

## < Trácht – Comment >

### A CATHNATION ONCE AGAIN

Easter 2021 at the GPO, An Taoiseach et al commemorating the Proclamation of the Republic, which promised to cherish all the children of the nation equally, in the spirit of the Shared Island initiative, with a Roman Catholic cleric presiding.



### FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS

*(Letter refused publication in The Irish Times on the Letters Page in the debate about the Angelus.)*

The simple fact of the matter is that the Angelus was instituted by the Roman Catholic Church and is seen by many Protestants as a manifestation of what they regard as the Marian cult. It is redolent of the days when RTÉ news readers used to refer not to 'the Pope' but 'the Holy Father'. The latter has since faded away, but the Angelus lingers on.

It may well be true that not all non-Catholics are offended by the practice, but many are, particularly in the North. And, at a time when we are all supposed to be striving for reconciliation in Ireland and mutual respect, it is ridiculous that this insensitivity is persisted in on the national broadcasting service.



*12 Sept 2020*

### COMMEMORATION & CONTEMPLATION

[Unpublished letter to The Irish Times]

In the proposed FG-FF document for government, it is stated that a unit should be established in the Department of the Taoiseach to consider preparations for a united Ireland.

This foreshadows a complex process, but, were such a step to be taken under any Administration, it might begin with addressing a few simple issues.

For a start, one thinks of the recent commemoration of the 1916 Rising in the GPO where the Taoiseach, the Chief of Defence Forces and other dignitaries stood in front of a Roman Catholic priest leading the ceremony. Then there is the daily practice of the public national broadcasting service preceding the main evening news bulletin with a solemn bell-ringing inspired by the Roman Catholic and specifically Marian Angelus.



The very Constitution of our State has a Preamble which is not only definitively Christian but also Trinitarian, and therefore exclusive of Unitarian Protestants, no matter how small in number they may be; and that is apart from consideration of other religious non-Christian and non-religious citizens, of which there are ever-growing numbers in Ireland.

As a person of partially Unitarian background and currently a Humanist in philosophical position, as well as a committed nationalist and republican, I find these

things insensitive and indeed offensive. I fully understand how unionists who are being wooed by some united Irelanders in the Irish Republic, with talk of inclusiveness, can thus regard the overtures in question as being hypocritical.

And the answer is not to be multi-denominational because, among other things, that is impractical, given the number of persuasions in the country. Rather should we accept that we are supposed to be living in a secular republic and that religious and philosophical stance should consequently be a matter for the private and not the public sphere, and certainly not portrayed as being necessarily characteristic of the State and all its citizens.

*18 April 2020*

#### INTERPRETATION OF GENERAL ELECTON RESULT

*[Unpublished letter to 'The Irish Times']*

I am writing in reply to Donal McGrath's reaction (February 21st) to my letter of 20th inst about the general election results.

One can of course correctly infer that 57% of the valid poll not going to FF-FG does not mean that that figure signifies the persons involved being of one mind in regard to an alternative. Nor did I suggest so. Further, it is elementary arithmetic to observe that Sinn Féin receiving 25% of the vote, although the largest single share, can be expressed otherwise as 3/4 of the poll not adhering to that party.

But, the basic issue is what conclusion is to be drawn from all the circumstances currently presented to us. Taking full account in the 33rd Dáil of the groupings and their votes as well as the seats consequently attached to them, I still hold that the most meaningful democratic response to the electoral behaviour in question is that there should be an SF-led Left, albeit minority, government thus entailing negotiation about the SF manifesto.

However, I am quite content, in light of the facts, to let your readers decide what is the most reasonable interpretation of the results.

*22 Feb 2020*

#### A PERTURBED POLLAK

*[Unpublished letter to Irish Times]*

Andy Pollak's latest verbal discharge (fortunately uncharacteristically brief) in 'The Irish Times' (11 Feb) endeavours to counterpose the cost of Irish reunification and the solution of the housing and health crises in the Republic. He implicitly attempts to peddle yet again a distortion about the subsidy from Britain to the 'north' and how that would simply

transfer to the taxpayer in the 'south'. While the subsidy is said to be about £9.2 billion, studies and analyses from expert sources have revealed that it could involve as little as £2 billion from the Irish exchequer in immediate accountancy terms on national reunification, and not having regard to the economic benefit that could more than compensate from the ending of partition.

As for the diminished figure, something that would help produce it immediately is elimination of expenditure on keeping the British Army in north-east Ireland! And then there are commitments which the British government cannot escape from such as the



substantial outlay required on pensions which have already been paid for by the contributions of citizens over the years. Just as the British had to meet a legitimate bill under various headings on leaving the EU, so they will have to legally fulfil their financial obligations in relation to Northern Ireland. Moreover, Irish unity will involve automatic reintegration of the six counties fully into the EU with the transfers from Brussels that that could mean.

Along with others devastatingly defeated in efforts at scaremongering about Sinn Féin, Mr Pollak now endeavours to frighten the electorate in the 'south' by suggesting the falsehood that their legitimate concerns and demands in respect of basic welfare cannot be met if the nation is reunited.

He thus seeks to swathe himself in benign beneficence as a disguise for his horror at the prospect of the consummation of Irish freedom. How patriotic.

*16 Feb 2020*

**DON MARTINO & SANCHO LEO**

'Sancho, is that a windmill over there?' 'No, Don Martino, it's an army council.' 'I thought so! Tally ho.'



