



TOWARDS IRELAND BRITLESS

A Personal View
by

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Inevitably, cracks have begun to appear in the vestigial British stone-wall, somewhat inaccurately known as 'partition'. No longer is London quite as sure of its footing or as certain of its right to what it once termed 'Ulster'. No longer too does the word 'Loyalist' bring any great cheer in the halls of Westminster. With the exception of a few 'Empah-type' rightwingers in the mould of Moseley, Thatcher and Enoch Powell and certain Kitsonian Army die-hards, the British people, are in the whole, wisely post-empire. Consequently they are both embarrassed and wearied by their country's military and political involvement in Ireland. Part of this change can no doubt be attributed to dire financial circumstances at home, riven as Britain is by unemployment, industrial paralysis and the deeper trauma of post-imperialism (including acquired racial hatred).

All in all, Britain is suffering from a more debilitating malaise than either the post-war condition of say Germany or Japan both of whom now enjoy an amazing material and psychological superiority over their erstwhile conquerors. Added to this low-ebb of national spirit is of course the war-weariness of what has become Britain's longest and least successful military campaign in Europe — the 'Northern troubles'. The lunatic National Front apart, it is no time for triumphalism or waving of the Union Jack. Try as she may to 'crush the I.R.A.' Britain's best efforts, including those of the much vaunted S.A.S. have all come to nought. No longer are the Crown Force lies, the Mason-type propaganda, believed. 'Defeating the I.R.A.' has now only a 'words' meaning, a mere dabbling in dubious semantics by the Brits and that after nine years of open warfare.

As the Maquis' nightmare was to the Nazi forces of occupation in France so now is the Irish Republican Army to the Crown Force and that considering the said Crown Force has for mercenaries an armed Protestant police in the R.U.C., a Protestant Militia in the U.D.R. and various murder-squads drawn from the U.D.A., the Red Hand and Tartan gangs. As if that were not enough there has been for the first time in our country's history open co-operation and unashamed collusion between the forces of the Free State and those of the Crown. Dublin has been at pains to explain her involvement as being "in the interest of security"! Despite all this, historians and realists among military experts have long since conveyed the message back to London and Dublin — the defeat of an armed Irish Patriotic Front was not on.

In many ways a somewhat similar position obtains in Smith's Rhodesia — forces of liberation who stand steadfast believing in the inalienable right to Sovereignty and Freedom even as their own Quisling within the

corridors of power, are still not easily crushed or defeated. There is however one rather significant difference between those mirror images — Mr. Smith got the message before the walls of the city crumbled.

There has, of course, been a school of thought which held that British war-lords could accept a certain level of violence in the North since the inbuilt compensatory factor of having soldiers 'trained' in actual war conditions was in itself of the utmost importance. Riot-squads using Belfast and Derry as baton-fodder would be all the more effective in a Cromwellian situation in say London, Coventry, Liverpool or Manchester. Be that as it may, the Exchequer appears to hold other views now, the vast destruction wrought on property and industry by a highly co-ordinated series of bombing and burnings being far in excess of 'controlled' or 'an acceptable level'. The truth is the cost to the Exchequer suddenly rocketed to staggering millions. There was, too, of course, the morale-sapping 'mainland' bombings bringing the war-message home to the very heart of England — London. Nor could the casualty lists be always cloaked up despite flying dead British soldiers out to West Germany and then telling their relatives they had been killed in 'road accidents' — a sordid enough business in itself. Even the crack regiment S.A.S. found the going tough having itself lost high-level personnel. The well-oiled Brit war-propaganda machine wilted too as did its Free State media agents and 'leaking' allies many of whom took off for London.

Very early in 1978 it became apparent that Britain had at last accepted the fact that she could never contain, much less defeat, the I.R.A. She had used all the tools of 'Empire' against the Republican Movement — murder, torture, internment, blackmail, propaganda and civilian harassment and yet all these monstrous instruments had failed her. Britain was not fighting an orthodox war nor was she engaging some mighty world power. Rather was she grappling with far more subtle and resilient forces, namely the Freedom spirit of an ancient people, the proud unconquerable Celtic will to liberate the homeland. Slowly but surely England recognised the Fenian flame which rose phoenix-like in 1916, blazed onwards in the War of Independence from 1918-1921 and had not been extinguished by either Carson or Cosgrave or De Valera for that matter.

For Britain it was time once again to withdraw the Crown Force finally and fully, gradually if necessary, and with whatever grace remained to be salvaged. The Brits have been rather good, traditionally, at this kind of thing. Firstly they allow war-orientated industries to run down closing one by one the more remote outposts and ancillary stations thereby concentrating their forces mainly in the larger urban barracks. Sometimes, too, there is a sudden escalation on the ground, a final parting shot as if to show-off and mark their departure with a pretence of strength. Childish perhaps, but part and parcel of Empire traditions. The scaling down is already at an advanced stage, the war escalation or *feu de frustration* not so obvious but to be presently expected. Perhaps the first hint at this ultimate revenge syndrome can be gleaned from the paranoid tactics being now employed at the infamous H-Block, Long Kesh, at Crumlin Road Prison and at Armagh Women's Prison. In each of these hell-holes

Irish men and women fight for prisoner-of-war status spurning the grey cloth of civil prisoners (the criminals are elsewhere!) and taking instead to a blanket wrap and that for almost two years now. Such Nazi-like concentration camps under the seal of Her Majesty Elizabeth II have done little good for the British image abroad, being as they are in everything save gas-chamber and incinerators fellow-monsters to Dachau and Belsen. Having been humiliated in the field of battle the military Brit feels he has to humiliate his prisoners-of-war. Ironically such jackbootery only serves to steel the freedom-fighter's resolve and thereby humiliate still further the already demoralised captors. Regular armies and their hired mercenaries may inflict massive suffering and great depravity but are as a rule poor at the business of accepting suffering themselves. Weaponless, they capitulate in psyche and person. Even Kitson's own psycho-fiends, well schooled though they be in paramedical torture could never crack this inner Resistance. Nor for that matter did the Auxies or the Black-and-Tans in another day and age. This the Brits have learned to accept slowly, painfully and perhaps grudgingly.

