes or precisely Haughey's role in them, so as to concentrate on a rounded view of 'the man'. But his treatment of the Arms Conspiracy Trial is nevertheless masterful and pretty well conclusive, in Haughey's favour.

On the "Falklands" he rather disappointingly veers towards the FG/Iveagh House line in rejecting the position he took as a major "*error*", because it damaged relations with Britain and isolated Ireland at the EEC Council of Ministers. But Haughey in that episode held rigidly to the constitutional imperatives on foreign policy, supporting EC sanctions against illegal Argentinian actions while seeking the "*peaceful resolution of international disputes*".

Britain changed the game when, firing the first shot, it smashed that process by an act of illegal warfare when it ordered one of its U-boats to sink an Argentinian troop ship outside an internationally recognised "*exclusion zone*". But when is murder "*murder*"? While Murphy describes the IRA assassination, in the Republic, of the Imperialist and serial paedophile Lord Mountbatten in 1979 as "*heinous murder*", the sinking of the Belgrano – Haughey's reaction to which "*damaged*" Anglo-Irish relations – was an "*incident*" in which over 300 Argentinians somewhat carelessly "*lost their lives*"!

But these are really only quibbles with what is otherwise an excellent and truly landmark biography. Rows over its interpretations of particular policies or decisions can follow, but the life of the man is now definitively recorded.

The most glaring feature of the Dublin4 reviews is their lack of any treatment of what was the most important aspect of Haughey of all – what he actually did as Taoiseach when he was in undisputed control of government, in the years 1987-92. During this time, an extraordinary series of decisions transformed the fortunes of the Irish Republic and its citizens. A sense of elation and liberation that something was

happening – though yet to impact – was in the air, epitomised perhaps in the morale and popular highjinks surrounding sport and music events of the time, as the unstoppable Irish won – or more often nearly won – medal after medal and music contest after music contest.

But of the post-1987 period, which would finally make the Irish rich in stark contrast to what they had been, these moralising reviews have nothing to say.

A bizarre 'Treaty' exhibition

To commemorate the 'Treaty' of December 1921, the state, through the National Archives, has mounted an exhibition involving an array of audio-visuals and much original documentation. Though difficult to find and hardly advertised, the exhibition, entitled, "*The Treaty 1921: Records from the Archives*", and mounted in the Coachhouse at the back of Dublin Castle, drew a large crowd on the day this writer attended, 9th December—an overcast day with a bitter winter wind. The writer was intent on getting to see the thing itself—the actual "Treaty" signed in the early hours (2 am) of 6th December 1921 and brought back to Dublin post-haste by Eamon Duggan and Desmond Fitzgerald to present to Cabinet to discuss. This document is thus the actual and original agreement signed on that fateful day, and which claims to be the founding event of the Irish state.

On entering the exhibition, and after a brief general perusal, the writer made a bee-line for the centre room where, mounted in a glass box atop a pedestal in the middle of the floor, said document was presented, opened at its final page displaying two lists of signatures ambiguously captioned "*On behalf of the Irish Delegation*", and "*On behalf of the British Delegation*" (not "governments"!). The notice beside the document brazenly describes this as—

"The signature page of the Irish copy of the Anglo-Irish Treaty, formally known as the 'Articles of Agreement', signed by the Irish and British delegates on 6 December 1921."

I say "*brazenly*" because this notice is a sleight-of-hand, as the word "Treaty" appears nowhere in either the title or the text of the document presented. It is headed "*Proposed Articles of Agreement*", with the word "*Proposed*" crossed through. It is unclear who the signatories represent ("delegations"), an *Irish state* is not mentioned (always only "*Ireland*")—and, as said, the word "*Treaty*" appears nowhere in it. Yet the notice calls it "*the Anglo-Irish Treaty*", which it says was "*formally known as the 'Articles of Agreement'*". In reality,

no document titled a "*Treaty*" exists in the Irish Archives! (There is a quite different document in the British Archives to which a front sheet has been attached with the title, "*Treaty between Great Britain and Ireland signed in London on December 6th 1921*"—an issue for another day.

This one notice, with its wording carefully-crafted in distorting language, destroys the credibility of an otherwise very interesting exhibition, which fairly accurately presents many ancillary facts and personalities and the debates that occurred.

If the exhibition is indeed interesting, the manipulation of language in the notice describing the document is compounded by the brochure issued as a take-away for visitors. Unambiguously entitled, "*The Treaty 1921*", this opens with 'A word from the Minister' (Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sports and Media, *Catherine Martin TD, of the Green Party*), though obviously carefully crafted by a committee. The "*Word*" says that the document, "*the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921*", was "*perhaps the most important document in Irish history*", leading to the "*establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922*":

"The 'Treaty negotiations' began in London on 11 October 1921 and concluded in the early morning of 6 December 1921 with the signature, by British and Irish negotiators, of 'Articles of Agreement' – better known as the Anglo-Irish Treaty (or the Treaty). The Treaty provided for the establishment of the Irish Free State on 6 December 1922, governing twenty-six of Ireland's thirty-two counties."

The booklet reproduces various ephemera, such as the seating arrangement at the London conference table, as sketched at the time by Robert Barton; an invoice for cutlery and tableware for the Irish delegation's quarters; and one or two documents from different periods of the talks.

But it couldn't find room to reproduce the crucial Cabinet's instructions to the 'negotiators' to refer back to the Cabinet before signing anything!

The Committee obviously worked arduously to come up with the delicate wording of the Minister's "*Word*" and of the text of the booklet. In its section titled "*historical background*" it emphasises the strong democratic mandate of the 1918 Dáil, and goes on to claim that, on 21st January 1919, after the Sinn Féin members had "*boycotted Westminster*", the Dáil "*declared Ireland independent*".

No mention that it actually declared Ireland an "*Irish Republic*", precisely as proposed by Sinn Féin in its election manifesto. Such

an admission would probably only have served to complicate the brochure's careful narrative!

Meanwhile, the brochure continues, an ambush in Tipperary "*on the same day*" by "*members of the paramilitary Irish Republican Army (IRA)*" meant that "*the Irish War of Independence had begun*".

Thereafter, in this incredible fantasy history—

"the Dáil devoted itself to securing recognition for Irish Independence abroad and established its own administration at home, while the IRA began a campaign of urban and rural guerrilla warfare across the island. The British authorities responded with reprisals and repression, by both military and paramilitary forces ..."

So, in this rendering, British "*repression*" followed Irish violence!

The issue of the mandate of the delegates is described thus by the brochure:

"The plenipotentiaries (as they were designated) had been authorised by the Dáil to 'negotiate and conclude' a treaty, but their instructions from the Dáil Cabinet specified that they were to refer back to Dublin before making a final decision. This contradiction between the two sets of instructions became a source of tension as time went on, and the necessity to travel back and forth between London and Dublin became a gruelling obligation. While de Valera and the Irish negotiators certainly considered the possibility that he might join the talks in London, his absence meant that, while the British negotiators were led by the prime minister, the Irish team was not being led by his counterpart."

The "contradiction" between allegedly opposing mandates from the Dáil and the Cabinet is a historical concoction.

Elsewhere the booklet rather hilariously claims that "*The British government was intent on securing a settlement of the so-called 'Irish Question'*".

It seeks to grapple with what the objectives of the delegations were. For the British, "*the principle issue of concern*" was "*Ireland's future relationship to the Crown and the British Empire, with naval defence, trade and finance being their priorities*". For the Irish, "*sovereignty and Irish unity were the critical issues*".

The Irish delegation "*sought an outcome suggested by de Valera*" of Ireland as an "*external associate of the states of the British Commonwealth*", on which the Deputy Secretary to the British Cabinet, Thomas Jones, noted: "*they seemed to think of a republic within the Empire*".

The booklet reprints the mandate for the "*negotiators*", issued by de Valera on 7th

October, “as President”, that “in virtue of the authority vested in me by DAIL EIREANN”, he hereby appointed the five negotiators —

“as Envoys Plenipotentiary from the Elected Government of the REPUBLIC OF IRELAND to negotiate and conclude on behalf of Ireland with the representatives of his Britannic Majesty, George V., a Treaty or Treaties of Settlement, Association and Accommodation between Ireland and the community of nations known as the British Commonwealth.”

The booklet does not reprint the accompanying instruction issued to the negotiators by Cabinet on the same date, to report back to the Government before signing anything — though both documents, in the original, are displayed side-by-side in the actual exhibition:

The booklet drives home its interpretation of events by reproducing a document allegedly “revealing the tensions between the instructions they [= the negotiators] had received from de Valera and the powers granted to them as plenipotentiaries”.

The tortured ambiguities of the Exhibition Brochure — with its decisively “pro-Treatyite” bias — and, most glaringly, the misnaming in the information panel of the document presented as “The Anglo-Irish Treaty”, reflects the balances within the current Government. That balance, despite Fianna Fáil participation — and, indeed, providing the current Taoiseach — entirely disowns de Valera.

So, where, or what, is Micheal Martin and his merry band of ‘Fianna Fáilers’? How did this exhibition take on this shape? Why has Sinn Féin nothing to say about it?

COVID CONUNDRUMS

Covid appears to bring on a nasty condition, comparable to a bad kind of flu. That is, of course, for those who actually develop “symptoms”.

A great number of people discover they have the infection only when required to be tested after being identified as a close contact of someone definitely infected. Otherwise, they would never know. Many who develop symptoms also don’t get very virulent ones, and the thing passes in a day or two. A very small number get very seriously ill, requiring hospitalisation (currently about 400 in Ireland). These are overwhelmingly older and overwhelmingly suffering from additional serious debilities.

In many societies, life is now being made very uncomfortable if not impossible for people who can’t or decide they won’t be vaccinated. The ‘science’, we are told, is unambiguous and its remedies — vaccines rushed into production after minimal testing — the answer.

This writer knows a small number of people who have died “with” Covid. These included two who were over 90 (who in his view died primarily of being over 90), and one younger person in their forties, who was, however, morbidly obese and suffering from diabetes.

He knows many especially younger people (under 50) who have had Covid, with unpleasant but mild doses, and as many again who were found by tests to have it but had no symptoms whatsoever.

According to the CSO, the vast majority of the approximately 5,000 people who have died of — or rather “with” — Covid over the last two years have been in the oldest age groups and/or had debilitating underlying conditions.

So, are we over-reacting? More precisely, should we be really so credulous of “the science”?

In the 1940s-60s there was near consensus across the global “medical profession” that breast-feeding infants was an incongruous hangover from more barbarous times. Bottle-feeding with formula milk was declared a “common good” and a great advance on the previously animal-barbaric practice. Female breasts were re-characterised as primarily items of sexual allure with no longer any practical function. This propaganda of new science was heartily promoted by a generation of public health officials in their zealous building of national health services designed in part as a great experiment in social engineering. This columnist is delighted that his own mother, listening to her earthy country roots and Catholic scepticism, rather than the latest fashions of the white-coated experts, declined to go for formula and breast-fed all eight of us.

Lo and behold, a generation later, from the late 1970s, a new ‘science’ emerged finding that breast-feeding was far superior to Nestlé’s snake-oil formula, which had made it one of the richest global corporations of the time. Breast-feeding of infants, it transpired, was elemental in building tough life-lasting immune systems, which bottle formula could never emulate. A large number of people who in later life developed “underlying conditions” were found to have been bottle-fed as infants and had gone through life with unnecessarily compromised immune systems.

Another scientific fad that gripped the medical profession for decades was the “science of eugenics”. This was no fringe movement but endorsed at the highest levels by the scientific and political worlds. The first *World Eugenics Congress* was held in London around 1910, hosted by an enthusiastic supporter of all new science, Liberal Prime

Minister Herbert Asquith, one of the fathers of the British welfare state.

Plans for national health and welfare systems were driven by eugenicist views on socially engineering out the defective, the imbecile as well as the socially and — yes — racially degenerate over a number of generations. Over fifteen US federal states had laws forbidding inter-racial breeding because of its ‘deleterious’ effects on the racial health of the dominant Anglo-Saxon component: laws only repealed in the 1960s.

While theories of eugenics, once virtually unchallenged, quickly fell out of fashion after 1945 — given the “values” for which WW2 had ostensibly been fought — the fundamental thinking did not change all that much. A brief look at the promotional material of the *Planned Parenthood Association* down to the 1960s testifies to that.

Yet another example was the rush to “intensive farming” from the 1920s to 1980s, universally endorsed by “the science”. Pouring lethal — but lucratively expensive — poisons into the ground and, latterly, genetically modifying crops, in favour of which again there was a consensus among “advanced scientists”, have turned out to be a disaster of earth- and humanity-threatening proportions.

A recent well-publicised research report found that the number of insects in the ground and air in Ireland today is 70% less than it was as recently as the 1970s, with disastrous consequences for biodiversity, species of all kinds, and the quality of food being produced and consumed.

As countries across the globe fell like nine-pins to the New World Order after the fall of the Soviet Union and the Gulf War, Monsanto-Bayer and their ilk have followed in the baggage trains of Western Armies, enforcing mono-cultural agriculture often with genetically engineered plants incapable of reproducing, and requiring new engineered seed each year. These weak engineered species also require the extensive use of herb- and pesticides to survive. Locally native varieties are bought up and patented, enabling their use to be suppressed. The march of science knows no bounds!

In the cases of eugenics, formula “milk”, “intensive” agriculture, genetically modified food plants, and so forth, the “science” was on what has transpired to be the near suicidal side of the argument, while “dissidents” challenging the new dogmas were ridiculed and silenced.

Another thing they have in common is that they served the meteoric rise of gigantic, obscenely wealthy and powerful pharma companies such as Monsanto and, latterly,

Pfizer. With privatised medicine, medical research and drug production closely intertwined with public health service provision, national and international health administrations can only be described as highly compromised.

As regards the current vaccination drive to combat Covid, the Column has learned that the US Webster dictionary this year changed its definition of what a "vaccine" is to facilitate these new wonder solutions, because they simply don't conform to the old definition. The Column knows little of "medical science" and is in no position to judge the line being promoted by the various arms of the medico-"scientific" press singing in unison. But one thing is clear, and that is that mRNA vaccines, at least, mess with the human genetic system, something which public opinion in Europe has not allowed the food industry to engage in with regard to plants and animals (though this is a battle slowly being lost).

Many of the experts on which the public health authorities rely work for research institutes which are heavily capitalised or reliant on corporate patronage, some with considerable personal stakes (shares, board positions, professional advancement etc.). Why should they be believed? We don't believe their equivalents in the media commentariat when they rant on (in unison) about the imminent Chinese threat to us all, Iraqi super weapons, or the Russian 'invasion' of the Ukraine.