*1 March 2020*

### DEMOCRACY DAN

Dan O'Brien, economist and 'Independent' newspapers' Hammer of the Heretics, affectionately known as 'Democracy Dan', writes (Ir Indo 13 Feb) about the democratic credentials of Sinn Féin. He begins by declaring that "the IRA's army council still exists". He quotes no source for this allegation, but perhaps he is borrowing from Micheál Martin who frankly depends upon that disinterested adviser - British intelligence in the form of MI6.

Later, he maintains that the IRA has yet to be disbanded, while most sensible people can see no traces of it. In particular, he requires that a statement be issued about disbandment and signed by "P O'Neill". This is actually put forward in all seriousness.

Not content with giving no sources for his allegations, he goes on to demonstrate an incapacity



to research in order to sustain his assertions. For example, he states that: "Nowhere in Sinn Féin's constitution is the Irish State recognized." This apparently is supposed to mark it out from other political parties. However, if he bothered for a moment to look at the constitutions of Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael or the Labour Party, neither would he find any recognition of the Irish State there. That is not astonishing to most of us, because those parties,

along with Sinn Féin, by their behaviour and participation make it obvious that the State is of course recognized. He remarks on Sinn Féin's mention in its constitution of the Republic proclaimed in 1916, as though that denies the current situation rather than simply acknowledges the origin of the degree of freedom that the Irish nation has come to realize. He also informs us that the Sinn Féin constitution "makes no reference to Bunreacht na hÉireann". Not surprisingly by now, he does not seem to be aware that such reference does not occur either in respect of the other political parties' constitutions.

There have been earlier instalments of this nature by Democracy Dan and, no doubt, there will be more in future, proportionate to his ignorance about the subject.

*14 Feb 2020*

#### **MI5 MARTIN & HIS BANKER BUDDIES**

Deputy Martin of Fianna Fáil continues relentlessly to cast aspersions on the democratic credentials of Sinn Féin, along with others in the Establishment. Reference is made to the fact that Mairtín Ó Muilleoir in the north asked an adviser if he was "content" about a particular course of action. That is distorted into supposedly asking for permission. Then there is the reference to the role of the SF Ard-Chomhairle vis-a-vis SF TDs. Because TDs pledge to seek "guidance" from and be "amenable" to the democratically decided positions of that body, which is democratically elected by the members at the Ard-Fheis, this is supposed to involve subordination! We are also supposed to be suspicious of advice being sought from experts in the Party who are not full-time advisers – so what? When one reflects on this 'evidence' for a moment, it is apparent just how pathetic it is. The irony is that FF advisers are not cast in the same light and the position of its national executive is simplified by ignoring it altogether when convenient to do so. So much for FF democracy. Of course, Martin adds to his accusations by referring to a fictional 'army council'. His source for this, he frankly admits, is British Intelligence in the form of MI5.

This is the same MI5 Martin who was instrumental in destroying the Irish economy when last in government and had to call in the IMF. He and his colleagues then went on to bail out their banker buddies at the expense of the Irish taxpayer, a burden which will be with us for decades to come. It is not difficult to see that MI5 Martin is trying to distract from his dismal record by churning out fake news about Sinn Féin. How pleased MI5 must be. However, it won't work, MI5 Martin.



*30 Jan 2020*

### IS THERE NO END TO IT?

A while ago, John Bruton drooled over 'Prince' Charles as a model for us all at a dinner, appropriately enough in Dublin Castle; later, he told us that the Easter Rising and War of Independence were unnecessary; recently, Quisling Flanagan proposed to commemorate the murderers of the RIC; and now royal-watcher Varadkar sympathises with disaffected aristocrats in Britain (poor Harry and Meghan). What can we expect next? A celebration of the great first leader of Fine Gael, fascist Eoin O'Duffy?



*16 Jan 2020*

### TÍRGHRÁ - PATRIOTS

The anti-national revisionists have been left reeling. Their attempted commemoration of the collaborationist RIC has been defeated ignominiously. Nonetheless, they may be regrouping in order to launch a second attack. That is why we must remain vigilant and ready. It is now increasingly seen by many that this outrageous proposal (along with the inclusion of names of imperialist killers on the Glasnevin Wall) is part of a general strategy to undermine nationalism and republicanism in Ireland. Those tendencies do not suit the social and economic aims and interests of the haute bourgeoisie and therefore must be countered.

However, this obviously cannot be done openly and requires disguise. To begin with, reaction has to

masquerade as reconciliation. There are about 900,000 unionists on this island (not the magical million often referred to) and over 6 million nationalists. We are told that rapprochement with unionists necessitates that the tail consisting of under 1/7th of this population should wag the dog of the other 6/7ths. The next manifestation expected of this is to show respect for the centenary of the partition Act of 1920. If unionists want to celebrate this, well and good. But to think that nationalists should do likewise or accept an equivalence between the cause of national independence and a colonialist act of national mutilation is preposterous. Tolerance is one thing and self-abnegation another.

Getting back to the RIC, we are told that those who were killed had wives and children. That is also true of the SS guards at Auschwitz. The proportion of atrocities committed may well have been different, but the principle remains the same. We are also told to have regard to the subjective intentions of RIC men as well as their objective effects. However, at the end of the day, it is the latter for which they must be held responsible. We are urged to forgive and forget, but sometimes it is necessary to condemn and remember. Otherwise, we shall end up, like the contemptible poppy-wearing easterlily-bashing Quisling Flanagan, accusing freedom fighters of being murderers.

