Irish

Foreign Affairs

Volume 4, Number 1 **April 2011**

"Every nation, if it is to survive as a nation, must study its own history and have a foreign policy"
- C.J. O'Donnell, The Lordship of the World, 1924, p. 145

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A Quarterly Review published by the *Irish Political Review* Group, Dublin

A New World Order!

There is a new law for the governing of States. The United Nations Security Council has discovered that Governments should not resist rebellion by force. A Government which resists rebellion murders its own people and it might even be that it commits genocide.

This discovery was made by Britain and France with regard to the casual, spur-of-the-moment, part-time rebellion in Libya. They put it to the Security Council. The Security Council agreed, and it authorised them to make war on the Libyan Government's resistance of the rebellion.

What a pity it is that Britain did not realise in 1916 that Governments should not resist rebellions, and that they commit murder if they do.

Under this new order of thought, democracy is established by rebellion.

Under the old political philosophy there was a strong presumption in favour of established States, whatever their political complexion, and the construction of democracy in conjunction with rebellions against established States was regarded as extremely problematical. But no longer. The rebellion is now the democracy. Anarchism rules—so to speak.

This is something new in the world. Eight years ago the émigré rebel groups, that accompanied the invading armies of Britain and America into Iraq, wanted to conduct a rebellion as the weak Iraqi Army was subjected to shock and awe by the invaders. Washington would not allow it.

Washington invaded Iraq to establish Democracy in it—so it is said, and it had the power to compel most of the world to believe what it said. And it did not think that a democratic state would emerge if the returning rebels called for popular rebellions in the wake of the advancing armies. It lectured the returning rebels about Democracy. It explained that Democracy had preconditions, and these preconditions would not be likely to spring up spontaneously at the behest of various groups of rebels who were stirring up the populace to rebellion without having any levers of control.

The first precondition of democracy is a State. The invaders were destroying the State. It is not clear why they decided to do this. In 2003 it was a harmless State—much damaged by the dozen years of United Nations sanctions which followed the deliberate destruction of the urban infrastructure by the UN bombing of 1991, but still able to maintain basic amenities, such as a supply of water. For whatever reason, the invading armies were destroying the State, not merely as a political body, but as an apparatus for supplying water, electricity etc. And Washington decided that the best way to establish Democracy in those circumstances was not to have the rebels, who accompanied its Army, call for a popular rising.

The invasion became an Occupation. And the Occupation was to be the framework of the new State, which was in time to become a democratic State.

Hamil al-Bayati complains about this in his book, *From Dictatorship To Democracy*, published by Pennsylvania University this year. The various émigré rebel groups (Chalabi's, Allawi's, and the two Kurd groups: Talabani's and Barzani's) formed a united front:

> "We together managed to convince Western officials that the Iraqi people were united in opposing Saddam's regime; that... they were strong enough to remove Saddam if the international community helped by implementing the UN Security Council resolutions..." (p6).
>
> "We requested the support of the international community to implement the Security Council resolutions passed after 1990 and tried to set up an international tribunal to indict Saddam and his top aides for war crimes" (p7).

Some of the groups encouraged invasion. Others were against invasion *"because it would result in civilian casualties, destruction of infrastructure, and occupation"* (p8). But what was the effect of the Security Council Resolutions that were enforced for ten years, except to destroy the infrastructure and inflict massive civilian casualties, but to do so without occupation? And what would be the use of an International Tribunal to indict Saddam for war crimes, unless Saddam was caught? And how was he to be caught without an invasion?

Anyhow, they all returned to Iraq with the invasion force. But:

> "We advised the U.S. planners against occupation and encouraged them to set up an Iraqi government immediately after Saddam's fall. The grave mistake, I believe, was in not listening to the Iraqis, and thereby turning Iraq's liberation into an occupation" (p8).

Al-Bayati does not explain how the 'liberation' (i.e. the invasion) might have been something other than an Occupation. Did he want the Americans to withdraw immediately after applying shock and awe, and arranging for Saddam's statue to be pulled down by a crowd assembled for the television cameras? Or did he want the American Army handed over to the émigré groups, to build a new State according to their hearts' desire? The latter, it seems:

> "We had warned the Coalition about the possibility of chaos and theft in the event of Saddam's downfall. It could have been averted by curfew, giving the Opposition security powers, and making use of Baath elements" (p189).

Making use of Baath elements assumed that the émigré groups had substantial connections with sections of the Baath regime. And there is no evidence of that.

Paul Bremer, head of the Occupation, which the UN recognised as legitimate although it had refused to authorise the invasion, took no heed of émigré advice to let an election be held which would be an act of sovereignty. He appointed a kind of Iraqi Government that was altogether subordinate to the Coalition *Provisional Authority*, chose Allawi to head it, and handed over Iraqi 'sovereignty' to it in June 2004.

What is the meaning of sovereignty like that? Sovereignty deprived of the power of decision.

Britain in the late 19th century decided not to make Egypt a colony within the Empire. Egypt was to be an independent State—though notional sovereignty over it continued to lie with Turkey. For the next sixty years or so Egypt was an independent state governed by Britain. All important decisions were made by the British Ambassador. Britain, which twice made war on

Germany on behalf of the Egyptian people. If the Egyptian Government showed signs of rebellion he had the means of bringing it to order.

It seems that Washington had the idea of running Iraq that way—with a sovereign Iraqi Government that would in fact be an instrument of the American Embassy. And Al-Bayati agreed to serve in that Government, becoming Deputy Foreign Minister in it.

The American plans did not work out smoothly. The strength of Baathist resistance did not tally with the propaganda construct of an Iraqi people yearning to be free of Baathist tyranny.

The Coalition incited Shia against Sunni as a means of consolidating the Occupation, but the Sunni hit back, against both the Occupation and the Shia who responded to its call; and the Shia did not prove to be as malleable as they should have been in gratitude for being liberated from Sunni oppression.

Al-Bayati glosses over most of this. He says in his Conclusion:

> "From 1968 until 2003, Iraq was under the one-party rule of the Baath party, and everything was under the control of the government: the judicial system, the media, the NGOs, and so forth. Since 2003, we have more than one hundred political parties, the judicial system and the media have become independent, and there are many active NGOs...
>
> "The security situation has improved dramatically since 2006, when Al Quaeda tried to instigate a sectarian war between the Shiites and Sunnis...
>
> "The new Iraqi government needs to focus on providing services... such as clean water, sewage facilities, electricity, schools, hospitals, roads, and housing to the Iraqi people who were deprived of those by the policies of Saddam's regime. They will not be achieved without reviving the free market economy, supporting the private sector, and attracting foreign investment in the country... Openness between the Iraqi government and the regional and international powers is also important for gaining political, economic, and other kinds of support for the projects in Iraq" (p313-3).

This means that, in the matter of ordinary conditions of life, Iraq is slowly getting back to where it was in 2003, when the Tyranny was broken up. But the conditions of life as they were in 1990, before the massive United Nations bombing, and the twelve years of stringent UN sanctions, take on a Utopian character. The Tyranny had maintained better public utilities through a dozen years of UN bombing and sanctions than the Occupation plus sovereign Government can show eight years after the Invasion that overthrew the Tyranny.

And "*the security situation has improved dramatically*"—since 2006!

The base from which improvement is measured is not the condition of Iraq as the Tyranny left it, but the condition to which it was reduced by three years of Occupation and two years of sovereign Government. The country was made a shambles in 2003 – 2006. Things have improved somewhat since 2006.

Before 2003 the country was governed by one party. Since 2003 there have been a hundred political parties in it, and that's not counting the scores of parties that were not allowed to contest elections.

A country with a hundred permitted parties and about fifty banned ones is either incredibly democratic or not democratic at all. It approaches the condition of a direct democracy of the people—and direct democracy as an actual mode of government became obsolete with the ancient Greek City-States.

Modern democracy is a form of representative government by parties. Rousseau denied that representative government could be democratic at all, but it is what we have agreed to call democracy when accompanied by a general adult franchise. It operates by bunching the populace together in a small number of parties and letting the electorate choose between them. The US has arranged for a tight two-party system to be maintained. Britain had a two-party system before the democratisation of the electoral franchise. Since 1918—when the franchise was democratised, and the Liberal Party split, and the Labour Party became the main alternative to the Tory Party—Britain has had a kind of two-and-half party system.

The French Republic, which proclaimed democracy to be the only legitimate form of state, never quite got the hang of operating it as a restrictive party system of representative government, and its excessive democracy had to be relieved by Napoleonic interludes, the last of which was De Gaulle's *coup*.

The only modern state in which there is a substantial stratum of literal democracy is Switzerland because the State is a federal structure erected on a base of very small sovereign units, fragments of Cantons.

In Ireland, following Britain, there is no real local government. Local bodies have authority conceded to them by the central State. It works the other way around in Switzerland. But the Swiss system was no more constructed according to a principle than the English system. Each was an accidental historical development that made a principle of itself once it came about. The Swiss system was formed in valleys made defensible by mountains. The English system was a product of the theological English Civil War—the one that sent Cromwell to Ireland. It was assumed for a couple of generations after the 1688 *coup d'état* that political parties were blots on the political landscape, which derived from the Civil War, and which survived afterwards because the Monarchy manipulated them in a "*divide and rule*" tactic. They were not accepted as legitimate and necessary elements of representative government until the 1770s.

The American two-party system also derives from Lincoln's Civil War. The Irish party system too derives from a kind of civil war, but it has not been as functional as the others because the Irish Civil War was not an authentic civil war. (The two sides to it wanted the same thing, but were manipulated by British power into fighting each other over whether to submit to a British threat of total war and accept something less for the time being.)