In the South, however, the "Éire" or Free State consciousness and attitude is a different matter. Long-term it might well be added a 'more serious matter' too. Ever since 1922 Dublin developed a stately mentality much as Stormont did, Carson and Brookeborough rule was OK and found its mirror-image in Cosgrave and De Valera. Self-centred in the extreme the Twenty-Six County Dáil Éireann ruled as if some mythical giant had pulled the Six Counties away from the parent country and made it into another island. Thus began the Free State schizophrenia. Political platitudes apart, usually at election-time, very little in the way of constructive political thought or initiative ever crossed the Straits of Partition. Now in 1978 the giant-pulling act has been reversed, no thanks to Dublin. Ireland once again is about to become whole, an undivided political unit, an island near to Britain but militarily and politically free of Britain's chains. This is as the majority of all Irish people want it to be; this too is what the majority of Britons want now after centuries of conquest and re-action. There always has been a vast difference in attitude towards this country between the ordinary working-class British people and their rulers cum military elite. The Irish, subtle as ever in speech, have marked this distinction in the English language and have coined a new word for the latter ilk — "Brits". There certainly is no residue of hatred or even animosity in Ireland towards the ordinary British people nor should there be. On the other hand there is very little love lost between most Irish people and those who rule politically or militarily from London. Surely polls and television trend-probes always fail to make this distinction between "Brit" and "British". One can only conclude that this is an exercise in media censorship, the word "Brit", as opposed to "British", being politically sensitive as indeed is "West Brit", a term of opprobrium reserved not for Britons domiciled in Ireland but rather for Irish by birth but English in outlook. Even on an Irish roadside the slogan always reads "Brits Out" not "British".

At home this sudden change from two-part island mentality to one has

caused a veritable storm in the Dublin political pool. 1977 brought a general election in the South and put the 'Border Question' right back into the political cauldron. A landslide victory for the Lynch camp ironically enough caused a degree of embarrassment to Jack Lynch himself. Cast in the role of leading the Free State 'Republican Party' he found himself the recipient of a massive 'Yes' to Unity and British Withdrawal and an equally massive 'No' to Cruise O'Brienery and Cosgrave. The people had spoken, there could be no shilly-shallying or 'wait and see' policies now. Cosgrave and Cruise O'Brien got the message instantly, one retiring to the hunting-fields the other to his spiritual home — London. Even the so-called Labour leader Corish decided to take a back seat having been well and truly gulled by the Cruise O'Brien 'think-tank'. The Coalition Brit-game was not going anywhere in a hurry except to the political dump-heap. The people in the South had given a strident 'No' to a Fascist orientated regime of 'Law and Order' which had led them to the brink of a second civil war. Clearly the most telling rejection of all was reserved for O'Brien's 'two states of Ireland' and the abandoning of the minority in the North to the not so tender mercies of Crown Forces and Unionist politicians. Never in the history of the Free State had the people punished an outgoing Government so deliberately and so heavily. Their much boasted "mandate" went up in a puff of political smoke. The Nation emergent, which very notion these discredited politicians had rejected, had even attempted to scuttle, to please their London overlords, had given her own answer.

As already stated, this massive swing towards active republicanism towards the culmination of a two-statelet Ireland, towards open British withdrawal on all fronts, military, political, cultural and fiscal placed Prime Minister Lynch in quite a dilemma. Henceforth he would have to make All-Ireland sounds. Seen in this light the General Election of 1977 in the South was a milestone in Irish history, a pointed rejection of West Britonism rather than any overriding enchantment with Fianna Fail. Indeed it presaged massive political support for those who had fought for Peace with Unity and Justice and gave its answer to the neo-colonials, the Careys, Kennedys and 'Tip' O'Neills of the outside world. Only very recently this trend was further consolidated when a B.B.C. television programme unearthed a 38% 'admiration for the idealism of the Provisional I.R.A.' in the South much to the chagrin of certain Dublin journalists and politicians not to mention R.T.E. The 'old pals' game was well and truly up.

Considering this attitude, firmly struck on the part of our people, Lynch has good reason to pause and ponder. The people had very clearly pointed to a new role, a new attitude towards not just the North or the South but rather to the union of North and South concurrent with the breaking of political union with Britain. Judging by a former term in office Jack Lynch may not be just the ideal man to bring to full such trends of change even in the South. Formerly he had come very much under the shadow of Fine Gael's Cosgrave much to the disgust of several

members of his own Cabinet. His cynical handling of the Northern Troubles has almost certainly left a large residue of mistrust and possible hate among the nationalist people of Occupied Ireland. Even very recently Mr. Lynch had to admit that he could not visit or feel safe even in Republican areas such as West Belfast, Derry or Crossmaglen to mention but a few places wherein a Dublin politician might once feel welcome and at home. This is a sad business but quite inevitable considering the weak-kneed 'bow and scrape' policy adopted by Dublin Governments over the past decade. As well, several of Lynch's financial backers have little or no interest in a benighted Six Counties or their sorely pressed minority. To them the Republican people of the North were merely 'those troublesome bastards up North'! It has been said of the Lynch regime that Big Business rules behind scenes with an affable and personable Jack for front. Macro-builders, stockbrokers, bankers and their ilk are rarely of the stuff of 'Freedom', the North to them being perilously close to 'rocking the lucre boat'. Fianna Fáil the 'Republican Party' — but how far?