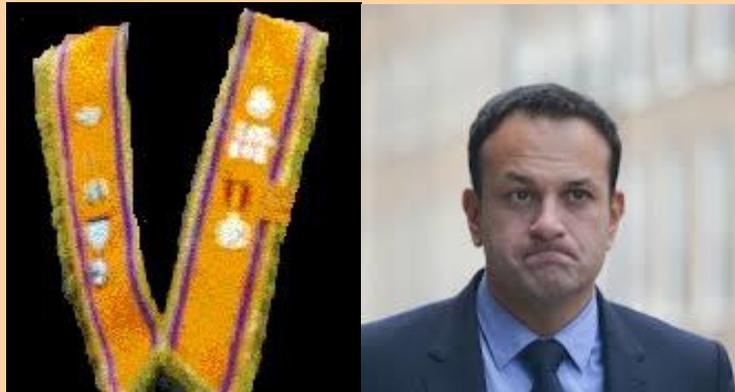
All that being said, we do not neglect to recall the thousands of RIC men who resigned in the 1920s rather than serve the empire against the republic. They are the ones who once wore the badge of the RIC who should be commemorated with admiration. It was suggested earlier that what is needed in the present context of the anti-national onslaught is a lobby of patriotic citizens to counter this and it was mooted that this should be called TÍRGHRÁ-PATRIOTS. In fact, this has met with a warm response and will be taken forward accordingly.

*8 Jan 2020*

<b>RECONCILIATION &amp; REVISIONISM</b>
---

Leo Varadkar has suggested that the opposition to commemorating the RIC could lead to postponement of a united Ireland. His concern is touching, but typical of an opportunist trying to cover up a would-be reactionary move in righteous clothing. However, this opportunism is also part of a general strategy to promote reactionary revisionism under the guise of reconciliation. We are supposed to abandon our critique of imperialism and colonialism along with its atrocities in order to reach out to unionists. Indeed, some would even advocate that we stop talking about a united Ireland to the same end. Of course, it remains

in order for unionists to shout from the rooftops about perpetuating a United Kingdom without in any way provoking nationalists.



But, we are not fools. This anti-nationalism has a rational basis. It is more about protecting the interests in the 26 counties of the haute bourgeoisie which does not want the social and political disturbance of a united Ireland. In this, their natural allies are the unionists who have of course jumped on the bandwagon of criticism of those who opposed RIC commemoration. Insofar as genuine reconciliation is needed in the process of national reunification, unionists can commemorate to their hearts' content the RIC and anything else of that ilk which appeals to them. However, they have to understand and accept that nationalists have their own political traditions and attitudes which, in any event, are not primarily directed at them, but rather at the imperialism which has just abandoned them in the Brexit context. We will not worship at the altar of a false and malign god.

*9 Jan 2020*

**QUISLING FLANAGAN  
TO ABASE HIMSELF YET AGAIN**

On 17 January 2020, the Minister for Justice of the Irish Republic, Quisling Charles Flanagan, will abase himself yet again in Dublin Castle through leading a commemoration for members of the RIC and DMP who fell in the course of trying to suppress the resistance to British imperialism in Ireland during the War of



Independence. At an earlier event in September of last year, he already referred to how they were 'murdered', in other words implying that Irish freedom fighters were murderers. In these actions, he has received the approval of Gauleiter Varadkar and others in Fine Gael. It is to be hoped that, at the imminent general election, his constituents will be fully informed of his behaviour and take the opportunity to decide whether or not he acts in their name. There will be a protest by Irish patriots at Dublin Castle at 10.00 a.m. on Friday 17th of January next to mark the true feelings of most of the Irish people about this despicable act of treachery.

*7 Jan 2020*

#### FÁINNE GEAL AN LAE

*Post-election comment (2019) re. north:*

'The great irony of all this is that for decades unionists have looked over their shoulders and decided that Irish nationalists were the great threat ... But actually it's English nationalism', Mike Nesbitt, former Leader of the UUP, told the BBC. (Euronews, Dec '19)



*14 Dec 2019*

#### THE QUISLING GANG

An organisation employing the acronym HARP is in fact the Historical And Reconciliation Police society. The reference is to commemoration of RIC and DMP men killed up to 1922. This abomination of the Irish

national symbol covers the surveillance carried out on the Catholic emancipation campaign of the late 1820s, the disruption of the tithe war (against paying taxes to the Church of the ascendancy) of the 1830s, the eviction of starving peasants during the famine of the late 1840s, the suppression of the Fenian rising in 1867 (for which they got the designation 'Royal' from Queen Victoria), the harassment of the Irish Republican Brotherhood in the later 19th and early 20th centuries, the brutal attacks on workers during the lockout of 1913, the effort to put down the rising of 1916, and the collaboration with imperialist forces during the War of Independence. A service was held for these people on 14th September '19 in Dublin and, in attendance, was Charlie Flanagan, Minister for Justice. Quisling Flanagan told us that the persons in question, who were felled by those struggling for justice and freedom, were "murdered in the line of duty". His boss, the Taoiseach, sent his aide-de-camp in his place.



As a Polish commentator has remarked, this was like praising the SS for their role in putting down the Polish resistance and, in particular, eliminating the Warsaw ghetto. With nauseating Ministers like Flanagan, one does not need the kind of anti-Irish detractor to be found on the reactionary right in the British media.

