

# THE IRISH NATION



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## EUROPA ÜBER ALLES?

**EU Commission President von der Leyen has launched the project of a Conference on the Future of 'Europe'. Of course, it is not the real Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals but, more specifically, the European Union. To begin with, it is worth reminding ourselves what the EU is basically all about. A succinct and pointed summary in answer to this question was given by Gerry Adams in his 2005 book *The New Ireland* [updated references inserted in square brackets].**

"The desire to turn the EU into a superpower under the hegemony of the big states, a European super-power that would dispute the world with the US superpower and other such rising powers as Japan, China and India is central to understanding the politics of the EU. ...

"This, of course, is the polar opposite of the democratic and anti-imperialist outlook of Irish Republicanism, as well as democrats and progressive people all over Europe. ...

"The EU provides ideal terrain for the West European-based transnational firms. ...

"They see this is the best way of undermining workers' rights, labour standards and national welfare states....

[One might elaborate that EU measures on equal pay etc only derive from the need to equalise the terms of competition.]



"The more policy-making is shifted from the [27] member states to Brussels, the more power a few hundred politicians, bureaucrats and judges get to make laws and decide things for the [437] million people [in question] ...

"And then we have the drive towards militarisation. ... Sinn Féin believes that there is no legitimate role for the European Union in military and defence matters, which should be left to individual States. International peacekeeping and conflict resolution should happen under the auspices of the United Nations. ...

"I do not believe that the EU can be made more democratic by giving more powers or proposing utopian schemes for restructuring the Brussels machinery. In order to increase democracy in the EU, or rather to reduce its lack of democracy, power must be

shifted back from losses member States. ...

"Sinn Féin campaigned against membership of the EEC in 1973. Our view was that as a small partitioned island we would not benefit from what was essentially a rich man's club led in the main by the former colonial powers.

"Since then, each successive European treaty has taken further powers from the Irish State and the other member States

*(continued on back page)*

# POPULISM & THE LEFT

## The Historical Background

Populism is very much in the news nowadays. In the media, and for much of the Left, it is a dirty word. It is portrayed as 'far right' and variously characterised by 'nativism', xenophobia, racism, homophobia, fascism, etc.

The term Populism has been around since the late 19th century. It emerged in connection with a movement in the United States, particularly among the agricultural community, which was self-described as populist. It also became manifest in a different form in Russia with the narodniks (narodnik being the Russian noun for a populist). The English word derives from the Latin for people - *populus*.

Both these movements were, to put it at its broadest, anti-establishment, although their social bases and specific demands were different.

Since then, there has been a variety of political trends in different countries which have been described by political scientists as Left Populist, to one extent or another. For example, the New Deal approach of Roosevelt has been so classified. Also, Peronism in Argentina has been placed somewhat in the same category. Right Populism was exemplified *in extremis* in the Thirties and Forties by fascism and nazism.

In Ireland, the attempt to internationally classify the parties has led to Fine Gael being designated as conservative and Labour as social democratic, while Fianna Fáil has often been referred to as populist to a certain degree and before the current international discussion of populism began. The latter was so because of FF appealing

in some measure to the lower middle-class, working class, small farmers and agricultural labourers (although the last of these has now largely disappeared, not least due to agricultural technology). At the same time, FF was and is preponderately beholden to medium and large-sized capital and finance, both domestic and foreign.

In fact, today and in the debate across the Western world, a less media-tendentious and more analytical approach to the phenomenon in question explicitly refers not just to Populism, but to Right Populism and Left Populism.

## The Components

The common basis of the two populisms is to be found under a number of headings.

**POWERLESSNESS** - There are those who have given up hope of expressing their grievances and demands within society because they believe they are simply not listened to. In electoral terms, this covers people who are not registered to vote and those who registered at one point but no longer exercise the franchise. Instead of having a sense of being involved in a community and in society, there is a state of alienation and a lack of trust in the governors. The young can feel particularly affected, especially when they suffer the highest unemployment

**RESENTMENTS** - Following on from the latter, people are antagonistic towards the establishment in all its forms - traditional political parties, administrative and governing institutions, and notable centres of power such as the banks. They see them as indifferent, uncaring, exploitative and, indeed, oft-times corrupt. On occasion, the havenots even feel that they are held in sheer contempt by the elite.