In fairness it must be said, indeed unequivocally said, that certain supporters of Fianna Fáil, certain men and women directly in line with 1916 and 1921 belong themselves to the 1918 Dáil Éireann tradition — a 32-county Ireland without any bloody or interfering Brits. Personally I have always felt rather sadly and deeply for these people, committed as they are to election-winning within the South. Indeed I know, too, that such election-blinded people exist within Fine Gael, many of whom have acted responsibly and sincerely on the side of Republicanism and hold deeply for British Withdrawal and Sovereignty. Surely there is food for thought here. Here we have party-minorities who, election-winning apart, never gave full allegiance to de Valera or Cosgrave, nor did they always agree with their respective leaders' attitudes towards Partition, the I.R.A. or "Ulster". If we examine this paradoxical situation in greater depth we find there exists a vast gulf in terms of nationalism and patriotism between the decent grass-roots in the major Free State parties and the sordid, vacillatory and pusillanimous double-dealers who are the 'Kingmakers' or string-pullers at the top.

Not every Fine Gael supporter for instance wanted Frank Stagg's body ghoulishly dismembered at Shannon Airport or buried beneath tons of Free State concrete — even for a short duration. Not every Fianna Fáil supporter would agree with the kidglove handling of the Wyman-Crinnion affair or cross-border co-operation and felon-setting with the Crown Force and the R.U.C. I know many supporters of that same party who would not hold with Dublin Minister for Foreign Affairs O'Kennedy when he hared off recently to Yugoslavia to declare that the Provisional I.R.A. were not 'liberation fighters'. Mr. O'Kennedy took good care not to say that nearer home, say in Derry or Belfast. In typical Brussels-bureaucrat fashion, O'Kennedy was trying to drag down the Northern fight for freedom to "terrorism" terms, the better to suit his new European bosses. All the more sad when one considers that this politician hails from Tipperary.

For too long now the grass-roots of Free State political parties have allowed their leaders get too easily off the hook when it came to discussing the North and formulating policy. One sensed there was almost naked indifference and not a little embarrassment when it came to the welfare and future of the Six Counties. Year after year different Free State Ardfheiseanna or General Meetings glossed quickly over this item when placed on the agenda, in many cases the time allotted to the Northern Question being deviously close to lunch-time exits. Free State politicians simply did not believe, nor could they even envisage, a Britless Ireland. Neither could they conceive that 'not-an-inch' Unionism would, since it was an anachronism anyway in the final quarter of the twentieth century, soften at the edges and gradually dissolve. Nor had they the sagacity to anticipate that such a softening process, such a modification of hardline Unionism and subsequent reorientation could be precipitated at will by Britain should she threaten to disengage. Indeed it could truly and justly be said of all three Leinster House parties, Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Labour, that their policies on the North could be contained on the back of any postage stamp. One party and one party only had the courage and foresight to nail its colours to the mast. Sinn Féin, because it was concerned more with the fabric of nationhood and the sacredness of sovereignty rather than the flesh-pots and jobberies, did just that. They preached Federalism at a time when it was viewed in the South as subversion. Sinn Féin, in January and August 1971, published as historic a document as the Easter Proclamation when they brought forth "Éire Nua" or "New Ireland".

Not that Sinn Féin's Federal Ireland outline was well received in the South at the time. Indeed it was almost completely ignored by a jaundiced Press and was banned, as it still is, from radio and television networks in the Free State. Were it not for "An Phoblacht" Sinn Féin's own weekly paper some eight vital years would have been completely lost in so far as Federal Ireland and the All-Irish consciousness were concerned. This is surely of some historical importance. Any radical document needs time to impinge itself on the consciousness of the people or peoples towards whom it is directed. One can scarcely expect any great success from "instant policy" as has been the Lynch attitude since it has become patently obvious that the I.R.A. would not or could not be weakened or defeated. [Even Jack Lynch had to admit of this himself by way of leading the clown politician Mason to his senses.]

Suddenly, indeed almost overnight, Federalism became a highly respectable word in Leinster House; Dublin was having a re-think. Sunningdale was now good olde blueberry Tory pie in the rather usually murky London political sky. It had conveniently fooled the Free State and had earned the wily Brits a few years respite. Of course empty formula that Sunningdale was its intrinsic political vacuum neatly sucked up the unfortunate S.D.L.P. and proceeded to split it right down the middle when suddenly dropped. The Sunningdale ploy had also a divisive effect on Unionism splintering the Loyalists and gradually weakening their willingness to go on believing in 'not-an-inch' intransigency.

It was not so much what Sunningdale would do, it was rather the threat of what it might do if implemented. Sunningdale was drafted in the knowledge that it would never be accepted by hard-line Unionists at the top and with a view to prolonging Direct Rule because of that same very rejection. Cunning statesmen that they are the Brits proffered 'power-sharing' but took full control of power themselves — a well executed double-shuffle catching all three 'innocents' — Free State, "Ulster" and the S.D.L.P. completely off balance, the latter party now being quite prepared to row in with R.U.C. rule O.K.! (A parody on the well-known Parnellite song must surely be on the cards — O have you been to Sunningdale . . .)

Oddly enough some very lean and learned men, some even with glowing wigs and flowing gowns were well and truly conned by Sunningdale Whitelaw. Not very much is heard of that 'silly season' political resort now — now it is Free State Federalism!

Dublin was lucky that at least one All-Ireland political party had set down seriously the possibilities of a Federal Ireland. Vital years would have elapsed because of Dublin's default before the Northern majority could at least become acquainted with such a political programme. One could not expect instant acceptance of such a radical document, on their part. Such an innovation would take time to sink in. Sinn Féin had certain inbuilt advantages in promulgating the principles of Federalism. Sinn Féin was of the North itself as much as of the South and did not belong to Leinster House and therefore was not Dublin or Leinster House centred. Far from fearing a loss of power or a downgrading of a Dublin house of parliament as would Southern politicians Sinn Féin envisaged a new House alternating in sitting between Belfast and Dublin or more ideally still occupying a central position say at Athlone or even the ancient ruling site at Tara. (Geographic change of this nature would be important in that it could be physically seen that old orders had changed North and South.) In a way those who had the foresight to formulate Éire Nua/New Ireland found an ancient readymade framework for such a Federal State — the Cúigí or ancient 'Fifths' or Provinces now grouped as four, namely Ulaidh/Ulster; Connachta/Connaught; Mumha/Munster; Laighin/Leinster. Indeed these political terms were still alive and were being used in everyday speech and print. Better still, Ulster proper crossed the border-divide in that three counties of 'Southern Ireland' and Six of the North merged under the very name Ulster.