*16 Sept 2019*

#### IT'S WITH O'LEARY & THE SPIN

Olivia O'Leary completed her two-part RTÉ hagiography of Daniel O'Connell last week (Sept '19). Conducted in a characteristically unctuous, superior and hectoring manner, it thus sought to promote bourgeois nationalism and deprecate radical republicanism. It reminded us that the one signal victory of O'Connell was Catholic emancipation in 1829. However, it notably did not highlight that this was achieved at the expense of narrowing the franchise in Ireland compared to that in Britain. Otherwise, there was the subsequent Lichfield House Compact with the Whigs in Britain seeking reforms out of which little came - the historian Liz Curtis has

described the episode as "six wasted years". O'Connell next turned to Repeal of the Union, the campaign for which was a total failure. He protested to no avail at the woefully inadequate British response to the great famine in Ireland of the later 1840s. This was an event in relation to which the British Minister responsible for relief, Trevelyan, stated: "The judgement of God sent the calamity to teach the Irish a lesson".



Of course, Ms O'Leary is at pains to stress O'Connell's pacifism and to bemoan insurrection. She quite correctly identifies John Redmond as being the ideological successor to O'Connell in striving to avoid revolution and to beseech the British for a degree of autonomy in Ireland. As she points out, Redmond succeeded in having a Home Rule Act passed at Westminster in 1914. This was a milk and water devolutionary measure, which was secured in a partitionist context and promptly suspended for the duration of the Great War, with the heart-felt British promise that it would be enforced after it! Redmond is depicted as continuing the non-violent parliamentary tradition of O'Connell, even though he encouraged thousands upon thousands of Irish men to go to their deaths in the service of a British imperialism that was allied with the French republican empire and the Russian Empire of Tsar Nicholas II. The death toll in question far exceeded that incurred in the Easter Rising of 1916 and the War of Independence in 1919 to '21. One fears that Ms O'Leary will have to try much harder in future in order to whitewash bourgeois nationalism and denigrate radical republicanism.

*3 Sept 2019*

#### DOUBLE STANDARDS – MALLON'S EPITAPH

Séamus Mallon, former stalwart of the SDLP, has produced his memoirs (May '19), with the assistance of Andy Pollak, the well-known unionist appeaser. Mallon's highest political achievement was when he became Deputy First Minister in the power-sharing Executive pursuant to the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. The latter he termed as 'Sunningdale for slow learners', referring back to the abortive accord of that

name in 1973. Bitterly, he could never accept that Sinn Féin achieved 25 years later substantially more than what he had tried to bring about previously. (I have detailed in my book 'Irish Republicanism – Good Friday and After' the very significant distinctions between the two settlements.) Mallon's attitude is somewhat akin to that expressed by neo-Redmondites when they suggest that there was no real difference between the Home Rule Act of 1914 and the Treaty of 1921. In that instance also, it is only necessary to juxtapose the two texts in order to ascertain the utter falsity of that assertion.

Mallon's outlook was consistent with his disdain for the dialogue carried out by John Hume with Gerry Adams in the context of the peace process.



For him, what was more important was that the SDLP should not be overtaken by Sinn Féin, which in fact of course happened

His parting shot now is to renege on a key term of the Good Friday Agreement, which he endorsed at the time, namely that Irish unity may be brought about by a simple majority of those voting in a poll on the issue. This, he holds, should be scrapped. Instead he recommends the adoption of 'parallel consent', by which he apparently means that, in addition to a majority of northern nationalists being in favour of Irish unity, there should also be a majority of northern unionists for that objective. What was good enough for unionists as regards membership of the United Kingdom, in the shape of a simple majority, between 1921 and 1998 is not now good enough for nationalists in respect of realising a United Ireland. One can imagine the music this is to the ears of unionists on learning that, when they are beginning to lose the game, the goalposts should be moved. At the same time, one should note that 'parallel consent' is not to obtain for inclusion in the United Kingdom.

One of his justifications for this advocacy is that, otherwise, there would be a recalcitrant minority within a United Ireland. Of course, we have heard all this before in the case of other instances of decolonisation. For example, the whites in South

Africa were supposed to offer stout resistance to democratisation there. In reality, what has happened around the world is that, in the face of end-game, the colons experience division and demoralisation leading on to negotiation and accommodation with the new dispensation. Although, one does not depend on this trajectory alone; persuasion and compromise should equally be attempted to facilitate the journey involved.

The real danger is that the abandonment of this key clause in the Good Friday Agreement will play straight into the hands of the dissidents in the nationalist community and will undermine the republicans and nationalists who have accepted that Agreement as the way forward. The consequence could well be a return to conflict and violence of the nature which we thought we had all put behind us. It is indeed ironic that this is the scenario which the would-be herald of reconciliation could really be calling up. But neither should one lose sight of the probability that Mallon is, consciously or otherwise, also giving voice to the nervousness of the bourgeoisie, north and south, at the prospect of a radical shakeup in the politics of this island.

28 May 2019

EUROPHILIAC AWARD OF THE YEAR
-------------------------------

The Europhiliac Award for 2019 goes to Stephen Collins, described as political correspondent of *The Irish Times*. In particular, this arises from his column entitled 'Those intent on the EU's destruction need to be exposed' (9 May '19).