**PERCEIVED THREATS** - These have been described as both vertical and horizontal. The vertical refers upwards to the elites stretching from Dublin to Brussels and the horizontal laterally to domestic minorities and immigrants.

The elite is perceived as serving only its own interest and at the expense of the less well-off. Thus, it is the cause of inequality. And it is increasingly cosmopolitan as reflected in globalisation, which is presented as enlightened and forward-looking, whereas it is really international capitalism without any of the controls that are exercised at the national level. Cosmopolitanism (the cultural side of globalisation) is also seen as a challenge to ethnic or national distinctiveness.

Migrants are often seen as a threat to employment when sometimes prepared to work for substandard wages. There is also hostility to them owing to cultural differences.

Examples of domestic minorities are the Roma in Eastern Europe and Travellers in Ireland and Muslims throughout Europe.

These resentments and threats are occasionally based on reality, although some of these need to be qualified.

For example, migrants not only in some instances get jobs for lower wages which Irish people are seeking, but also often do underpaid menial work which the locals are not prepared to do and such migrants are thus frequently separated from their families in their countries of origin. In these respects, they are also the exploited.

On the cultural side, however, there is reason to be critical on occasion of the attempt to import attitudes and practices which are reactionary and inhumane. For instance, there is the position of women in particular in some cultures, involving both status and bodily integrity (being a chattel or being subjected to female genital mutilation). 'Multiculturalism' sometimes tries to gloss over these considerations. On the other hand, one has to be careful about rightful criticism sliding into downright racism. There is also the problem of migrants living in ethnic ghettos. This can further reinforce simple wariness of

difference and strangeness.

RESPONSES - Both Right and Left Populism recognise these resentments and threats, but differ sharply in the analyses and remedies put forward in connection with them.

The Right seeks to demonise Muslims, Jews, Roma, Travellers, and foreigners generally, as the case may be. It is also censorious of the elite for what it sees as pandering to minorities and ignoring the majority.

### The Traditional Left

The problem with the traditional Left lies in a number of areas. To begin with, it has failed to successfully challenge neo-liberalism at the national and international levels. It had already accepted a compromise with capitalism in terms of Keynesian economics and the welfare State. Into the Seventies, this helped to deal with unemployment and poverty up to a point. There was also a degree of redistribution of income, but this was as much to ensure purchasing power for manufactured goods and commercial services as anything else.

The underprivileged also frequently see the Left as now placing identity politics (e.g. gender issues, sexual rights, ethnic concerns, and so on) above class politics instead of it complementing the latter. In other words, such politics is perceived as the outgrowth of a cultured and educated cohort or of the trendy Left which don't have to worry about social and economic deprivation. These elements further tend to favour unrestricted immigration as a manifestation of their 'liberalism'. They are moreover prone to advocating a multiculturalism which is viewed as detracting from national distinctiveness and producing an amorphous rather than just a tolerant society.



### **Post-Keynesianism**

The 1970s saw the drift away from Keynesian economics and the welfare State towards neoliberalism and individualism. The oil crisis of the early Seventies shifted the focus from consumption to supply economics, and the policy emphases became those of low inflation rather than job creation, and deregulation and privatisation instead of quality public service. Financialisation also grew whereby riches were accumulated, not on the basis of ownership of capital or meaningful provision of services, but speculation as regards currencies, credit, debt, and interest payments. Investment and production went by the way in this perspective.

The social democratic parties and trade unions, which had been partially seduced by a kind of corporatism and had come to rely unduly upon Keynesianism and welfarism, were confronted and cowed by the new regime. The ideological context was substantially assisted in these respects by the collapse of communism and the discrediting of socialism in general because of the reputation for inefficiency and corruption that had become associated with the States of Central and Eastern Europe. There was talk of a third way between socialism and capitalism, but what eventuated was a competitive centrism in which social democracy and the unions lost. On top of that, when the inevitable crises eventuated, the solution called for was 'austerity'. Progressive taxation, expenditure, investment, infrastructural development, and job creation were no longer the orders of the day.

It is not then surprising that popular discontent began to grow from the 1970s onwards and has reached a crescendo at present. The Left, however, generally seems unable to understand and react appropriately to this overall state of affairs. In other words, it has simply become out of touch and therefore has not framed the necessary approaches and demands to deal with the situation.