The most difficult thing in constructing a democracy of the British or American kinds is to devise the party system to operate

Irish Foreign Affairs is a publication of
the *Irish Political Review* Group.
55 St Peter's Tce., Howth, Dublin 13

Editor: Philip O'Connor
ISSN 2009-132X

Printers: Athol Books, Belfast
www.atholbooks.org
Price per issue: ¤7 (Sterling £5)
Annual postal subscription: ¤28
Annual electronic subscription: ¤20

All correspondence, orders:
philip@atholbooks.org

it. There is no formula for doing this. Britain and America got their party systems through historical developments which had civil wars as their centrepieces. They were not in the position of new States of the present, which have irresistible Super-powers supervising them, interfering with them, and frequently cutting their historical development short by abortion—as was done in Afghanistan ten years ago, in Iraq eight years ago, and is being done in Libya now.

The term *"the Iraqi people"* is a conventional ideological construct of United Nations rhetoric. There was no reality on the round corresponding to it.

Twenty years ago there was a functional Iraqi State which organised the peoples of Iraq along the lines of a West European social development. Eight years ago there was still a functional Iraqi State, despite all the wrecking the United Nations had inflicted on it. That State was not organised politically in the way that we call democratic, therefore we made war on it. (Ireland sent no invasion Army, but it played a political part in justifying the invasion, and it facilitated the US invasion army by refuelling the warplanes at Shannon.)

The war was justified on the grounds that the Iraqi people must be victims of oppression at the hands of the Iraqi State because that State was not democratic. The Iraqi State was destroyed, and it was revealed that there was no Iraqi people. There were many peoples in the region that Britain made into a subordinate national state for its own purposes in 1919, following its destruction of the Ottoman Empire. There was no sense of national cohesion amongst those people. The Ottoman State had not strapped them into national straitjackets. For centuries the many peoples of Mesopotamia had lived alongside each other, being under no compulsion to do each other down.

Britain thought it expedient to declare the region a 'nation state', rather than treat it as an extension of its Indian Empire. It imposed a King from Saudi Arabia on it in a rigged election, and set about running it as a subordinate state. Resistance against this treatment was put down with a heavy hand.

In 1939 a presumptuous Iraqi Government declared neutrality in the World War launched by Britain. Britain could not slap it down immediately, but it did so two years later. Churchill decided to invade Iran to gain control of its oil. He passed the invading army through Iraq. He was entitled to do so under the unequal treaty Britain had imposed on Iraq. The Iraqi Government did not try to stop the passage of the British Army through its territory, but asserted a right to observe it. Churchill overthrew it and installed a puppet government.

Fifteen years after that the British/Israeli attack on Egypt (which had become independent of the British Ambassador) threw the Middle East into turmoil. The functional Baath State in Iraq emerged from that turmoil. It was a liberal secular state in the social development it encouraged, but not what we call democratic. Elements from all the major segments of the population were drawn into the functioning of the State. The liberal secular line of development naturally provoked religious resistance, but elements from all religions played a part in the State.

The destruction of the liberal secular State in Iraq, and the call on the social forces that were repressed by it to assert themselves, resulted naturally in a surge of religious 'fundamentalism', and in anarchic conflict between forces that had found a more or less orderly place for themselves in the Baath State. The only force capable of containing the anarchy was the Occupation Force that had caused it. Eight years later that Occupation Force is still trying to establish civilised order on the chaos that it brought about—and, of course, to do so in a way that is advantageous to itself.

All States involve the repression of something. And the destruction of any State by the absolutely overwhelming power of another State, combined with an exhortation to the repressed elements to assert themselves, would be likely to bring about the same kind of situation as was brought about in Iraq in 2003.

The intellectuals who supported the invasion, and the project of quickly establishing a State that was democratic as well as liberal and secular, in place of the liberal, secular Baath State, by proceeding through a phase of destructive anarchy, deluded themselves by taking the situation in Germany in 1945 as a precedent. They imagined that the rapid emergence of a democratic State in Germany following the utter destruction of Nazism, was the work of the Western Occupation Forces, who brought some marvellous democratic formula to bear on the situation. It would be more in accordance with historical fact to say that German democracy re-emerged so quickly because of the substantial continuity between it and the Nazi state, which in turn had maintained structures from the earlier era of the Kaiser's State.

The fate of a thorough de-Nazification, which Britain and the US had intended to apply to the Germans, had to be set aside because of the rapid emergence of the Cold War.

We read in a new book on the subject (*Exorcising Hitler: The Occupation And Denazification Of Germany*, by Frederick Taylor) that:

> "The seventeen million Germans unfortunate enough to find themselves in the Soviet Zone after twelve years of Nazi dictatorship, were then seamlessly subjected to more than forty years of a competing brand of totalitarianism, marginally less brutal" (pxxxiii).

Those 17 million Germans had the misfortune to be subjected to the State that defeated the Nazi State. Without the Soviet success, it is hard to see how the Nazi regime would have been defeated. France had made a settlement and Britain had been dithering for a year after disengaging in France, when Hitler attacked Russia and was defeated by it. But the unfortunate Germans were those who were saved from Nazism by the force that defeated Nazism. And the Germans of the Western Occupation Zones were saved from de-Nazification by the need of the Western Powers to get them onside against the Eastern Power that had done most of the work of defeating Nazism.

If West Germany had not been saved from de-Nazification by the need to enlist its support against the State that liberated Germany from Nazism, it is unlikely that it would have emerged as a stable and successful democracy in a couple of years.

Taylor recycles the standard version of the rise of Nazism. It happened because the Versailles Powers in 1919, while abolishing the authoritarian monarchy and supervising the introduction of a democratic Constitution, did not break up the old social order of Germany:

> "The Reich's government and constitution became democratic but the official and military classes remained both influential and fervently nationalist, eager to evade the conditions of the harsh Versailles Treaty and secretly longing to avenge what they saw as an unjust defeat... The pre-war authoritarian core regained more and more control as the Depression took hold in the 1920s and the democracy set up in 1918 lost support of both extreme left and extreme right" etc.

The *"authoritarianism"* of the Kaiser's Germany was an ideological construct of the British war propaganda. The German State was not less a democracy than the British, but it had a slightly different relationship between Executive and Legislature. The British war propaganda therefore declared the German State to be an *"autocracy"*, without bothering to explain why. The *"autocracy"* was abolished when Germany was defeated. The German State lost the weight of conservative ballast that every State needs. Its resulting disorientation made it incapable of challenging and resisting the Versailles Powers. And the form of its democracy, shaped in accordance with an ideological ideal rather than with an eye on how actual States function, made it incapable of effective action in a crisis.

Nazism, like Fascism before it, was not a reactionary re-establishment of something old. It was a new kind of movement designed to make a functional combination of social elements that had been driven apart by the outcome of the Great War, and make it effective in a viable State, and to do so in a way that was compatible with capitalist economy and culture. Winston Churchill hailed Mussolini as the saviour of Western capitalist civilisation from Communism, and did the same with Hitler some years later.

The blundering foreign policy of the British Empire helped Nazi Germany build itself up from 1933 to 1938 before suddenly deciding to make war on it in 1939. When it decided to make war on it, it suppressed the reasons why it had been supporting it for five years, and indulged in the extravagant demonisation which it has found necessary when making war in recent times. And then in 1941 it found itself in a dependent alliance with the Communist Power which a few years earlier it had supported Fascism as a barrier against.

But Germany, in its domestic existence, remained in 1939-45 what it had been in 1933-38, and when defeat in the War was not followed up with the threatened root-and-branch remaking of German society, it clicked into place easily as part of the Western capitalist system.

The collapse of Soviet Russia in 1990 deprived the West of the Great Power enemy, the fear of which caused it to act rationally in its own interest in Germany after 1945. Left to its own devices it has been acting catastrophically in the world since 1990, driven by its own megalomaniac ideological delusions. □

Of relevance to the article on "Desmond Fitzgerald" p. 31 and the article on the "Treaty" p. 17:

On Hitler And Mussolini

By James Murphy

Edited by Brendan Clifford
Athol Books 2002

The collection of writings by James Murphy (1880-1946) reprinted here has the general aim of explaining the emergence of Fascism in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s as a historical phenomenon arising out of the elemental consequences of the First World War.

Murphy, an ordained priest who dropped out of clerical practice, was closely involved with the Italian situation during the war and for some years afterwards. He then moved to Germany, where he was on familiar terms with Einstein, Schroedinger and Max Planck. He was thus exceptionally qualified to comment on the affairs of both countries.

As well as providing background information to facilitate the reader in following these Italian and German events, Brendan Clifford, in an extensive introduction, reviews modern Germany's difficulties in coming to terms with the aftermath of war. Particular attention is paid to the furore around the speech to the Bundestag by Speaker Phillip Jenninger on the 50th anniversary of Kristallnacht.

An appendix on The Jewish Problem in interwar eastern Europe completes this collection.

Athol Books has already re-published the "International Forum", the star-studded magazine Murphy produced in Berlin in 1931. The present volume will further enhance the reputation of a remarkable European, who seemed equally at home in the worlds of philosophy, literature, abstruse physics, and practical politics.

Berlin Magazine of 1931

International Forum

Editor: James Murphy
Athol Books 2000

Full reprint. Contributors include Oliver St. John Gogarty, Thomas Mann, Erwin Schrodinger and Max Planck. 94 pp. (A4).

The Irish Press

Fianna Fáil and the decline of the Free State

By Brendan Clifford
Aubane Historical Society 2007

The opponents of the Treaty were utterly defeated in 1923 by the forces of the pro-Treaty party. Yet, within four years, the defeated party was equal in electoral support to the pro-Treaty party and formed the Government of the State five years later.

