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COMHDHÁIL NÁISIÚNTA NA HÉIREANN

BREXIT & IREXIT

A Discussion Article

In the near future, our country is going to experience momentous change and upheaval arising from circumstances not of our making, but which nonetheless will force us to make difficult political choices and take calculated political risks.

The Three Crises

There are three looming political crises that Ireland is going to have to address. [1]

The non-functioning of the political institutions in the six counties and, in the longer term, the end of the entity of Northern Ireland, at least in its present form. [2] Dealing with the outcome and consequences of the Brexit decision in the United Kingdom. [3] Our future relationship with the European Union and how we as a small nation deal with the growing democratic deficit, the mass impoverishment being caused by imposed economic policies, and the threat to the remnants of national sovereignty arising from proposals to create a superstate - in effect, an empire.

We shall now deal with each of these issues in turn and, as will be seen, the common theme that runs through all three subjects is the National Question in its

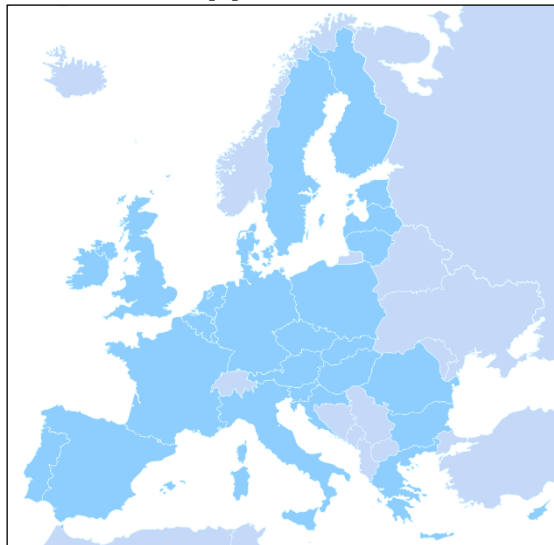
widest sense, national sovereignty, and the will of the people.

Sovereignty

The decision by a small majority of the UK electorate to leave the EU sent shock waves through the Irish political establishment and, indeed, created some degree of panic. In the twenty months or so since the Brexit vote, the Irish establishment has calmed down somewhat and is attempting to offer constructive proposals aimed at alleviating the more negative outcomes from Brexit. Dublin's relative sense of calm and reassurance stems no doubt from the fact that Britain is essentially out on its own and that, for the time being at least, the 26 continental EU states are supportive of the Irish position.

However, it remains to be seen

whether the Irish equanimity can be maintained once the second, and more important, round of negotiations begins. Ireland's needs could be rendered secondary in the intricate dealings between the UK and the EU. The major Irish concerns in this whole process are: the potential losses of export earnings, particularly as regards food and indigenous manufacturing; the imposition of a so-called hard border



on the island of Ireland; and, finally, the potential for the unravelling of the Good Friday Agreement.

Inside the UK state itself, the Brexit electoral result has produced major divisions amongst the electorate, with some organized groupings vainly seeking to reverse the Brexit vote.

Scotland and the six counties of course voted by majority to remain and that now has the potential to re-open the debate concerning Scottish independence and the possible break-up of the 311 year-old Union. In the north of Ireland, we saw how it was that many unionists, even in rural and border districts, voted for Brexit, i.e. voted in an ideological way seemingly against their own economic interests. The nature of this particular stance was attributed to an attempt to stop the process of so-called soft Irish reunification that they saw as arising from the open borders policy of the EU.

Origins of Brexit

Outwardly, it would appear that the current British government is floundering and clueless, and many are of the view that the country is being led to a disastrous outcome. However, there are others claiming that the ground was being prepared for Brexit long before the plebiscite. These sources are claiming that, at the very highest levels of the British ruling class and the 'deep state', there has been for some time a view that the EU is fundamentally a failed project, destined to collapse. This view it seems is also shared by the German military intelligence service which has been drawing up contingency plans to deal with this possible outcome. The preferred option of Britain's rulers is to create a new Atlanticist trading block initially between the UK, the US, and British Commonwealth states. When we talk about the British ruling class here, we should also include the highest levels of finance capital in the City of London, at least those parts of it that are not dependent on Frankfurt or Brussels for business.

There are indications that US so-called 'dark money' and 'vulture funds' played a significant role in financing the Brexit

campaign, hoping to capitalize on potential windfall profits arising from the future status of the United Kingdom. British strategists are aiming at turning post-EU Britain into a global financial and trading hub, attempting to restore its past status as it were. It would be difficult to see how this could come about, given the hollowing out of British industry, caused by years of deliberate de-industrialization and outsourcing. However, as a financial centre, London would retain its dominant global role and the over-inflated London property market would continue to attract so-called hot money from global oligarchs and criminals.