As a result, the Right has successfully recognised and acknowledged the feelings, attitudes and perceptions of the people and is leading them towards an authoritarian and intolerant order which will still in the main serve the interests of the elites, but guarantee less resistance to them.

### **The Alternative Populist Left**

Some political scientists have classified Sinn Féin as being an example of the Populist Left. Other such parties that they point to include Podemos in Spain and SYRIZA in Greece (although the latter has departed from its original stance).

Sinn Féin in fact is and should be a Left Populist party in that it is in touch with the people, not only coming up to elections, but also constantly in between them. It seeks to identify their legitimate concerns and propose appropriate remedies for them. It both articulates protest and endeavours to organise same as need be. It accepts that the elites in Dublin, Brussels and elsewhere (e.g. IMF, OECD etc.) are to be opposed and that their efforts to undermine the interests of the underprivileged should be frustrated. It reaffirms that it is a socialist party which needs to struggle against capitalism. It adheres to a modern socio-political analysis from a progressive point of view. It also supports reasonable demands arising from identity politics. In short, it is a voice for the voiceless - both generally and for particular groups.

In doing all this, it opposes the false interpretations and remedies offered by Right Populism in respect of popular grievances.

### **Methods of Struggle**

In all of the foregoing, one must utilise thoroughly all the modern techniques of communication and propaganda in fulfilling the purpose which progressives have set themselves. This refers both to traditional forms of activity such as leafleting, postering, canvassing, clinics, and public meetings, on the one hand, and to full exploitation of the internet, social media and the like, on the other.

# REPUBLICANISM & NATIONALISM

## *An Imagined Conflict*

*The following is the main content of a memorandum produced in August 2000 in reaction to the article specified below which is still relevant today.*

The Ireland Institute has taken a worthy initiative in launching a new magazine entitled *The Republic*. Ironically, however, the introductory article, 'Beyond Nationalism: Time to Reclaim the Republican Ideal', is counter-productive from a republican standpoint insofar as that aims to advance to the fullest extent the rights of the Irish nation and of its citizenry.

### **Confusion?**

The article commences with a statement of the need to undo the "confusion of republicanism with nationalism". What ensues is an imagined conflict between the two positions rather than a clarification of content and compatibility. The source of the difficulty is established early on by rejecting the approach of "nationalisms", or put less academically, denying the fact that there are different kinds of nationalism.



*'The Republic', Cicero*

As an ideology, nationalism generally emerged in modern history in the form of movements against empire through the assertion that nations have the right to independence.<sup>1</sup> (Later, they would be alternatively described as anti-imperialist, although that epithet can be attached to other and complementary stances as well.<sup>2</sup>) The nation was defined in terms of a socio-cultural entity, although with various mixes and emphases ranging from the heterogeneity of the Swiss to the virtual homogeneity of the Hungarians, to take but

two examples. In other words, the movements in question were not just civic in being comprised of citizens or those thus seeking citizenship instead of subjecthood; they were also ethnic in the delineation of the particular groups of citizens or would-be citizens concerned - therefore the description nationalist.<sup>3</sup>

### **Varieties of Nationalism**

But, while all nationalists hold that the nation should be self-governing, in respect of *how* it should be so, there are of course varieties of nationalism, just as there are of conservatism, liberalism and socialism. On the right, there is fundamentalist and conservative nationalism; on the left, liberal and socialist nationalism. In Irish circumstances, the fundamentalist would insist on a Catholic nation, while the conservative wants laissez-faire economics and has a narrow perspective on civil liberties; the liberal is more flexible on the economic front but is safe on civil liberties, while the socialist is also secure on the latter and advocates democracy throughout the socio-economic system.

### **Distortions of Nationalism**

It is this refusal to accept that there are varieties of nationalism which leads to the blanket statement that: "Nationalism categorises the world only in terms of nation and nationality. It ignores other categories such as gender, ethnicity, sexuality, class and more" True of some nationalists, perhaps, but not of others. Following on from this, it is averred: "If there is a conflict based on gender or class, in what way can an appeal to nationality as

<sup>1</sup> Although an independent nation state logically need not be internally democratic or liberal, nationalist movements tended to embody these perspectives.

<sup>2</sup> For example, persons in metropolitan countries opposing their own nation's expansionism.