This Columnist has always avoided doctors unless absolutely necessary. Doctors invariably prescribe, prescribe and prescribe, often drugs in whose dissemination they have acquired a material interest. The promiscuous over-subscribing of antibiotics is now generally admitted to have been a "mistake", leaving huge numbers of people again severely immunocompromised against the most everyday bugs. Yet, in the 1960s-70s, antibiotics were the cure for "all known ills". The current writer often found himself politely declining such 'solutions' and falling back on taking to the bed with copious doses of garlic, good soup, lemon and clove-enriched whiskey, turmeric etc. for a few days, which worked in most cases.

In a very few instances, this proved insufficient and the writer succumbed reluctantly to the product hawked by the medical/pharma personnel.

America is the future to which all "democracies" of the world — or at least the ones selected by President Biden to be part of his alliance — desperately aspire,

despite pretensions to cultural superiority. European sophisticates, such as Colm Tobin and Fintan O'Toole, for all their snobbish disdain for much of what popular America actually is, crave its embrace.

If only it would adopt an outer layer more in keeping with what they represent it would be just about perfect!

The career pinnacle of such sophisticates is to be published in New York, reviewed admiringly in its press and invited to lucrative visiting chairs in the likes of Princeton. At which point their critical faculties dissolve. Yet America is also the driver of all the near terminal medico-scientific fads of the past century — and the present — outlined above.

Recently the US Department of Health and Social Services (HSS) — hardly a hotbed of the "fascist conspiracy theorists" O'Toole has recently been raving about — declared an "opioid epidemic". I quote:

"In the late 1990s, pharmaceutical companies reassured the medical community that patients would not become addicted to opioid pain relievers and healthcare providers began to prescribe them at greater rates.

"Increased prescription of opioid medications led to widespread misuse of both prescription and non-prescription opioids before it became clear that these medications could indeed be highly addictive.

"In 2017 HHS declared a public health emergency and announced a 5-Point Strategy To Combat the Opioid Crisis."

(<https://www.hhs.gov/opioids/about-the-epidemic/index.html>)

The HHS states that upward of 70,000 people die each year in the US of opioid addiction. A commentator, John Minahane, has asked:

"Were the doctors, chemists and drug producers who did this all some kind of monsters? Were they all in on some sort of fix, as those who seek to identify a "big pharma conspiracy" claim? Surely not! Surely they were fairly normal doctors, chemists, manufacturers and merchants. But they were in a context, they belonged to a great system where this kind of thing can and does fairly often happen."

And here's the rub: this writer has taken his two doses of AstroZenica (though not before requesting the EU-led BioNtech or Russian Sputnik instead, for political reasons). Even the white-coats don't claim that the Russian, Cuban or Chinese vaccines are any less effective than the western corporate concoctions (in fact even *The Lancet* has found them to be very effective indeed), but these are not "approved" by the EU-US-UK authorities. So is "the science" sometimes just "the politics" after all?

This columnist is in two minds about the "booster", or the tri- or bi-monthly injections

thereafter, that seem to be our fate, though will probably get it. This is because he is of an age with not too much to lose and so as not to be excluded from normal social activities still permitted.

The consensus across the scientific, medical, media and political worlds in Ireland is deafening, and of a bullying kind that brooks no dissent. The pinnacle is represented by O'Toole's column headed '*The three anti-vaccine types – egoists, paranoiacs and fascists*' (Irish Times 11 December). But even regular news reports are distorted. The *Irish Independent* (28 Nov.) carried an article

"*"Young people in ICU with Covid almost exclusively unvaccinated and some are dying"* — medics on the reality of the crisis".

But the substance of the article said something quite different to the headline, that those in most danger from a Covid infection are those with already serious conditions, who make up a staggering 80%+ of those in ICU:

"... The HPSC report(ed) ... that most of those in ICU have an underlying condition and that the unvaccinated outweigh the vaccinated. Of the 476 seriously ill patients admitted between June 27 and November 13, a total of 387 had an underlying medical condition — most commonly high blood pressure (44pc), followed by chronic heart disease (36pc), chronic respiratory disease (30pc) and diabetes (24pc). Two-hundred-and-ninety of those seriously-ill patients were unvaccinated or partially vaccinated. Among them were 19 pregnant women."

This columnist is philosophical. He is 64, has had a good innings, and has rarely ever been detained in hospital for more than a day except to get his appendix out when he was six. This run of luck could come to an end at any moment of course, and he could be struck down by something tomorrow that will destroy him. That's life. But, after 64, we are all really into bonus time. Half of humanity never reaches such an age. The vaccines, says the science now, protect us against getting very or — to be precise — terminally sick. It is no longer claimed — as it was with emphatic certainty just six months ago — that it stops you getting and transmitting Covid! The party line changes by the day!

Anything can happen to someone of the columnist's age from here on in, and if the latest snake oil is a protection against this particular thing finishing him off, well, there's not much to lose at this age in taking it. But, if he was 30 years younger, it would be a very different story. We simply don't know enough about these "wonder vaccines" and their consequences (remember formula

"milk", wonder fertilisers etc.). The scepticism of the intelligent young is well-based. (I discount here the "my choice" brigade as a distraction.)

Is it not selfish of old people living out their pampered bonus time to shrilly demand of the young, of whom virtually none, statistically speaking, get seriously ill from Covid, be locked up for what is now already two years and be forced to take medicines peddled by western pharma companies through a scientific Establishment that is simply not to be trusted?

It is now obvious that trying to stop the spread of this or that variant is a labour of Sisyphus. Vaccines, antivirals, and all the other lucrative products being presented by Pfizer & Co., however dodgy, should be

freely and easily available to anyone who wants them, and those over 60 or with any kind of immuno-compromised conditions (especially bottle-feeding survivors) should be urged to get jabbed.

But leave the young alone to make up their own minds, and allow opinions be heard (such as the *Barrington Declaration* of last year). Allow the young to live—particularly, socially. No one mentions Sweden now—but look at it! Since its Care-Home disaster in the first year of the pandemic, it has continued with its mostly very light restriction regime (pubs, clubs, sports etc. open), while having one of the lowest hospitalisation and death rates in Europe!

How embarrassing for the white-coats is that?

still be the same "political regime" that appeared "permanent and unchallengeable."

So it seems that the Republican War that Currie generated was a necessary event in the great transformation of the Catholic community. Without Currie, no Caledon etc.; without Caledon, no War; without War, no *Good Friday Agreement*; without *Good Friday Agreement*, no equalising; without today, the one-party Stormont regime.

On 10th October, Derry Nationalists, by an overwhelming majority, recommended that the Party should withdraw from the role of Official Opposition it had taken on the orders of Taoiseach Lemass, at Stormont. Currie, speaking at a Constituency Meeting in Cookstown as the MP for East Tyrone said that:

"... the party would cease to be the official opposition. The decision to become the official opposition... had been taken in the aftermath of the O'Neill-Lemass talks as an earnest gesture of the party's dedication to the ideal of good community relations and in the belief that the new atmosphere would lead to government intervention to ensure social justice. For the nationalists, official opposition had been a degrading one-way process of all give and no take. As far as he was concerned the experiment had already ended. Derry was just the last nail in the coffin... In a normal democratic community, Mr. Currie said change would take place through the normal channel of parliamentary debate. But this was not a normal community and those who desired change had not been able to achieve it through Parliament. The same changes had been demanded over 40-odd years and had been constantly refused. It was for this reason and this reason only that civil disobedience had been used in an effort to bring social justice. If the Unionist Party continued with its 'not an inch' policy, civil disobedience would inevitably spread. The theme for an increased number of people in the future would be: If we cannot have justice, then we must make a system based on injustice unworkable" (IN 11.10.68).

The decision to take the role of Official Opposition at Stormont exposed the futility of politics for the Catholic community. It undermined the Nationalist Party by showing the charade of Stormont and it meant that energies had to be put into other directions. This led to the street politics of 1968/9 and the explosion of August 1969.

After the explosion of August, the issue of reform of the security forces of the pseudo-state came onto the agenda. When the setting up of the UDR was announced to replace the B Special shock troops, Currie said that: "the only way to defeat the Unionist game is by non-Unionists making application to join".

In his autobiography Currie reveals that he really wanted the UDR to become a cross-community force. He reasoned that,

Austin Currie

Austin Currie, who died recently, was the man who started the war in 'Northern Ireland'. He was clear about this in the first page of his autobiography, '*All Hell Will Break Loose*', when he remembers his days as the Nationalist MP for East Tyrone:

"On Wednesday 19 June 1968, near the end of an acrimonious debate in the Stormont Parliament, I was ordered by the Speaker to leave the House. As I left, I angrily threw my speaking notes at the jeering Unionist benches and shouted, 'All hell will break loose, and by God I will lead it'... I didn't wish to hang around anyway. I knew what I had to do. Had I known the consequences of what I intended to do later that day, at Caledon, would I have proceeded with it? I have asked myself that question many, many times over the years. Would I have gone ahead had I known, or even suspected, that the action I was about to take would initiate a process that would lead to the loss of nearly four thousand lives? Would I have gone ahead had I known that my intended action and other actions stemming from it would transform the political scene in Northern Ireland and destroy a political regime which, at that time, appeared permanent and unchallengeable?... These are some of the questions I have wrestled with for more than thirty years..." (p. 9-10)

Currie was the main continuity between the old Nationalist Party and the new SDLP—in other words he was "constitutional nationalism" personified. His political career illustrates that decent and well-meaning men can often be the ones who make decisions which intensify and prolong conflict—while conversely the "men of violence" may emerge as the most effective peacemakers.

In a speech during October 1967, Austin Currie told an audience at Magee University

College, Derry, of the feelings in the Catholic community towards the reforming Unionist leader, Terence O'Neill:

"No politician in the history of this state has aroused hopes and expectations to the same extent as has Captain O'Neill. For the first time we seemed to have a Prime Minister who could shake off the shackles of the past and look to the future" (Belfast News Letter, 24.10.67).

Currie warned that O'Neill had a 12-month deadline in which to "weed out injustice and intolerance" and that, if he failed, a "grave militancy" would develop in the Catholic community. As events proved 12 months was accurate nearly to the day. Currie warned of what was to come if O'Neill did not satisfy nationalist demands:

"There will be more squatting, more acts of civil disobedience, more emphasis on 'other means' and less on traditional Parliamentary methods. And Terence O'Neill and his Government must carry their responsibility. The Prime Minister could leave a record of real achievement or, if he refused to act, he will be recognised as the political confidence trickster of and stuntman of this generation".

On 19th June 1968, with the help of local Republicans, Currie occupied a house in Caledon, Co. Tyrone to protest at its allocation to a single Protestant woman by the local Council. Currie argued that his action was to highlight discriminatory allocation practices by the Unionists.

Currie was very honest in his autobiography as to the implications of his actions and he answered his own question, that he would not have occupied the house at Caledon and brought direct action into play against the Stormont system if he had known all the trouble he was going to cause in doing so. But, in making this admission, Currie infers that without the trouble there would

in a doomsday situation, if such a force had many Catholics it could not be used for general massacre. He claimed that Kevin Mallon, a prominent Republican in Tyrone, had led a crowd in Coalisland demanding Catholics be let into the new force and be armed and Currie interpreted this as Catholic enthusiasm.

But Catholic applications in Tyrone and Fermanagh were insignificant. In the Stormont debate on the Bill it was claimed that Unionist members in the localities suggested Catholics were disloyal and, therefore, would not get through vetting screens. But Currie still urged Catholic participation for much longer than his colleagues, like John Hume:

"There are certain members of the Government who do not wish the 'minority' to join these forces... The opposition will continue to urge the 'minority' to join." (IN 24.11.69)

Another issue that emerged after the explosion of August 1969 was whether Stormont should remain as a communal agitator. In later years there was something of an 'admittance' that Catholic politicians had been 'mistaken' in their antagonism to Direct Rule in 1970. Austin Currie, said in an interview with the *Irish Times* on 20th June, 1988:

"The Civil Rights movement wanted British troops in, but it should have been accompanied by a British political presence. The crunch mistake in 1969 was to keep Stormont, with Oliver Wright as the British government's watchdog in the North. That was the crucial period in which the Provisional IRA was founded and gained momentum."

The *Irish Times* noted at the time:

"Currie blames the political deterioration on the fact that Stormont carried on for a further three years, building up pressures and providing a front for what was actually being done behind the scenes from Westminster".

But, during those years, Currie, Hume and Fitt etc. went along with the British objective of maintaining this "front" which represented a false front of the British State. (A false front is a military tactic aimed at drawing the enemy into an area in which he exhausts his energies before the real front appears).

In the same interview, Currie cited the establishment of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, which took responsibility for housing away from the Local Councils, as "*the only justification I would require*" for having engaged in political agitation — thus implying that the NIHE was set up in response to his demands. But, in 1970, the *Irish News* reported that—

"Massive opposition is to be mounted at Stormont to the Housing Executive Bill to set up a Central Housing Authority. Mr. John Hume who, with Mr. Austin Currie, shares

the responsibility of 'shadowing' Mr. Brian Faulkner, the Minister for Development, declared last night 'We do not regard these proposals as reform and we will demand changes.' ... We will strongly oppose it in parliament' he declared." (15.10.70)

A few days after the Fianna Fail Ard Fheis of 1970 Currie gave a speech to the U.C.D. Law Society which illustrates the effect Fianna Fail's activist policy from August onwards had on Northern Nationalists in narrowing down the more complex character it had developed during the 1960s, into traditional Anti-Partitionism. The *Irish News* reported under the heading, 'Currie Tells U.C.D. Law Society "*Unity is Inevitable*"':

"The spirit of nationality has never been higher in the North as it has been since the eruption of last August. At the beginning of the Civil Rights campaign with its emphasis on 'British Rights for British subjects' some people had been concerned lest the desire for national unity would be diminished. They need not have worried — the fire burns brighter and stronger than ever.

"Unity can only be achieved by peaceful means. Let there be no mistake in any part of the country about that... What is needed... is a union of hearts and minds. A forced unity, in the aftermath of a bloody civil war, against the majority of present-day Unionists is not worth having. Anyway, on the practical side, as has now been admitted by the Taoiseach, sufficient force to over-run and hold the North is just not available. Even if it was, what would happen to thousands of Catholics living in isolated positions before friendly troops reached them? The use of force to achieve unity by a physical take-over of the North is clearly neither desirable nor practical..."

"Some political commentators were amazed at the welcome given to the 'old enemy' when they appeared on the streets of Belfast and Derry. They should not have been. With due respect to the British Army, the legions of the Devil would have been welcome replacements for the RUC and B Specials. And, one might ask, how much more welcome than British troops would fellow Irishmen have been in the Bogside, the Falls Road, Coalisland and Dungannon etc." (IN 23.1.70)

The *Irish News* editorial and Currie's speech present a picture of Northern understanding of Taoiseach Lynch which is very different from that presented of him today by the coterie of Southern historians who lionise the Taoiseach for his "*moderation*" in and after August. The actions and signals Taoiseach Lynch sent out to the North certainly had the effect of invigorating the Nationalism of the Catholics of the Six Counties and guided them back toward the true path of Anti-Partitionism as the solution to their predicament.