New Social Darwinism

There will be an enormous social price extracted from UK citizens as a result of Brexit. Not only will UK taxpayers be saddled with a large exit bill by an angry and vengeful EU, they will also of course end up losing many of the benefits and protections that went with EU membership. This is the stark underlying agenda behind Brexit that ordinary citizens are not being told about. For the simple reality is, and the elites pushing the Brexit agenda know only too well, that their vision of a new post-EU Britain can only come about through the tearing up of the social contract in the UK. In particular, the future of the National Health Service looks bleak, given that US interests are seeking to cannibalize it and mine it for profits.

The xenophobes who made one of their campaign issues immigration restriction will soon be made to realize the extent of their folly. The brave new post-EU Britain will need more rather than less immigrants. In order to restore international competitiveness and profit margins, labour costs will have to be driven down and the social safety net shredded. Inevitably, a new brutal social Darwinism will come into being. Police forces in Britain will come to resemble the old Royal Ulster Constabulary, and any attempt to organize serious mass-dissent against the neoliberal onslaught will be brutally suppressed. In the Britain of the not too distant future,



everyday social reality will come to resemble some of the worst aspects of today's United States of America.

Irexit

It would be incorrect to term the Brexit slight majority vote in England and Wales as 'populist', given that much of the current leadership of that movement is made up of xenophobes, social reactionaries and financial predators. It is at this point that we need to ask ourselves what is the best position for Ireland to take now that it is clear that the United Kingdom will leave the European Union in 2019. Should we remain or should we Irexit, as some would advocate?

Given that the UK is quitting a wealthy continental trading block of some 430 million people, for what could be at best an uncertain future, the only logical and sensible position for the Irish State to adopt at this time is the remain one. We will argue this for the following reasons.

Firstly, notwithstanding the increasingly undemocratic nature of the EU and its growing embrace of neoliberal and destructive austerity economics, there are, at least for the time being, important supports, benefits and safeguards of a socially benign nature still in place. Agricultural supports, food safety standards, infrastructure grants, training subsidies, protection for workers' rights and, very importantly for us in Ireland, human rights safeguards and oversight. Britain, on the other hand, seems destined for a period of escalating social regression under a very brutal form of Anglo-US capitalism which up to now British people have never experienced, even under Thatcher! Disturbingly, the UK government has also indicated that it wishes to withdraw its support from existing EU human rights legislation. Imagine the future effect that particular change could create in the north of Ireland!

Secondly, If the Irish State were to Irexit alongside the UK, there is little doubt that we would find ourselves gravitating, economically, politically and culturally, back towards Britain and what is termed, the Anglosphere. This would have a negative effect on national morale and lead many to question our very existence as a

distinct State. The cultural link with continental Europe is vital for our self-image and for our very survival.

Remain

So, in terms of our overall approach, we should support the remain position. We should therefore assist communities, particularly those living in the border areas, which are seeking a special status for the six counties when the UK finally does leave the EU. And we should give our support to any positive initiatives taken by the Irish government, provided that there is no weakening of resolve or pandering to British mischief.

In conclusion, we need to be aware that as actual Brexit comes closer, Irish society will find itself being pulled in both directions. Certainly, Anglocentric commentators will start issuing stark warnings as to what will happen to us for not following the British lead. Expect to hear arguments along the lines of: "We have nothing in common with the continentals ... Britain is our extended family". Also, do not rule out the possibility, given past form, that the British could try to create problems on various levels and may try to use an anxious and easily rattled Irish Government as their cat's paw in dealings with the EU bureaucracy. And, no doubt, we will hear renewed calls for us to rejoin the British Commonwealth.

Irexit & the National Dimension

There will be those who will call for Irexit, coming from an Irish republican, nationalist or socialist perspective. They will argue that we should leave the EU in order to restore our sovereignty, regain control over our currency, and over resources such as fisheries. Many of the arguments they put forward against us staying in the EU are interesting, and valid in their own terms and worth taking into account. However, they are perhaps a little too sanguine concerning the prospects for a post-EU Ireland. They are failing to take into account what centuries of brutal colonialism and actual genocide have done to the Irish psyche. We simply do not have the self-confidence of the Swiss, Norwegians or even the Finns. In a post-EU Ireland, our easily frightened comprador elites would,

Francis Martin, April 2018

more likely than not, put us straight back under British tutelage. Our anti-EU friends should be debated with in a fraternal and amicable way. But, for the present at least, their advice should be disregarded.