<sup>3</sup> However, 'colonial nationalism' did not include

aboriginal peoples, and certain examples of 'internal colonialism' can be found elsewhere. For example, some of the south Slavs fighting with the Hungarians against the Austrians in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century switched sides when they found out that the borders of the old Hungary were to be maintained and would still incorporate them.

arbiter resolve that conflict? The only answer it can find is one which is already contained within the nation, and it is this which inclines nationalism towards conservative and authoritarian solutions and a propensity to favour the powerful and privileged.” The fact that some nationalists ally the drive for national freedom with a commitment to domestic change is overlooked. Next, we hear that: “Culture from outside the nation will seem alien and to some degree will be interpreted as threatening to the national culture.” Again, true of some nationalists. Apart from that, shades of the old and spurious opposition of nationalism versus internationalism (repeated elsewhere) when, in reality, they can be two sides of the same coin: for instance, in culture, treasure quality in your own and augment it with quality from others. At the same time, if external culture is that of an imperial power and being imposed on a nation while that nation's culture is being extirpated, resistance to attempted substitution, as distinct from worthwhile addition, is only natural.

### Nationalism & Change

The article may also be the victim of its own abstract categories. Insofar as nationalism is to be defined as dealing only with the national aspect of things, that does not mean that the nationalist, when confronted with certain problems, refers just to the nation for their solution. But even this distinction is somewhat limiting; not infrequently, the nationalist wants to be self-governing precisely for the purpose of changing some things within the nation - e.g. nationalism with a view to modernism! Or, put yet another way, nationalism can not only sit easily alongside domestic transformation, sometimes it is seen as a necessary condition for its achievement. Such nationalism is *not*, therefore, defined merely by the national *as it is*, but also by how it can and *ought to be*. These considerations are where the varieties identified above come in.<sup>4</sup>

“Nationalism”, it is argued, “is simultaneously liberating and oppressive, cosmopolitan and chauvinistic, democratic and undemocratic. The usefulness of a

concept which can contain such opposing meanings at the one time is doubtful.” Here, there is reference not only to the blurring of distinctions among different sorts of nationalism in regard to the objects of independence, but also to the blurring of the contrast between imperialism (or colonialism) and nationalism insofar as the first often rests on the alleged superiority of one nation over another or others. But this may be said to be not primarily a conceptual so much as a terminological dilemma (and not altogether a contingent one) of which more below.

### Conservative Nationalism

Not surprisingly, given what has gone before, the article proceeds as follows:

*“ ... while nationalism offers a convenient unifying point, its programme of building a nation state is essentially conservative and runs counter to the other transformative trends. Ironically, the nationalist part of the movement[?] proposes to build a state which is the mirror image of what the struggle is against: it is only the nationality of the state which will be different.”*

Reconstructed in a more precise political fashion, it might run like this:

*“ ... while nationalism offers a convenient unifying point, a programme for some of building a nation state is essentially conservative and runs counter to the other transformative trends. **The right-wing part of the nationalist movement proposes to build a state which is in its socio-economic character the mirror image of what the struggle by left-wing nationalists is against: it is only the nationality of the state which will be different.**”*

And, one might add, the persons who govern it would likewise be guaranteed to be conservative. Also, it is declared: “Neither democracy nor the republic refer to the nation or nationality.” That may be so semantically, but how are they to be made politically concrete other than by resting on the nation? Or are we back to Austro-Marxism with its hope of transmogrifying an empire into a republic with whatever contemporary equivalent is chosen - the EU perhaps?

<sup>4</sup> This has been particularly so in the case of some

African and Asian nationalist movements.

### False Antitheses

We are next informed that: "Attaching rights and obligations to a common citizenship leads to more open and democratic outcomes than attaching them to nationality." Once more, false antithesis raises its head. There is no necessary 'either/or' here. One has rights both as a member of a nation and as a citizen and the two cannot be divorced if democracy is to be fulfilled in the real world. One has rights as an *Irish* citizen or as a *French* citizen, and so on. Some of these rights are human and universal (freedom of conscience), others are more particular (e.g. use of a specific language).<sup>5</sup>

Another illustration of sweeping false antithesis is the following: "The right of the nation to be self-governing is placed above the right of each person to be self-governing, and the welfare of the nation, which usually means the interests of the dominant section." This might describe the position of Griffith; it certainly would not that of Connolly.