Starving the Germans: The Evolution of Britain's Strategy of Blockade During the First World War – Part One.

by Eamon Dyas

> "The geographical position of this country and her preponderant sea power combine to give us a certain and simple means of strangling Germany at sea . . . (In a protracted war) the mills of our sea-power (thought they would grind the German industrial population slowly perhaps) would grind them 'exceedingly small' – grass would sooner or later grow in the streets of Hamburg and wide-spread death and ruin would be inflicted." - *Rear-Admiral Charles Langdale Ottley, Secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence, in a letter to Reginald McKenna, First Lord of the Admiralty, 5 December1908.*

The above was written on the day after the opening of the London Naval Conference which ran between 4 December 1908 and 26 February 1909. Ottley was one of the two British naval delegates at this conference; the other was Rear-Admiral Edmond John Warre Slade, Director of Naval Intelligence. The day before the start of the conference, on 4 December 1908, Slade, in his capacity as head of naval intelligence, had presented a paper to the most important high-level inquiry into British strategy before the First World War. The Committee of Imperial Defence's sub-committee initiated this inquiry which was designed to deal with 'The Military Needs of Empire'. It was chaired by Asquith, the Prime Minister, and attended by senior Cabinet Ministers as well as leading civil servants and military chiefs. Slade's paper to this committee explained why the German economy was vulnerable to an economic blockade and that any disruption to its raw materials and foodstuffs would produce a situation which would become intolerable for civil society. After a short discussion, the Committee of Imperial Defence endorsed the strategy of economic blockade and in its report it stated:

> "We are of the opinion that a serious situation would be created in Germany owing to the blockade of her ports, and that the longer the duration of the war the more serious the situation would become." (Both this and Ottley's letter are quoted in *Morality and Admiralty: 'Jacky' Fisher, Economic Warfare and the Laws of War*, by Avner Offer. Published in Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 23, No. 1, January 1988, pp.100 and 105)

The importance of the strategy of economic blockade to the British Navy war plans against Germany had been evolving for some time and remained a consistent element in its general strategy from the start of the Liberal Imperialist war agenda in 1906. Between 1906 and the war there were many occasions when the strategy was reworked and revised in the light of the larger military perspective but it remained an important component of overall British war strategy throughout this time. Yet many academic commentators use the inevitable fluctuations in naval opinion on the subject between 1906 and 1914 as reason to question the fact that such a strategy had ever been systematically worked out, or alternatively, as evidence that it had never been seriously viewed as a central plank of the wider British war effort until immediately before the war. What follows will show that the preparation for naval economic warfare, of which the blockade was a critical ingredient, in fact pre-dated the arrival of the Liberal Imperialist agenda in 1906 albeit prior to that time not directed at Germany. Although Germany was not the original target, in the aftermath of the arrival of the Liberal Imperialist anti-German agenda it was only a matter of applying such preparations to the new military context.

While it is undoubtedly the case that the whole issue of economic blockade of Germany generated different opinions among the senior naval figures, this in no way implies that the blockade strategy was not a central element in British war plans, only that some naval personnel had opinions that were not in keeping with what turned out to be the effective strategy. In the aftermath of the ascent of the Liberal Imperialists agenda when the recognised enemy dramatically switched from France and Russia to Germany, the required secrecy in redirecting the target of the strategy brought in its wake personal animosities and confusion among those in the navy who had been left out of the preparations for the new arrangements. This in turn generated the adoption of invalid positions (in the sense that they were not part of the effective strategy) by such people who were not privy to the new agenda. Also, just as the opinions of politicians like Lloyd George and Churchill changed after they were brought into Asquith's inner circle, so too some naval personnel changed their positions in the aftermath of a similar embrace. The other element which has lent itself to the perpetuation of historical confusion on this question is the fact that while the Liberal Imperialists were fine-tuning their naval strategy in secret, they were compelled to adopt public positions that concealed their real intentions not only from the British public and the German government, but also from the United States. The only methodology that can make sense of the history of the economic blockade against Germany is to start at the point where the influences that brought about that strategy began and this means beginning with the career of John ('Jacky') Arbuthnot Fisher, the man who more than any other crafted the evolution of the strategy in a manner that ensured a victorious British outcome of the First World War.

Reforming the Navy

The British armed services are of course an instrument of the State but, certainly up to the period before the First World War, the way the State exercised its control over the navy was somewhat complex. The navy, because of its unique historic relationship with the way that the British Imperial state evolved, occupied a more archaic position in the command structure between that state and its armed services than was the case with the army. This is also reflected in the continued use of arcane titles for people who occupied official positions within this command structure.

The following provides some explanation of how this structure operated just before the First World War:

> "The British Navy is administered through a Board of Admiralty, and its chairman, the First Lord of the Admiralty, is the Minister responsible to Parliament for the work of the department.

He is assisted by four Sea Lords, who are all naval officers of high rank: the First Sea Lord (Chief of the Naval Staff), the Second Sea Lord (Chief of the Naval Personnel), the Third Sea Lord (Controller of the Navy), the Fourth Sea Lord (Chief of Supplies and Transport). The other members of the Board are the Deputy Chief of Naval Staff, and the Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff (Air), who are both technically trained officers; the Parliamentary and Financial Secretary, and the Civil Lord of the Admiralty, who are both politicians and aid the First Lord in his parliamentary work; and the Permanent Secretary, who is head of the secretarial services, and is the only member of the Board who has a permanent position. The First Lord, the Parliamentary Secretary, and the Civil Lord have, of course, seats in Parliament; and the First Lord is always a member of the Cabinet." (*The Cabinet Minister and Administration: Winston S. Churchill at the Admiralty, 1911-1915*, by R. MacGregor Dawson. Published in The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science, Vol. 6, No. 3, August 1940, p.329)

Thus it is important not to confuse the First Sea Lord and the First Lord of the Admiralty. By the 1870s the tradition had been established that the First Lord of the Admiralty was responsible to the Cabinet and through the Cabinet, to Parliament. The First Sea Lord was an officer in the naval service, a professional seaman who commanded the Navy, while the First Lord of the Admiralty did not occupy a position in the naval service but was a politician and Government minister answerable to the Cabinet. Likewise, the Board of Admiralty was not an exclusively naval body but included both politicians and the senior officers in the naval service.

Just as the Boer War provided an impetus for a reforming surge in the British Army so the same event provided a similar impetus to those seeking reforms in the Navy. Although the Boer Republic was a landlocked state and there was no Boer navy the fact of British involvement in the conflict provoked a fear among British commercial interests of the possibility of intervention by a continental European coalition with consequences for British trade routes. As a result of this, attention began to be focused on the protection of such sea routes and the capacity of the navy to provide adequate protection. Consequently, in 1902, a new Trade Defence Section was established by the Admiralty within its Naval Intelligence Department. The initial function of the Trade Defence Section was to gather data on the patterns of world trade and shipping with the object of informing naval policy in the protection of British interests. The formation of such a department represented a significant departure on the part of the Admiralty where the prevailing philosophy was one which eschewed any notion of defence.

"'The primary object of the British Navy is not to defend anything but to attack the fleet of the enemy,' insisted Rear Admiral Reginald Custance, and arch-Mahanian, whose dogmatism on the subject was legendary. Custance, who had served as DNI [Director of Naval Intelligence – ED] from 1899 to the end of 1902, lectured everyone with whom he came in contact that the word 'defence' must never be used in official papers. With equal adamancy he notified the Royal Commission on Food Supply that '*the danger of our food supply being seriously stopped is not great unless we suffer a great defeat*' in battle, and disparaged all suggestions to make preparations for trade defence." (*Strategic Command and Control for Maneuver Warfare: creation of the Royal Navy's "War Room" system, 1905-1915*, by Nicholas A. Lambert. Published in The Journal of Military History, Vol. 69, No. 2, April 2005, pp.368-369)

Although it failed to make any initial impact on existing attitudes and was largely ignored by senior figures within the Admiralty, the establishment in 1902 of the Trade Defence Section of the Naval Intelligence Department could be said to represent a significant development in the process within the Admiralty which was to lead inexorably to the formation of the economic warfare strategy applied by Britain in its war on Germany twelve years later.

However, such developments in themselves were only components in the evolution of the process and reforming the navy on the lines required was not an easy task. Unlike reforming the army, where, in the aftermath of the Boer War, the need for reform was reinforced by several committees of inquiry, the navy had not been subject to such close scrutiny by so many government committees and consequently the pace or direction of reform was not laid down. Also, the two services were very different in terms of operational structure and culture—differences that would make reforming one a far easier prospect than the reformation of the other. The conditions under which the command structure of the navy evolved is explained in a very informative article published by the Society of Military History (formerly, The American Military Institute) in its journal some years ago:

"Until the twentieth century, the British Board of Admiralty's ability to command the fleets and squadrons of the Royal Navy was constrained by the limitations of communications technology. During the age of sail, the movements of ships carrying message traffic across the oceans had been governed by winds, seamanship, and chance. Conveying information by this means could take weeks and even months. Faced with these constraints the Admiralty had no alternative but to delegate authority to the senior officer in each geographical region or 'station,' as it was termed. Such officers were designated 'Commander-in-Chief' and wielded enormous power within the boundaries of their 'stations,' analogous to those conferred upon the viceroy of a distant province." (ibid, p.362)

Added to this was the importance of tradition in the navy. As the senior service it held a very particular position in the folklore of English political and military history. Since Elizabethan times the navy was looked upon as the ultimate guardian of England's interests and consequently there existed a strong sensitivity among politicians when it came to issues of naval controversy. For that same reason during the late 19th and early 20th century protagonists of both sides of the reform debate became more adapt at handling and utilising the press than their counterparts in other areas of the armed services.