Considered comments about this article will also be published

CENTENARY COMMEMORATIONS

As we progress through the historic events of the Decade of Centenary Commemorations, events which included a re-enactment of the burial of Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa in 2015 and celebration of the Easter Rising in 2016, both of which attracted massive public support, we are now nearing the centenary of three further seismic events which shaped the political direction, ethos and polity this State was to embrace.

1918 was marked by the anti-conscription campaign and December 2018 sees the centenary of the 1918 general election, followed by the establishment of the First Dáil Éireann in January 1919. The Irish National Congress acknowledges the role of the Government, the Expert Advisory Group and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht for the wide-ranging number of events celebrated during the centenary commemorations.

There were, understandably, some initial concerns on the direction the government commemorations were taking. For instance, the puffed-up promotion of Redmondism and the appalling proposal to invite British royalty to the 1916 Rising commemoration were government proposals which were abandoned following public disquiet and, in some cases, outrage.

Subsequent events clearly appealed to the national spirit and were in accord with popular demand, and in a major way restored national morale after economic collapse. Receiving due world-wide media

coverage, the Easter Rising commemorations projected Ireland centre stage and her people responded magnificently by unashamedly and respectfully expressing pride in their history and their national cultural identity. Citizens from every corner of Ireland and the world converged on Dublin and many other centres to pay tribute to those who fought for our independence, with some making the ultimate sacrifice and giving their lives for Irish freedom.

Commemoration Committee

The 1916-1921 Club, which contains current and former members of the Irish National Congress, has formed the First Dáil Commemoration Committee (FDCC) and seeks to ensure that the State gives similar recognition to the Centenary of the 1918 General Election and the First Dáil of 1919. These events we regard as defining moments in our national history which led to one of the most stable democracies in the world. This splendid parliamentary achievement, which was inspirational from the outset and carried forward with principled determination despite adversity through decades of instability, comprehensively answers those few that even today would hesitate to acknowledge the right to self-determination of the Irish people.

The FDCC aims to ensure that the Centenary of The First Dáil is appropriately celebrated as the foundation stone of Democracy in Ireland just as the Easter Rising was the foundation of the Irish Republic. Since the imperial election of 1918



is linked to the First Dáil, the commemorations should commence in December 2018 culminating in the Centenary weekend of celebrations in January 2019.

It is our understanding that a meeting of the Oireachtas in the Mansion House will be the highlight of the official Centenary celebration. A Simultaneous Sitting of Both Houses of the Oireachtas should take place, as occurred in 1969 for the 50th Anniversary. We presume that the current Oireachtas members will be central to the occasion in the presence of relatives of those elected to the First Dáil. Party leaders' statements should feature the highlighting of party links to the First Dáil, followed by the main address by an An tUachtarán Michael D Higgins. The importance of this occasion warrants the announcement of a national holiday, 'Independence Day', as just recently formally proposed in Seanad Éireann.

Centenary Recommendations

Centenary Year Recommendations identified and proposed by the FDCC include:

- ◆ The Irish language as First Language of the State should have prominence as was the case in 1919.
- ◆ The Centenary Year should feature Debate/Discussions on: The Dáil Then - The Dáil Today.
- ◆ Honouring: Cathal Brugha, Éamon de Valera, Michael Collins, Arthur Griffith, Countess Markievicz and others.

- ◆ Unmanageable Revolutionaries - Leading Women of that time.

- ◆ The Centenary Programme should include a photographic record, film archive display and exhibition of copies of historic documents such as The Declaration of Independence, Message to the Free Nations of The World and The Democratic Programme of The First Dáil.

- ◆ The 1918 Election, which resulted in the Dáil in the first woman-appointed Minister, and the first election in Ireland that largely recognised women's suffrage.

- ◆ A large photograph of the members of the First Dáil to be displayed outside the Mansion House, Leinster House and Government Buildings during Centenary Year.

- ◆ The national broadcaster, RTÉ to have a central role to play. Our recommendation is that programmes should be centred on three themes: Election 1918, The First Dáil and the commencement of the War of independence.

- ◆ The FDCC recommends that the significance of the First Dáil be brought to schools nationwide, as the 1916 Rising was in 2016. Encourage schoolchildren to research local records on members of the First Dáil from their locality.

- ◆ A recommendation that Centenary Coins and Stamps be circulated, as the USA did in the 1970s for their Bicentennial.

Tom Cooper, Cathaoirleach, CNÉ

TOWARDS A UNITED IRELAND

The Republican Movement's policy on a British position regarding a united Ireland, at the time of the commencement in 1971 of the Period of Armed Conflict (PAC) involving engagement between the IRA and crown forces in the north, demanded British departure from the six counties. Over subsequent years, it evolved into demanding a specific date in the not too distant future for departure, to Britain becoming a persuader for the reunification of Ireland, to at

least declaring in favour of it.