There is then the conclusion: "While republicanism rejects the idea that nation and nationality should be the basis for political organisation, or that nation should be equated with the State, it does respect and welcome them as forms of community and identity." One wonders where this leaves the United Nations and its premise of self-determination? Of course, nations and States, given geographic and demographic factors, cannot always be congruent, even after self-determination, and the rights of national minorities, where they exist, should be respected. But that does not take away from the fact that, in the modern world, the nation is the principal determinant of the State. To some extent, it depends here on what is meant by "political organisation" and being "equated with the

State". Insofar as it is a protest against forced homogeneity and intolerance, that is unobjectionable. However, as it stands, the statement perpetuates the failure to distinguish between the approaches of right and left-wing nationalism.

### Terminology

It is true that, whatever about its origins, nationalism as a term has by now unfortunately, owing to sloppy usage in both academia and journalism, become convoluted for many in its general significance. This is not entirely accidental. If, in *international* relations, for instance, the nation is taken, on the one hand, in an egalitarian way as a justification for independence and, on the other, in a superior way for domination, and

'nationalism' is used to describe both situations, then meaning is blunted and has to be qualified by referring to democratic or aggressive nationalism.<sup>6</sup> (Previously, the first would have simply been nationalism and the second imperialism.)

It may be that, in global political discourse, such a point of required qualification has been reached. But let us at least acknowledge that and not persist in the obfuscation that there is

only one 'nationalism', either domestically or in international relations. An excellent example in international relations of convenient obfuscation was when Britain attacked Egypt in 1956 and said it was standing up to nationalism in much the same way as it had stood up to Hitler!

We must also be conscious of a usage deriving specifically from Irish history. With capital initials, Nationalism and Republicanism came to have respectively right and left-wing connotations, because, more laterally, of the Redmond-Griffith and Pearse-Connolly spectra. But the nomenclature of parties or constellations of same should not bedevil political analysis. The



Robert Emmet, 1803

5 If there is a tension between the civic and the ethnic in Ireland today, the real one is clearly between unionism/loyalism and nationalism/republicanism, at least in terms of community and identity, requiring, among other things, confirmation that fidelity to Reformation Protestantism does not demand union with Britain and attachment to Tridentine Catholicism is not a condition of

Irish independence. Otherwise, the cultural content of Irishness in the civic-ethnic continuum should be a matter of choice.

6 That is apart from fundamentalist/conservative and liberal/socialist 'nationalisms' all of which are at least anti-colonialist (although some would say not all are anti-neocolonialist).

fact is that Redmond was a home rule nationalist, Griffith a duomonarchical nationalist, Pearse a democratic republican nationalist, and Connolly a socialist republican nationalist. However, the nationalist-republican dichotomy of nomenclature was perpetuated in the partitioned six counties with the continued existence of a Nationalist Party and the alternative of the Republican Movement. Yet, properly speaking, in Ireland all republicans were nationalist, even if not all nationalists were republican. (One suspects that the article is significantly influenced by this dichotomy and also by a certain ultra-leftist dogmatism.)

### Republicanism

Subsequent to 1921, however, every form of Irish nationalism in time became in effect republican, if only with a small 'r', because being a nationalist region or coplayer in empire was no longer an option, and nobody seriously suggested that an independent Ireland should be a monarchy in its own right rather than some kind of republic, whether or not the word was to be used in the official title of the State. Currently, SDLP politicians are wont on occasion to stress that they are republican as well as nationalist. (In the contest for support that is taking place in the north, the intelligent riposte for SF is to underline that it is nationalist as well as republican.)

Moreover, if there is a contemporary broader *terminological* problem with nationalism, republicanism is not without its difficulties either. We have referred to the classical denotation of nationalism and agree, in the same classical vein, that "a republic without democracy would not be a republic", that it has got to do with "the welfare of the people" and that it enshrines the principles of "liberty, equality and fraternity". But how many 'republics' are or have been capable of such attribution? And what about some 'republicans', whether those in the US or the neofascist republikaner in Germany? Is it any surprise

that people now also talk about *democratic* republics (even in official title) and conservative and radical republicans? Republic now often just conveys that the head of state is not a monarch, although he or she may be the vilest of dictators. Does that beg the challenge that we must seek to recover the original and essentially progressive nature of republicanism? Is there not then also the challenge of recovering the original and essentially progressive nature of nationalism?<sup>7</sup>

### The National Republic

In that sense, if republicanism and nationalism are to be compared, we should be explaining where they overlap and combine to eventuate in the enlightened result of a national republic.<sup>8</sup> The ideological struggle here is not *between* nationalism and republicanism, but *within* each and to produce the best of both; we don't want nationalism without meaningful democratic content, and we don't want republicanism without meaningful social content.<sup>9</sup> Counterposition of nationalism and republicanism instead of selective synthesis is the real confusion and one which can only be damaging to advanced politics in the north in particular and throughout the island in general.