Despite the conservative drag which the command structure placed on reforms within the navy there were significant individuals who, even before the Boer War, acknowledged that there was a need for reform in the service but the direction of that reform was not clear. Also, even those who held the conservative opinion would not dare oppose anything that provided the service with additional ships, funding or advances in technology. Therefore the situation prior to the Boer War was that some reforms had been undertaken, some in the process of implementation, and some under consideration. But, while the Boer War provided

impetus it did not provide a settled direction for these reforms. Consequently, until a few years after the Boer War these reforms were based on scenarios that were outdated or strategically incorrect. Until the arrival of Liberal Imperialist influence in the government of 1906 began to provide that direction there was incoherence within the Royal Navy on the issue of reform. The direction that the Liberal Imperialists provided was one that not only shifted the military target from Russia and France to Germany but it also established the strategic parameters within which the reforms could be made effective (that these were not systematically synchronised with those of the army in the early days does not obviate the general direction provided by the Liberal Imperialist agenda).

Communications as a tool for reform.

Within the above context developments in technology also provided a significant tool in the process. Although it was conservative in terms of organisational and command issues, traditionally the navy eagerly embraced, and in many cases pioneered, new advances in machinery, engineering, and technology. The man who oversaw the programme of naval reforms in the aftermath of the Boer War, Sir John Arbuthnot Fisher, was also one of the more enthusiastic advocates of technological advance. It is generally believed that Fisher began to be involved in naval reform after he was made Second Sea Lord in 1902, when he was given special responsibility for education and training, but this was not the case. Prior to that, taking advantage of the semi-autonomous powers he possessed as Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Station, he embarked on an area of activity that ultimately would provide a highly significant tool in changing the way that the navy operated, not only in terms of its relationship with the enemy and its own internal organisation, but also in providing the means by which the weapon of economic blockade could be made effective.

Developments during the nineteenth century of such things as steam propulsion to a large extent freed ships from the vagaries of the weather and made it easier for them to navigate reliably from one point on the globe to another. It also elevated the importance of naval strategy closer to the modern concept of things like timing, and distance of engagement with the enemy became something that was now much more controllable than it was when the position of ships was more dependent upon wind and tide. Also, other advances in armaments and the ironclad wooden hulls had an impact on battle strategy as it enabled ships to adopt more advantageous firing lines during conflict. Alongside these technological developments was the advance in communications represented by the arrival of the electric telegraph (which was first put to military use by the British Army during the Crimean War). But it also had a naval use in that it enabled naval land stations to maintain timely contact with each other. By the mid-1880s, the cable coverage for the electric telegraph had connected all twenty-four British naval bases across the continents. However, the electric telegraph had its Achilles heel – it still required a physical link via the cable network between the sender and receiver of information. Consequently, it was not something that could be used to communicate between ship and shore and even its use between naval land stations was precarious in times of war as the possibility of it being cut was always anticipated.

It was the arrival, at the end of the 1890s of wireless technology that opened up the prospect of far-reaching reforms within the navy. Not only did this have repercussions for the way that ships could communicate with one another but it also created the possibility of Admiralty HQ in London being more actively involved in the decision making process out at sea. Thus, the traditional command fiefdoms of the commanders of the fleets came under threat of dilution for the first time in history. The Admiralty in London for the first time had the means of keeping tabs on its individual commanders at sea and of communicating instructions to them in a timely fashion. Alongside this was the opportunity such technology offered for intelligence gathering and dissemination. However, the inertia in the command structure and conservative nature of the admirals ensured that the opportunities opened up by this development remained, at least for the time being, unrealised. It would have to await the arrival of Sir John Fisher as First Sea Lord in 1904 for the benefits to be fully comprehended and it was his promotion to such a position of command that made it possible for technology to become the instrument of the Liberal Imperialist agenda a couple of years later.

Fisher had been an early exploiter of the potential of the electric telegraph and telegraphy. Before the Boer War the gathering and use of intelligence was primarily the responsibility of the naval commanders in their respective regions. When Fisher was still an Admiral of the Fleet and assumed command of the Mediterranean Station at the end of 1899 he became responsible not only for forty-four warships but also for the gathering of intelligence in his area. Fisher's main base was in Malta and from there his staff organised a network of agents (which included the Bishop of Gibraltar) and some of his naval officers were even sent in disguise to spy on Russian naval bases in the Black Sea. But aside from the conventional intelligence gathering methods of the 19th century Fisher showed himself more alert than his contemporaries to the possibilities offered by the cable telegraph and wireless telegraphy:

> "When Fisher relinquished his command [of the Mediterranean station – ED] in May 1902, he bequeathed his successor a list of enthusiastic vice-consuls and paid informants, plus the subscriptions to numerous foreign newspapers. But undoubtedly his most valuable sources were the names of the local managers of the British-owned cable companies who had routinely forwarded to Fisher's headquarters copies of foreign military and diplomatic communications relayed over their lines. At this time, 80% of the world's telegraphic traffic outside Europe was carried over British cables. 'I was thus able to obtain all the cipher [sic] messages passing from the various foreign embassies, consulates and legations through a certain central focus,' Fisher claimed in his memoirs, 'and I also obtained a key to their respective ciphers.' Papers in the Admiralty archives substantiate this story and indicate that it was Sir Nicholas O'Conor, British Ambassador at Constantinople who supplied the ciphers.
>
> Fisher's tenure as Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean also happened to coincide with the introduction into naval service of wireless telegraphy. Since Captain Henry Jackson had first persuaded the Admiralty of its practicability back in August 1896, the Royal Navy had been eagerly awaiting the prospect of communicating with warships over the horizon. By 1899, the reliability of wireless had improved sufficiently to justify fitting three warships participating in the annual maneuvers with crude quarter-watt Marconi sets. The experiment was a success: twelve months later, forty-two warships had been similarly fitted and eight shore

stations established. But there remained major problems with reliability. Whereas in 1899 cruisers up to sixty miles apart had succeeded in sending and receiving messages, those participating in the 1900 maneuvers struggled to be heard over twenty. Another problem was that early Marconi spark sets could transmit on just one wavelength, which meant that only one ship at a time could transmit signals. If a second tried, then each would jam the other's signal. In 1901, Captain Jackson joined the Mediterranean Fleet [then commanded by Fisher – ED], ostensibly to take command of HMS *Vulcan*, but in fact to continue his development of tuneable wireless sets away from radio interferences in the United Kingdom caused by commercial transmitters." (ibid. pp.372-373).

Fisher's ambitious use of the technology as Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet stands in sharp contrast to that of the First Sea Lord at the time, Lord Walter Kerr, who, it is stated in his DNB article, "was not a creative mind". Nonetheless, even he could not ignore the development of the new communications technology that was being exploited commercially all around him at the time.

"Lord Walter Kerr was notorious for wanting to 'await developments' before investing in new technologies. So it was with wireless telegraphy. Kerr provided the Navy's electrical school with a budget for experimentation and earmarked a small sum to equip annually a few warships with transmitters. But he was unwilling to spend any more until it had been demonstrated conclusively that wireless had become sufficiently reliable to justify the large outlay that would be required to equip the entire fleet with proper equipment. . . . Whatever the rationale for going slow, when Kerr retired from the Navy in late 1904 less than half the fleet was wireless capable, and the Navy possessed no more than the original eight short-range (fifty miles) naval wireless stations. As a result, wireless coverage even within the narrow waters of the English Channel was patchy at best. . . .

Rather than invest public money in building Navy-owned and operated shore stations, Kerr preferred instead to encourage private British companies to develop their networks with the intent of commandeering them in wartime. It was well known that the Admiralty leased time on the Marconi Company's high power 35-kilowatt transmitter that could bridge the airwaves across the Atlantic Ocean. Much more secret was the subsidy paid to Lloyds of London to upgrade their global network of nearly two hundred semaphore signal stations. Each was located on a major headland from where it could observe and communicate with passing ships, and close to a cable telegraph office so that information could be passed rapidly back to London. In December 1901, the Admiralty agreed to provide a subvention to expedite the installation of wireless at each site. According to a document found in the Lloyds archive, the Navy secretly provided two-thirds of the capital cost, helped find suitable staff, and gave an undertaking that 'the Admiralty will cover any possible pecuniary losses which may accrue in the ultimate working of these stations.' In return, Lloyds agreed that when necessary their network could be used by the Admiralty." (ibid. pp.373-374)

Fisher was to develop this relationship with Lloyds of London when he became First Sea Lord in 1904. At this stage the main threat to Britain's interests was believed to come from Russia or France or a coalition of both and this remained the case when Fisher was appointed First Sea Lord:

"The appointment of Fisher did not signify—or result—in any change in the Admiralty's strategic outlook or aspirations. The new First Sea Lord was equally committed as his predecessors to upholding Britain's global supremacy, that is, maintaining the capability to protect vital interests in home waters and distant seas against a coalition of any two rival powers. Fisher, just as Kerr, regarded France and Russia as the Royal Navy's most likely opponents in any future war and developed his ideas accordingly." (ibid. p.375)

As will be seen later, although the strategy of the navy at this time was based upon Russia and France as the potential enemy, the technological revolution introduced into the equation by the development of wireless telegraphy was a weapon that was capable of serving Britain's hostile intentions even if the objective of these intentions under the Liberal Imperialist influence was to change in the future.