Austin Currie later recalled the formation of the SDLP, within which he became a prominent member:

"At the time of the formation of the SDLP... nationalism was being put on the back burner... There was recognition that we had to live within Northern Ireland for a considerable period of time... we had to make the best of the situation, but that we were entitled to an equal spot in the sun — that was our determination and commitment." (Gerard Murray and Jonathan Tonge, *Sinn Fein and the SDLP*, p12)

The SDLP was, from the very beginning, a conglomeration of Catholic interests. There was the British Socialist element that formally led it and which gave it purchase amongst the British left at Westminster. There was also a more Catholic conservative wing that was devolutionary in instinct and gravitated toward a settling down in a reformed Stormont with a chastened Unionism. This was a more vigorous version of the Nationalist Party which the SDLP had replaced. But it was the Nationalist Party après Lemass, rather than the one of Cahir Healy which saw itself as something distinct and superior from the Republican wing of Nationalism rather than as part of a continuum. This was the section represented by Currie and Seamus Mallon.

Brian Faulkner, the ablest Unionist leader, responded to the SDLP with an attempt at accommodation. This represented a radical change in Unionist policy that would, for the first time in 50 years, involve Nationalists in participation in the Stormont administration. Currie notes in his autobiography that the offer was unprecedented and "*represented a major, even revolutionary, advance*" that—

"would have been enthusiastically welcomed by the opposition at any other time over the fifty years as an indication of unionist willingness to reach out to the minority community and to take their views into account in the running of the State" (*All Hell Will Break Loose*, p.166 and p.165).

The logical reason, therefore, for the SDLP walking out of Stormont was to break it up and bring about Direct Rule — perhaps so that the local parliament could be reconstituted in a different form by Whitehall. The following account from Currie seems to confirm this:

"The alienation of the non-unionist community embraced, not only those who had never identified with the Stormont system, but also professional and business types who had been prepared to play a full part particularly under O'Neill. The alienation was so total that even if the SDLP had wished to talk, it would have been impossible. But we had no desire to talk. We had already committed ourselves to fighting internment in every non-violent way possible and in so doing had given a lead to public opinion. Since our withdrawal from Stormont, a month earlier, we were committed to ending the Stormont system of government. It was one of those occasions when personal inclination, public opinion and political judge-

ment absolutely and completely coincided. By refusing to talk to Faulkner or the British, by initiating a civil disobedience campaign, and by symbolising our rejection of the system through the alternative assembly, we could end internment, end Faulkner and end the System." (SDLP News 5.10.72)

In this passage Currie runs together two separate events – the SDLP withdrawal from Stormont and the British introduction of Internment. In the following years the SDLP let it be understood that the withdrawal from Stormont took place as a result of the introduction of Internment. But the reverse was closer to the truth – Internment was a consequence of the SDLP walkout. Currie's account from 1972 suggests that the SDLP declined Faulkner's offer because it would have involved a straightforward conflict with Republicanism and 'Constitutional' Nationalist representatives in Stormont would have threatened the vigour of the developing Anti-Partitionist offensive that would give the SDLP a more substantial role in the administration that Faulkner was offering.

Currie admits as much himself in his autobiography when referring to the excuse John Hume used to take the SDLP out – the killing of two Derry Catholics by the British:

"The benefit of hindsight makes it possible to see that our withdrawal from Stormont over the Cusack-Beattie killings was a mistake. It had one consequence to which we had not given sufficient consideration: it removed from Faulkner one concern which might have prevented him from introducing internment... and which made it easier for the London government to agree to support him in its introduction. Faulkner knew we would not stomach internment, and that any hope of the 'participation' he considered necessary for the continuation of Stormont would be wrecked by our threatened withdrawal if it were introduced. Our boycott of Stormont relieved him of that disincentive." (p.173)

There is no getting away from the fact that the SDLP decision to pull out of Stormont was a major contribution to the escalation of the conflict and encouraged Westminster to seek a military solution to the conflict. If Currie and the SDLP had decided to accept a role in the administration, internment could not conceivably have occurred, since the price Faulkner would have had to pay for their involvement would certainly have been the shelving of internment. And Internment greatly intensified the War which put paid to Stormont.

The first and only Catholic who joined a Stormont Cabinet, under Faulkner, was G.B. Newe, Regional Organiser of the Council of Social Services and a founder member of *Protestant-Catholic Encounter* (PACE), a committed participator and non-sectarian. Austin Currie reserved a special hatred for Newe and issued the following statement against him, published in *The Tyrone Democrat*:

"If you are a man at all, if you wish to maintain any shred of your reputation, you should resign immediately. The administration of which you are a member is no longer recognised by your co-religionists North or South of the border as having any moral or political right to their allegiance. You are like a Jew in Hitler's cabinet. Get Out" (All Hell Will Break Loose, p.188).

Faulkner's offer would have satisfied all Currie asked of Stormont but, having joined the resistance, the SDLP were now looking for Irish Quislings. The SDLP decided to up the ante and in the campaign to destroy Stormont leading members of the SDLP addressed large rallies, alongside representatives of all strands of Nationalism, from the two IRAs, to People's Democracy over the following months. At one such rally in the Falls Park, Austin Currie predicted the following, as the Provo military campaign intensified with urban bombing:

"Within the next six or seven months, Faulkner and his rotten Unionist system will have been smashed... The so-called British Home Secretary has once again come on T.V. and said that the SDLP ought to be prepared to talk. But I say to Maudling 'Why the hell should we talk to you? We are winning and you are not'... Even if Maudling got down on his bended knees and kissed all our backsides we would not be prepared to talk." [This line was censored by the Irish News and reported only by the News Letter, PW.] ... The aim of this campaign is not only to end internment but to destroy this government because all the evils of this community are symptoms of that basic disease – unionism." (BNL and IN 3.1.72)

Currie and the SDLP, despite condemning individual excesses of the Provos, got swept up by the Republican intensifying of their campaign in the face of Faulkner's Internment policy. There was obvious pleasure taken, and shown, at the Unionist Premier's increasingly desperate statements reassuring the public that Internment was working when it plainly wasn't, according to Currie's autobiography. At the same rally as Currie gave his speech, Paddy Devlin called on the British Army to be driven out of Catholic areas – although by whom he did not state.

These speeches by moderate 'Constitutional' Nationalists must have had an effect on Protestant attitudes to the Catholic community. They surely encouraged the view that the Catholic community was generally supportive of the shooting and bombing and Loyalists, unfortunately, would have seen them as justifying reprisals on the Catholic community that they were only too ready to engage in. The only substantial effect of the SDLP civil disobedience campaign was in convincing the Unionist community that the SDLP and the Provos were two sides of the same coin and solidifying opposition to the "forces of Catholic-Nationalism".

Austin Currie called for a boycott of rent and rates payments by the Catholic community in response to Internment. However, he retreated when he became Housing Minister in an administration the SDLP joined under Faulkner in 1974. The rent and rates boycotters were left high and dry by Currie's *volte face*, after the Provo campaign brought about the Power-Sharing agreement at Sunningdale.

On May 17th 1974 Currie reopened the question of collection charges on those taking part in the Rent and Rates Strike. On the one hand, he was asking the Executive to treat one form of civil disobedience – the UWC strike – as a rebellion, while on the other asking it to condone it in another form. The collapse of the Sunningdale arrangement, after the Council of Ireland was unwisely pushed, put Currie and the SDLP back into the wilderness.

Currie's next significant intervention occurred in 1981. Some way through the Hunger Strike the Provos were presented with a stroke of luck when Frank Maguire, the Independent Nationalist MP for Fermanagh/South Tyrone died suddenly. Austin Currie attempted to enter the contest for the seat, as he had against Maguire in 1979, but the MP's brother, Noel, indicated he was putting himself forward. The local community would not stand for a split Catholic vote under the circumstances.

Hume supported Maguire's candidacy and shot down Currie. Currie put himself on stand-by in case Republican pressure got to Maguire and he pulled out. But Maguire waited until less than an hour before nominations closed to prevent the SDLP stepping in and gave Bobby Sands a clear run against the Unionist. The local SDLP Council Chairman then signed Sands' nomination papers.

If Currie had been successful against Hume it certainly would have prolonged the War. The Hunger Strike and Bobby Sands' election was crucial to the gestation of Republican electoral politics and the road which Sinn Fein subsequently took.

A few years later, as part of the developing Adams/Haughey peace initiative, John Hume was brought in to the peace project and talks arranged between Sinn Fein and the SDLP to establish a common platform vital for moving toward a Republican ceasefire. However, the Sinn Fein/SDLP talks broke up without agreement as intransigent SDLP chiefs resented the movement of Sinn Fein into political territory that the SDLP had previously occupied unopposed. Currie wrote in his autobiography:

"It was with a great sense of relief... that the Sinn Fein talks came to an end in September... My experience of the Sinn Fein talks convinced me more than ever of the

necessity of finding a way of opening talks with the unionists.” (p. 370)

What is apparent is that the primary objective of many within the SDLP, including Currie, was to use the Hillsborough Treaty of 1985 between the Thatcher and Fitzgerald Governments as a lever against Unionists to establish a return to devolution with the Anglo-Irish Agreement acting as a kind of fall-back device pinning the Unionists into some form of power-sharing with the SDLP. This is very apparent from an interview published in *Fortnight* magazine of June 1987 with Currie, after the Loughgall Ambush, and just before the Westminster Election which the SDLP hoped would strengthen its position. The *Fortnight* reporter wrote:

“Austin Currie is optimistic. He has a vision of the post-election period in which things work themselves out and fall into convenient slots – with the Anglo-Irish Agreement playing a pivotal role... If the electoral geography of Fermanagh-South Tyrone denies him a Westminster seat he nevertheless is ‘fairly certain’ there is a safe seat for him in any new PR assembly... The election, hopes Currie, will ‘isolate the two P’s of Paisleyism and Provisionalism and create a greater coming together of the moderate elements in both traditions and communities’... He is not impressed by the intensification of the IRA campaign... There can only be a political solution and politically the IRA is dead, Sinn Fein is dead, if only they had the wit to stiffen... Rumblings of discontent amidst the disarray of unionism are encouraging noises to Currie’s ear... ‘My pretty confident prediction [is that] in the aftermath of the election the devolutionist argument will win’. Moderate devolutionist unionists, having come to terms with the fact that the Anglo-Irish Agreement is not going away, will sit down at the negotiating table. And... the SDLP will join them there, ready to talk about devolution... Indeed, the presence of the Agreement – contrary to what certain people in the unionist and even Alliance ranks have been saying – is a spur to the SDLP to agree to devolution rather than a hindrance... The existence of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and the guarantee that gives to nationalists should encourage us to go into a power-sharing operation, rather than the reverse – simply because, if any arrangement we entered into were to fail, for any reason, then the position would revert to the Anglo-Irish situation...”

Currie admitted that although he was “*a Labour supporter and, of course, the SDLP is a social democratic party... in terms of Northern Ireland, and the nationalist position in Ireland generally, the Labour Party has been a disappointment.*” He therefore hoped for a comprehensive victory for Mrs. Thatcher and the Conservatives in the 1987 British election:

“I’m sorry to have to say it but - from the point of view of nationalist Ireland a con-

tinuation of Maggie Thatcher in power, for a limited period of time, would be to our advantage... I believe that, while we have a strong Conservative government, that is a reason for optimism for the immediate future.”

However, although Mrs Thatcher achieved a crushing victory over Labour in 1987, Currie’s hopes for a devolutionist settlement and alliance with moderate unionism was about to be shot down by Hume’s wider strategic vision. And, of course, the Provos, who were far from “*dead*” after the Loughgall reverse, refused “*to stiffen*” and went on to form the stable centre with the other P – Paisleyism, a couple of decades later.

The differences between Hume and his party colleagues emerged in striking form at the hush-hush talks held at Duisburg that have been ignored by historians but which were a pivotal event in separating Hume from his party colleagues, including Currie.

The October 1988 talks in West Germany were an attempt to break the Ice Age caused by Hillsborough. Present were the UUP, DUP SDLP and Alliance. Fr. Alex Reid was present to transmit the Sinn Fein view. The Duisburg talks took place after two years of an absence of formal dialogue between the Unionist parties and the SDLP. The Unionist parties required a suspension of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, including the closure of the Maryfield Secretariat, to engage in formal talks on re-establishing devolution in the province. They had made an election pledge not to engage in talks while the Agreement was in place and they wanted sufficient time to elapse before the next meeting of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference in order to hold formal inter-party negotiations. So they requested a date from the two governments for the next meeting of the Secretariat to justify taking part in talks while the Agreement was operating. The SDLP represented by Currie, felt the party should accommodate the desire of Unionists to hold formal dialogue believing there to be a softening of Unionist resistance to the Agreement and a potential for devolution.

However, Hume disagreed and communicated his displeasure to Currie after a leak had suggested the SDLP delegation had agreed to this. Hume sent Currie a policy document he had drawn up himself saying that there would be “*serious political consequences*” if Hillsborough was suspended and he ordered Currie to stop pursuing the matter further (Belfast Newsletter 6.2.89). Hume stated that the objective should be—

“to achieve an agreement that will transcend in importance any previous agreement ever made and... address all the relationships that can contribute to the realisation of peace and stability.”

Currie noted in his autobiography:

“I was very disappointed by this document. The whole purpose of Duisburg, as far as I was concerned, was... to enable the Unionists to get off their hook of not talking while the Anglo-Irish Agreement remained in existence. Devolution was part of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, supported by the two governments, and... a central plank of SDLP policy... The SDLP response to the Unionists, which was effectively John Hume’s response, did not cover the exigencies of the political situation. I began to fear another agenda was at work... What I did not recognize at the time, because I was not party to everything that was happening, was that the end of Duisburg was a watershed and that devolution had been moved down the list of SDLP priorities.” (pp. 361-2)

Currie, McGrady, Hendron and Mallon wanted to see a devolved power-sharing government established within ‘Northern Ireland’ on the basis of Article 4 of the Hillsborough Treaty. A working party had been set up with this objective in mind. But Hume let the devolutionists go through the motions before he calculated, after his talks with Adams, that an all-Ireland settlement which included Sinn Fein should be held out for rather than surrendering the position hard-won at Hillsborough. Hume saw that the Treaty of 1985 had failed in its objectives and would, at best, only lead back to the situation of Sunningdale in 1974. That was good enough for many in the SDLP, but not for Hume any more, especially since he became aware of the peace initiative that was driven by Haughey and was supported by the Irish Government.

Hume’s project fostering a pan-Nationalism with Sinn Fein to achieve a wider settlement beyond devolution, had won out. And this was indeed a watershed in political affairs, as Currie noted.