In this, he attacks existing and prospective MEPs who take up a eurocritical position as regards the European Union and, specifically, highlights Sinn Féin in this regard. However, his journalistic standards do not rise to either fully reporting facts or correctly stating them. To start with, he represents Sinn Féin as anti-European, which is quite different, for example, from being opposed to the creation of a European army or policies which privilege plutocratic interests. Moreover, he does not substantiate his accusation that Sinn Féin is opposed to free trade. What he appears to be tendentiously alluding to is the critique put forward of the proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), which envisaged massively extended privatisation and severe limitations on governmental control of transnational business. That is some distance from simply being

antagonistic to free trade

It has been clear for some time that he has just swallowed the portrayal of the EU as basically being about peace and prosperity. There is no historical sense of how it was promoted by the United States and its euro-acolytes as a socio-political bulwark against the rise of the Left in Western Europe at the end of the Second World War and how it has fulfilled that role ever since. Mr Collins, therefore, is in effect a tribune for national and international capitalism right through to the neoliberal intensity which prevails at the moment.

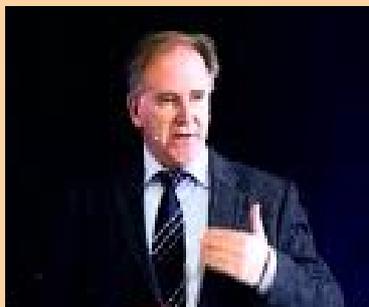
The consequence has been a stream of pathetically unsophisticated journalese over the years to the undoubted gratification of the Brussels bureaucracy.

20 May 2019

#### MC GARRY DENUNCIATION OF EASTER RISING

(Below is an unpublished letter to *The Irish Times*:)  
In his Opinion piece 'State must end practice of commemorating 1916 Rising' (7th May '19), Patsy McGarry opens by referring to the murder of Lyra McKee in Derry and then proceeds to deprecate the Easter demonstrations by political associates of dissident paramilitary groups who reject the Good Friday Agreement and support the kind of violence which led to her death. However, he also includes in his disdain the demonstration by the State commemorating the Easter rebellion. This is because of his view that 'The 1916 Rising was a criminal act perpetrated by a self-selected few who took up arms against a British state from which Ireland was then disengaging by parliamentary means.'

In the latter regard, he ignores the historical facts that, in 1916, Ireland was forcibly occupied by a foreign power and that it was thus incorporated in a State (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland) which was not properly democratic - 50% of adults (viz. women) had no vote for parliament and only a limited number of males were granted that entitlement according to property qualifications.



Nonetheless, the national bourgeoisie was content in this context to seek limited devolution (i.e. 'home rule') from the 1880s up until 1916 (fruitlessly), which would have been far from disengagement from the UK. The alternative of a truly democratic republic

based on support from a majority of all adults was not exactly capable of being put to a plebiscite. Therefore, the insurrection rightly occurred. It was an act of resistance as justified, for example, as that undertaken by the maquis against Nazi rule in France after 1940

In 1998, the first all-Ireland plebiscite (as distinct from a parliamentary election) in Irish history on the issue of national sovereignty, and how it was to be obtained, occurred. Accordingly, democratic Irish republicans have been operating since within the framework of the Good Friday Agreement. There is therefore all the distinction in the world between such republicans and those who have come to be known as dissidents.

It is to be hoped that the tragic demise of Lyra McKee is not going to be opportunistically and tendentiously employed by neo-Redmondite elements against democratic republicans and the anti-imperialist legacy in order to promote their anti-national attitudes.

13 May 2019

#### CROPPIES LIE DOWN ARÍS

(Unpublished letter to *The Irish Times* 11.2.19)

In his article on Northern Ireland and Brexit (9th February), Noel Dorr suggests that Sinn Féin should “defer its Irish language and other demands for a time in the common interest.” He also states that “Irish nationalism as a whole could perhaps begin to consider some more generous approach than the simple majority, North and South, that is implied in the Belfast Agreement provision about future Irish unity.” In an earlier article (17th October 2018), he had already cautioned against “a united Ireland imposed by a bare majority vote at the cost of creating a large new resentful minority.”



All this is typical of an appeasing mindset which is characteristic of a certain element in the Department

of Foreign Affairs. First of all, the persistent and bigoted refusal of unionists to accept the full expression of Irish identity, while theirs is fully accommodated, is therefore acquiesced in and the croppies told to lie down once more. Secondly, the simple majority required by the Belfast Agreement for Irish unity is not “implied”, it is explicit. But, again, we are supposed to move the goalposts here and require a standard of nationalists which was not sought of unionists in the past for whom a simple majority in respect of the Union was sufficient. With regard to the fear that is expressed of “creating a large new resentful minority”, this has been used throughout the world, such as in South Africa, when progressive change is in sight. Apart from that, no thought is given to the advantage which would thus be given to ‘republican’ dissidents by such a departure.

What is particularly shocking about these comments, from a former senior diplomat in the Department of Foreign Affairs, and aside from his ill-judged recommendations, is his urging that a carefully and painstakingly constructed international agreement should thus be reneged on.

*14 Feb 2019*

<b>RIC – ROYAL IRISH COLLABORATORS</b>
--

The Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) derives from the Peace Preservation Act of 1814 as followed up by the Irish Constabulary Act of 1822. Apart from discharging ordinary policing duties, the Constabulary was to be the local paramilitary force of the British government in Ireland.

Fulfilling the latter role, it sought to suppress protest in the Tithe War of 1830 to ‘36. In the early 1840s, it curbed agitation in favour of repeal of the Act of Union. Next, it helped to put down the Young Ireland insurrection in 1848. During the Great Famine, it enforced the eviction of starving peasants from their cottages. In 1867, it was awarded the prefix Royal by Queen Victoria for quelling the Fenian rebellion. Between 1879 and ‘82, it dealt with trouble arising from the Land War. Throughout the second half of the 19th and early into the 20th century, it harassed the IRB right up to the Rising of 1916. It also distinguished itself by harshly subduing labour unrest ensuing from the lockout of 1913.