Home Rule & the Free State

The historical background to the Northern Ireland Act 1998, pursuant to the Good Friday Agreement, lies in the Government of Ireland Act 1920 (known popularly as 'Home Rule'). 'Home Rule' left the United Kingdom (or 'Union') intact; it was a devolutionary measure which gave only restricted powers to Ireland in the shape of two parliaments for six and twenty-six

counties, respectively, with the possibility of a largely consultative Council of Ireland for the entire island. Following the War of Independence and the Treaty, Home Rule was confirmed as only obtaining in respect of six counties in the north-east, while the other twenty-six counties became the Irish Free State, thus leaving the United Kingdom, while assuming dominion status in the British Commonwealth.

The Government of Ireland Act was scaled down gradually, following the onset of the armed conflict in the north. It was replaced entirely by the Northern Ireland Act in 1998. On the question of national sovereignty, its novelty was in providing for a border poll in the six counties which could definitely lead to a united Ireland. The Act states that a poll will occur "if at any time it appears likely to him [the British-appointed Secretary of State for the north] that a majority of those voting would express a wish that Northern Ireland should cease to be part of the United Kingdom and form part of a united Ireland." But the means by which such an apparent likelihood would be ascertained are not spelled out. Moreover, if a poll is held pursuant to this clause, and, from a nationalist point of view, lost, a second poll cannot be held for another seven years.

Pro-Unity Demands

The Northern Ireland Act is a positive advance on previous British legislation as regards the north, while still leaving the Act of Union currently in place in regard to it. But, by itself, the NI Act lets the British off the hook of formulating a definitive policy of its own on Irish national sovereignty. In addition to the Act, republicans should still be demanding that Britain favour Irish unity and become a persuader for it, both politically and materially. Politics is not just

about persuasion; it is also about pressure. And the two need not be in conflict with each other. This holds true as regards unionists. Otherwise, one could end up with an approach to Irish unity redolent of Official Sinn Féin and its renamed successors. Pressure as well as persuasion is especially necessary, because unionism is essentially a bigoted, supremacist creed veering towards fascism among the loyalist working class.

Another demand which should be raised by republicans is that a referendum be held in Britain on the continuance of the union with the north. All the opinion surveys which have been conducted in Britain indicate an overwhelming majority for ending the union with the north, although not necessarily in favour of a united Ireland. That would be left for the Irish to sort out.



Reformationism & Orangeism

As for Orangeism, while the Reformation tradition of the around 900,000 Protestants in north-east Ireland and others in the 26 counties should be respected, Orangeism is quite another matter. The Reformation began in the early 16th century and was a challenge to the Roman tradition which, among other things, was seen as scripturally invalid and materially corrupt. Monarchist Orangeism, however, emerged in the 18th century in Ireland in opposition to nationalism whose adherents were mainly Catholic; it was and is sectarian and reactionary and should not thus be confused with Reformationism. Indeed, there are Reformation Protestants who reject it on those grounds. For republicans to accept Orangeism as a legitimate part of 'the cultural life of the nation' is thus profoundly mistaken.

Daltún Ó Ceallaigh, Oifigeach Cumarsáide, CNÉ

IN-SOMME-NIA

For Britain, the blood sacrifice of the Somme is one of the central foundation myths upon which the British State is built.

The nobility, heroism and stoicism of the battle are recalled unquestioningly by the media, and intellectual and political elites.

The battle of the Somme lasted from the 1st July 1916 until November of that year. In it, Britain suffered 481,842 casual-

ties of which 95,675 were killed while the French endured 240,000 casualties of which 50,755 were killed.

In reality the Battle of the Somme was a mere distraction to relieve the pressure on France at Verdun where the manhood of France was being bled white by the German army. The Battle of Verdun lasted from 21st February to 18th December 1916 and cost 542,000 French and 434,000 German casualties and the lives of 162,000 French and 143,000 German soldiers. In Verdun, 30 million shells were fired, 2 million in one day. But, unlike the British commemorations at the Somme, since 1984 the French State has held a joint commemoration at Verdun with Germany.

In Islandbridge Dublin, there stands the Irish national war memorial and upon it are inscribed the names of 49,400 Irish men who died fighting for Britain in World War One. Among them are 2000 members of Carson's UVF who were sent out to be butchered on the first day of the Battle of the Somme at 7.30am on 1st July 1916. For Ulster Loyalists, the Somme was their slaughter, their famine. Out of the 50,000 Irish men who died in World War One 10,000 came from the six counties; most of them served with the UVF's 36th Ulster Division. Only 70 out of Captain Frank Crozier's 300 Shankill Volunteers survived the war.

