

## < Trácht – Comment >

### RIC – ROYAL IRISH COLLABORATORS

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*

<b>SHAMROCK-POPPY AMHÁIN</b>
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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 antinational 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

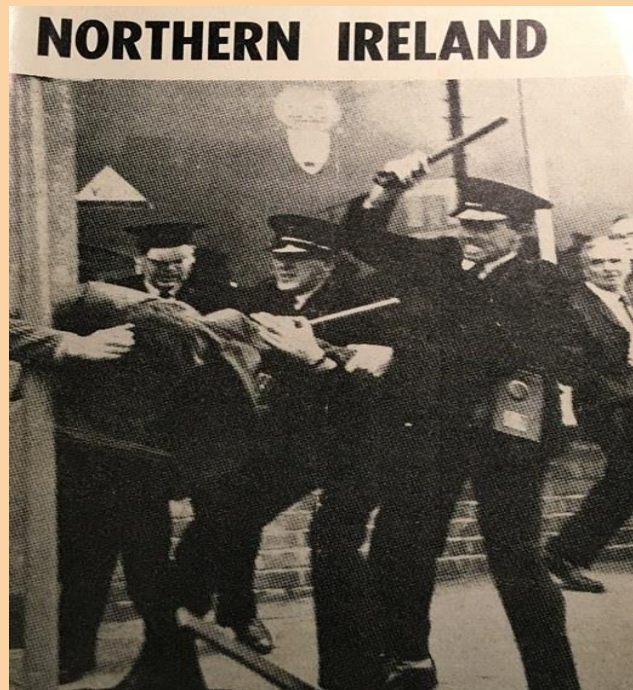
Today's media are full of reports about analyses, conferences and release of State papers concerning the 20th anniversary of the peace in the north brought about in 1998 and the ending of 'The Troubles'. It is about time that we became more politically accurate. 'The Troubles' consisted of two parts: 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 1970-96.

*24 Aug 2018*



## CIVIL RIGHTS 1968 IN THE NORTH

Do you apologise for this, Drew Harris?



*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 working class 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*