## RESISTING REUNIFICATION

There is now a serious prospect of the reunification of Ireland taking place in some form in the medium term. This is due to a number of factors addressed elsewhere dealing with demography and changing political attitudes, within both Ireland and Britain.

It is only to be expected that there is opposition to this emanating from some traditional unionist quarters, although there are also signs that more liberal and realistic

<sup>7</sup> At the same time, this is more of a problem in international debate because, while that can feed back into discussion on this island (as the article in question demonstrates), generally speaking, Irish people do not find in nationalism a suggestion of fascism or view republicanism as a neutral description when it comes to consideration of the radical.

<sup>8</sup> Connolly warned against 'Nationalism without Socialism',

just as he was opposed to nationalism without republicanism. But it was not a case of socialism *instead of* nationalism any more than of republicanism *instead of* nationalism. (*Socialism and Nationalism*, D Ryan (ed), Three Candles, 1948.)

<sup>9</sup> A specific task is getting militarism out of republicanism and hibernianism is out of both.



elements within the northern Protestant community are prepared to consider reunification on reasonable and accommodating terms, not least given that they are becoming more and more aware that they are simply not wanted within the United Kingdom by those inhabiting the neighbouring island.

At the same time, one hears siren warnings that the attempt to reunify will lead to dissension and conflict, quite possibly of a violent nature, both within the north and Ireland generally and emanating from loyalists. So-called responsible and moderate voices are raised in 'respectable' circles cautioning to this end. It is notable that these correspond to the moneyed classes, particularly in the 'South', and are frequently and loudly heard within the news media, which they either own or tend to dominate. In more old-fashioned terms, this element would be simply termed the bourgeoisie. They, however, tend to refer to themselves as 'the people', a classically presumptuous instance of illogically arguing from the particular to the general. In the first case, they are worried about the alleged cost to the 'South' of reunification, although this is frequently and grossly exaggerated. (In fact, it has been demonstrated by some researchers that reunification will lead to economic benefits overall for the island.) As for any costs that could arise in the immediate term, the bourgeois concern is that they will be borne by the well-off who can afford to and will have to pay any taxes necessarily involved.

Naturally, the bourgeoisie cannot admit that this is the situation which causes anxiety for them. Therefore, they conjure up the spectre of 'inevitable' loyalist and unionist violence arising from the campaign for reunification and its possible actualization, both in the six and particularly in the 26 counties. This is nothing more than a glorified scare tactic. It is something which has been used in

numerous other post-colonial contexts where *colons* or their descendants have been seen to ultimately accept the new state of affairs and to accommodate themselves to it. Why that should be any different in the case of the North is not clear.

Given the experience of the past fifty years, what seems to be totally ignored in this outlook is the likelihood of violence indeed re-emerging - on the part of frustrated nationalist youth, if the promise in the Good Friday Agreement of reunification pursuant to a border poll resulting in a 50% + 1 or more vote for unity is reneged on. It would indeed be an outrage if the criterion which was good enough for unionists in the previous half century were to be changed in the case of nationalists.



Don't mention a united Ireland!

In fact, the 'Southern' moneyed classes urge that we not even talk about a united Ireland or a border poll, lest it antagonise unionists. It is alright for unionists to shout to the high heavens about the Union with Britain without nationalists of course being in the least annoyed, but one must not speak of Irish unity for fear of sensitive unionist upset.

In reality, this approach to the situation could become rapidly incandescent with consequences that it is not pleasant to think about. If the democratic settlement of the Good Friday Agreement is reneged on in respect of a simple majority vote on reunification, young Ireland may turn once again to armed insurrection as apparently the only way of asserting their rightful demands. They may recall Mitchell's dictum of "They know nothing save the edge of the sword." That is precisely the state of affairs which the 'Southern' bourgeoisie is in danger of leading us into. Their resistance to reunification must thus be resisted at all cost.