In all, 19,240 British soldiers were killed in that first day of the battle of the Somme, substantially more than the 12,000 who were killed on all sides in the Easter Rising, War of independence, Civil War, recent northern conflict, and all other political violence in Ireland from 1916-2016. In all, 702,000 British were killed and 1.67 million wounded in the First World War. When one adds in the rest from the empire, casualties from Canada, Australia, India and elsewhere, the combined "British" total was 907,000 killed and 2.1 million wounded.



When one considers that, between 1839 and 1853, the British army suffered 58,139 deaths at home and abroad, mostly through disease, one can imagine the psychological shock the war had on the British system. Britain was used to inflicting massive casualties on its enemies, as with the 27,000 Sudanese Askaris massacred by British troops at Omdurman on 2nd September 1898, not to enduring them.

That was not how, since at least 1904, Britain had planned the 'Great war' should go. The French, Germans and Russians were meant to slog it out on the ground on the European continent until exhaustion, with Britain providing little more than a token force, while the British Royal Navy would strangle the German civilian population into submission with a starvation blockade. The British army was then to cherry-pick the prize fruits from the German and Turkish empires in various 'side shows' around the globe, from Tanzania, to Baghdad, to New Guinea. Britain was supposed to emerge triumphant, with both her enemies and allies weakened and bankrupted by war and Britain engorged from former empires. She would once again prevail through divide and rule.

However, the Germans, Austrians and Turks proved tough nuts to crack and fought on even when the realisation of their strategic objectives seemed impossible. By 1916, Britain had run out of excuses and her allies had run out of patience at her failure to launch a major offensive on the Western front. The 'westerners' in the British cabinet, who wanted to grind Germany into the dust, gained the upper hand over the 'easterners' who wanted simply to steal for the British empire; the result was the Somme.

The man chosen to plan the offensive was the 1st earl, Field Marshal Douglas Haig - a former member of the Bullingdon club in Oxford University and a veteran of the 1898 Sudan war. His millionaire father

was an alcoholic and head of the Haig distillery. Before his death in 1928, he set up the "Haig Fund" which today is known as the British Legion's poppy appeal.

The English FA recently applied for their players to be allowed to wear a poppy on their team's strip (as they have done previously). However, UEFA refused the request, saying teams were not allowed to wear political symbols. A spokesperson pointed out that many other countries had experienced huge losses in wars past and present. If the French didn't demand to display their corn-flower or the Russians their black and orange ribbon why should Britain's sacrifice be treated differently.

The decision was met in England with shocked disbelief at the ingratitude of these insolent foreigners; had they not realised that these Englishmen died for their freedom? As ever, Britain practises one thing and preaches another. She claims to have fought 'a war to end all wars' yet, in the century since, she has fought in dozens of other conflicts from the Russian civil war to Dresden to Korea to Afghanistan. She fought for 'the freedom of small nations' yet sought to suppress the struggle for freedom in Ireland, India, Kenya and dozens of other countries.

A century on, Britain still claims a unique sense of suffering; it is superior to the Americans as she sacrificed more than their 100,000; it is superior in sacrifice to the Germans' 2.9 million casualties as they died on the wrong side; and it is superior to France's 1.9 million casualties as they died for selfish motives. The more time that passes between the sacrifices of the past and today, the more fervent is the mania to commemorate to the point where it is virtually mandatory to wear a poppy to appear on British TV. The British State's obsession with its own past sacrifice, and indifference to the past and present suffering of others, would indicate a diagnosis of maudlin, narcissistic, psychopathy.

However, the British State does not genuinely grieve for its 'glorious dead' but rather uses them in an annual act of State-sponsored sorcery. Every November at the cenotaph in London, the great and the good of the British State line up to bear witness as a cavalcade of human wreckage proceeds past their leaders whose

hands are soaked in the blood of the innocent. The spirits of the sacred dead are invoked to confer absolution upon their past, present and future crimes; the mirage of peace-keeping is conjured up to condone the continuation of carnage. The incinerated infants of Dresden, the skulduggery of Suez, the anarchy of Aden, the tortures of Kenya, the ambushed priests of Ballymurphy, the screaming sailors of the Belgrano, the horrors of Helmand - all this is forgiven and, more importantly, forgotten.

As Irish republicans, it is our duty to remember, to expose delusions and confound the imperialist death cult of poppy fascism.