Hume focused his efforts on the all-Ireland settlement which included Dublin and Sinn Fein. The devolutionists were shoved aside. In 1988 Currie fronted for the “socialist” SDLP at Duisburg. Less than a year later he left ‘Northern Ireland’ and was standing for Fine Gael, the most bourgeois of Southern parties, in opposition to its sister-party in the South, Irish Labour. But at least Currie engaged with real politics in a real state where he exercised ministerial authority.

Austin Currie’s career illustrates the tragedy of the Northern Catholic. He wanted to live in a normal state and serve his people as best he could. However, the perverse political entity constructed and maintained in ‘Northern Ireland’ by the British government denied him that and made a well-meaning, and personally brave man, a force for agitating the communal conflict.

Pat Walsh

Seamus Deane Obituary

On the 12th May 2021, at Beaumont Hospital, Dublin, after a short illness, at the age of 81, Seamus Deane died, surrounded by his family. And finally the encomiums were written by all the main Irish papers, especially *The Irish Times*, *The Independent et al.* These very papers during the long life and career of Deane were often those who made the most out of fiercely criticising his work and consistently troubled themselves about where the latter stood “*on the national question*”. And the same treatment was given to Seamus Heaney, though obviously more obliquely, after he became the Nobel Laureate for Literature in 1995.

Deaglán de Bréadún gave testimony to Deane in ‘*The Sunday Independent*’, under the most lavish wording:

”Literary lion, academic, poet, novelist – and Derryman”.

On the other hand, ‘*The Irish Times*’ soberly wrote: “Seamus Deane, leading Irish writer and critic, has died at 81.”

Nevertheless they all mention that out of Derry came the two most world-famous sons: Seamus Heaney, or famous Seamus as Deane called him, and the latter self-styled Seamus éile. They met at the Catholic diocesan grammar school for boys in Derry, St. Columb’s College. Heaney was 11 and Deane 10 and then they went on to study at Queen’s College, Belfast in 1957, where they attended “the same English class”. From their second year onwards, they boarded together and as undergraduates both wrote poetry. But Deane pursued a career in academia and, after some teaching in a secondary school at Derry—while Heaney was at one in Belfast—Deane took off to obtain a PhD at Pembroke College, Cambridge, and then onto America where he taught first at Oregon and latter at the University of California at Berkley.

Seamus Deane came back to Dublin where in the 60s he took up a position as lecturer and then, in 1980, he was appointed Professor of Modern English and American literature at University College, Dublin. In 1993, he became Professor of English and the ‘Donald and Marilyn Keough Chair of Irish Studies’ at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, from which he retired a number of years ago.

Perhaps the obituary that is notable for its many quotations from Seamus Deane is the one written in *History Ireland* by his friend and colleague, Professor Kevin Whelan— though it should be noted that it attributes the author as now being “the Michael Smurfit Director of the Notre Dame Dublin Global Gateway”- (?). Whelan wrote that Deane came from the Bogside in Derry, “a festering Catholic slum”, and Deane himself wrote:

“The Bogside and its neighbouring streets lay flat on the floor of a narrowed valley. Above it towards Belfast rose the walls, the Protestant cathedral, the pillared statue of Governor Walker (Protestant hero of the siege of Derry in 1689), the whole apparatus of Protestant domination. History shadowed our faces. The drifting aromas of poverty were pungent and constant reminders to the inhabitants of those upper heights that class distinction had the merciful support of geography. We lived below and between.”

Whelan attests that the 1947 Butler Act in the UK gave rise in the 60s to “the first university-educated northern Catholics... A cohort of leading activists and writers emerged, including Bernadette Devlin, Michael Farrell, Eamon McCann, John Hume, Seamus Heaney, and Seamus Deane, who was part of that first cohort of Catholics to be able to proceed to university earning a BA in 1961 and MA in 1963 from Queen’s University.”

Quoting Deane:

“We were the first generation to benefit from the post war educational reforms of the Labour Government” (so decried by the likes of Elizabeth Bowen). “My father said, “Educate yourself, I wish I had the chance. That’s the way to resist”.

“There was poverty, gerrymandering, discrimination, a failed political system,

a great sense of isolation but no way to mobilise the anger; I felt as though I was living in a frozen sea...”

Deane raged in one of his poems:

”The unemployment in our bones
Erupted in our hands in stones.”

In 1980 Seamus Deane joined Field Day, founded by the dramatist, Brian Friel, and the actor, Stephan Rea. Along with Deane there was also Seamus Heaney, Tom Paulin and David Hammond. Again, according to Whelan, Deane edited the “transformative” *Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, Vol. 1-3, (1991), and conceded that women were underrepresented when mná na hEireann set up a hue and cry. He raised the funds himself so that they could write a further two volumes. Whelan contends that this endeavour “cleared the intellectual space for the *Peace Process*”.

So are we asked to believe that the 30 years of war could have been avoided if the gunmen had only waited for their release from the brutal experience of dispossession for the efforts of the poets and the writers flitting from Belfast, Dublin, Oxford, Cambridge, and the US?

In the meantime, Deane went on to edit a six-volume edition of Joyce’s works for the Penguin Twentieth-Century Classics series:

“a deliberate project to reclaim Joyce as an Irish writer. Deane enjoyed an international reputation: Edward Said, for example, widely regarded as the founder of post-colonialism, invited him to give the keynote lecture at a conference celebrating Said’s career at his own Columbia University” (Is Professor Whelan not familiar with Fanon *et al?*).

But Whelan is right when he says of the northern nationalists, post-partition, that:

”A striking feature of the post-partition generation of Northern Catholics was their silence: they felt cowed and alone, abandoned by both the British and the Irish states, isolated in a new Protestant state where they did not wish to be and in which they were treated as suspect aliens. They became a silent, watchful, betrayed generation, ‘the bastard children of the Republic’ in their leader Eddie MacAteer’s striking phrase.”

Deane’s autobiographical novel, ‘*Reading in the Dark*’ is, according to Whelan:

“a brilliant ‘Troubles’ novel, all the more so because Deane showed that to understand the outbreak in the 1960s you

had to have an intimate understanding of the legacy of partition”.

But, in 2021, what has been the response to partition by our Irish *ersatz* Government?

And one could also ask the same of the Irish Catholic Church, in the person of Archbishop Eamon Martin, Archbishop of the See of Armagh and Primate of All-Ireland. The Head of the Church in the other island had Her daughter, Princess Ann, the Princess Royal, “touring the Siege Museum and unveiling a stone to mark the centenary of the foundation of Northern Ireland”. QED.

Two further points that I wish to clear up. Some readers may notice that my Bowen series has been interrupted, but that is due to this month’s early printing – it will be back in the next issue of the *Irish Political Review*.

The other point that I would like to make is that, in Deane’s ‘*A Short History of Irish Literature*’ (1986), he himself had no trouble erasing one of Ireland’s greatest novelists, Canon Sheehan, by stating that his work represented a ‘Devotional Revolution’. with all its—

“recrudescence of this narrow, triumphalist Catholicism which promoted the popularity of novels like those of Canon Sheehan (1852-1913), particularly ‘My New Curate’ (1900) while it also contributed to the extinction, as far as reputation was concerned, of Gerald O’Donovan’s novels about the death of liberal Catholicism...”

And, of course, no mention is made of Brendan Clifford’s brilliant pamphlet on this “*Turbulent Priest – Canon Sheehan*”. Canon Sheehan was a novelist of international stature. Leo Tolstoy said of him that he was the greatest novelist of his day.

Julianne Herlihy ©

Canon Sheehan: A Turbulent Priest
by B. Clifford.
€6, £5 postfree
in Ireland and Britain.

You can buy books and pamphlets from:

<https://www.athol-books-sales.org>

Collins And The ‘Treaty’

The negotiations which led to what is called “*the Treaty*” had to do with two things: Partition and the Crown. The *Agreement* that was signed by Griffith and Collins included recognition of Partition and the Crown.

Only one of them was negotiable to some extent: the Crown. But Collins, after being set up under the ‘Treaty’ with a Provisional Government and a new Army, prioritised the issue on which no gains could be made: Partition.

In May 1922 he invaded the North with the anti-Treaty IRA and brought the Northern IRA out in an insurrection. He seems to have believed that he had been given permission by his British colleagues in the ‘Treaty’ negotiations to do this. He had no grounds for that belief except an understanding which he thought he had established with Lord Birkenhead on the basis of mutual sympathy. He thought that the Northern Ireland Government was something that Whitehall would be glad to see whittled away.

He found, when he acted on his ‘understanding’ with Birkenhead, that it had been a gross misunderstanding; and that Northern Ireland was in no sense a State, but it was a particular political arrangement of the British State in the Six Counties. He found that he could not make war on the Northern Ireland Government as a distinct entity. He had some success in conflict with local Ulster Unionist forces, but then at Pettigo he came up against the military force of the State—the same State that had set him up as the Provisional Government in the 26 Counties—and he had to retreat: leaving the Northern Republicans, whom he had brought out into the open, to be dealt with by the Northern Ireland Government with its A-Specials, B-Specials, and C-Specials, along with its local police force, the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

The RUC was not the 6 County region of the RIC. It was a different kind of police force than the RIC. The RIC was a state police force, directed by the Government of the UK State, and not subject to Local Government authority. It was relatively impartial in the policing of local conflicts. But the RUC was a local police force run by the Northern Ireland Government. It was therefore the police force of the ruling community, the Protestant community. In the Six Counties—excluded from Brit-

ish politics—the only possible form of politics was the conflict of the Protestant and Catholic communities. And a police force drawn from that conflict, and having the function of defending the dominant community as the Government, could in practice only be Protestant.

Collins could possibly have defeated the local forces of the devolved Government in the North in 1922. He could certainly have done so in areas which were predominantly Catholic. I doubt that, even if the forces of the State did not intervene, he would have made much headway in Protestant majority areas. But the State did intervene, and it held the Border set by the 1920 British Act which set up Northern Ireland.

By signing the ‘Treaty’, Collins recognised the 6 Counties as part of the British state, whether he knew it or not. I assume that, in fact, because of his peculiar relationship with Birkenhead, he did not know it. He thought that, along with signing the Treaty, he had been given informal authority to over-ride it in this respect.

A MEETING OF MINDS?

Tim Pat Coogan, whom I first came across as the Treatyite Editor on the Anti-Treaty *Irish Press*, dedicated much of his life to presenting Collins to the public of the post-1969 generation. He wrote best-sellers praising Collins and disparaging De Valera. I was very surprised to find that these books were the source from which a whole generation—in Dublin if not throughout the country—got their information of what had happened since 1914.

Here is his account of the Collins/Birkenhead affair:

“Taken together, the English negotiators [of the ‘Treaty’, BC], backed up inside the chamber by two of the most brilliant public servants of the century, Lionel Curtis and Tom Jones, and outside it by the resources of an imperial civil service, presented an obstacle of Himalayan proportions to Irish Republican aspirations.

“Collins established an extraordinary friendship with one of his adversaries during the struggle to surmount that obstacle, courageous, fractious, noble and foredoomed as the attempt was. Apart from his affinity to Collins by virtue of their shared realism, audacity and courage, Birkenhead was in his heyday a great athlete and visitors to his estate were exposed

to a daily routine of golf, riding and tennis. Like Collins... Birkenhead loved women, and social drinking—though he seems to have eschewed the bottle for most of the negotiations—and one could well imagine the pair, had Birkenhead been younger at the time, enthusiastically fighting, and biting, for ‘a bit of ear’. Birkenhead, like Collins, had an ‘X’ factor behind the ruthlessness, the patronising, baiting, put-down demeanour which he carried like a weapon. The factor in both cases was patriotism, a patriotism which so often seems to be the Karma of the Anglo-Irish relationship that one appears as the obverse of the other’s medal: freedom-fighter/terrorist, law-giver/oppressor. Austen Chamberlain afterwards wrote that Birkenhead had managed to ‘enter Michael Collins’ mind, won his sympathy, and secured his confidence. The very fact that to him life was a gallant adventure created a link between him and Michael Collins without which we might never have reached agreement’. It was an extraordinary turn-around for ‘Gallop Smith’, who as a rising lawyer and Tory politician, F.E. Smith, had acted as Carson’s ‘galloper’ in the great anti-Home Rule rallies in Ulster. Whether he had come to his new position through expediency, because it was the way the compass of empire was now set, or for any other reason, Birkenhead’s conversion was so complete that on the Treaty debates on Ireland he became Carson’s principal, and most successful, adversary in the House of Lords” (p236).

“Birkenhead turned to Collins after putting his name to the document and said, ‘I may have signed my political death-warrant tonight’. The younger man replied, ‘I may have signed my actual death-warrant’...” (p276).

What grounds could Collins have had for making that remark? Who was going to shoot him for signing? Coogan does not explain, nor does any one of the many other writers who have noted that reported remark. The fact that he was actually shot seven months later is taken to be sufficient explanation.

What did Birkenhead actually do in the Irish interest to merit this outburst of praise from Coogan? Nothing whatever as far as I can see. And Coogan seems to lose interest in him after introducing him with that purple passage.

It might be that, as Chamberlain suggests, they would not have got Collins to sign the Treaty without the authority of his Government if Birkenhead had not got into his mind and unhinged it—or freed it from its obligations.

Collins signed at 2.30 a m on December 6th. By signing on his authority, in defiance of the instructions of his Government, he usurped the authority of that Government. Perhaps that is what he had in mind when

he said he may have signed his own death warrant. But he wasn’t shot for signing the ‘Treaty’. He returned to Dublin and set up a ‘Provoisional Government’ on British authority.

The delegates negotiating with Whitehall were under instruction from their Government—the elected Government of Dail Eireann—to sign nothing without its approval. The leader of the delegates, Arthur Griffith, reported to the Dail Government on December 3rd that he had got as much from the British as he thought it was possible to get, and he thought it was enough to make a settlement on. But the Government did not agree that enough had been got for a settlement. Griffith agreed to return to London and try to get further concessions. He agreed that signing the British document as it stood would split the country. And he undertook to sign nothing without returning to the Government for approval. But, less than three days later, early in the morning of December 6th, he signed the British document without informing his Government.

Collins said nothing to the point at the Government meeting of December 3rd. Unlike Griffith, he did not say that what the British were offering was good enough.

It seems that, shortly before midnight, in London, on December 5th, he told his fellow delegates that he intended to sign.

It does not seem that Griffith reminded him that they were under instruction by their Government not to sign anything without its explicit authority.

Griffith seems to have forgotten that there was an Irish Government in Ireland, to which he was responsible. Collins is less likely to have forgotten it, as he was a member of both the Dail Government and of a parallel Government maintained in Platonic form by the Irish Republican Brotherhood conspiracy. In fact, he had discussed the British document on December 3rd with the IRB while remaining silent on it at the meeting of the Dail Government.