In a way this was a form of folk-federalism in itself, especially in terms of sport and competition and was, in itself, a prototype of things to come. Sport perhaps more than anything else moved easily across divides and borders and had done so for many years. To instance but two venues: Ravenhill was not exactly unknown to the South nor was the R.D.S. Grounds, Ballsbridge, unknown to the North. Certain roots, if somewhat fragile and tenuous, had always existed in the grounds of Federalism. All four Provinces shared for instance a common if acquired language, English and yet all four held Gaeltacht areas and communities whose everyday speech was the Irish language. In the past, much

mischievous comment has been made in the matter of so-called 'conflicting cultures'. That there are two cultural roots of differing origin and age cannot be denied. To whip up this biculturalism into a racial frenzy is another matter. Conjuring up conflict rather than co-operation and symbiotic enrichment between languages and traditions is the work of the Philistine. That the Irish and English languages should be seen in duel context rather than in dual, speaks of a lack of sophistication peculiar perhaps to insular rather than to continental peoples. (No greater exponent of such philistinism could be found than the now London-based erstwhile Free State politician, Cruise O'Brien.)

In a Federal Ireland there would be no 'language of the conqueror', no seeking 'supremacy'. We should be glad for the 'more-ancient' and glad too for the world-wide language of diplomacy and commerce, both now very indigenous to our island. One feels that in a New Ireland not shadowed by Britain or London there would be a natural desire to trace back our ancestral roots, seeking for mergings as well as divergences and that out of this there would come a great cultural flowering. Truth is that this has already happened in the more instant or spontaneous art-forms such as music, song, dance and indeed also in art and sculpture. It has happened too, of course, in the matter of language, albeit in terms of a one-way street. What might be referred to as the Synge-input (some may hold cynically to Kiltartanese) sowed the rich field of Anglo-Irish literature. Nor was this language federalism confined merely to letters since it was watered by great streams of Celtic imagination by men like A.E., Joyce, Yeats, Clarke and Colum to mention but a few. There still remains to be carried out a similar enrichment and cultivation of the Irish language in an All-Ireland context drawing now from our acquired Anglo-Irish culture and letters. That this has not occurred naturally and of itself in the past, that this partition has not been assimilated and broken down is due in part to the siege mentality on the part of our would-be 'revivalists'.

In an Ireland totally directing her allegiance towards herself there would be new and invigorating cultural forces at work which could only foster and support the newly-founded federal state. For the first time since 1169 A.D. Ireland would be rid of a foreign force of occupation and this could only result in equanimity and constructivism. A new understanding between North and South would then seem inevitable. The old 'black-and-white' attitudes of 'hostile cultures' and ghetto mentalities would subside and be no more. To envisage this, to hope for and strive towards this goal in not necessarily to be Arcadian or Utopian. In reality it would mean that as an island people we had outgrown our tribalisms and had become a mature people. Already in our art galleries, in our museums and in our churches great and noble examples of the twinning of the Gaelic-Hibernico Anglo repose side by side complementing and adding lustre to each other.

Thus it can be seen that Federalism has been with us longer than we have realised, that our artists, our writers, our thinkers all had already achieved a merging of minds and hearts even if our politicians had failed

to find common ground. Perhaps this is the order of things, perhaps in the evolution of modern Ireland the less materialistic forms, the arts, arrive at a common platform well before the more worldly facets of life. True enough, certain businessmen have achieved a good working cross-border agreement with one another but not nearly to the extent that would in itself and by sheer weight of trading volume cause all tariff and duty barriers to come down. Sadly we in the South have turned Border Custom traffic into a lucrative State enterprise. There can be no excuse for any deliberate feet-dragging on the part of Politics or Big Business. For too long now we have reaped the deadly whirlwind of Brookeborough cum Churchillian remove, the callous intransigence and brutal political indifference. (The real men of violence often have cigars in hand for gun.) Even viewed from a British standpoint a united rather than a strife-torn island would form a more trustworthy and stable bastion to Britain's own western flank. Indeed the same holds true for Europe. Logically then both Europe and Britain should work towards this goal, a sovereign and consolidated Ireland rather than fractured and disjointed statelets.

For too long now both Dublin and London have played together the cynical 'men of violence' game, the subversive edition, the 'Reds In' if 'We Out'. There has been an awful price exacted for this blatant duplicity on the part of the so-called 'just politicians', those pillars of 'law and order'. There is something grievously wrong with the allegedly democratic seats of power be they in London, in Dublin, or in Brussels if one can read the following leader in a national newspaper: 'For it is patently obvious to everyone now that no British Government which is running up to a general election will *bother* itself with trying to formulate a new approach to Northern affairs'. This equates the Northern Troubles with seats and numbers in Parliament and renders peace and justice very secondary to Westminster party-survival and 'balanced' power. What a mockery this makes of 'fine and righteous' politicians' words!

Much more could be said about this abuse. For almost ten years now Free State and British politicians have banded closely together to combat what they call "terrorists" and "gunmen" — Brit propaganda terms. These Paddy-tags are all the more amusing coming from the mouths of Free State politicians when one remembers that the present 'Dáil Éireann' itself was a parliament born of gun and bullet and even worse — a savage civil war.