Paul McGuill, Rúnaí, INC

ZIONISM & ANTI-SEMITISM

There is no doubt that, down through the ages, and from ancient times, Jews have suffered abominably in the treatment that they have received from the societies in which they were and are situated. The position grew substantially worse with the onset of Christianity and the assertion that they had crucified the 'saviour'. There were ghettos, pogroms, and widespread and severe discrimination otherwise, with the diabolical consummation occurring in the holocaust perpetrated by the Nazis.



Ruth Dudley Edwards

Nationalists and Jews

Irish nationalists often saw a parallel between themselves and the Jews. In societies marked by injustice and inequality, the spurious cause of Jewish conspiracy and exploitation was invented. In Ireland, Catholics, most of whom were nationalists, were depicted as a lesser breed than the Anglo-Saxon and Ulster Scot planters and

were portrayed as deficient and subversive in every sphere. The Jews were the whipping boys in Britain and continental Europe and Catholics and nationalists were the same in Ireland.

Zionism

However, in the 19th century, a distinction arose between the legitimate rights of Jews, and Zionism which preached a doctrine of primordial entitlement to Palestine. Nonetheless, there were many Jews who were opposed to Zionism and saw in it the potential for a new form of colonialism and persecution of the natives concerned. This ideology was fulfilled by the establishment of the State of Israel towards the middle of the last century and the development of a cruel and harsh treatment of Palestinian Arabs. This is what has led Irish nationalists today to identify with the Palestinians on grounds of equity and national democracy.



This distinction is not recognised by some. In the case of some Jews and others who support Israel, the situation has developed whereby criticism of Israel and anti-Semitism are fused. This is a bullying tactic designed to shore up Israel and discredit criticism of its policies towards Palestinians.

Ant-Semitism & Republicans

One of the most recent adherents of this tactic has been Dudley Edwards. In an article in the *Belfast Telegraph* on 23 April 2018, she denounced Irish republicans as anti-Semitic. She began by claiming that Sinn Féin had trained "its gullible followers to be virulent anti-Semites." Of course, no evidence is produced by this revisionist historian and tabloid journalist for such a ridiculous accusation.

She also stated that: "They fly Palestinian flags much less as a mark of the

compassion for Palestinians than as a sign of their hatred of Israelis." "Loyalists, on the other hand, see Israel as beleaguered and fly Israeli flags not because they hate Palestinians, but because they hate republicans." Obviously, she has not witnessed or has chosen to ignore the spectacle of the swastika of Nazi Germany and the ensign of the Confederate States of America being flown in loyalist areas.

She regards Israel as "the only functioning democracy in the Middle East"! Rather is it a semitocracy whose denial of human rights and creation of ghettos in Gaza and the West Bank obviously count for nothing in her eyes.

While Sinn Féin is quite capable of speaking for itself, it is clear that Dudley Edwards is trying to denigrate all republicans and should thus be responded to as appropriate.

The Good Old Days

Paul McGuill, Rúnaí, INC

There has been a recent trend of nostalgia for the good old days of British rule triggered by the likes of dramas such as *Downtown Abbey* and *Victoria*. When allied to other reality programmes like *Benefits Street*, they hark back to a 'golden age' when everyone knew their place. Perhaps it would be a worthwhile exercise to refresh our memories as to the highlights of the good old days of the British Empire.

Slavery: Before slavery was abolished in the British empire in 1832, there were 800,000 British-owned slaves, mostly on plantations in the West Indies. In addition to the usual unpaid back-breaking workload, discipline was enforced at the end of a whip and many female slaves had to endure 'nutmegging' - the rape of black female slaves by their masters. One owner in particular, Mr Thistlewood, kept a diary of the more than 4000 tortures and rapes he committed against his slaves. When slavery was eventually abolished, the 46,000 slave owners received the equivalent of £17 billion in compensation from the British State, the slaves of course received nothing.

Domestic Servitude: The rise of domestic service only really took off with the

abolition of slavery in 1832. Until then, domestic servants were usually unpaid except for their room and board and the uniforms they were provided with. A Victorian house maid was paid the equivalent of £69 a year for a working week of six and a half days and 16 hours a day of drudgery and deference. In 1861, in Britain, out of a population of 20 million people, 1.2 million were domestic servants.¹ In Ireland, in 1911, 10% of the workforce or 131,970 people were domestic servants compared to 4858 in 2011.