Admiral Mahan's influence on strategic thinking

Up to the end of the 19th century there was no formal element in war strategy or naval history in the education of naval cadets and such things generally were deemed to be add-ons to the more important skills associated with seamanship. Fisher was a significant influence when, in 1900, this omission began to be addressed with the introduction of a "War Course" at the Royal Naval College in Greenwich. The course was mandatory and originally lasted for eight months at which elements like naval history, strategy and tactics were taught. The main theoretical influence on naval strategy at this time was the works of US Admiral Mahan in the 1890s (the most famous of which was *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660–1783*). When his books were first published they had an immediate impact on a large number of British naval officers and Mahan's visit to England in 1894 reinforced his influence. However, Mahan was primarily a naval historian whose grasp of naval war tactics left a lot to be desired (for instance, regarding the enemy fleet he had a preference for the 'get them out to fight' school of thought and favoured heavy armoured ships against the idea of large guns and speed). Mahon's influence goes a long way towards explaining the nature of the objections of many British naval critics to Fisher's subsequent policies as, in the absence of any insight into the secret war strategy, Mahan's was the orthodoxy that they generally fell back upon. Nonetheless, Mahan's analysis of the history of naval power did offer insights that were in harmony with Fisher's own ideas and in some instances proved to be prophetic in relation to the thinking that formed the basis of Britain's economic warfare strategy against Germany:-

"It is not the taking of individual ships or convoys, be they few or many, that strikes down the money power of a nation; it is the possession of that overbearing power on the sea which drives the enemy's flag from it, or allows it to appear only as a fugitive; and which, by controlling the great common, closes the highways by which commerce moves to and from the enemy's shores. This overbearing power can only be exerted by great navies, and by them (on the broad sea) less efficiently now than in the days when the neutral flag had not its present immunity. It is not unlikely that, in the event of a war between maritime nations, an attempt may be made by the one having a great sea power and wishing to break down its enemy's commerce, to interpret the phrase '*effective blockade*' in a manner that best suits its interests at the time; to assert that the speed and disposal of its ships make the blockade

effective at much greater distances and with fewer ships than formerly. The determination of such a question will depend, not upon the weaker belligerent, but upon neutral powers; it will raise the issue between belligerent and neutral rights; and if the belligerent have a vastly overpowering navy he may carry his point, just as England, when possessing the mastery of the seas, long refused to admit the doctrine of the neutral flag covering the goods."

(*The Influence of Sea Power Upon History 1660-1783*, by Captain A.T. Mahan. Published by Little, Brown, and Company, 14th edn. Boston, 1898, p.138)

During the First World War Britain did indeed "interpret the phrase 'effective blockade' in a manner that best suits its interests." Also, it dealt with the restricting influence of the neutral flag in a similar manner by simply ignoring it. This will be dealt with in a later article.

Mahan's thinking highlighted the difference between the French and British approach to naval warfare at the end of the 19th century. Until the first years of the 20th century the French naval strategy was known to depend upon the *guerre industrielle* (also known as the *Jeune Ecole*) concept whereby its ships would mount surprise attacks from their overseas bases on the enemy's commerce. The purpose of this was to impose sufficient disruption on the enemy's trade on the high seas to eventually stifle its economy. This strategy depended upon speed of attack and withdrawal before being intercepted by the enemy's warships and the favoured craft for this type of action was the cruiser. Since the 1890s the French navy had been developing an improved type of armoured fast cruiser that was better than any British trade protection cruiser stationed outside European waters at the time (although Britain remained far ahead in terms of numbers and other types of battleships in such areas). By 1900 the French and Russian navies were known to have more than twenty such craft either projected or under construction to add to their existing fleets. All of this added to the belief that it was from this quarter that the threat to British trade would be found.

Mahan, on the other hand, claimed that tactics such as the *guerre industrielle* were not likely to seriously threaten shipping. The use of the commercial blockade was a far more effective tool in destroying the commercial trade of the enemy. He was at pains to point out that it was effective precisely because it differed from a purely military action:

"Commercial blockade is not to be confounded with the military measure of confining a body of hostile ships of war to their harbor, by stationing before it a competent force. It is directed against merchant vessels, and is not a military operation in the narrowest sense, in that it does not necessarily involve fighting, nor propose the capture of the blockaded harbor. It is not usually directed against military ports, unless these happen to be also centres of commerce. Its object, which was the paramount function of the United States Navy during the Civil War, dealing probably the most decisive blow inflicted upon the Confederacy, is the destruction of commerce by closing the ports of egress and ingress. Incidental to that, all ships, neutrals included, attempting to enter or depart, after public notification through customary channels, are captured and confiscated as remorselessly as could be done by the most greedy privateer." (*Mahan on Naval Warfare: selections from the writings of Rear Admiral Alfred T. Mahan*, edited by Alan Westcott. Published Little, Brown, and Company, Boston, 1918, p.94)

However, given the size and make-up of any of the European navies at any time before the First World War, the tactic of a commercial blockade was just not an option. The only navy capable of exerting such a blockade was the British navy. In these circumstances, the French tactic of the *guerre industrielle* was the only one possible and indeed it was a variation of this tactic that the German U-boat squadrons mounted after 1915.

As an island Britain had the advantage of numerous commercial ports through which its trade was processed and the effort and resources required in blockading enough of them to be effective ensured that it was never a serious possibility. The situation where a commercial blockade can be successful is where it is imposed on a country with a limited coastline consisting of a small number of ports through which its commerce is compelled to move. The only country with the capacity to undertake a close blockade on an enemy was Britain but the operational value of such a tactic was compromised by the fact that most European powers, because they were located on a continent and were not island nations, had the option of overland trade with other nations who are not belligerents in any particular war. As it will be seen later, this problem was overcome by Britain through the practice of ignoring the rights of neutral states in wartime by emulating the American Navy's Civil War tactic of coast line blockade. The British strategy, when it came to the use of the blockade, was therefore one that was based on its pragmatic adaptation of this device to prevailing circumstances at the outbreak of the war and was not inhibited by the fact that it managed to entrap neutral as well as enemy shipping in its application.

Britain's circumstances, as the possible target of any kind of blockade, were markedly different. Although it was favoured defensively by the fact that, as an island with an extensive coastline containing many deep sea commercial seaports, it was relatively blockade-proof, its dependency on an extensive global trading network left it vulnerable to the disruption of its trade traffic on the open seas. However, its huge navy ensured that this apparent weakness was turned to its advantage:

"On the oceans, particularly at the confluence of several trade routes, commerce attack and defence were two sides of the same coin. A squadron deployed athwart a major trade route could simultaneously protect friendly and interdict enemy commerce. For many years, Fisher had been arguing that strategic geography favoured the Royal Navy in this respect. Britain already possessed naval bases at the Straits of Dover, Suez, Gibraltar, and Malacca (Singapore), and the Cape of Good Hope; each one was a choke point for oceanic trade. In Fisher's opinion, control of the sea-lanes at these five locations conferred upon Britain effective control of the global trading system—access to which was widely regarded by contemporary political economists as crucial to the prosperity of modern industrial economies. This was what Fisher meant by his well-known boast that Britain owned all 'five keys' to lock up the world!" (Lambert, op cit, p.381)

Fisher was never a blind disciple of Mahan in the way that other British Admirals were. He was essentially a pragmatist who was prepared to accommodate those parts of Mahan's insights that he believed to be relevant. However, he had already formulated the basis of his thinking prior to Mahan becoming the fashionable celebrity among Admiralty strategists and he adjusted it according to the requirements that circumstances and intelligence indicated. As far as Fisher was concerned, it was

intelligence (in the military sense), combined with a powerful navy that provided the basis for the evolution of an effective commercial blockade strategy.

The intelligence points the way.

As previously mentioned, during his stint as Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet, Fisher had enlarged and improved its intelligence gathering operations. When he was promoted to First Sea Lord, Fisher inherited the relationship previously established by his predecessor between the Admiralty and Lloyds of London.

> "Additionally, in the event of war, the Admiralty could still supplement their network with the British-owned and operated Lloyds' signal stations. Far from abandoning this relationship, Fisher forged still closer links. In 1905, for example, Lloyds acceded to an Admiralty request to build four new overseas stations at locations where the Navy had been unable to gain Treasury approval for building naval wireless stations. Routine telegrams received from Lloyds signal stations were henceforth copied to the [Naval Intelligence Department] NID (the significance will become apparent below) and a dedicated phone line between the Admiralty and Lloyds secretly installed. In January 1908, Lloyds wrote to the Admiralty, again assuring them of their unconditional assistance in helping to perfect 'war arrangements.' Lloyds even went so far as to help set up an espionage network in Germany to monitor the movements of the German High Sea Fleet through the Kiel Canal.
>
> The Admiralty's investment in wireless was accompanied by a radically new approach to the gathering, processing, and exploitation of intelligence. After 1904, not only was the collection of data much more systematic, but analysis was centralized in London. There were many obvious benefits in so doing: the City of London was the commercial hub of the world, and Britain dominated the world in those industries where information was paramount, such as banking, insurance, and shipping. In addition, the world cable network through which most of the information flowed was mostly British-owned and managed. The Admiralty possessed good contacts in each industry." (Lambert, op cit. pp.379-380)

Thus was the close relationship between the Navy and the City of London established prior to the war. As made obvious in the above quotation, by this time, under the direction of the Liberal Imperialist agenda, Russia and France had been replaced by Germany as the enemy to be confronted.

When the Naval Intelligence Department's Trade Division was created in 1902 its brief had been to gather and process information as a means of protecting British seaborne trade against a determined French *guerre industrielle*. When, in the aftermath of the arrival of Liberal Imperialists' influence on government in 1906 the enemy was redefined as Germany, the perspective not only changed with regards to the country in its sights but also the use to which future and previously gathered information could be put.

> "At some stage it dawned upon someone at the Admiralty that other nations might be similarly vulnerable to economic dislocation, and that the mass of data on the subject already gathered by the trade section might prove useful in preparing schemes for attacking enemy commerce. To whom this revelation appeared is not known, but to Fisher belongs the credit for taking action. From 1905 onwards, the NID trade section devoted less and less time to the study of British trade defence. Instead, as the director of the trade division noted in 1909: 'The work of this department as regards German trade has been an attempt to investigate the oversea requirements, the economic effects of stopping the same, the origins of supplies, the quantities and values of the supplies and the movements of the tonnage carrying the same at various periods.'" (Lambert, op cit, pp. 380-381)

It can be seen just how important was the development and expansion of the navy's intelligence gathering operation—a development that relied heavily on co-operation from the British cable and City of London banking, insurance and shipping companies. The result of this arrangement was not just intelligence gathered on the basis of assessing the strength of the German navy and its movements but intelligence that was based on an aggressive British strategy that had as its goal the destruction of German commerce and trade.