**On 21 January next, the centenary of the start of the War of Independence will occur. This entailed the first assault on Crown forces in that conflict at Soloheadbeg against two RIC men guarding the transport of gelignite as a result of which both were killed. In the years that followed until the Truce of 1921, the RIC sustained many more casualties as well as the British Army. This was not surprising, given the paramilitary and intelligence-gathering role of the RIC on behalf of the imperialist war machine. At the same time, credit is due to those RIC men who resigned rather than support the British during the War of Independence.**

**Recently, it was confirmed that an association may be launched to commemorate alongside each other members of the RIC and of An Garda Síochána who died in action over the years. This attempt to lump together the memories of fallen participants in a colonialist instrument of repression with memories of those lost by the legitimate and respected police force of an independent Irish State is reprehensible to say, the least.**

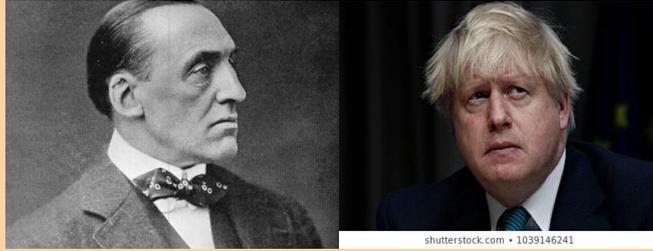
**It is known that this proposal is deeply resented by many members of the Gardaí and it is to be hoped that the Government and the Management of An Garda Síochána will have no part in promoting such a scheme. The memory of Gardaí who died while on duty should be held as precious and not sullied in such a manner.**

**Moreover, it is hard not to view this idea as other than yet another move to diminish the heroic resistance of Irish freedom fighters in the face of British imperial might.**

*11 January 2019*

#### **WHAT FOOLS THEY STILL ARE**

**One almost feels sorry for unionists at times. The weekend provided the entertaining spectacle of Boris Johnson – Britain's version of Boris Yeltsin – giving another clownish performance at the DUP**



conference. He realised that it was time to play the Orange card yet again. The words of Edward Carson at Westminster in 1921 spring once more to mind: “What a fool I was. I was only a puppet, and so was Ulster, and so was Ireland, in the political game that was to get the Conservative party into power.” For the latter, substitute the Brexiteers

*26 November 2018*

#### GREEN PAPER ON IRISH UNITY

Andy Pollak (*Irish Times*, November 7th) stresses the need for “intermediary steps” in regard to seeking a united Ireland. He states that that is what he and his former colleagues in the Centre for Cross Border Studies have done.

“As somebody from a Northern Protestant background who has lived (mainly) in the South for the past 46 years”, he expresses his astonishment at how little political, media and public discussion there has been about such steps.

He avers that these will be necessary so as “not to stumble into renewed conflict following the kind of crude border poll that is constantly demanded by Sinn Féin”.

As somebody also from a northern background, which is partially Protestant (Unitarian and Presbyterian), and who has lived (exclusively) in the south for the past 47 years, I share his astonishment, but would also point out that, for several years now, Sinn Féin has been calling for a Green Paper on Irish unity which would deal, among other things, with the intermediate steps in question.

Unfortunately, Mr Pollak, in the process of urging the required progress, cannot resist his customary inclination to cast an inaccurate aspersion on Sinn Féin.

*12 November 2018*

#### WAR OF INDEPENDENCE – A JUST WAR

Patsy McGarry notes in his article “Centenaries ahead likely to be most contentious” (Opinion, *Irish Times*, November 2nd) that the Sinn Féin manifesto for the general election of 1918 stated that it would use “any and every means available to render impotent the power of England to hold Ireland in subjection by

military force or otherwise.”

He goes on to mention the question occasionally raised by some as to whether or not the War of Independence was morally and democratically justified in the light of this statement. One should also note, however, that the first Dáil subsequently endorsed the campaign of the IRA undertaken as the legitimate army of the revolutionary Republic.

In the matter of what the people voted on in 1918, it would be somewhat naive, to say the least, to think that the statement quoted from the Sinn Féin manifesto could not be taken to cover a war of independence. What manifesto could have been allowed by the British authorities to ask explicitly for such an endorsement and what would have been the fate of Sinn Féin in 1918 if it had issued such a request?

There are of course those who constantly search for ways of de-legitimising the Irish struggle for freedom in those heroic years of the revolution stretching from 1916 to 1921. However, it really holds little water to assert that there is any substantiation for their position on the basis referred to.

*5 November 2018*

**YOUR FRIENDLY POPPY-WEARING TOMMY IN THE NORTH OF IRELAND**

**Wear a poppy and join them in the commemoration (celebration?).**



*11 November 2018*

**BADGE OF SHAME**

**Appropriately coloured red and dripping with the blood of Irish, Cypriots, Arabs, Africans and Asians. The badge of slaughter and torture.**



*11 November 2018*

**OPPOSE THE POPPYFEST –  
WEAR AN EASTER LILY**

The centenary of the World War One armistice of 11 November 1918 is coming soon and the wearing of a poppy is being promoted yet again. It is necessary therefore to comprehend fully what the poppy represents.