Prostitution: From 1860-1925, Dublin's red-light district, 'Monto', around Talbot St and Gardiner St, was the largest in Europe with 1600 working prostitutes who mostly catered for the British army garrison in the Royal barracks. King Edward VII is said to have lost his virginity in Monto. Although Monto survived for more than 60 years under British 'Victorian prudishness', within three years of the establishment of an independent Irish State the humiliation and degradation of the girls of 'night town' was brought to an end. Nor was this experience unique to Ireland. In India, from 1860-1888, 75 cantonments were designated as brothel areas with regulated prostitution. When this arrangement was suspended, the rate of venereal disease grew to 25% in the Indian army by 1895.²

Transportation: In 18th century Britain, 222 crimes carried the death penalty. As a more 'humane' alternative between 1788-1868, 162,000 people were transported as convicts to Australia; 24% of these were Irish, and many, like John Mitchell, were transported for 'political offences'.

Workhouses: Since the 1601 Poor Relief Act, Britain had tried to deter destitution and vagrancy with the humiliation and tedium of the poor house. In 1834, the poor law system was reformed creating 163 purpose-built standardised workhouses throughout Ireland. In effect, it was an

attempt to criminalise poverty. Families who entered the workhouse were segregated by sex, made wear uniforms, given porridge in feeding troughs, made to sleep on straw mattresses and set to work from 7am to 5pm every day on pointless and tedious tasks such as stone breaking and oak-ham picking, bone grinding and wood chopping. At its height during the famine in 1851, 200,000 were in receipt of poor relief and 770,000 received outdoor relief. By 1896, 40,000 were in poor houses. In the south, workhouses were converted into hospitals after independence in 1922. However, in Northern Ireland, workhouses continued until the start of the welfare state in 1948.

Housing: In 1911, Dublin had the worst housing in the UK. 26,000 families or 36% of the city's population lived in one-room tenements. In No. 7 Henrietta St, 19 families or 104 people lived in one house. The Dublin death rate was 22.3 per 1000, as high as in Calcutta, while in London it was 15.6 per 1000. In 1916, 6741 people died from TB compared to 25 in 2016. Many of these houses were unfit for human habitation; in 1913, a tenement in Church St collapsed killing 7 people.

Nor were these properties tightly regulated, as 16 members of Dublin corporation themselves owned tenements. Nor was rural Ireland much better. In 1841, 135,314 farms were of less than one acre; by 1871, this had been reduced to 48,448 holdings. But in that year, 37,117 dwellings were one-room thatched mud huts, while 117,564 were one-room cabins made of stone. In 1871, there were 592,590 agricultural holdings in Ireland; 72.65% of all farms operated at subsistence level and were under 12 acres in size. Most of these farmers were tenants and paid rent to the 4000 landlords who owned most of the land of Ireland; 48% of these landlords were Church of Ireland, 43% were Catholic and 7% Presbyterian. In the 18th century, out of a total national income of £4 million, £1 million was taken out of Ireland by absentee landlords. Should the crops fail, tenants faced evic-



¹ *Capital Vol 1*, Karl Marx, page 479.

² *Britain's Forgotten Wars*, Ian Hennon, Page 18

tion if the rent could not then be paid. Between 1877 and 1881, there were 6906 evictions. This resulted in acts of vengeance called agrarian outrages which ranged from murder to cattle maiming and crop burning. Between 1877 and 1881, there were 8424 agrarian outrages. This 'Land War' forced the British government to assist tenants to purchase their own landholdings. Between 1885 and 1920, the land commission bought 13 million acres and, by 1909, 270,000 purchases had been completed and 46,000 more were pending.

Famine: Between 1845 and '51, over one million Irish people died in the great potato famine at a time when Britain was the most economically advanced super power in the world. Ireland was called the 'economic basket case of Europe' because it experienced net emigration of over 1.1 million between 1926 and '96 yet, under British rule from 1841 to 1925, 5.2 million Irish people emigrated.³ Nor was this the only famine to occur in Ireland under Britain's watch. Between 1739 and '41, over 400,000 or one-eighth of the population died in a famine. The last localised famine in Ireland occurred in county Mayo in 1895. Ireland was not the only part of the British empire to experience a famine. In 1943, while 6 million Jews were being murdered and dying of typhus and starvation in Nazi death camps, 3 million Indians were starving to death in a manmade famine in Bengal. When Japan conquered the rice bowl of Burma, Winston Churchill ordered rice supplies to be diverted to British troops, sparking hoarding, panic buying and a 400% increase in the price of rice which caused mass starvation among Bengal's poor.⁴

Racism: Throughout the 19th century, London's *Punch* magazine spewed out thousands of racist cartoons which depicted the Irish as murderous ape men. Racist attitudes were commonplace in Britain such as in Rudyard Kipling's poem "The White Man's Burden". Such racism was perhaps an essential ingredient in the expansion of the British empire as it used perceived differences to 'divide and rule'.