And yet it has to be admitted that it was the so-called 'subversives', the Republican Movement who first proffered the only viable solution left — a Federal Ireland. It affords one no great pleasure to have to state bluntly that Peace with Justice for the minority in the Six Counties came a very remote second in the eyes of successive Éire (sic) governments to 'crushing the I.R.A.' Indeed during the Cosgrave-Cooney regime, a British officer whose platoon had 'wandered by mistake' and temporarily invaded the South had this to proffer the Gardaí Síochána or Éire police-force: "Look here mate aren't we doing the one bloody job". A sad slight on any force of Irishmen.

There has however been a change in Southern attitudes of late, or at least a shift of emphasis. Since their massive rejection at the polls in 1977 'Law and Order' and Fascist revisionist tactics have been somewhat pared down. FitzGerald obviously got the message from the grass-roots during his post-election tour of defeat — 'Tell the Brits to go . . .' Very soon we were hearing of a 'Confederal' Ireland from FitzGerald too! The new leader of Fine Gael even declared that the I.R.A. could not be defeated, much in the manner of Taoiseach Jack Lynch. What a change from the 'Claudia and transom' days of Admiral Donegan! Even Labour's Cluskey appeared to wake up and Conorless mumbled something about a 'new policy' for the North. Bravo! all around. Why now such squeaks of change? The answer is simple enough. The London tuning-fork had been firmly struck and soon the vibrations and pitch travelled swiftly across the Irish Sea. Not for the first time had 'our master's voice' travelled from East to West across the pond.

For too long Southern politicians have viewed the North as a 'political nuisance', a perennial problem which simply refused to go away. Faced now with a shift in British policy our Dublin politicians became highly flapped and grasped at 'new policy' formulae like a drowning man would a straw. Suddenly it was a case of having to produce a 'document', some kind of document, to fill the years of abject vacuum and Stormont acceptance. Looking back now Sunningdale would have 'saved' the South, would have taken the Free State off the hook — but then it didn't happen nor was it meant to happen. That left a return to Stormont II and this simply would not wash with the electorate in the Twenty-Six Counties. So it had to be Sinn Féin's policy on Federalism, filch it anyway you like, for Fianna Fáil, and a watered-down form — Confederation — for Fine Gael. Labour's Cluskey, still under the shadow of Cruise O'Brien, plumped for 'two states or three' which he exactly did at his party's Annual General Meeting at Wexford. An historic moment to be sure! A 32 County Ireland free from Britain was simply not on for the so-called followers of the great and noble James Connolly.

The attempted grand larceny of the Provisionals' Federalism by Jack Lynch and Fianna Fáil is both amusing and interesting. Some naïve persons may see in it a return to 'republicanism' and pre-De Valera days, a genuine desire to unite North and South rather than set up political dynasties in Dublin and accept the mirror-image Unionist dynasty in Belfast. If that were now true one wonders why Fianna Fáil and its leader Lynch stalled for so long. One cannot but help thinking that political expediency rather than noblesse lies behind the Lynch 'about turn'. In a fast-forming 32-county Ireland how could Fianna Fáil itself survive or even exist without roots in "Ulster"? Unlike Sinn Féin neither Fianna Fáil nor Fine Gael have any political structures in the Six Counties. Astute politician that he is Jack Lynch would see in the S.D.L.P. a readymade mould which would suit his purpose very well. Indeed the S.D.L.P. and Fianna Fáil would appear to have a lot in common when it comes to vacillation and political chicanery. Garret

FitzGerald too has made overtures to the S.D.L.P. in a desperate effort to cloak his party's nakedness in the province. Not surprising therefore the S.D.L.P. have begun to talk of a 'federal' Ireland, though over the past years they have been quite happy to accept the R.U.C. and co-operate with them, to side with Britain's bailiffs against rate-and-rent-striking tenants which strikes these discredited politicians first advocated and even led! They too would if necessary forget 'Federalism' overnight and would gladly settle for 'power-sharing' and Stormont II. Any political structure which would afford them payments and power is viable as far as the S.D.L.P. is concerned. A shifty, mercenary bunch to be sure, whose very future as politicians is far from being assured at the ballot-box. Suddenly they too would like to grab Sinn Féin's original policy on Federal Ireland though a short few years ago S.D.L.P. members described Éire Nua/New Ireland as being 'impracticable' and 'pie-in-the-sky'. How these political chameleons change their spots when London rings the changes!

Of course Sinn Féin should feel proud that such a retinue of political copycats have fallen in behind its lead now that Britain has behind scenes come heavily down on the side of 'Disengagement and Withdrawal'. These clearly exposed political parties' conversion to a Federal Ireland is not born of any innate love or understanding for the minority in Occupied Ireland nor have they ever shown any solidarity with their cause. [For them Brian Maguire can hang away in the torture chambers of Castlereagh while reams of words are mouthed about Aldo Moro.] Rather is their Barabbas-like conversion due to having an eye on the northern ballot-box, in an All-Ireland Four Province election. Sinn Féin should not forget this. In fact, the Republican Movement would do well as a whole to remember this. Experts that the Lynch camp are at mealy-mouthed electioneering, they could conceivably have neck enough to put 'their man' in the field in "Ulster". No doubt they would arrive at Sunday churchgates and tell the people of the North how much they did for them in this the final War of Independence. Or would they now? There are even limits to political hypocrisy, at least one would hope so. The Northerners are not so easily fooled. (Already their patience has begun to fray, their tempers to flare, in neighbouring Monaghan.)

And yet the Republican Movement has not a scintilla of reason to trust any Free State politician. One can win a war and lose a peace. Collins did. History has many such examples. They should serve as warning. Already we have seen the 'snatch' at Republican Federal policy. The time is ripe to envisage a 1918-election even while the Brits are still on Irish soil. London would most likely want Power-structures filled to her satisfaction before any withdrawal of Crown Force. She would too almost certainly favour a minority representation orientated towards the largest political party in the South. In this way her interests would be best served even after she had left. Sinn Féin would thus be effectively 'cut out', a point Sinn Féin should take well to heart by way of anticipating such political opportunism. Possession being nine points

of the law, those elected from nationalist areas in the first Federal Ireland election would prove difficult to unseat. Several years would elapse before such an opportunity would present itself again and by then the twinning of 'favoured' northern candidates with the Establishment in the South would be complete. One does not have to possess a very vivid imagination to see the S.D.L.P. and possibly the "peace people", well funded as they are, play such a role.