It was introduced after World War I to commemorate the British soldiers who had fallen in battle against the Central Powers. These soldiers were part of the Allied set-up which consisted mainly of the British Empire, the Republican French Empire and the Russian Empire. By 1918, the Russian Empire had ceased to exist and the American Empire (including its Philippines and Caribbean conquests) had joined the Allies. In Europe, there were a number of democratic outcomes with the emancipation of peoples from the German, Austro-Hungarian and what was the Russian Empire so as to create new (white) nation states such as in the Baltic, Poland, Czechoslovakia and what came to be called Yugoslavia. However, imperialist rule in North Africa and the Middle East (after collapse of the Ottoman empire) was either perpetuated or refashioned from Morocco to Syria and Iraq. As a result, the British, French and the late ally of Italy presided as colonial rulers over the native peoples therein. The depiction of WW 1 as being for small nations, such as Belgium, was a farce. That is not difficult to understand in Ireland which had to fight a War of Independence from 1919 to 21 in order to extract most of this island from the Empire and the United Kingdom.

The poppy is also used to commemorate British soldiers who died in the Second World War and in other conflicts, before and after. It is portrayed as a war for democracy, which is another farce. Explain that to the peoples in eastern and central Europe who were given over to Stalinist dictatorships. Explain it also, on behalf of Britain, to the peoples of Cyprus, Yemen (then Aden), Malaya and Kenya as well as those who were shot down in the streets of Accra in the early demonstrations for the independence of Ghana. Explain it moreover to the peoples of Indochina, given the French attempt to reconquer the

nations in question before handing over Vietnam in particular to the Americans and then continuing to subdue Algeria until the 60s. And let us not forget little Holland's violent attempt to repossess the East Indies (Indonesia) and little Belgium's ongoing suzerainty in the Congo. And the survey of post-war European imperialism is not complete without mentioning the fascist Portuguese colonies in Africa and Asia up to the 70s.

The poppy, in particular, attaches to British Army casualties, including those who were killed by Irish freedom fighters. It also includes the tens of thousands of Irish men who died in the First World War as a result of the blood sacrifice for home rule offered by John Redmond.

We should show that we are not fooled by the hypocritical depiction of the poppy as simply an expression of human compassion, tragic and all as it was that workers were exploited once again as cannon fodder in the cause of reaction. We should mark the occasion of Armistice Day by instead wearing an Easter Lily in repudiation of imperialism and colonialism and in assertion of the principles of national freedom and democracy.

*31 October 2018*

#### SHAMROCK-POPPY AMHÁIN

Senator Frank Feighan has informed us that he is distributing a shamrock-poppy emblem in connection with the upcoming centenary of the World War I armistice of 11 November 1918.

As previously, this consists of a poppy superimposed upon a shamrock. He advises us that this is being distributed widely among public representatives and others in the region of 1000 items. He does not tell us whether or not this will be paid for to any extent out of public monies, given his membership of the Senate.



We wonder if Senator Feighan wears an Easter lily emblem each year. In any event, has he considered designing an emblem consisting of the orange rose with an Easter lily superimposed on it which could be sent to members of unionist and loyalist organisations?

We suspect that he has not as it would interfere with the efforts to reBritishise Ireland posing as reconciliation. Indeed, it would not surprise us if he donned a blue shirt and goose-stepped back into the

United Kingdom.

29 October 2018

**IRELAND & THE EU**

*'The Irish Times' maintains its criterion of unbalanced journalism through refusing to publish the letter below.*

I have just come back from a journey abroad and was reading back over 'The Irish Times' for the period since I left. Thus, I came across a letter from Eoin Ó Murchú of 11 September concerning the review of a book to which he contributed a chapter.

In the course of this, he refers to “membership of the EU” and “the [consequent] abandonment of the aim of Irish national independence ... which, it appears, Sinn Féin now supports.”

However, nothing could be further from the truth. In a debate until recently characterised by Eurosceptic versus Europhiliac, Sinn Féin has adopted a position of Eurocritical. This has been depicted by some as mere verbiage and without content, which is a facile and erroneous judgement. The Eurocritical stance takes account of current reality and seeks to act within the framework of the EU in order to, as far as possible, promote the interests of Ireland and counter steps which would damage them. In so doing, we harbour no delusions about what is feasible and the constraints on national sovereignty posed by the EU.

The EU was and is recognised by Sinn Féin as antipathetic to Irish national independence. The issue is how to act in the context of Irish public opinion in the 26 counties currently registering almost 80% support for the EU and making the immediate prospect of withdrawal unachievable. It would be irresponsible simply to state opposition to the EU and then rest upon rhetoric alone. In any event, what Sinn Féin is definitely opposed to is a federal Europe and, fortunately, that is at present the policy of the Irish government as well.

In the longer term, opinion may be got to shift within the 26 counties towards disengagement from the EU and that would be welcomed. Of course, before then and as things are going at the moment, the EU as we know it now may disintegrate anyway as a result of the various tensions becoming manifest within it.

In the hope that this helps to clarify matters.

*Daltún Ó Ceallaigh*

8 Oct 2018

**IMPERIALIST COLLABORATORS  
& CANNON FODDER**

Stephen Collins characteristically and unctuously continues his ant-inational crusade in The Irish Times of 27th September 2018. Therein, he berates the Irish State for failing to acknowledge “the sacrifice made by policemen [RIC] who died during those terrible years” [i.e. the War of Independence]. However, he notes that the State “has rightly honoured the Irishmen who fought in the British army during the first World War and even the British soldiers who died suppressing the rebels in 1916 ...”