Collins and Griffith did the same thing by signing the British document without Dail authority at 2.30 in the morning of December 6th, but they did it within different perspectives and in different states of mind.

Collins’ state of mind must have been Napoleonic. He must have known that, as a man of action, with physical power at his command, he was usurping the authority of a Government which he saw as dithering in a moment of crisis, and was confident that he had the contacts for managing the situation and bringing it all back together at the end, at the cost of disrupting it for a while.

But the moment when authoritarian action is taken is also the most dangerous moment. Hence his repartee with Lord Birkenhead at 2.30 am on December 6th.

COLLINS AND LENIN

Collins later insisted that he did not act under the duress of the moment on December 6th, and he was rather contemptuous of Barton, who said that nothing but the duress of the moment had made him sign.

Barton was the last hold-out against signing. It was put to him forcefully that, if he did not sign at once, he would be responsible for making Lloyd George go on a killing spree in Ireland. He was a Protestant gentleman with a large landholding and he did not feel, when the chiefs of the native population were supporting Lloyd George, that he should be the one who stood in the way of their settlement, and subjected the people to “*immediate and terrible war*”. So he signed, under duress, against his Government’s instructions, and made no pretence otherwise.

It seemed to be important to Collins to insist that he had not signed under the stress of the moment (the threat of *immediate and terrible war*) but out of some more general considerations. And that was a bad mistake.

A number of years ago the leader of Fine Gael, Enda Kenny, compared Collins to Lenin in the matter of signing Treaties with a much stronger enemy. Collins signed with Britain in 1921 to get a breathing space as Lenin had signed with Germany at Brest-Litovsk in 1918 to get a breathing space. But Lenin made a virtue of signing under duress—he was a politician of the first order—and extracted advantage from it at every turn, while Collins threw his best card away.

Lenin lost the support of the Socialist Revolutionaries by making peace with Germany and they tried to assassinate him. But he conceded in a way that convinced realists of his determination to make good use of the breathing space he had gained. He said nothing good about the Treaty he signed. Its only saving grace was its necessity in the moment.

HARRY BOLAND

Collins spoiled the ground for himself by denying duress and praising his “*Treaty*” (which, unlike Brest-Litovsk, was not actually a Treaty at all). That stance lacked credibility. Some of his supporters, Mulcahy for example, seemed to see the sense in stressing helplessness in the face of brutal power, and the need to withdraw in the hope of making a better leap in the future. But that was not the Collins way—at least, not in public.

According to Harry Boland—a close friend whom he had expected to be a supporter, he tried to play the thing both ways: the Treaty was both a good deal, which conferred the substance of independence, and was a pause in the struggle for independence which enabled them to strengthen their forces for a resumption of the struggle. And, as for Oaths, they were expedients.

Here is the gist of a statement written by Boland, in early June 1922 I would guess:

“The future of Ireland under the Treaty is a very difficult subject to discuss. I prefer to deal with the immediate present. Ireland under the Treaty is now rent asunder and I cannot see any grounds for hope unless the Treaty-ites explicitly assert in the constitution of the Free State:

- That the nation is one and indivisible
- That all authority in Ireland is derived from the people of Ireland, and
- That the oath of allegiance and the Governor-General must be omitted from the Treaty.

“...But it must be understood that England forced the plenipotentiaries to sign under the threat of ‘immediate and terrible war’. Of all England’s abominable crimes against Ireland this latest is, to my mind, the most revolting.

“There are two shades of political thought represented in those who favour the Articles of Agreement signed in London. One, led by Mr. Arthur Griffith, asserts that the agreement gives Ireland essential liberty and is quite prepared to accept the arrangement in complete satisfaction of Ireland’s claims or, in the words of Mr. Griffith, to ‘march into the British Empire with our heads up’—and settle down... with the hope that some day the ultra-Imperialists of the Six Counties called Ulster will come into the Imperial Free State.

...
“The other group, led by Mr. Michael Collins, claims that the Treaty gives Ireland ‘freedom to achieve freedom’. ‘Get the British out of Ireland, build up the country, and in ten or twenty years Ireland will be in a better position to fight England and so establish the Republic’. This plea has secured many adherents to the Treaty... Indeed, were it not for the fact that Mr. Collins signed them, the Articles of Agreement would have received very short shrift in Dail Eireann.

“The Republican point of view expressed by De Valera and supported by the young men of the Irish Republican Army... is a simple one, based on the fundamental right of the Irish nation

to the undictated control of its own affairs..., prepared to stand on the fundamental rock of right, refusing to give democratic title to the British King in Ireland, and refusing to march into the Empire with heads up as Mr. Griffith invites, or march in with hands up for ten years or more, as Mr. Collins would have it. Of the two policies that of the ‘heads up’ is the more honourable.

“Republicans argue that once the Irish nation sanctions this Treaty and ratifies it in the ballot-box, the honour of the nation is committed, and by doing so Ireland wills her own national death. The sanctity of treaties is invoked against Mr. Collins’ arguments. It is pointed out that entering the Empire gives the lie to all that for which countless generations of Irishmen have contended...

“Now that the army of the Republic has cut itself off from those who would accept the agreement, the future of Ireland under the Treaty is very doubtful. It remains to be seen whether Messrs. Collins and Griffith will persevere in their efforts to force the Free State against the Irish Republican Army opposition. If they so persist, then I look for serious trouble in Ireland. If, on the other hand, they tell the British that they cannot ‘deliver the goods’, I feel sure that a just peace can be negotiated between England and Ireland. Of one thing I am certain: this so-called Treaty will not bring peace to Ireland... In the words of Franklin, ‘Those who would give up essential liberty to purchase a life-safety deserve neither safety nor liberty’...”

Collins and Griffith did “*persevere in their efforts to force the Free State against IRA opposition*”. Griffith, who was not the one who would have the task of doing it, had long been eager for it. Collins, who would have to do the dirty work, had restrained Griffith, and had even obliged him to accept a Treatyite/Anti-Treatyite Coalition in the Election. And Collins had formulated a Free State Constitution which approximated to the conditions set out by Boland.

But then it turned out that the forming of a Constitution for the Free State was not Free State business at all. It was British business. Collins was called to Whitehall and told the facts of life about the Treaty. Here is Coogan’s crisp account of the encounter:

“Days of frequently emotional exchange followed. At one meeting Collins burst out at Lloyd George that during the Anglo-Irish war, the British had released Childers ‘after half an hour because he was an Englishman’, whereas had he fallen into English hands he would have

been shot. The Prime Minister replied evenly that ‘they would indeed have shot him’. Lionel Curtis was present at this meeting and after it he and Lloyd George discussed Collins. Lloyd George said that ‘Collins was just a wild animal, a mustang’. Curtis compared negotiating with Collins to ‘trying to write on water’. Lloyd George replied, ‘Shallow and agitated water’.

...
“One can say with certainty that few issues in the long, stormy history of Anglo-Irish relations produced such blunt speaking in Downing St., or so little positive result, as did Michael Collins’ Constitution” (*Michael Collins*, p326-7).

BIRKENHEAD

Collins found that he was a caged animal and he went wild. And where was his kindred spirit at this moment of crisis for him? Birkenhead had entered his mind and led him into the cage, but he is not recorded as being present when Collins came to see what had been done with him by those admirable people who had given him his Treaty.

Birkenhead (a.k.a. F.E. Smith) was bred to Orange politics in Liverpool, but in British terms he was not a “*reactionary*” on Irish affairs. He was an outstandingly successful lawyer in private practice and was able to buy an aristocratic façade and fund an extravagant lifestyle out of earnings. He gained a toehold on the margin of high politics, and seems as Lord Chancellor to have made some reforms of a legal system which, because of its free-wheeling character, is always in need of reform. But his chief contribution to statecraft does seem to be the influence he exerted on Collins during the ‘Treaty’ negotiations. It is what he is remembered for in that most authoritative account of British history, the first edition of the *Dictionary Of National Biography*:

“Birkenhead’s place as one of the statesmen of the third Coalition government must stand or fall... by his attitude to the Irish question. So long as the only course open to the government seemed to be that of resistance to a criminal conspiracy, Birkenhead was for the maintenance of the struggle. So late as 21 June, he delivered in the House of Lords a speech which gave no indication of any intent to seek peace. But negotiations had already begun... On 10 August Birkenhead spoke in the House advocating a settlement by consent... He desired to save the effusion of English blood and the waste of English treasure in Southern Ireland,

provided only that he could secure the independence of Ulster... As soon as he met the Irish negotiators he became convinced of their sincerity... He acquitted a respect which amounted almost to affection for Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins and it was in the spirit not of one who had been defeated but of a statesman bent on securing a long-desired aim that he supported the proposals of the government to give effect to the Irish Treaty..."

Birkenhead presented to Collins a facet of the multi-faceted Imperial State which appealed to him and persuaded him to sign on the dotted line—and then apparently left him to sink or swim in the reality of things. That was his service to his State. He warded off a re-appearance in Whitehall of the resourceful and unimpressible De Valera—that actual *Ulysses* of the Irish story.

Pacing around in his cage in mid-June 1922, Collins had to make a decision under duress—the thing he denied doing on December 6th. He had made a political arrangement with the Anti-Treatyites, against Griffiths' wishes, to contest the Election on an agreed platform, in which the Treaty did not figure, and to form a Coalition Government with them in the new Dail. Whitehall condemned the Election agreement as undemocratic—imagine the brazenness of such a judgement made by an Imperial Power—and it threw out the Constitution Collins had drawn up for the Free State and gave him another one.

Of course Collins was not in actual confinement. He was a free man in everything but his own mind. His position was stronger than De Valera's had been in December. He was the strong man in a Government set up by Whitehall. He had his own Army, given to him by Whitehall, and the IRA was still in being, was bigger and better armed, and was collaborating with him in the North.

If he had stood by his Constitution and his Election Agreement, what could Whitehall have done about it? Declared war on the instrument which it had itself chosen to govern Southern Ireland?

'CIVIL WAR' BY MISCALCULATION?

Collins had a decision to make. And he had choices. He could join the Empire which had defeated him and given it a fresh source of energy—the Afrikaaner Smuts was there to show him the way. Or he could stand by the Dominion/Republic of his Constitution, hold Birkenhead to his lightly given promises, and given Lloyd George a headache.

But he did not make the decision at that point. He dithered. He did not come home and revoke the Election Pact. He just made a low-level equivocal speech—the kind of nod that is as good as a wink to a blind horse—leaving the Election a confused affair.

But Churchill had warned him:

"You will find that we are just as tenacious on essential points—the Crown, the British Commonwealth, No Republic—as de Valera and Rory O'Connor, and we intend to fight for our points" (quoted from Coogan, p326).

When Field Marshal Wilson, strong man of the Northern Ireland Government, was shot in London by two British ex-Servicemen on 22nd June 1920, Whitehall said the Anti-Treatyites were responsible, and ordered its Army, which was still in Dublin to act against the Anti-Treaty headquarters in the Four Courts. But the General on the spot—Macready—delayed. He did not believe the Four Courts Republicans were responsible for killing Wilson. (Who did believe it!)

During the British delay Collins agreed to act against the Four Courts and that started the 'Civil War'. But it could hardly be said that he decided to make war on the IRA.

Collins was badly informed about the IRA, although usually described as being head of it. His dimension of the War of Independence was Counter-Intelligence, assassination of enemy agents, and supplies. He seems to have had little sense of the Republicanism of the country, which sprang up from the world of Canon Sheehan's *Graves At Kilmorna*. And Irish society was predominantly country society in those times.

He struck at the Four Courts, apparently believing that this would keep Whitehall happy while maintaining the *status quo* with the territorial IRA—and found himself engaged in a war of conquest of Munster.

He had, unintentionally, decided in effect to make war on the IRA, rather than stand by his Constitution and his election agreement in the face of Lloyd George's threats.

If he was relying on the Irish Republican Brotherhood, then the IRB failed him—possibly because of the democratising influence exerted on it by De Valera.

Collins wrote to his friend, Harry Boland, former President of the IRB Supreme Council:

"Harry—it has come to this! Of all things it has come to this.

"It is in my power to arrest you and destroy you. This I cannot do. If you will think over the influence which has dominated you it should change your mind.

"You are walking under false colours. If no words of mine will change your attitude then you are beyond all hope—my hope".

This letter, dated July 28th, is quoted by Coogan (p387) from Rex Taylor's 1961 biography. Coogan comments that—"*Boland seems to have taken Collins' appeal to him as some kind of implied threat*". What else could it have been? It was a combination of threat and promise. Boland was lost if he did not shake off the evil influence under which he had fallen, but Collins could save him!

The entry on Boland in the *Dictionary Of Irish Biography* (a poor imitation of the *British Dictionary Of National Biography*, produced for Ireland by Cambridge University and the Royal Irish Academy) is by David Fitzpatrick, an Australian who as a Professor at Trinity College supervised the rubbishing of Irish history. He says that Boland's—

"chief partner in both republican and sexual politics was Collins, who usually excelled Boland in both pursuits and thus gained an ascendancy that turned sour only in 1921..."

Fitzpatrick then makes this curious remark: "*At the outbreak of the civil war (28 June 1922), for the first time he took up arms against the government*"—that is, Collins' Government, which had launched 'civil war' for the purpose of pre-empting a possible British intervention.

Boland was captured by Collins' forces on July 31st, three days after Collins wrote to him that, if he did not free himself from De Valera's evil influence, he was lost. He died of his wounds in St. Vincent's Hospital on August 1st, after being held for a while in Portobello Barracks.

Coogan quotes a letter from Collins to his Director of Intelligence on July 31st asking about Boland's condition, and saying "*There will not be a guard placed over him but we want to take some precaution to prevent escapes*"

Professor Fitzpatrick published a biography of Boland. It did not come my way, and I did not go in search of it because I knew from his writing on Northern Ireland that he played fast and loose with historical fact, and I had seen the damaging effect of his perverse academic regime on some of his students.

The late Manus O’Riordan reviewed the biography at length and said it provided evidence that Collins had got rid of Boland. Some exchanges followed between Manus and Fitzpatrick which might be looked at in a later issue. Manus, in my experience, was very careful with facts.

HAYDEN TALBOT

The statement by Boland on the possibilities of the Treaty, which I quoted above, is from *Michael Collins’ Own Story. Told To Hayden Talbot*. This was published by Hutchinsons of London in 1923. It was one of the first books about Collins that I read.

Talbot was an American newspaper correspondent who managed to strike up an acquaintance with Collins at the end of 1921. He put it to Collins that his story needed to be told to the world. Collins was too busy to write it himself but agreed to find time now and then to tell it to Talbot, and he recommended others, including Eoin MacNeill and Hannah Sheehy Skeffington, to co-operate with Talbot.