Evolution of organisation and strategy

While he was Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet, Fisher, besides developing the idea of an increased use of intelligence, invested some thought into how the Admiralty command structure could be reorganised to meet a modern war situation. In February 1902, in a letter to his Flag Captain, Prince Louis of Battenberg, he expressed his concerns that there was no real war plan that took account of modern requirements. Battenberg, who had been an assistant in the Naval Intelligence Department and Flag Captain to the Commander-in-Chief of the Channel Fleet during the Fashoda crisis of 1898 (when Britain and France nearly came to war over the area of East Sudan) replied along lines that found harmony with those of Fisher. He stressed the important potential of the Naval Intelligence Department. This department needed to be expanded and more power delegated to its Director. The Director would formulate the strategic plans in conjunction with senior officers of the foreign stations working within broad parameters as laid down by the Admiralty. The new type of Director would be a member of the Board of Admiralty being second only to the First Sea Lord. Fisher discussed the concept with Lord Charles Beresford, his second-in-command of the Mediterranean Fleet at the time. "What we want is an additional naval member of the Board of Admiralty absolutely dissociated from all administrative and executive work and solely concerned in the preparation of the Fleet for War . . . a von Moltke on the Board. All the other Lords have too much to do." (Fisher to Beresford, 27 February 1902. Quoted in *The Royal Navy and War Planning in the Fisher Era*, by Paul Haggie. Published in Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 8, No. 3, July 1973, p.115)

Beresford was at this time returning to England on completion of his stint with the Mediterranean Fleet and, when a short time later he took his seat as Member of Parliament for Woolwich, it enabled him to agitate in Parliament and the press for the institution of the type of 'War Lord' that he, Fisher, and Battenberg had wished for.

As a corollary to the 'War Lord' concept, Fisher at this time was also a supporter of the idea of a General War Staff for the Navy as a kind of naval inner war cabinet—in 1902 he was the

author of a memorandum on *The increasing Necessity for a General Staff for the Navy to meet War Requirements*. The idea was that the General War Staff of the Navy would work with the 'War Lord' to formulate the Naval War Plans. This was another organisational reform for which Beresford was an energetic advocate. However, it was the two areas of the War Plans and a General Staff for the Navy that came to provide the basis of the animosity between him and Beresford for the remainder of his career (more on this later).

When Fisher was elevated to the role of First Lord of the Admiralty in 1904 he began to interpret the position in terms of the 'War Lord' figure originally envisaged two years earlier. This of course caused wide unrest and discontent among senior naval figures:

> "However, the unrest and discontent were due as much to Fisher's alleged personal rule and to the methods he used to carry out his reforms. The former has to do with Fisher's 'departure' from the traditional system of Board control, whereby the First Sea Lord had only been *primus inter pares* on the Board, to the existing 'one-man show' initiated by the redistribution of business on 20 October 1904. This redefinition of Board functions made the First Sea Lord solely responsible for 'preparation for war' and for the 'fighting and sea-going efficiency of the Fleet.'" (*From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow: the Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904-1919*, by Arthur J. Marder, vol. I, *The Road to War, 1904-1914*, Oxford University Press, London, 1961, p.79)

However, he refused to implement the other ingredient of the organisational reform in ways acceptable to his erstwhile supporters. Instead, fearful that a properly constituted Naval General Staff might result in a diminution of his control, he sought to provide the necessary naval war plans without recourse to a Naval General Staff so at the end of 1906 he formed a small *ad hoc* committee under the chairmanship of Captain George Ballard, a man who, until July 1906, had been Director of Naval Operations. Their brief was to provide, not so much a definitive set of war plans, but an overall general context within which the war plans might emerge. Other members of the committee included Captain E.J.W. Slade (who we met earlier), a former director of the War College, and Julian Corbett, who was a lecturer at the War College, and Maurice Hankey as the committee secretary.

The 1906 Ballard Committee provided Fisher with an understanding of the various schools of thought in the navy that were closest to his own thinking and it was from these schools of thought that the eventual war plans would emerge. Although the committee produced, as required, a variety of plans to meet the most obvious scenarios that would confront Britain in its next war, everyone was agreed that the starting point of these plans was that the enemy would be Germany. Moreover, these plans show that as early as 1906 not only was the target for Britain's war identified but the main thrust of the general strategic planning that went into the operation of that war was also in the course of being formulated.

Julian Corbett contributed the introduction to the report of the committee which shows a departure from the existing ideas of senior naval strategists. Only the year previously, at a meeting between Fisher and the staff of the Naval Intelligence Department the prevailing line of thinking had become apparent. The minutes of that meeting state that:

> "It was considered by those present at the meeting that in a future maritime war the first duty of the British fleets and squadrons will be to seek out the corresponding fleets and squadrons of the enemy with a view to bringing them to action and fighting for what is the only decisive factor—the command of the sea. It was considered that this policy also affords the most effective protection that can be given to our ocean trade against attack by the regular men-of-war of the enemy.' [source: PRO, Adm 116/866B. Those present were Fisher, Ottley (DNI), Bacon, Inglefield and Ballard (Assistant DNIs), Commander Wilfred Henderson, and W.F. Nicholson, Fisher's private secretary.]" (quoted in *The Royal Navy and War Planning in the Fisher Era*, by Paul Haggie. Published in Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 8, No. 3, July 1973, pp.117-118)

In 1905 it was obvious that the "*Get them out to fight*" school retained significant influence not only in the Admiralty but also in the Naval Intelligence Department—a fact which explains why Fisher continued to insist upon retaining an exclusive rule in the areas of war planning and fleet preparedness while at the same time relying for advice on a select group of people who could see beyond the "*Get them out to fight*" strategy and shared his general way of thinking. Thus, the 1906 Ballard Committee appointed by him made a number of points which were based on a completely different strategy—points which retained their validity in terms of the strategy that was in fact later adopted by the Navy in the lead-in to the First World War. The idea "*that the first duty of the British fleets and squadrons [was] to seek out the fleets and squadrons of the enemy with a view to bringing them to action*" was replaced by a strategy that cohered around the concept of the distant (or open) blockade. This of course had implications for the type of ships best suited for such a strategy:

> "Corbett describes what he sees as being the correct use of various types of warship, including a defence of the value of speed in capital ships, and also the theory of the intermediate type (i.e. an apologia for the battle-cruisers). Of particular note in view of Fisher's dreams of Baltic operations is the assertion that '*For reasons familiar to every naval officer, it is certain that in future wars open blockade must take the place of close blockade as the basis of naval strategy*'." (ibid p.118)

The reference to Fisher Baltic operations in the above quote relates to a scheme he had also explored in the early days which involved an amphibious landing on Germany's Baltic coast as part of his wider strategy—an idea that he later abandoned—of including such a landing in an effort to bring about an early end of the war. It should be noted however, that this did not preclude his simultaneous commitment to the economic blockade as the best means of handling a longer war. A point made in the actual war plans:-

> "When the war plans which follow are studied, however, it becomes clear that a radically different assumption is being made from that expressed in the introduction. '*It is considered that the German war fleet itself is not a true ultimate objective, although its destruction is in general eminently desirable as a first step. The Germans would doubtless regret its loss, but no immediate suffering would thereby be entailed upon the nation's commerce and industries, such as would arrive by a stoppage of trade*'. The German mercantile marine is evidently regarded as the prime objective by the writers of these plans, and blockade as the prime weapon." (ibid p.119)

The Ballard Committee produced four possible plans for war and each of them in two versions depending on the role of France as either an active ally or a passive neutral.

"The first plan assumes that the destruction or enforced idleness of German shipping might be sufficient to bring hostilities to an end. If this is unsuccessful, the second plan provides for an increase in pressure by rigorously blockading German ports and preventing all trade, whatever flag it is passing under, from reaching them. If still greater pressure proves necessary, it '*can be exerted by attacking and harrying the second objective, the German coast, towns and population. But then we shall have practically reached the extreme limit of our powers of aggression, unless the third objective of a German army dependent on seaborne supplies is available*'. The final plan assumes that this third objective is available, due to German occupation of the chief islands of the Danish Archipelago, Siaelland and Fyen.

In order to implement the first plan, cordons were to be placed across the English Channel and the northern entrance to the North Sea, while cruisers were detailed on the various trade routes to hunt down any German shipping outside the cordon, or which succeeded in breaking through it. 'These arrangements for the attack on German trade would in large measure also afford protection to our own, should any of the enemy's vessels succeed in breaking out to open water.' The second plan was to be carried out by means of a *close* commercial blockade, dependent for its feasibility on the blocking of the Elbe. The escalation required in the third plan was to be provided by the destruction of the defences and facilities of the Baltic ports and the seizure of the North Sea islands of Borkum and Sylt as destroyer bases. The occupation of Siaelland and Fyen by the Germans was to be dealt with by an immediate and close blockade of these islands.

The German coast cannot strictly be accepted as itself constituting a primary objective, as the plans state. The only objectives which are considered to be of sufficient importance to justify the risk of attacking German territory are to capture and destroy German naval forces, to seize a base for the British destroyers and torpedo craft, or to increase the efficiency of the commercial blockade. The major aim throughout the plans remains the destruction of the German merchant marine and the stoppage of German seaborne trade in neutral bottoms. This aim, and the advocacy of close blockade to achieve it in certain of the plans, represents an outlook very different from that of Corbett. Clearly no satisfactory war plans could be elaborated until this vital point at issue between the writer of the introduction and the authors of the plans themselves had been cleared up." (ibid pp.119-121)

These plans outlined possible British responses to all conceivable scenarios at the time including scenarios that called for a close or a distant (or indeed both types of) blockade, depending on the circumstances at the time. All things considered these plans represent a highly sophisticated punt at a future event that was still eight years away with the actual circumstances of its application unknown.