Daltún Ó Ceallaigh



## THE ARLENE ALTERNATIVE



*"I don't think that I would feel comfortable [in a united Ireland] and that's why I think I would leave," Arlene Foster, 28 March 2021.*

The erstwhile NI First Minister, Arlene Foster, led the way. The time has perhaps arrived to think what was previously considered unthinkable, namely, that some resettlement of population from north-east Ireland to Britain may be an option in helping to solve the northern Irish crisis.

Parameters for the constitutional future of Ireland have been set by the Good Friday Agreement, particularly in relation to the North. Ireland currently consists of two polities: an Irish Republic of twenty-six counties and a semi-autonomous province of the United Kingdom consisting of six counties entitled Northern Ireland. The status of Northern Ireland is not determined in perpetuo. It is subject to border polls, which may be held every seven years. If one of these decides that Northern Ireland should leave the United Kingdom and become part of a sovereign united Ireland, however defined, that situation will be brought into being.

That raises the question of what happens regarding unionists in the new dispensation. Nationalists, in the broadest sense of the term, thus including republicans, have clearly indicated that they seek to be as accommodating as possible to unionists within a united Ireland, taking account of their legitimate traditions and senses of identity. In mind here, on the one hand, is Reformation Protestantism, and, on the other, those who either do not either identify as Irish at all or describe themselves variously as Irish, Northern Irish, Ulster, Ulster Scots, or British. Of course, some of these categories can be, and often are, combined, including in the

case of northern nationalists.

Accommodation can refer to devolution within Ireland, guaranteed rights, participation in government, and symbols. Specifically, in the latter instance, one thinks of flags, emblems, anthems, and the full official title of a sovereign State.

At the same time, it is now clear that, whatever democratic decision is taken in a border poll, and whatever accommodations and agreements are reached among most people, there are those unionists who would not be able to tolerate the idea and actuality of a united Ireland in any shape. This has been encapsulated most succinctly by Arlene Foster in her declaration that, should a united Ireland be endorsed in a plebiscite, her intention would be to leave the island and live elsewhere, in Britain or wherever. And, no doubt, there would be other unionists, of an indeterminate number, who would join her in that journey.

Population movement in the course of decolonisation is not an unusual phenomenon, although it can occur in particularly ugly ways. However, it should be made absolutely clear in an all-Ireland context that nobody should be forced to go; likewise, nobody should be forced to stay. And compulsion can be present in different forms. For example, one may wish to move and have nowhere or nothing to move to. That raises the question of a resettlement programme.

Britain is no stranger to resettlement within its shores. One only has to observe the many Caribbean, Asian and African communities which are now part and parcel of British society to realise this. Therefore, it would not be all that challenging to devise a resettlement programme for those union-

ists who prefer to leave in the event of a united Ireland being realised. As already noted, at present, it is not feasible to assess what numbers would be involved beyond Ms Foster. And how much of a programme would be necessitated could only be assessed when that becomes evident. Nonetheless, the elements of a programme are not hard to envisage.

Firstly, exact locality has to be considered. It is not predictable what the reaction of the 'mainlanders' would be to arrivals from the North, but there is no reason to believe that it would be antipathetic. Next, suitable housing and apartments would need to be provided, as the case may be. Then, employment would require to be found for those giving up work in the North. This could be facilitated to some extent by exchanging suitable jobs with nationalists in Britain willing to come back to Ireland. All this would demand adequate financing, both for grants to cover the costs of moving with one's goods and for expenditure in respect of infrastructure for the new environment.

Some population movement in modern history has often been the only manner of

dealing with persons who will never be content under a new regime created by the departure of the metropolitan power. It has also frequently been geographically close to the 'motherland'. For example, in Algeria, several pieds noirs left in the wake of independence. However, it is not being suggested that all or most unionists should or would want to leave. But, it indicates that resettlement programmes are not untypical or unachievable. In fact, we believe the majority of unionists will choose to abide on appropriate terms. Yet, a number will not, some of whom, if they did remain, would be inclined towards disruption. For all those discontented to stay, and particularly the latter, there should be another choice - the Arlene Alternative.