We have referred before to the difference between compassion and condonement. At a human level, it is indeed sad that some Irishmen were misled or culpable in being induced to become collaborators at home or cannon fodder abroad. However, the attempt by Collins and his ilk to conflate reactionary politics with human sensitivity, so as to disguise the former, is as reprehensible as ever. It does nothing more than attempt to rationalise the obsequiousness of a quisling establishment.

Sometimes, it takes an outsider to highlight the reality of what is happening. For example, some Polish friends of mine have remarked that the kind of behaviour in question, as also exemplified in the notorious Glasnevin wall, is equivalent to honouring patriots who died in the Warsaw uprising of 1944 and at the same time regretting the fate of those SS who fell in that conflict along with their kapos.

*1 Oct 2018*

#### ANOTHER HOWLIN HOWLER

Labour Party leader (for the moment) Brendan Howlin is complaining about the inauguration of the President of Ireland occurring on the same day as the centenary of the 1918 Armistice. That brought to an end the inter-imperialist war in which tens of thousands of Irishmen were induced to perish fighting for the British Empire by the quisling John Redmond. Russia did not share in the victory as the one-time ally of the Tsar had been overthrown in a revolution the year beforehand. One cannot but have compassion for the Irishmen who thus lost their lives, but the event is an attempt to fudge the fact that the conflict was not one for democracy or a 'war for small nations' (what about Ireland?) but a reactionary contest among bourgeois and aristocratic forces. However, one does not expect much more from the fast fading Labour Party.

*31 Aug 2018*

#### THE EPITAPH OF LABOUR

Last week, the respected and astute columnist, Noel Whelan, wrote in The Irish Times about talk of a merger of the SDLP with Fianna Fáil. There was an interesting agúsin to his piece. In this, he revealed that he had been speaking to some senior members of the evaporating Labour Party and that they had mooted the possibility of LP also merging with FF. It is not altogether surprising that some of the anti-national and anti-republican Labour leadership should now think this way. Perhaps they could thus reclaim a few government positions. However, it is doubtful if the bulk of Labour members would go along with them, among whom there are many sincere progressives, especially in the youth wing. But, in the event of this happening, they have an alternative – join a genuinely socially radical party which is unapologetic in its upholding of the Connolly republican tradition, namely Sinn Féin.

*30 Aug 2018*

#### THE NORTHERN INSURRECTION

Today's media are full of reports about analyses, conferences and release of State papers concerning the 20th anniversary of the peace in the north brought about in 1998 and the ending of 'The Troubles'. It is about time that we became more politically accurate. 'The Troubles' consisted of two parts: a PERIOD OF UNREST from the Divis Street incursion by the RUC in 1964 to the attempted pogrom of nationalists in 1969 by unionists, and then THE NORTHERN INSURRECTION from 1970 to 1996 when the IRA engaged crown forces and unionist extremists. It has been said that it would have been better if the civil rights movement had simply been allowed to follow its path. However, the experience was that the movement was beaten off the streets by the RUC, and then the British army (which had no right to be in Ireland anyway) shifted from initially protecting nationalists to 'containing' them as it was easier to do so with a minority, most blatantly with the curfew of the Lower Falls. And unionist extremists continued their attacks. That is the explanation for THE NORTHERN INSURRECTION of 1970-97.

*24 Aug 2018*

#### CIVIL RIGHTS 1968 IN THE NORTH

Do you apologise for this, Drew Harris?

## **NORTHERN IRELAND**



*18 Aug 2018*

### **IRELAND & THE COMMONWEALTH**

The question comes up from time to time as to whether or not the Irish Republic should rejoin the Commonwealth. The basic republican reaction is negative because the organisation is headed not only by a monarch but a British one. Moreover, it is redolent of empire even though it consists of post-colonial countries and a few never occupied by Britain. The idea nevertheless is suggested as perhaps a means of contributing to reconciliation and facilitating the path to Irish unity. However, I have to say that, in broaching the matter with unionists in the north, there is little joy I have found in these regards. Some workingclass unionists have never heard of the Commonwealth and those further up the line who have state that the Irish Republic rejoining is of no relevance to any kind of rapprochement. If that is generally the case, it would seem that contemplating rejoining is just a plain waste of time. I also detect that some 'southerners' have a notion to the contrary due to their lack of familiarity with unionists. However, others may have had different experiences. But these are mine.

*12<sup>th</sup> Aug 2018*

### **CROPPIES LIE DOWN**

Alex Kane, former communications officer for the Ulster Unionist Party, writes in 'The Irish Times' (16-7-18) about Gerry Adams at an annual commemoration

in Mullaghbawn saying that Sinn Féin would continue to demand a border poll on Irish unity, and states that this “was a particularly unhelpful comment ... ” Of course, it is never unhelpful for unionists to constantly call for the maintenance of the union with Britain in perpetuum. Sensitivity towards unionists is to be observed, while insensitivity towards nationalists is to be discounted. This is nothing more than a modern and euphemistic version of ‘croppies lie down’.



But it does not stop there. A typical accompaniment to this opinion is the tired criticism often made about our national anthem. A short while before Kane’s comment, Andy Pollak (ex-Centre for Cross-Border Studies) trotted out in the same newspaper (14-6-18) the usual denunciation of the “militaristic, anti-British Amhrán na bhFiann”. Others would see this as an historically proud expression of the heroic and militant resistance to British imperialism during the course of winning independence for the twenty-six counties. One trusts that citizen Pollak does not scrutinise too much the words of the Marseillaise, otherwise he might have an apoplectic fit.

*23 July 2018*