The completed plans were sent to a select number of the naval commanders for their criticism and comments. The responses were to prove, as Fisher undoubtedly suspected they would, that many of the senior commanders showed a lack of real understanding of the needs of modern sea warfare or were imbued with a sense of tactical orthodoxy that made any comments less than helpful. The exception was Sir Arthur Wilson, (then Commander-in-Chief of the Channel Fleet and later, in 1910, the man who Fisher himself recommended as his replacement as First Sea Lord). Wilson showed a modern appreciation of the dangers posed by the development of the mine and torpedo. He was also critical of the close blockade concept and favoured the distant blockade. Commenting on the close blockade he states "*A continuous watch off all the German ports, in sufficient strength to prevent anything from coming out, would be very difficult and costly to maintain, and, if effective, would bring us no nearer to the end*." Interestingly, at this stage there is evidence in Fisher's annotations to the original document which shows that the Japanese were unofficially supplying the British with advice on their proposed war with Germany. Fisher's annotations to Wilson's comments on the close blockade reads: "*This is Admiral Yamamoto's secretly expressed opinion, based on the Japanese naval study of the question of war between Germany and England*" (quoted by Haggie and referenced PRO, Adm 116/1043B).

Corbett, while a member of the Ballard Committee, in line with other senior naval officers, continued to urge Fisher to establish a permanent Naval War Staff but Fisher resisted because he felt that at this stage in the evolution of the Admiralty that such a body could not be relied upon to provide the required unanimity and direction of purpose that the emerging war with Germany demanded. In fact, by the time he retired as First Sea Lord in 1910, Fisher still had not introduced the type of Naval War Staff that he himself had begun to advocate in 1902. It was left to Churchill to establish the semblance of such a body in 1912 but even then, by the time war was declared it remained, to all intents and purpose, a non-functional entity. During Fisher's time, the Admiralty retained a culture that continued to reflect the conservative and individualistic perspective based on the historic position of the Admiral in almost absolute charge of his own station. This, combined with the continuing affinity of many of them with the "*Get them out to fight*" orthodoxy, constituted a hindrance to its ability to adapt rapidly enough to meet the imminent challenge of a modern war. While the establishment of a Naval General Staff in 1904 may have eventually facilitated an evolution in the required direction, there was no guarantee (particularly after the 1906 general election brought Liberal Imperialist influence to the fore on matters of foreign affairs) that this could be done in the required time-frame. Consequently, Fisher used the force-grow technique of dragging it in the direction he felt it must take. By the time Churchill came to influence events in 1912, not only had the pace and direction of change been established at the Admiralty but the relationship between the government and the Admiralty had shifted to one which left more control in the hands of Asquith's circle.

Despite the impetus given by the Boer War, the development of the new wireless technology, the vision and energy of Fisher and the arrival in government of the Liberal Imperialists, the readying of the navy for its war still had to surmount many difficulties. These difficulties took the form of opposition on the issue of cost, opposition from traditional navy commanders jealous of protecting their fiefdoms, and opposition from those with their own ideas of the direction that the reforms should take. Politically, the latter proved to be the most problematic because they could ride the wave of popular sentiment that demanded a modern navy but, not being privy to the direction of the intelligence-led strategy and Liberal Imperialist agenda, only had partial sight of what was required. These were influential people who were outside the coterie that formulated and developed the Liberal Imperialist agenda. Consequently their energetic pursuit of reform had the paradoxical effect of hindering the real reforms that were deemed to be necessary to fulfil that agenda.

Thus the terms of the 1907 scare differed from its predecessor in that it was now no longer France but Germany that posed the

threat and, instead of urging the government to simply acknowledge the possibility of such a threat, it was claimed that such a threat was imminent. Balfour passed to Sir George Clarke, Secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence, a report of the scenario as well as a recommendation that an investigation be instituted to seriously examine the implication of the possibility of invasion. This resulted in the Prime Minister, Campbell-Bannerman, appointing a special sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence. The sub-committee, which met sixteen times between 27 November 1907 and 28 July 1908, was chaired by H.H. Asquith and consisted of Lloyd George, Sir Edward Grey, R.B. Haldane, Lord Esher, Lord Tweedmouth, Sir John French and Sir John Fisher. Thus, in the figures of Asquith, Grey and Haldane, the sub-committee was represented by those Liberal Imperialists who were to take over the Liberal government in 1908. For now however, although the terms of the inquiry was directed at a threat from the acknowledged enemy, the nature of that threat was totally inaccurate and misguided. From the point of view of the Liberal Imperialists, this posed a dilemma, for if the unlikely scenario of a German invasion of Britain was to be acknowledged this would become the basis of Britain's military strategy and resources that needed to be invested in an aggressive anti-German strategy would be wasted on a defensive one. The Liberal Imperialists were rescued from this dilemma in large part by Sir John Fisher:

> "The sub-committee was formed in the face of the wrathful opposition from Fisher, First Sea Lord and father of the Dreadnought class capital ship. From the initiation of the invasion alarm Fisher, the chief proponent of the 'Blue Water' school, had feared that increased expenditure on land forces would dictate neglect of the Navy. Mutual recriminations ensued in a bitter press campaign which dominated the pages of *The Times*. . .
>
> Fisher's rage was exacerbated by his assumption that Repington was the *eminence grise* behind the whole affair and that everyone else involved in raising the invasion bogey had been '*simply putty in Repington's hands*.' Moreover, he believed that Repington was in collusion with Sir Charles Beresford, Commander of the Channel Fleet and inveterate opponent of Fisher's naval reforms. Esher attempted to allay Fisher's misgivings by pointing out that '*An invasion scare is the mill of God which grinds you out a Navy of Dreadnoughts, and keeps the British people war like in spirit*,' but the obdurate First Sea Lord refused to acquiUsce willingly to the investigation. In August 1907 Fisher lodged with the Prime Minister an unsuccessful protest against the formation of the sub-committee, commenting that he must oppose '*the assumption that anyone except the Board of Admiralty had any claim to speak with authority as to the adequacy of the naval defence of these islands*.' (ibid p.10)

Fisher's suspicions were indeed correct. Repington was in cahoots with Sir Charles Beresford, who at this time was Commander of the Channel Fleet and, although as a serving officer was inhibited from making any public statement on the subject, found a mouthpiece in Repington. Beresford used the opportunity to provide Repington with information and advice based on his belief that existing naval resources were inadequate to meet the challenge posed by a German invasion. The information surreptitiously supplied by Beresford to Repington was highly detailed and verging on the treasonous. It included a detailed list of the distribution of ships in Home Waters and technical advice on mines. However, underneath all the detailed evidence the basis of Repington's argument was that the British naval defences were prone to a surprise attack from the German navy intent upon facilitating an invasion. Because he and any of his supporters, were not privy to the intelligence capability of the navy at this time, his position was effectively undermined at the inquiry by Fisher and his naval officers (which included Captain W.J.W. Slade, the Director of Naval Intelligence). The final report of the sub-committee was presented to the Cabinet on 22 October 1908 after the ascent of the Liberal Imperialists in government was complete and H.H. Asquith had become Prime Minister. It concluded:

> 'that no major invasion seemed practical as long as naval supremacy was maintained. Conversely, if dominance in the North Sea were forfeited, then capitulation to the enemy would become inevitable, even if a significant home defence force existed. The report therefore recommended that home defence forces should be of adequate strength both to repeal minor raids and to assure that any enemy invasion army would be of such colossal size that it could not possibly successfully elude the British fleet." (ibid p.11)

The inquiry did serve one area of the Liberal Imperialist agenda however. In the course of its investigations certain things became apparent that led to an acceleration in the implementation of Haldane's reform of the army:

> "testimony before the sub-committee also revealed that few of Haldane's reforms were completed. The British Expeditionary Force, because of its paucity of transport equipment and support personnel, could dispatch only two divisions to the continent in a fortnight. Moreover, the embryonic Territorial Army was still in a state of near total confusion. These sobering revelations prompted the War Office to hasten its implementation of Haldane's reforms during the next year.
>
> The invasion controversy, because it exposed that the British General Staff was now firmly committed to the principle of continental intervention, also diminished the ambiguity which had hitherto characterized military planning. Implicit in the C.I.D.'s exorcism of the invasion spectre was its assumption that two of the six B.E.F. divisions were to be allotted for home defence. Alarmed at this emasculation of a force with which it intended to aid France in a future war, the General Staff immediately dispatched a vehement memorandum of protest to the C.I.D. Partially as a result of this episode a later sub-committee report affirmed the priority of continental over imperial military ventures. The tragic path which was to lead the British Army inexorably to Mons, the Somme, and Passchendaele was now being blazed in earnest." (ibid. p.11)

Despite the findings of the sub-committee, the question of the threat of invasion did not go away and continued to operate as a kind of counter-scenario which, if conceded, would have stymied the actual plans of the Liberal Imperialists for an aggressive war on Germany. The problem for the Liberal Imperialist anti-German agenda was that its furtherance always ran the risk of stimulating the type of public reaction that would compel the adoption of a more defensive strategy and the movement of resources to a home based army rather than an aggressive expeditionary force and a stronger navy. As was often the case in these situations, it was the naval question that helped shift the public's perspective from the home to the European front. In the meantime, the naval plans of economic warfare continued to be refined in spite of the apparent British incoherence during Second Hague Peace Conference and the London Naval Conference.