The final chapter, “*What The Treaty Means—A Symposium*”, is made up of contributions from Sean McEoin, Cathal Brugha, Eoin MacNeill, Sean McEntee, Ernest Blythe, Countess Markiewics, Liam de Roiste, W.F.P. Stockley, William Sears, H.J. Boland, Dan MacCarthy, Joseph MacDonough, P.J. Hogan, Sir Maruice Dockrell, Archbishop Gilmartin, Richard Croker, Erskine Childers, Sean Milroy, Mary MacSwiney, J.J. Walsh, Sean Etchingham and Kevin O’Higgins.

But there is an *Addendum* explaining that, when some of the chapters were published in a London newspaper, the work was denounced as a forgery by General Pierce Beasley, Chief of the Free State Censorship Bureau, who said that the powers of international law would be used to prevent publication as a book. Talbot said he had ample documentary proof that Collins collaborated with him, and this must have convinced the publisher, as the book was published.

Beyond this, Talbot said that Collins had given the handling of him to Sean McGarry:

“Now, General Pierce Beasley, you need look no further. Although I am not sure of McGarry’s rank, I think he must be less than a general. As his superior officer call him before you and let him tell you what I tell you—that you are not telling the truth! Michael Collins is dead, but Sean McGarry is alive, and from what I saw of him and from what Collins told me about him I am willing to leave the matter to McGarry. Collins could not have been so fond of him if he were not both courageous and honest” (p253).

I did not try to follow up on this at the time. I was preoccupied with the North and not particularly interested in Collins or the Civil War. I knew that Beasley wrote his own book about Collins, in two volumes. I glanced through it but it made little impression on me. I expected that sooner or later I would come across Beasley’s dispute with Talbot, but I never did. I just left it with a question mark over it. But now I notice that Coogan lists it in his Bibliography, though he does not mention it in his text, except for using it as a reference somewhere.

Sean McGarry was an IRB member of very long standing. He was associated with Hobson and McCullough and later with Tom Clarke and Sean McDiarmada. He was a member of the Supreme Council, and was President at one moment. He was an electrician by trade. He was with Collins on the Treaty. His shop was destroyed after the Immaculate Conception murders of Mellows, O’Connor etc. by the Free State Government. In 1924, after the ‘Mutiny of the Major Generals’, he resigned from the Treaty Party (Cuman na nGaedheal) along with a number of others who saw that the strategy by which Collins got support for his Treaty had been rejected by the Cosgrave Government.

That group also resigned their seats in the Free State Dail and applied their energies to developments in civil society. Their outstanding achievement was the world-famous Irish Sweepstake.

It is evident that the Cosgrave Government sought to monopolise the dead Collins as an icon while rejecting his purposes. And I see no reason not to treat the book on which he collaborated with Hayden Talbot as his last will and testament.

Brendan Clifford

Manus O’Riordan

**In Appreciation
from page 30**

General. We knew from experience that the RUC Special Branch had their friendly and unfriendly elements. Whether this was by design we didn’t know. One might advise us to go to Australia out of the way, for Northern Ireland was too small for our sophisticated political views. (insult and praise in the same breath) Another might say you will need us even more when you get your communist country. The overt anti-communist branch-man was liable to be fuming with his hands moving agitatedly as if he wanted to punch you or strangle you, as he whispered loudly about us needing to go to Russia. At least it wasn’t Australia all the time. The same person would also try to recruit us as informers by inviting us to Musgrave Barracks, a sinister-looking place on the edge of Queens Bridge. In the forecourt of the barracks, behind the wall, was a Bren-gun carrier with a leather helmeted RUC crew ready for action. I know this fact because I passed this barracks to and from the shipyard every day, where I worked, and sometimes the steel gates were ajar as the yard was being swept clean.

We were aware that Sydney Silverman, a Labour London MP, was concerned about the human and civil rights of the left in Northern Ireland. I didn’t know if this also applied to the Northern Catholic even though I socialised with his two Trotskyite sons, when I moved to London in the early 1950s. I was even introduced to their father on one occasion. Looking back now I must have felt I was already doing something for my community by being a communist.

Anyway, to mention the name of Sydney Silverman and say you’ll contact him, if you don’t stop trying to recruit me as an informer, was to have the branch-man foaming at the mouth. His mantra in reply was: *One day you’ll be crawling up that road on your hands and knees with the blood pouring out of you.*

There were no more attempts at recruiting us as informers. Except for the 16-year-old girl we stayed in the YWL and went on to become members of the CPNI. Today, those of our age, back then, would still be at school.

My father was especially interested in Pastor Niemoller’s poem for a good reason, I was to learn a few years later. One of his best friends, when he lived in New York (1923-1930) was German, aged 23, his own age, he was a carpenter, like him, and was also a communist, like him. He came from Dusseldorf. In 1930 he was going home. My father was also going to return to Belfast in the same year. There was no hope left in New

continued on page 29, Column 3

Popular Fiction!

I didn't notice this novel when it was published back in 2018. It only came within my vision when the author was lambasted in the UK media for causing her latest novel in 2021, *Beautiful World, Where Are You*, not to be translated into Hebrew by an Israeli publishing house. She had let them translate *Normal People*, though the novel plainly shows her support for the Palestinian cause (but only through less than a dozen words). Later she made a public statement about her support for the boycotting of Israel products through the Palestinian-led BDS (Boycott, Divestment Sanctions) organisation.

In the-less-than-a-dozen words she has her two main characters in the novel demonstrate in a Dublin rally, to condemn what I took to be the 2018 invasion of Gaza, by the Israeli Army, in which over a 1,000 Palestinians were killed. Her brief mention of this anti-Gaza operation can easily be skipped over or ignored because of it is not drawn out. Also mentioned, in a word or two, is Cuba and James Connolly, the executed 1916 Easter Rising leader. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions also gets a mention, as does Sinn Féin—all as mere words that scarcely expanded into sentences. Fine Gael gets a short-sentence mention as a Franco-type party.

A local communist stands in the general elections and loses to SF and FG. A character is briefly mentioned as being a holocaust-denier, a fascist. His father is in the Irish Government and was one of a few responsible for a devastating economic decline. A half-built private estate in Carricklea, called the ghost estate, lies rotting as a result.

Thankfully Northern Ireland isn't mentioned: 'thankfully', because, I'm tired of reading anti-Republican propaganda from a nation founded on Republicanism and calling itself the Irish Republic. But I don't know her opinions on the Northern enclave.

I have been reading her new novel, *Beautiful World, Where Are You?* and 'Bloody Sunday' is mentioned in two words (thankfully for small mercies!). I can't comment any further on this as I haven't read all the novel yet. The internal world of her characters so swamps the outside world, the international readership doesn't have to wonder what all the minuteness of historical names, of political parties

of nations is about. Dublin is reduced to a few streets, Carricklea has a main street called Main Street, a night club, a soccer club, a pub and two houses belonging to the families of Connell and Marianne, the principle characters in the novel.

The title of her new novel, she acknowledges, is taken from a Friedrich Schiller poem *Die Gotter Griechenlandes* (the Gods of Greece), first published in 1788. She says that, in the original German, the phrase reads: *Schöne Welt, wo bist du!*—*Beautiful World Where Are You?* Franz Schubert set a fragment of the poem to music in 1819. It was also the title of the 2018 Liverpool Biennial, which she visited during the Liverpool Literary Festival in October of that year.

Just when you think this is a serious novelist fighting to get out from under the enormous paper mountain of a bestseller, we have another quotation, from her, put in just after the flyleaves of *Beautiful World*:

"When I write something I usually think it is very important and that I am a very fine writer. I think this happens to everyone. But there is one corner of my mind in which I know very well what I am, which is a small, very small writer. I swear I know it. But that doesn't matter much to me." Natalia Ginzburg, *My Vocation*.

Connell and Marianne are the two main protagonists in *Normal People*. They are teenagers, students in high school. Place names like Dublin and Sligo are mentioned briefly, as is the small town of Carricklea on the west coast, which barely exists. Connell is of a one-parent family, working-class. His mother works as a cleaner for Marianne's middle-class family. Her father is dead. Connell also is fatherless, his birth was through a quick relationship, or no relationship at all. His mother is very well-adjusted and her past doesn't bother her. Both families are matriarchal. Marianne's family is dysfunctional, while Connell, the only son, gets along very well with his mother whom he calls by her first name.

When the novel opens, many of the students are already indulging in sexual relations and watching as to who is *riding* whom (a word that has survived from my own teenage days in Belfast, while the term in rural County Down was *dolling*). I got

the feeling that the author is saying this is Ireland-and-free and not priest-ridden and sexually-inhibited, as your prejudices might tell you.

Ireland, North and South, has always had its Sally Rooney country. WW2 in the North seemed to go mad sexually. Of course during that time it was all very secretive. Post-War, I was aware that the teenage apprentices working in the Belfast shipyard were taking tents into the countryside in order to meet girls and have somewhere to *entertain* them.. Some converted old lifeboats into motor-boats, in order to sneak into ports around the North, and even to take the short trip across the Irish Sea to Scotland, to meet the girls and have somewhere to take them. Meanwhile others hit the Butlin Holiday Camps in England.

Film matinees on the Catholic Falls Road were meeting places for 14 year olds up to their tricks. I was once taken, as a fourteen year old by another fourteen year old to a cinema in that area, which was full of that age group. There I was instructed by my companion to kiss the girl on either side of me. I wasn't quite ready for this horn-of-plenty and left to jeers. Permanently open air-raid shelters in Belfast was the venue for affairs. The countryside had its field and haylofts. Girls who 'did it' in the nice Presbyterian areas of County Down were known as *Good Things*.

You were aware of birth control as young as 11 years old. You couldn't miss the idea of it, with condoms caught in the hedgerows from the night before. My sister at 10 years old picked one up, thinking it was a balloon, and was about to blow on it, when I knocked it out of her hand. I couldn't tell her why I did that. But you would act the innocent with parents, who were still talking about storks, and gooseberry bushes where babies might be found.

The old WW2 song sung by developing teens, in the countryside, mainly taunting girls, was *Roll Me Over*. The boys of a similar age were a little more undeveloped. This is said to have come from England though we in NI, at the time, felt it was ours because of its rural setting.

Now, this is number one,
And the fun has just begun,
Roll me over, lay me down,
And do it again.

(Chorus)
Roll me over in the clover,
Roll me over lay me down,
and do it again.

Now, this is number two,
And he's got me in a stew,

Roll me over, lay me down,
And do it again.

(Chorus)

Now, this is number three,
And his hand is on my knee,
Roll me over, lay me down,
And do it again.

(Chorus)

Now, this is number four,
And he's got me on the floor,
Roll me over lay me down,
And do it again.

(Chorus)

Now, this is number five,
And his hand is on my thigh,
Roll me over, lay me down,
And do it again.

(Chorus)

Now, this is number six,
And he's got me in a fix,
Roll me over, ay me down,
And do it again.

(Chorus)

Now, this is number seven,
And it's like being in heaven,
Roll me over, lay me down,
And do it again.

(Chorus)

Now this is number eight,
And the doctor's at the gate,
Roll me over, lay me down,
And do it again.

(Chorus)

Now, this is number nine,
And the twins are doing fine,
Roll me over, lay me down,
And do it again.

(Chorus)

Now, this is number ten,
And he's started all once again,
Roll me over, lay me down,
And do it again.

(Chorus)

Sally Rooney's novel, *Normal People*, could be set in Essex, or any part of South-East England, or in any major city in the world. We know it's Ireland, but it goes easy on the Irish, the dialogue; the game played is soccer, and history is bottled up in the odd word or two, like the mention of James Connolly. There seems some message there for the Irish readership. (I'm a prisoner let me out of here?)

Connell and Marianne have an on-off sexual/friendship relationship. Occasionally they can be seen with different people, but this is temporary and they return to one another, and then it breaks up again. The dialogue hits the romantic novel level at times. There are naturally female interests, things that male authors could miss: like how a female is dressed, what state her hair is in, what make-up does she put on, or doesn't ever put on. There is a woman's touch about some things that men might find boring, like kitchen

details and mentions of glasses, of cooking utensils, of curtains—all no doubt very essential things in everyday living. And the Irish language doesn't exist. The Mass is something they don't attend except for funerals or commemorations for the dead of the families. They describe themselves as *just not Mass people*.

The sex scenes, which might give the novel it aphrodisiacal effect for a worldwide readership I read through patiently. Being the best part of a century in age now, I knew she had missed a few important things in that area. It's odd now, looking back on how we as teenagers just had to read the 1944 novel *Forever Amber*, (described as a book that should be banned). It was written by Kathleen Winsor [sic], about 17th Century England in which an orphan—Amber St Clare—sleeps her way to the top, right into the bed of Charles II.

None of the sex scenes (mostly implied) came anywhere near today's *Normal People*. *Forever Amber* we would cackle, in our breaking voices, about what it was implying. Don't we know all about sex and does it have to be described continually? Well, who knows? for some people it does, and it continues to sell a lot of books. In the more serious Sunday papers you will get book reviews about what is felt to be an important book. Away down the page to one side you can find a brief review of a book by a female author about her most intimate parts and her story about men. You have never heard of the author, but if you research her you'll find she's selling ten times as many books as the so-called more important author on the same page.

Usually as an author you don't want to be describing sex scenes because someone you were with, or married to might recognise they are being written about. Sex is something very private. If you continue to write sex scenes throughout a novel then it's going to become monotonous for some people, for some people like me.

It was a relief when chapter after chapter missed out on it altogether, and pretty awful when it reappeared near the end of this novel. By this time I had had enough of it. The repetition of it made it commonplace, even monotonous and mechanical. Oddly for the two main characters it was being treated with less passion. Comments by Marianne in a casual voice like: "*That was nice*" could have been about a an avocado sandwich.

Marianne, in changing partners, takes on sexual sado-masochistic tendencies. She and Connell are now at Trinity with all its difficulties of class bias for Connell.

It's pure hell student days for him, trying to earn money so as he can continue his English studies. At first, he couldn't make up his mind what to study. English he chooses while at the same time saying he'll never find a job when he graduates. Marianne is studying politics and various social subjects. She and Connell are successful in their studies, though it doesn't lighten their moods. They are both clever enough to get scholarships, which eases Connell's financial worries. Marianne never needed the money.

Marianne, is now off to Sweden for a while, in some exchange with Trinity. It's hard to know what she's studying there, for relationships with men seem to be top of her agenda. She meets a Swede, a hippy-type photographer, and visits his down-at-heel studio for sex. Sweden is smaller and of less importance than even Carricklea. How she met this weirdo isn't mentioned. He treats her with total disdain, which the author says is what she wants. This develops towards exposing her naked body for his camera, and the whole thing gets worse with his practice of bondage. You get the feeling that, if this continues, he's going to end up killing her!

In fact the whole novel is a cliff-hanger as you wonder if she and Connell will ever get together again and, when they do, when will they break-up again. It's continual anxiety for the reader, turning the pages hoping for a peaceful resolution.