In India, Ireland and elsewhere. This racism was not only applied to empire's darker races but also to creating a hierarchy of European races and indeed within the regions of Britain itself; the Scot, Scouser, Cockney, Taffy, Brummie and Geordie all had to learn their place in this regional pecking order beneath of course the 'Home Counties' aristocracy.

CELTOPHOBIA

Well into the 20th century, historians taught that the Celts arrived in Ireland around 500 BC. Sometimes, this was described as invasion or migration and in one or more waves. It was not clear what happened to the aboriginal population and whether or not it was eliminated or absorbed.

New Scenario?

In recent decades, this scenario has been challenged on various grounds.

First of all, some archaeologists have told us that there is little or no trace of Celtic intrusion or intrusions.

Then a number of scientists came up with DNA research which seemed to indicate that there was no great influx of Celts in the period concerned and that the aboriginal population continued to dominate genetically up to and beyond 500 BC.

Next, some scholars pointed out that the current use of the term Celt only became established in the 18th century and that Celts in Europe or in Ireland did not so describe themselves.

A major question which remained was that of how Ireland came to be exclusively Gaelic speaking, and with a Gaelic culture and indeed a certain Gaelic national consciousness as evidenced in various lines of historical research. It was then suggested that all this was not so much due to population movement as cultural influence arising from contact with the continent.

It is not difficult to see in some of these assertions an attempt to further deflate nationalism by casting doubt on the ancient Celtic origins of the Irish nation. However, the result is a racialist as distinct from a culturalist approach to nationality. In the latter case, it does not really matter

³Ireland Since the Famine, FSL Lyons, Page 44

⁴International Business Times, 22/2/13

what blood flows in one's veins as distinct from the cultural tradition which one possesses and suffuses the consciousness of Irish men and women today.

Scepticism

At the same time, a certain amount of scepticism is required in reacting to the techniques of Celtophobia.

On the archaeological front, the comment by some other archaeologists is to be borne in mind that absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. One thinks here of what used to be considered the myth of Troy and what was discovered to be reality at the end of the 19th century.

In respect of DNA, it is virtually fool proof in dealing with the identification of contemporary murderers, but there are doubts about how far the current state of the science is reliable as regards human developments over thousands of years.

As for the name Celt, there is nothing unusual in a term coming to describe an ancient people who may not have used it much, if at all, themselves. For example, the ancient Egyptians (a Greek word) did not refer to themselves as Egyptian but rather as from Kumat.

In respect of language and culture, while there were no doubt influences which spread in the ancient world across geographical and national boundaries, it seems to stretch credibility to assert that these came to bear so predominantly in Ireland without some degree of population movement. Yet such movement need not have been overwhelming, but adequate to implant and perhaps replace the autochthonous culture of what was a small, primeval population. In the age of mass media, we are conscious of not only continental but global influences. But we have to remember that we live in a very different age from that of ancient Ireland.

Celtic Ireland

All this said, Celtophobia will no doubt continue to be promoted by some scholars and smart-alec journalists whose anti-nationalism is well known. There may have been in the past nationalists who felt that Celtic blood was important, but today it is Celtic culture which is paramount.

In summary, Ireland was predominantly Celtic in ancient times and is Celtic to

this day in significant measure. To that extent, we can be proud to say that we are culturally Celts, even often via the English language, and reject a racialist interpretation of nationality.

Daltún Ó Ceallaigh, Eagarthóir, INC NEWS

CHANGE OF ADDRESS FOR IRISH NATIONAL CONGRESS

For almost thirty years, P.O. Box No 2814 was used by the Irish National Congress as our correspondence address, but last year, due to an extraordinary piece of incompetence by An Post, in failing to invoice us for the annual premium, the address was deactivated. Some of our members who had purchased raffle tickets had their counterfoils and remittances returned. This action by An Post was arbitrary, intemperate and unjustified. Following discussions with An Post management, they reversed their decision to deactivate our postal address, but we felt that the Box Number had been irrevocably discredited and those members who had correspondence returned would be unlikely to use this address again with confidence. This is understandable. We have decided therefore to change our postal address which is now Pearse House, 27 Pearse Street, Dublin 2.

We apologise for the debacle of last year, which was not of our making, and hope that your support over many years past will continue long into the future. May we make a special plea to our members to continue with your support as we would be unable to function without it. The funds generated through our annual raffle, including some very welcome donations by members, are used exclusively for printing and posting the *INC NEWS*. All other running expenses are met personally by members of the INC national executive. Thank you.

Tom Cooper, Cathaoirleach, INC

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