The Republican Movement can scarcely afford to forget these possible future scenarios in a New Ireland. An organisation engaged in a long and wearying War of Independence should not forge this final goal. War does not go on indefinitely. The signs are all there that Britain has had enough. Her troops' morale has begun to crack, her propaganda to fly back on her face. Settle she must and leave. In that event Sinn Féin must stand fit and ready to implement the Federal Document which it alone drew up and fostered. Towards this end the Republican Movement will need all the brainpower and political expertise it can muster. This will mean that the energy now being put into the field of battle can then be directed at selling Sinn Féin policy to the people. It will mean a new field of training for some, a new outlook on a Britless situation. It will mean a common front Republican Movement with a much closer merging and liaison between the militant and the political sectors. It will essentially mean a closing as well as an opening of the ranks. This may not be as easy as it sounds. Men and women trained in the skills of combat usually find it difficult to re-adjust, to rechannel their undoubted expertise and energies to a new scene, a new field of activity. Yet it was towards that field that the war was fought. Having won, to fail to occupy that field or help to possess it and hold possession of it would be nothing short of disastrous.

The Republican Movement is lucky that in the main its ranks are drawn from the young and the idealistic. It is lucky too that its political wing was buoyant enough to envisage Britain's disengagement and so formulate a policy most suited to a new and modern Ireland. In this respect the principles of Sinn Féin Federalism are worth examining in some detail. Firstly Republican Federalism is no 'milk and water' cross-border 'co-operation'. It is the full thing and not a Free State attitude of peeping across a line, Uncle Tom-like. Nor does it see Dublin as the hub. Sinn Féin Federalism sees the old idea of a 26-County Free State as dead and gone and with Lloyd George in the grave. Henceforth it shall not be merely North and South but rather North, South, East and West. That is the true meaning of a Federal Ireland, a new orientation, a new political consciousness.

Central to New Ireland or Éire Nua policy is the worthy concept of decentralising power. Over the years politicians and their masters, the Bureaucrats, have moved power and rule farther and farther away from the people. In a way government in Ireland is but another name for bureaucratic dictatorship. Closely allied and working hand in hand with the merchants of red tape are, of course, the big financiers. It is both their business to stand at a considerable remove from the people,

building about themselves an aura of mystique — the Untouchables and the Unanswering. Our banks as constituted are probably the most corrupt and amoral institutions we have. They, as matters stand, are above government and would appear to dictate rather than accept government policy. No doubt this arrangement is highly lucrative and acceptable to the cognoscenti, the 'select' few but the price paid for the jet-setting is best gleaned from the indecent profit margins worked out annually by bankers and their cohorts. In a Federal Ireland it would be of primary importance that all banks and finance corporations be taken over and made into a people's fiscal system or Federal State Bank. This is certainly a most important part of the document known as Éire Nua/New Ireland.

Rule in present-day Ireland is nothing more sophisticated than a two-tier structure, local government and central government. As matters stand a gulf exists between both and consequently there is a grossly lopsided apportioning of real power. Local Government at County Council level would not be unfairly described as being at best a mere rubber stamp. No even or steady flow of power exists from Dublin down nor are there any life-lines or feed-backs from people to rulers. In the latter respect a courteous hearing is the exception rather than the rule. So bad has bureaucracy become that it is common to find people in the South being grateful for 'privileges' when in actual fact they have merely received their citizens' rights! Psychologically speaking this would appear to be a hang-over from the Workhouse Days, one begged and was lucky to receive, Leinster House becoming the omniscient Big House. With scarcely a single exception no Free State politician has had the humanity or the courage to examine how strong was the voice of the people after their votes had been counted. Our people have very little real say in the matters of their country. Used as ballot-box fodder, our people are effectively sidelined between elections. It is no wonder that ordinary quiet-living communities have been forced into public demonstrations and near riot situations. (The Raybestos Affair in County Cork is a good example of highriding bureaucracy where the people of Ringaskiddy find their parish turned into an asbestos waste dump. Tomorrow it could be the Boys of Wexford in view of the proposed nuclear reactor at the Carnsore site.) There exists an obvious and serious breakdown in the link between the people and the State.

It is certainly of paramount importance that such barriers between ruled and rulers be broken down in a New Ireland. The old systems have clearly outlived their usefulness. Decision-making must take place at local level in matters that pertain to the locality. Reading the chapter on government structures in Éire Nua it is quite obvious that Sinn Féin advocates rule by the people for the people. The stress is always on the importance of local representation, local executive. There is no question of Kafka-like castles and their occupants ruling with their heads dizzy in Olympian clouds.

The Sinn Féin Federal document proposes government at four levels — Community Council, District Council, Regional Council and

Provincial Parliaments with Dáil Éireann or Federal Parliament at the top. 'Under regionalisation the basic unit and focal point of statutory government will be the district council.' These district councils democratically elected on a Proportional Representation basis will represent a community of 10-14,000 people and their purpose will be to foster the social and cultural development of a specific area. People involvement is the key-note here, a devolution of power from the top which does not obtain North or South at present. The smaller Community Council will be represented on the District Council, a voluntary representative body representing and acting on behalf of local communities of 1,500—6,000 people or say the average Irish town unit of population. Again our towns and their councils as at present constituted are mere talking-shops with no real say in their own destiny, politically speaking. A real link between our town-governing bodies and Local or Central Government does not now exist. At next and higher level there would be some 15 Regional Administrative Councils whose responsibilities would include the collection of taxes and revenue, third and higher level education, hospitalisation, communication and the development of industries and growth centres.