Both Marianne and Connell are now moving out of their lighter, though anxious, teenage days and descending into having balance of minds problems. Quite a bit of drinking has been going with both of them. There is no mention of cannabis smoking and only the odd line of cocaine is taken at parties.

A mutual friend of theirs from Carricklea, and at Trinity, has been found dead in a river. It was suicide. Both Marianne and Connell are severely disturbed by this incident. Connell starts to go through a breakdown himself, and is seeing a counsellor at Trinity. It is mostly box ticking to try and estimate how he is feeling.

Do you feel like killing yourself?

A: Some of the time?

B: All the time?

And so on, each question making him feel even more ill. After that it's medication time.

Marianne has broken away, with some relief for the readership, I would imagine, from the photographer in Sweden with the author's words:

"Could he really do the gruesome things he does to her, and believe at the same

time that he's acting out of love? Is the world such an evil place, that love should be indistinguishable from the basest and most abusive forms of violence?"

Of course Marianne isn't his prisoner. She sees him voluntarily and only breaks off the relationship when she becomes frightened of what might come next.

She gets out of his studio alive, and with all her images deleted from his camera.

After that she comes to visit Carricklea, from Sweden, for the funeral of the dead student.

Then she's back with Connell and it's finally decided they do have love for another.

On the romantic novel and its rise in readership since the Covid pandemic an American commentator has this to say:

"From talking to readers and fellow booksellers, I believe that romance has experienced a rise in leadership during the last year and a half because people need escapism and the guarantee of a happy ending, a story where, no matter the obstacles, they could be safe in the knowledge that everything was going to work out in the end" (*The Romance Novel Sales Boom Continues*, by Rachel King, writing in *Fortune* magazine).

However, this novel can't be in this genre because, just when things seem to have settled down between them and they are again living together, Connell is offered a creative writing programme at a New York University. He hadn't told her that he had applied for it.

At Trinity he had begun to have short stories published in the University's literary magazine. With this American opportunity, he might never come back to her, or he might come back and be utterly changed. Nevertheless, she encourages him to go ahead with it. He decides to accept the offer.

I felt that things are left hanging, seemingly without resolution, throughout the entire novel. That leads to not much joy for these young people, and creates a lot of anxiety for the future. Maybe that's really what the future holds! The author did say it again—so briefly, that it could easily be missed—that it is a world of oligarchy in which the poor and innocent are murdered. Somewhere in the novel the single word *capitalist* appears—but there is not enough thinking to disturb the bedroom-scenes! I am therefore surprised at Sally Rooney's encouragement of creative writing courses in US, which surely leads to navel-gazing, to block out the real world! She herself has done such a course in the US.

The style of writing is very much in the present tense, even when looking slightly back. But there is so little looking back

that a history hasn't been able to form properly. Could it all be about a reject-generation, restless and rootless, bereft of culture, on a planet where everything is becoming much the same?

In order to get a full picture of the author I finished her latest novel, *Beautiful World Where Are You?*, published by Faber, London, September, 2021.

There are four main protagonists: Alice a novelist; Felix a warehouse worker; Eileen, whom Alice knew when they were both students at Trinity and who works for a non-profit literary magazine; and Simon, who studied philosophy at Oxford University, and who now works at Leinster House for what is described as a left-wing parliamentary group. Simon is a practising Catholic, and therefore though to be weird, as if he was the only Catholic left in Ireland.

I mentioned the 1944 novel, *Forever Amber*, which, in that decade was read furtively by young teenage boys, in search for erotic bits—but first having to plough boringly through the more serious side of the novel to reach them. In *Beautiful World* it was the opposite. I had to plough through badly written, sexless sex romps, in a fit-all mode, in order to read her more serious comments on life and relationships.

After reading her comments on the Bronze Age Collapse—in which writing methods may or may not have disintegrated—it was back to the bedroom for some more open meat displays and beef injections. Could I survive to reach the last page, page 337? If people are reading her work for the sexual side of things, then there must be a lot of innocent or pathetic people out there, for the sex scenes are pretty crude in description, a sort of rough foreplay.

*

Alice says civilisation died when the Soviet Union ended, that our version of civilisation will also collapse eventually. The thought of the demolition of the Berlin Wall causes her pain. She claims that the ideas of Communism is becoming a trendy subject with people on her level because at the moment there is nothing to cling on to. That's why it's impossible to write a classical-type European/American contemporary novel. She says the old values were the best, but she doesn't tell us what those old values were.

The location shifts between Dublin and a small town on the west coast, most likely Mayo and most likely called Carricklea, the same location as in her other novel *Normal People*. In Carricklea, where the heroine has moved into an old manse, she

meets Felix, a warehouse worker at a local industrial estate, through the dating app *Tinder*. 'Bloody Sunday' is mentioned when a British politician denies in a hostile manner the allegation that it was premeditated. That subject is never developed. The couple listen to the *BBC Newsnight*. She mentions her anger with herself when she couldn't answer the questions in the *BBC University Challenge*. (No RTE in Carricklea?)

Her world and the world of Carricklea is taken up with WhatsApp, more *Tinder* dating, and social media timelines. It could be anywhere in the world—but mostly it's aimed at Britain/USA where her main readership is.

Reading through what the US media were saying about her work, in papers like *The New York Times*, you could see that they weren't bothered by what she acclaimed as her left-wing views. The heavy-weight critical Columns were saying words like *posturing* and *shallow leftism*. While Faber & Faber is still promoting her, the publisher would take its cue from that. Certainly her readership is stepping over the ideological puddles in order to get to her bedroom for some synthetic fast-sex, as in fast-food.

Alice takes Felix to Rome, when he has a few days off from the warehouse, and pays for everything. She has interviews and book-signing. She's doing this while Felix roams around the city with his earphones on, listening to music and checking his mobile for messages every few minutes. The Coliseum doesn't impress them, just a ghostly old ruin in the moonlight.

The declare themselves to be bisexual but there is no practice of this nor any evidence. I think the sexual identity crisis hadn't yet developed sufficiently enough in London for her to write about it, but being bi-sexual smudged the sexual identity in the meanwhile. Dublin is described as a city of small flats with rapacious landlords taking fifty percent of a person's wage. That sounds possible. She says she doesn't mention personal beauty as that can mean you are into cosmetics. You wonder what Trinity did for them, or even Oxford University, in the case of Simon. But then again, in looking at the British media scene, you can have two Cambridge University graduates running a half-brain TV game and getting overpaid for it. They won't revolutionise the mass, and as a couple of safe-hands they will continue to shovel shite to the masses.

Her characters have gone from drifting teenagers, as in *Normal People*, to drifting thirty plus adults, still rootless, as in her last

novel, balking at marrying, and not having children. They still casually go from one relationship to another without emotional distress. Even Felix, the warehouse man, is at it, so killing emotions is classless. They travel a lot around Europe,. To show that they are more than Irish? But then who doesn't, with bargain airfares?

She looks at the idea of a god, and we are subject to a bit of preaching and the possibility she'll find some comfort in finding one. Jesus she admires, but only as a man. The woman, a sinner, who washed and dries his feet with her hair, she wonders what sins she committed. There is some talk of Catholic guilt, as if Catholics are the only humans who have guilt. There is some attempt to bring in Irish identity at a party in Carricklea, when such songs as *Come On Ye Black and Tans*, *She Moved Through the Fair*, and *Carrickfergus* are sung. *The Fields of Athenry* is proposed but not sung. She has the thought that celebrity culture has replaced religion. Mayo GAA is mentioned but, again, no enlargement of what one of her characters has to say about it.

There is the idea of the re-distribution of the world's resources, but again no full explanation of how this might happen. Alice's friend, Eileen, is reading *The Brothers Karamazov* but is described as *The Karamazov Brothers*, as if they're two Russian builders! Maybe, to placate her US readership, and their sensitivity about toilets/lavatories, she calls them *bathrooms* in the US style of description. Someone goes to the bathroom in a nightclub or in a railway station! The US word *gotten* is used a few times instead of plain got. The War of Independence—the IRA fight for freedom—suddenly appears on one page. But don't worry, the bedroom is waiting. Cinema is a family-friendly nightmare porn, funded by car companies and the US Department of Defence. She says contemporary novels, except for a few, are irrelevant. Visual art is merely a commodity market for oligarchs. But don't worry, that bedroom door is opening again. Everyone smokes cigarettes, that must prove something. And there is the odd joint, while discussing micro-plastics in our drinking water, cancerous Teflon chemicals. Did I hear the bedroom door creak again? George Melly, the late English jazz singer once said as his sex-drive was waning:

Thank God for that. It was like being chained to a madman. Or to a mad woman?

The main character Alice, a novelist, has had a breakdown, in the past,

Roger Casement

Letter send to *Irish Times* but not published

Finn Redmond sees the recently installed statue of Roger Casement at Dun Laoghaire as “a tribute to the complexity of the world” (Casement statue says more about us than him, 7 October 2021).

Why the complexity? Casement was very clear and honest about his motivations. Like many Liberals at the time, he was appalled by the machinations of an inner group in the British Cabinet intent on the entrapment and destruction of Germany. And he actively supported those working for Irish independence from Britain.

He made plain his views in a work published in the US in 1914 before the war had started, *The Crime Against Europe*. Then, during the war and in the same year, he travelled to Germany on behalf of the US wing of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, seeking military support and continuing to make the case for Germany in published writings.

The Casement story only becomes complex if you believe that he was the author of alleged diaries that the British Government placed in the Public Record Office in 1959, forty-three years after his trial.

Thanks to recent work by Paul Hyde—*Anatomy of a Lie*, Wordwell, 2019 and *Case-ment: Decoding False History*, Aubane Historical Society, 2021—the authenticity of the diaries has become increasingly difficult to defend, so much so that those who still believe that Casement was a pederast should either refute Mr Hyde or drop the allegation.

Every viewer of the Casement statue is entitled to their own thoughts on the man it commemorates. A narrative of neutrality/complexity as presented by Finn Redmond, although open to question, is one perspective. That Casement was a diplomat who made a courageous stand for international order and Irish national rights at a difficult time should not be lost sight of.

Dave Alvey

as a result of her success, and has been hospitalised

She mentions twice that she has made a million pounds to Felix, her now boyfriend. He talks of being in debt, so I wondered what he was up to in this relationship. But we hear no more about that possible sub-plot. He continues his warehouse job, complaining all the time about how dull it is, while his girlfriend can find no relief in being a successful novelist, but not being the novelist she wants to be.

In the end there is the happiness of the romantic novel. Eileen moves in with Simon and gets pregnant. Alice and Felix are living together.

The style of writing is minimalist in this novel, but not as much as in *Normal People*.

She follows the dictates of Ernest Hemmingway: a style I prefer myself. So, it's easy getting through the novel. I

could easily read a hundred pages at one go. There are indications that she could write better stuff. She is still young; but that doesn't apply in writing, in my opinion. That could come at any age, so she might have to wait. But if that does come about, will she be published with a permanently-closed bedroom door, or maybe just a slightly opened one? A blurb somewhere says:

“Beautiful World Where are You: is about a novelist making her case in addressing her critics. Some of her critics will be pleased about this most recent novel.”

Now she has had a sudden burst of world-wide publicity through her support of the Palestinian cause. Hopefully her support is not just a trend. This is the one solid rock she can stand on while she contemplates her future work.

Wilson John Haire.

23.10.2021

Does
It
Up

Stack
?

Neo-Darwinism

There was no influenza going around last year in what would have been the 2020-21 flue season. This was probably because anybody with a severe flu was diagnosed as having Covid-19. People with chronic long term illnesses, such as asthma, diabetes and cystic-fibrosis etc, are vulnerable to suffer more severely when they get the flu. Every year; it seems the flu consists of different viruses than the year before, and the WHO (World Health Organisation) decides (guesses?) which viruses to included in the current year's flu inoculation. They say that, if they do not get it quite right, nevertheless having the flu jab will mitigate the effects of any flu infection. Maybe the WHO is right. Maybe the various infections turn on each other and so mitigates the effect on the host person? Like when a farmer is being attacked by a mad cow, he is helped if a few dogs attack the cow. This seems a likely scenario.

Because viruses are just a minuscule form of life, it is unlikely that they have brains. They just do what they do and nothing else. How much do we know about viruses? What is the life-cycle of a virus? Does the virus need a human or animal host to replicate itself, or can a virus or maybe a group of viruses replicate themselves on a neutral surface such as a piece of stone or wood? How long does a virus live without a human host?

My cousin has designated sections of a hallway in her home for each of five days and over each section is a cardboard which reads 'Day 1', and 'Day 2' and so on, and she will not touch anything coming into her home until it is there for five days. I know a factory which has adopted the same system: incoming parcels and packages of parts and supplies are not touched for five days after arrival. Is this system based on scientific knowledge? They don't know but they say "you can't be too careful". True enough.

All the same it is surprising that there is no scientific information available to ordinary people, or even to GPs, about the

life-cycle of the Covid-19 virus.

When the Covid-19 virus was diagnosed in Hunan, China in October 2019, its existence was eagerly seized by the computer industry and by the pharmaceutical manufacturers as a crisis to be exaggerated and used to increase sales of their products. Promotion of their products went into overdrive. Stick and carrot were used – people were frightened into not having human contact and therefore needing computers in business, in education and for social contacts.

Not only needing a computer on the desk at work-place or school, but also a personal computer at home. In Ireland, for example, the Department of Social Protection spent over four million euros extra on electric power because, they said, the computers and the lights had to be on 24/7 last year to allow staff who were working from home to access their desk computers in the work-space. It does not stack up except in a very dodgy sort of way. And it sounds like very bad management in the Department. As if no one really cared what it cost when the taxpayers were paying.

Then, at a hearing of the Public Accounts Committee, the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association of Ireland admitted that Ninety Three Million Euros was spent on "promotion" and, of this, for example, 34,000 Euros was paid to a medical person to promote a product. Isn't this unethical?

What about the patients, on whom the product was thrust: maybe they actually needed another, more appropriate medicine? How would you feel as a victim of this sort of medication? We need to trust our GPs and medical consultants to give us the medicines we need and not to be part of some sales promotion for a medicine you don't need.

DARWINISM

It is very obvious from the shifty bleatings of politicians and health officials that we, the public, are being subjected to propaganda, prevarications and downright lies. They will seize upon and expound on anything which is calculated to keep us in fear. We all fear for our health—and Covid-19 is definitely a health risk—but to put it in perspective: in the two years 2019 and 2020, the number of babies killed by abortion in Ireland is 13,243 (that we know of), and in the two years to 31st October 2021 the number of people who died of Covid-19 is 2,437 (that we know of).

Covid-19 is a medical problem, so why

are surgical operations in hospitals being cancelled? Covid-19 does not require surgical intervention. Why are patients with cancer being given appointments for next year, when they need to be treated now? The list of deceptions goes on and on. Truth has become a very scarce commodity indeed.