*Daltún Ó Ceallaigh*

*NOTE: There are about 900,000 unionists in the north, not the magical million often referred to. If a thousand or so of them wanted to leave, that is a significant bloc of people, some of whom could otherwise be a disruptive element, in one way or another, in a united Ireland. But the departure of some would not exactly constitute a mass exodus. And that is quite possibly all that one may be talking about here.*

## A DOMINION ONCE AGAIN

Former TD and MEP Gay Mitchell ('Long Shadow of the Treaty Talks', *Irish Times* Letters, May 26th), posing the idea of a Canada-style dominion status for the whole of the island in return for Irish unity, asks if "we in the republic are ready to incorporate Britishness as a legitimate identity on the whole island?"

This is not the first time Gay Mitchell has floated this idea.

In August 2006, at the annual Michael Collins/Arthur Griffith commemoration in Glasnevin Cemetery, Mr Mitchell asked "How would we in the Republic of Ireland of the 21st century accommodate the Irish unionists today?"

Mr Mitchell suggested that the Irish Government might consider a role for the British monarch in a new all-Ireland State, perhaps even a role as joint head of that State to accommodate those Irish who also see themselves as British and have a

strong attachment to the crown.

Mr Mitchell regarded Arthur Griffith's Hungarian policy of a dual monarchy as considered and imaginative.

Gay Mitchell's floating of the possibility of a type of joint sovereignty with monarchical Britain is repugnant to our republican and egalitarian ethos. This suggestion openly challenges the continued existence of a Republic of Ireland separate from Britain.

Mr Mitchell's suggestion of a Canada-style dominion status would be a retrograde step which would have the potential to turn this State once again into a devolved British colonial administration.

Ironically, it was a Fine Gael Taoiseach, John A Costello, who in 1949 ended the last British link over most of Ireland. It is imperative that we ensure that some in modern Fine Gael do not try to undo that achievement.

*Tom Cooper*

**WE'RE NOT  
EXCLUSIVELY  
BRITISH!**

"I always viewed myself as Irish . . . clearly I'm British as well, but my whole life I've identified as Irish". *Doug Beattie, Leader, Ulster Unionist Party, 24/5/21*

'There are people in Northern Ireland with a British identity, others are Irish, others are Northern Irish, others are a mixture of all three and some are new and emerging.' *Arlene Foster, ex-Leader, Democratic Unionist Party, 28/04/21.*

"I am a proud Northern Ireland man. I love this people and this place, and it faces many challenging times." *Edwin Poots, Leader, Democratic Unionist Party, 05/05/21.*

**SHANNON STOPOVER CONTINUES**

*Reproduced from Facebook 28 May 2021*

It now seems that Shannon airport is being kept open only to allow US military to refuel on their way to and from their Middle East and other war zones and military bases.

A check of Ireland's airport websites this morning reveals quite a few flights to and from Dublin, just a few from Cork, Kerry and Donegal airports, and none to or from Shannon airport. Yet we do know that an OMNI air N819AX flight CMB545, on contract to the US military landed at Shannon at 6.24 am this morning, refuelled and took off again at 8.09 am and is scheduled to land at a base in southern Spain. We also know that another Omni airplane, N342AX is scheduled to land and refuel at Shannon airport at 1.38 pm this

**EUROPA ÜBER ALLES?**

*(continued from front page)*

and transferred them to Brussels, where the Irish people and the peoples of the other member countries no longer are in control of them. ...



"Our approach to the EU is one of critical engagement: those things that are in the interests of the Irish people, we support and seek to further; those things that are not, we oppose and campaign to change. However, we do not delude ourselves or the Irish people that we can enjoy full democracy and national independence as long as the majority of the laws that now bind us are made by people whom we do not elect and have minimal control over." ♦

afternoon, coming from Norfolk Naval Station in Virginia. Aer Lingus announced yesterday that its cabin crews based at Shannon are to be laid off for at least two months.

Shannon airport is of huge importance to the west of Ireland from tourism and business points of view, but also for the essential travel requirements of Irish citizens living in the West of Ireland, but all our Dublin based politicians and bureaucrats have no interest in creating balanced regional development in Ireland outside of the Pale.

Worse still, they are allowing Shannon airport to be used almost daily to refuel US wars of aggression in the Middle East in gross contravention of international laws

*Edward Horgan*

**AN NÁISIÚN ÉIREANNACH**