The creation of democratically elected Provincial Parliaments would give real power to all the people North, South, East and West and would be tailor-made to their particular needs. More importantly still it would go a long way towards the solution of the partition problem since the Unionists' traditional fear is basically and understandably one of being placed 'under Dublin control'. In an Ulster Parliament the Unionists would hold a majority in nine counties whilst the minority too would be assured of access to real Power as would other ex-Unionists all forming a real and strong opposition. The Federal Parliament would be a single chamber of 150 delegates half of which would be elected by direct universal suffrage and the other half would represent in equal numbers, the four provincial parliaments.

Implementing Federal Ireland policy will be a long uphill battle with the entrenched ways and mores of Freestatery. A 32-county consciousness will after all those years of separatist mentality appear alien to Dublin. They may even resist it trenchantly and in armed combat. Much will depend on the 'humour' or mind of the people in the South who will be deeply indoctrinated no doubt by all the arms of the mass-media especially television. (R.T.E. 2 may well be an extra mouthpiece to this effect.)

Meanwhile Jack Lynch, if true to form, may concentrate on marking time by playing push-penny politics with London. For Dublin and Leinster House the wrench would not come easily. This is already apparent in the Lynch reluctance to change the Constitution or draft a new one. Even this is considered too great a departure from De Valeraism. The irony is of course that had Dev been at the helm himself in such a situation he would be subtle enough to change with a fast changing scene. He would quite conceivably bring the Constitution back to the theocratic source from which it came since it had by now

outlived its usefulness. De Valera and the Cabinet in Leinster House at that time may have approved of the said Constitution but the mind behind it, the *eminence grise* who actually thought out its articles and wrote down the actual lines and words is never mentioned.

Change there has been however in Church attitudes especially on the part of the Catholic Hierarchy. Recently Dr. Ó Fiaich, Archbishop of Armagh, and therefore Primate of All-Ireland, made it crystal clear that the Catholic Church and the State were independent bodies, each having its own separate function. What was 'sinful' may not necessarily be considered 'criminal'. Recalling the days of 'The Mother and Child Bill' this is certainly a radical change on the part of the Hierarchy. Such change is timely, indeed vital. In a 32-county Ireland there would be no place for what was justly or unjustly termed 'Rome Rule'. In a mixed denominational community Federal Law could not possibly be seen as an extension of any particular Church doctrine. Confirmation-day platitudes about not 'compromising your faith' from certain past retiring-age pastors cuts little ice in the harsh realities of a strife-torn Northern community. What may sound nice and cosy in West Cork may not sound very sensible twixt Falls and Shankill. Common sense would even seem to dictate that. Nor does one have to exactly apostate to meet his fellow christian or indeed non-christian half-way in what are essentially and humanly personal and civil matters.

Obviously such emotive issues as divorce and contraception were to the forefront in the minds of the majority of the Catholic Hierarchy when the distinction between Church and State was so clearly made. True enough the Catholic Church by virtue of its traditions and ex-cathedra teachings cannot very well change its doctrines to suit anybody or even for that matter a Federal Ireland. Neither in a way can the Church of Ireland, the Presbyterian Church, the Anglican Church nor the Methodist. Yet no church need be placed in any such embarrassing position if forum and pulpit are treated as separate entities. As matters stand Article 44 Sections 1 and 2 of the Free State Constitution certainly stands repugnant to the proposed nondenominational Federal Law.

'Religion' is by no means innocent in the matters which have convulsed this country for over sixty years now. For too long bigotry and hate-drumming have been somehow confused with the true christian ethic of charity. Churches have for the most acted as institutions and repositories for such sectarianism. Pulpit violence has long preceded that of the street. We have all been slow to admit this and indeed slower to put it down in script. This perhaps might well be attributed to a certain sense of fear, a veiled and latent sense of personal attack coming from within the ranks of elitist groups within one's own denomination. There can be no denying the financial and nepotistic power and influence wielded by such elitist religious sects as the Freemasons, their counterpart the Knights of Columbanus and to a lesser extent perhaps the Opus Dei. The works and pomps of these groupings have not been above a covert and well-cloaked violence in terms of position-filling (or emptying!) and power-wielding. These fount-sources of distrust, of nepotism and open

bigotry are rarely mentioned. Each seems to carry its own dark veil. Their existence and operations are excused as being for the 'propagation and ultimate good' of their respective churches. Since they are highly divisive and inward looking any good they may possibly achieve must surely be nullified strictly in terms of the true christian ethic.

In a non-denominational Federal State of Ireland, religion would gradually be seen to be a highly personal rather than sectarian matter and would rest within the walls of chapel, kirk, or church. For too long we have witnessed 'religion' acting as an unworthy Material Front with 'holier than thou' attitudes being struck all around. In a New Ireland different churches and religions would have to respect the democratic rights of one another and would see the federal law of the land as being above sectarian favour or influence. Likewise a similar tolerance would be evident in all public institutions and bodies, be they executive or administrative, none brooking any interference whatever from any church body. As yet this communal sophistication has not been reached North or South in this island though it would appear that such a non-denominational climate did blossom to some extent in the South in the post-treaty Free State. This the cynical may attribute to patronage and numerical superiority on the part of the Southern Catholics. Yet if this be so a like or reciprocal attitude to the minority was not to any visible degree adapted by the Northern Protestants. When these balances are openly, fairly and fully struck a new and settled Ireland is almost certainly inevitable.