We are being told that Covid-19 is mutating! The most serious "mutation" was the extremely dangerous "Delta variant". Where is Delta now? It has simply vanished to be replaced by Omnicron.

The Taoiseach, Micheál Martin, speaking from Brussels on Friday, December 17th, said that Omnicron was very infectious and fast-spreading and so he declared pubs and restaurants must close at 6 pm. If the Taoiseach really believed what he was saying, he would not be flying to Brussels — he'd be isolating in one of his own homes. But then, the food in Brussels is excellent and the restaurants there do not close at 6 pm!

It just does not stack up.

Michael Stack ©

Manus O'Riordan

In Appreciation

Continued from page 24

York because of the 1929 Stock Exchange Crash. They both ended up working in the kitchens of hotels for meals in lieu of cash, sleeping in a basement storeroom, being unable to pay the rent on their apartments, after being evicted. It was now a matter of going down to the New York waterfront to look for ships signing on coal-stokers for the engine room. It was a passage home, sleeping in three tier bunks in the fore-castle, and again, in lieu of cash.

During WW2 BBC radio reports would celebrate the bombing of German cities by the RAF and the USAAF. When Dusseldorf was mentioned my father would wonder if his friend had survived. Post-WW2 he wondered if the Nazis had murdered him in one of their camps. My mother sometimes urged him to write to the Dusseldorf address he had been given in New York.

After my father died in 1983, my sister, during a phone conversation casually mentioned she had found a half-finished letter in tidying up my father's library of books and papers: *To some owl German*.

I asked her to send it to me but she had burnt it months previously.

Wilson John Haire

6.11.2021

LABOUR continued

welfare system is that payments are paid at a flat rate (typically €203 per week) and priced below the poverty line, designed to offer no more than minimal financial support when a person is out of work.

This is in contrast to other rich EU countries, where short-term welfare benefits are paid as a percentage of a worker's previous wage, designed to secure normal living standards during temporary breaks in employment.

Payments become less generous the longer the time spent out of work and there is a cap on the weekly amount paid to high-earners.

By way of demonstration, a low-paid (€27,000) worker in Ireland aged over 25 years has just 39% of their gross wage replaced by our €203 unemployment payment if they lose their job.

The same worker would have 91% of their wage replaced by social welfare in Belgium, 82% in Denmark and 71% in the Netherlands.

Because welfare payments are a fixed amount in Ireland, the replacement value falls as earnings rise leaving middle-income workers exposed to an even bigger drop in their living standards during periods of unemployment, illness, maternity and family leave.

For example, a worker earning the average annual wage (€40,000) has just a quarter (26%) of their wage replaced by unemployment benefit.

There is a means-tested top-up payment to cover some of the cost of housing if renting in private rented accommodation. But there is no extra income support available to workers with a mortgage to repay.

Our social welfare system performs slightly better if instead of comparing single people we compare couples with children.

Unlike in other EU member states, means-tested top-up payments are paid in Ireland for a dependent spouse or partner (€134.70) and for each dependent child (€38 if aged under 12 years and €45 if 12 years or over).

However, entitlements for single people show how well a welfare system protects workers in their capacity as workers. In this regard, social welfare in Ireland is exceptionally weak by EU standards.

Unlike our flat-rate payments, the European-model of pay-related benefits

ensure workers can continue to pay their mortgage and other bills during short interruptions in earning a wage.

They also promote greater public support for social spending, making the welfare budget less susceptible to attacks that there are "people who pay for everything while getting nothing in return".

During economic downturns pay-related benefits protect consumer demand and jobs in sectors reliant on discretionary spending.

Critics however point to the unfairness of short-term benefits for workers with sufficient PRSI contributions being more generous than long-term benefits paid to vulnerable groups outside the workforce such as lone-parents, carers, and people with a disability.

Ireland is atypical in there being no difference in the value of contributory benefits and non-contributory benefits.

Unlike in other EU member states, being in employment in Ireland does not confer additional income protection from the welfare system.

The only advantage to being an insured worker is freedom from means-testing for those living in households with another source of income such as a working spouse or savings.

When lockdown was imposed to slow the spread of the virus in March 2020, the €350 Pandemic Unemployment Payment had to be created overnight and later devolved into a European-style benefit with four payment rates that closely aligned to the claimant's previous earnings.

The Programme for Government contains a commitment to consider a permanent move to a pay-related unemployment payment. However, it will be a full two years before the details of such a payment will be finalised.

In the meantime, a Commission on Taxation and Welfare has been established to make recommendations on the future design of our tax and welfare systems and is currently holding a public consultation.

In advance of our submission, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions is today launching our campaign for the social safety net to be strengthened for workers and a move to pay-related short-term benefits. (Irish Examiner-15.11.2021).

Dr Laura Bambrick is Social Policy Officer with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

Manus O'Riordan

In Appreciation

Nothing got past Manus when it came to the distortion of facts. It was a good experience to read his last article:

HOLOCAUST FACTS MATTER AND NONE SHOULD BE DENIED (Church & State, No 46, Fourth Quarter, 2021) Also, to be remembered is Dave Alvey's magnificent account of his Wake and Funeral. *Irish Political Review*, November, 2021)

The poem, *FIRST THEY CAME* (1946) by Pastor Martin Niemoller, a German Lutheran minister, based on a sermon, has been abused over the years, especially during the cold war period by faint hearts and warmongers. This poem, especially the first line, must remain untouched forever, as Manus wanted it to be in his fine article.

First they came for the communists.

It must have been the late 1940s, or early 1950s, when I heard my father quoting from something he was reading. I only remembered that particular first line because, after a Young Workers' League meeting in Church Lane, Belfast, we came down the stairs from the rooms above the bookshop and opened the door into this narrow street. It was choked by the RUC, carrying the usual firearms. I thought at the time, as a young teenager, that this was it. And what was going to happen to my parents and my younger sisters. Have I brought something terrible upon them by being a communist. I got some relief from my fears by remembering that I was already their enemy, as a Catholic, and with my family, we were already suffering under their armed rule. When I got home I didn't mention this sudden show of force, by the RUC, to my father, a former party member, who knew from his own experience, in the unemployed movement of the early 1930s, how the RUC had used their batons on the half-starved. To my young mind he had done his time and now it was my time, modern times. I wouldn't bother him with my anxiety, for that would be showing my fear. He opposed everything that might bring fear by confronting it head-on.

The sudden RUC-filled street became something of a mystery, as we walked through the gauntlets, for all we got were disdainful stares. One of the girls began to cry, a sixteen-year-old Protestant. She didn't think the RUC would do this to her. We never saw her again. Normally we didn't get this much attention, from them, not as much attention as the Catholics of the Falls Road got. We wondered if the RUC now had a new more severe anti-communist Inspector-

continued on page 24

CONNOLLY continued

A Naval Brigade of raw, untrained units was sent into Antwerp to deceive the people with the hope of British assistance, and the Belgian people were driven on by England to the needless sacrifice of another city in order to provide another 'horrible example' for the unctuous hypocrites of the British press to shed tears of ink over.

Now that Antwerp has fallen, all the professional liars of the capitalist press assure us that it is of no importance to the Germans. By such a statement they only further prove the truth of what I have just written. They illustrate the cold-blooded determination of England to sacrifice Belgium, all Belgium, to save the precious skins of the Allies. If Antwerp is of no importance to Germany, then all the greater is the crime of those who forced the Belgians to resist the bombardment when they desired to evacuate the city.

If Belgium had contented herself with protesting at the passage of German troops through her territory, she would now have all her fortresses and cities in her own hands, her soldiers would all be alive and in a position to act with effect when the war had exhausted both sides, none of her civilian population would have lost their lives, homes or domestic treasures, or be scattered as exiles on the charity of strangers, her foreign trade would not be lost by the paralysis of her domestic industry, and her neutrality and independence would be effectually maintained.

If in the fluctuations of the war the soil of Belgium became the scene of conflict, both sides would have in their own interests kept aloof from any considerable town or city in the possession of large bodies of fresh Belgian troops, and would have avoided anything calculated to make fresh enemies for their own side.

Under such circumstances any conflict that would have taken place in Belgium between the Germans and the Allies would have been fought out in the open country, or around small villages whose inhabitants could easily have been sheltered in the large towns, and all the horrors to which Belgium has been subjected would have been unknown.

For all those horrors she has to thank her stupid governing class, and the wily, heartless English diplomacy that sacrifices Belgium in a quarrel not her own.

Will Ireland allow her sons to be sacrificed by the same unscrupulous power that English capitalism may rise by garrotting the civilisation and commerce of Europe? No, a thousand times no!

Mr. Redmond's Volunteers — the unpaid soldiers of England, scabbing on the British Army, doing for nothing what British soldiers require pay for doing — they may go, though we doubt it, but no man to whom Ireland and Ireland's interests are dear will ever draw a sword or fire a shot in any quarrel of England's making until such time as such quarrel finds its venue in Ireland, is fought out on Ireland's own soil.

And when that day comes the swords will be drawn and the shots fired by Irishmen for Ireland, and for Freedom for all who work and live in Ireland.

(James Connolly, Irish Worker, 17 October, 1914.)

GERMAN APOLOGY:

The matter of the tragic sinking in 1942 an Irish merchant vessel, the Irish Pine, was raised by Joe Duffy on Liveline on 3rd December. He had contacted the

German Embassy in Dublin about the sinking and reported as follows:

"Now we put it to the German Government through their Embassy and this is what they said, what they just replied in the last few minutes:

"The tragic story of the sinking of the Irish Pine and the crew was further testimony to the long-lasting suffering inflicted on many millions of people during and after the Second World War, which was started by Germany.

The remembrances of victims continue to this day. The Federal German Government deeply regrets the sinking of the Irish Pine and the terrible fate of its innocent crew.

"The Nuremberg Military Tribunal ruled that attacks by German U-Boats on neutral ships during World War 2 constituted a violation of international law. Commonly accepted principles of International Law do not provide for individual compensation in cases like this. Instead the matter must be settled between the nation states involved"..."

(Liveline, 3.12.2021, RTE Radio One. See: <https://www.rte.ie/radio/radio1/clips/22037882/>

[We introduce a new monthly feature.
Readers are invited
to send in their Trade Union news]

Organised Labour!

Dr Laura Bambrick: Flat-rate social welfare system is not working for workers.

The experience of the pandemic has highlighted the need for the State's social safety net to be strengthened for workers.

This week [15.11.2021] the Pandemic Unemployment Payment will be cut by a further €50 as part of the gradual phasing out of the payment by February next year.

Anyone who has not returned to work when their entitlement to the PUP ends and who meets the stricter qualifying conditions will transfer over to the ordinary

€203 unemployment payment.

The relative generosity of the €350 emergency income supports for workers in response to Covid-19 has ignited public interest in our threadbare social safety net.

A recent OECD survey of public opinion found very high demand in Ireland (70%) for more action by government to ensure people's financial security and address gaps in social protection — highest out of 10 rich EU member states included in the survey and markedly higher than the average for this group (54%).

An unusual feature of Ireland's social
continued on page 30



LABOUR

Comment

ISSN 0790-1712

VOLUME 40 No. 1

CORK

ISSN 0790-1712

James Connolly

How England Sacrificed Belgium (1914)

It has often been remarked in Irish Nationalist circles that, according to the current cant of the Parliamentary Party, the interests of Ireland can always be best served out of Ireland.

Sometimes it is on *'the flure of the House'* of Commons that Ireland must be fought for, sometimes it is on the platform in the United States, sometimes it is in election contests in England, and now it is on the battlefields of the Continent.

It is always outside of Ireland that blows must be struck for Ireland, if we are to believe the official *'leaders of the Irish Race'*.

It must surely be upon some such principle of action that England is fighting for the neutrality of Belgium. According to all the British jingo Press, and still more according to the organs of the Irish Home Rule Imperialists, or Imperialist Home Rulers, Great Britain has entered into this war solely because of her burning zeal for the neutrality of Belgium.

Only because of the danger to Belgian neutrality was the mighty heart of England moved to action, and only because she saw this precious thing in danger did England at last reluctantly draw the sword and enter the lists against the Germans.

And here in Ireland we are tearfully appealed to, to consider the awesome spectacle of the conversion of England to ways of justice and chivalry, and so considering to rush to her aid and side by side with her army battle for the neutrality of Belgium.

But, when we look around us, all that we see tends to arouse the suspicion that England has simply made a catspaw of Belgium, has deliberately tempted

Belgium from her neutrality, and having committed that brave little kingdom to the fight has cold-bloodedly left her towns, cities and territories to be defended by her own unaided efforts.

Whilst howling long and loudly against the violation of the neutrality of Belgium, England never sent as much as a corporal's guard to help to prevent it. Whilst the Belgian soldiers were pouring out their life-blood in torrents in an effort to stem the forces of the invader, whilst the harvest in Belgian fields was trodden under foot, Belgian industries destroyed, and the population of Belgium driven from home and country, the armies of England were kept carefully out of Belgium, and that country left to stew in its own juice.

England and France cried out to the world that they were modern paladins of chivalry risking their all to save Belgium whilst all the time they were coolly devoting their every energy to the work of saving their own skins. All during the first month

of Belgium's martyrdom England poured her Expeditionary Troops into France leaving Belgium to her fate.

Belgium asked for troops to help defend her neutrality. England replied,

"We are sorry, we would like to send you some troops, but you see we have a pressing engagement elsewhere. But we will write some nice newspaper articles about you, and even if you do suffer just think how useful your sufferings will be to us in the preparation of speeches against Germany."

That is all the satisfaction Belgium has got or is likely to get: the satisfaction of serving England, as a tortured animal under the hands of the vivisectionist serves science.

Antwerp in its last agony brings this fact out very clearly. Even the most thoughtless cannot be but struck by the manner in which the editorials of the English newspapers assure their readers that the sufferings of Antwerp will be another argument against Germany. They dwell so much upon this aspect of the situation that it is clearly seen that in their eyes the sufferings of the Belgian people count for little—the manner in which their sufferings can be exploited to England's advantage counts for much.

The English press now admits that, before the bombardment commenced, the Belgian authorities wished to evacuate the city in order that it might be spared. But the English insisted that Antwerp must fight on although, as they now admit, they were well aware that the forts would be powerless to hold out long enough to be relieved, and that the resistance would mean the destruction of the city.

Irish Political Review is published by the IPR Group: write to—

1 Sutton Villas, Lower Dargle Road
Bray, Co. Wicklow or

33 Athol Street, Belfast BT12 4GX or
2 Newington Green Mansions, London N16 9BT
or *Labour Comment*, TEL: 021-4676029
P. Maloney, 26 Church Avenue, Roman
Street, Cork City

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Sterling-zone: £25

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€ 15 / £12 for 12 issues
(or € 1.30 / £1.10 per issue)

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