One cannot but feel that the field of education has a lot to answer for in this matter. Unfortunately our schools have been heavily segregated. This has laid down certain barriers over the years leading finally to thinly veiled distrust and even open hostility and sectarianism. There can be little doubt as to the divisive influences exerted by our segregated schools on our people. Keeping our young citizens apart in different educational (sic) camps during their most impressionable and formative years inevitably leads to unfriendliness and distrust in later life. This in turn spills over into industry, business, executive fields and even the arenas of sport. The tragic irony of this school-age segregation is that it has its roots and reason in the teaching of religion. Or at least that is the excuse proffered for denominational education and that in the name of Christianity! One can of course imbue one's pupils from infant level onwards with a love and loyalty to a chosen religion to the exclusion of others but if that imbue ultimately leads to sectarianism, pogroms and armed hostility then one must consider deeply and in conscience the validity of such segregated education. It is very difficult, with all due respect to the Reverend Philbins and Paisleys of the Six Counties, and the Reverend Luceys of the Twenty-Six, to see exactly what Christian virtue may accrue from such calculated segregation of our people.

As a teacher who has had the privilege of teaching children of mixed denomination I can see no insurmountable difficulty in coping with multi-denominational schools. Naturally in the South the children in my classes over the years who were non-Catholic were very much in a

minority. And yet non-Catholic parents have on certain occasions exercised their right to choose a school other than their own for their children. One has to respect this constitutional right since this is real democracy at work. Here we had a minority within a minority situation. In the local Christian Brothers School where I work the period for Religious Instruction is from 12.00 to 12.30 or the final class before lunch-hour. This affords the non-Catholic pupil a choice of leaving at noon or if they should desire so staying on for the Christian Doctrine class. From personal experience the latter was nearly always the case and was carefully respected. There is a lot of Christian teaching which is common to all children.

Nevertheless such an arrangement is obviously far from being ideal. There is a lot to be said to leaving Christian doctrine to parents and within the privacy and congeniality of the home. Surely nobody is more privileged to teach the parental Christian ethic or the non-Christian ethic for that matter than the parents themselves? It may be said that certain parents are, for one reason or another, handicapped in this respect. This is often true. And yet there is a way out in such circumstances. Ideally religious instruction should be left to those who are skilled in that particular field. What more ennobling task remains to be done by those who have devoted their lives to religion than to teach the young? A lay teacher by virtue of his birthright is extremely limited in this respect being confined to a particular creed. This brings us to multi-religious teachings within a particular school, a system which has worked quite well in what used to be termed Vocational Education in the South. In these post primary schools minister and priest pay weekly visits and take over the religion classes. There is no reason why such an arrangement could not obtain in Religious Secondary Schools and also Primary level. Our universities are on the whole non-denominational or are fast becoming such, a sophisticated attitude which befits such institutions of learning. What cannot be denied is the plain fact that religious teaching in this island has produced some extraordinarily unchristian results. In a Federal Ireland serious and radical thought must be given to this matter. There can be little doubt but that much of the present-day bigotry and sectarianism stems directly from our schools.

It is therefore all the more sickening to hear smug observers in the South, clerics and their mouthpieces included, refer to 'brutal and savage deeds being perpetrated in the name of Freedom' when these very persons wage a cold war of 'churches' themselves. True there are no nice civilised wars either of conquest or liberation: war is always brutal and savage. It is Man animalistic rather than intellectual. And yet our so-called men of mind allowed the springs to coil and coil for over fifty years under the torque and pressures of autocratic misrule in what must be infamously known as the Brookeborough Era. To think that such selective injustice could continue indefinitely without any *force de frappe* was criminal and mindless misjudgement on the part of 'legitimate governments' in two islands. These governments who now adopt a very 'moral' stand condemning daily 'rebels' and 'terrorists' have short memories

and do not even like to be reminded of their monstrous indifference to the rights of the minority. Never a word uttered then about 'civil rights', 'equal opportunities', or 'power-sharing' and, of course, there was no question of British Withdrawal or a Federal Ireland. Sadly it took ten years of bomb and bullet to bring the 'legitimate governments' to their senses, the so-called politicians and statesmen to their responsibilities. To those who shout 'violence', 'murder' and 'savagery' let it also be said spawned by gross political ineptitude and even grosser political violence and selfishness.

Is it too much to expect a change of heart now from our rather well-heeled politicians? Will 'party' always come before country? Is 'federalism' a mere shibboleth on their part, a sop to electioneering and the hustings? Or are we big enough North and South, East and West, each to lose a little in terms of power so that all our people may benefit and gain. The centralists of 'Stormont', Leinster House and Westminster have had their bluff called loud and clear by Sinn Féin's Federal Ireland policy. Is Whitehall prepared to remove its armed presence once and for all from Irish soil? Are hard-line Unionists prepared to finally forget about a return to Stormont II? Is 'Dáil Éireann' prepared to leave Leinster House and its traditional Free State infrastructure? Well may it too be asked if the Catholic Church is prepared to be less hierarchical, less political, than it has been?

Should all these questions be answered in the affirmative then there would truly exist an Éire Nua — a New Ireland. Time, as always, will tell. But there can be no hedging now, no equivocation. Ireland an island complete within itself, geographically, politically, culturally and fiscally is at the very crossroads. This time the signposts do not point to London. This time we begin and treat at home.

Diarmaid Ó Súilleabháin,
Bealtaine, 1978



Diarmaid O'Suilleabhain born at Eyeries, Beara, Co. Cork, 1932. Nephew of Sean O'Driscoll first O. C. Fourth Battalion, Cork Brigade who later fought at Crossbarry. Though a bilingual poet, playwright and novelist most of O'Suilleabhain's work has been written in the Irish language. Winner of numerous literary awards including the American Butler Award, the Irish Academy of Letters Award and some 20 Oireachtas prizes. A volume containing over 100 poems is with the author's publishers Sairseal agus Dill. 'Towards Ireland Britless' was preceded by the much in demand political treatise 'Ireland - Free State or Nation?' A past editor of "An Phoblacht" this writer has trenchantly engaged the British Propaganda War Machine in the letter-columns of the Dublin Press ever since the Troubles began in the Six Counties. Diarmaid O'Suilleabhain was tried and sentenced by the very first Free State Special 'Nonjury' Criminal Court on June 13th 1972.