[to be continued] □

Report for *Liberty Online*—SIPTU, Ireland—March 3, 2011

EESC Overwhelmingly Opposes Sarkozy And Merkel Diktats On Economic Governance And Wage Controls

by Manus O'Riordan

The European Union is undergoing a crisis that is both economic and political. The economic crisis is characterised by the devastating impact on jobs and living standards triggered by banking insolvency, alongside mounting public finance deficits and debt, but it is further aggravated by the severity of the austerity measures supposedly designed to address the first set of problems. Yet both the root cause of, together with the false solutions to, such an economic crisis actually lie in the political sphere – the pursuit of policies that worshipped a false god of financial and property speculation, while simultaneously undermining a tax base that should have remained independent of such speculative activities.

The political crisis is not, however, solely centred on the character of the "stability" measures undertaken by various Governments. The EU political crisis has been severely heightened by the solo runs of French President Sarkozy and German Chancellor Merkel in seeking to unilaterally determine a strategic response which not only threatens to further undermine the well-being of European workers, but also threatens the very basis of an effective and acceptable EU-wide response to the crisis. In such circumstances, the near-unanimity of the European Economic and Social Council in adopting an Opinion on enhancing EU economic policy co-ordination for stability, growth and jobs, achieves greater significance. For that Opinion decisively rejects the Sarkozy/Merkel approach, not least by affirming that "freedom in collective bargaining must be respected: government targets for collective bargaining, let alone government-decreed wage cuts, are unacceptable and must be rejected". **Manus O'Riordan, who participated in the EESC debates on this Opinion, reports.**

http://siptucommunicationsdepartment.newsweaver.ie/image/161/41174/91 4 2 0 4 E E S C % 2 0 O P P O S E S % 2 0 SARKOZY%20AND%20MERKEL%20DIKTATS.pdf

EESC ADOPTS A CRITICAL OPINION ON ENHANCING ECONOMIC POLICY CO-ORDINATION FOR STABILITY, GROWTH AND JOBS

The Italian trade unionist Stefano Palmieri was the *rapporteur* for this Opinion from the European Economic and Social Committee. It was first discussed in draft form by the EESC's Section for Economic and Monetary Union and Economic and Social Cohesion at its meeting on February 7th, while it was finally adopted by the EESC as a whole at its Plenary Session on February 17th. The Opinion acknowledges that the current economic crisis has challenged not only the economic and social, but also "the political resilience of the EU in general and the EMU in particular", as the crisis has clearly revealed the prevailing limited capacity for co-ordination between Member States. It further points out that "the high public debt of some Member States, caused at least in part by extended bank bail-out operations, is an obstacle to public investment and the sustainability of welfare spending". The Opinion expresses the hope that "European economic governance will be strengthened, ensuring equal attention to the need for stability and job-creating growth".

The Opinion therefore, devotes as much attention to the limitations and risks inherent in the current approach of the EU Commission, as it does to its potential. It rather pointedly observes: "*The first step has to be to overcome the stalemate in which the EU is currently mired, caused by the tribulations of the European Constitution and the enlargement to 27 Member States, all with very different histories and political visions, which makes it difficult to identify the common economic, social and environmental objectives on which economic governance must be based*."

The Opinion argues that "*the rules for the future must be based on a shared understanding of the past, particularly as regards the limitations of the existing co-ordination tools which have resulted in the ineffective implementation of the Stability and Growth Pact*". It is, of course, of no small importance to note that both France and Germany themselves violated the SGP with impunity, by means of the opportunist route facilitated by the intergovernmental approach. The Opinion further points out that "*the crisis originated in the private, not the public sector*" and it goes on to highlight the shortcomings of the EU Commission's approach to resolving it: *"According to the Commission, in order to overcome the crisis, more stringent rules and clearer penalties are needed, with less policy discretion and more automatic application of rules. However, no set of rules can address severe crises effectively, as these crises are almost always caused by extraordinary, unforeseeable events which experts are unable to predict and to which pre-established rules are unable to provide a response. The utopia of 'government by rules' – which exonerates politics from making choices – would be hard to achieve and, on the contrary, even dangerous.*"

The EESC Opinion highlights one of the risks in adopting the Commission approach as being the threat to growth and social equity arising from inflexible rules of tight financial policy. But it further highlights an even greater risk from the Sarkozy/Merkel approach: "*Prevalence of the intergovernmental approach could lead to the same underestimation of the European citizenship deficit as had already occurred with the Lisbon Strategy. It would challenge EU economic, social and political resilience in the same way as the global crisis and could cause resurgence of the illusion that national sovereignty can be recouped by rejecting the euro (and even the EU itself).*"

At the February 7th meeting, the Opinion's expert, Federico Tomassi, pointed out that the fallacy of a purely rules-based approach could be illustrated by the fact that up until 2007 Ireland had been strictly adhering to the provisions of the Stability and Growth Pact. And yet the EU Commission has provided no review of the weaknesses as well as the strengths of the SGP as

a policy instrument. Without common objectives, he further argued, co-ordination could only be an empty shell. During the course of my own contribution, I pointed out that a serious demagogic threat to the EU itself was indeed emerging. But this was not posed by any "mobs on the streets". Demagogy was in fact what was taking place at Heads of State and Government press conferences. For it was just three days previously, on February 4th, that the Merkel/Sarkozy press conference included rules for wages in its so-called "*pact for competitiveness*", as they "advanced" from unilateralism to bilateralism in telling the 25 other EU member states that "*Germany and France will make clear that, as the EU, we intend to grow together*".

It was in direct response to such a diktat that an addendum was adopted at this meeting, proposed by Gabriele Bischoff of Germany's own TUC, the DGB, which declared: "*If closer economic policy co-ordination extends not only to fiscal and monetary policy, but also to tighter wage policy co-ordination in the euro area, then freedom in collective bargaining must be respected: government targets for collective bargaining, let alone government-decreed wage cuts, are unacceptable and must be rejected.*"

The draft Opinion was adopted at this Section meeting by 50 votes in favour, 1 against and 1 abstention. It next proceeded for final resolution at the EESC Plenary Session on February 17th. The *rapporteur*, Stefano Palmieri, pointed out that it was the intergovernmental approach which had undermined the Stability and Growth Pact in the first place, as it was now posing a threat to a resolution of the current crisis. The German trade unionist Armin Duttine rejected any policy based on German solo runs and diktats, while the former General Secretary of the French CFDT, Gerard Dantin, stated his belief that this was an Opinion of which the EESC could be proud. **I myself pointed out that national collective bargaining, such as had operated in Ireland from its re-emergence in response to the economic crisis of the mid-1980s, until it was sabotaged by Government policy during the course of the current one, was in fact highlighted in the Opinion as the appropriate means for including wages policy among the components of macroeconomic co-ordination, as opposed to the Sarkozy/Merkel Government diktats rejected by that same Opinion.** The British trade unionist Peter Coldrick further argued that another lesson which should be learned from the current crisis was that the euro was in fact here to stay. The much-voiced Eurosceptic boast about the Britain's freedom to devalue sterling against the euro had now been shown to be counterproductive, with the consequences of a serious inflationary problem now re-emerging in the UK.

This EESC Opinion was finally adopted with 244 votes in favour, only 2 against, and just 14 abstentions – a remarkable demonstration of near unanimity, when one considers that the employers' group, no less than the workers' group, accounts for one-third of EESC membership.

[http://eescopinions.eesc.europa.eu/EESCopinionDocument.aspx?identifier=ces\eco\eco282\ces352-2011_ac.doc&language=EN provides a link to the full text of this Opinion]

Manus O'Riordan
Member for Ireland, Workers' Group
European Economic and Social Committee

http://memberspage.eesc.europa.eu/Detail.aspx?id=17843&f=2&s=0&o1=0&o2=0&o3=0&inst=CES&co=IE

Notes On Eire
***Espionage Reports to Winston Churchill*—3rd. Edition with extra reports**

by Elizabeth Bowen,

Edited by Brendan Clifford and Jack Lane
Aubane Historical Society 2008

The story of this book starts in 1993, when extracts from Elizabeth Bowen's works were included in "A North Cork Anthology", with the qualification that, though her family had property connections in the areas, she could not be regarded as a North Cork, or even an Irish, writer. This caused outrage in the Dublin media and some vicious attacks on Jack Lane and Brendan Clifford, the compilers of the Anthology. There was even doubt cast on the fact that Ms. Bowen spied against Ireland in the Second World War.

The upshot of that controversy was that the Aubane Historical Society traced several of Ms. Bowen's secret reports, which are published here in full for the first time.

For those who would see Ms. Bowen's spying as needing no defence, on the supposition that the Allied war on Germany was absolutely justified, and that Neutrals had no case, this book provides an extensive survey of international affairs in the decades before the War, including de Valera's role in the League of Nations. There are also sections on Irish and European Fascism.

The book is rounded out by reproducing the polemic about Bowen which took place between the Aubane Historical Society and luminaries of the "Irish Times" and the "Sunday Business Post". The controversy about how to describe Ms. Bowen goes to the heart of what Ireland and Irish culture is, and this book is as good a starting point as any for those who seek the middle path between the Scylla of bigoted nationalism and the Charybdis of West British globalism.

The second edition provides a further review of aspects of World War 2—the British betrayal of Poland, the American provocation of Japan, the British insistence on delaying the Second Front, and the Nuremberg Trials—in response to an indictment of Irish neutrality by Professor B. Girvin and Dr. G. Roberts.

also of relevance to articles in this issue:

A Reply To Senator Martin Mansergh on The Case of (President) Mary McAleese vs B. Clifford, by Brendan Clifford A Belfast Magazine no 30, 2007

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THOUGHTS ON THE "TREATY"

by Jack Lane

Irish political life is often bemoaned about as being based on 'civil war' politics and that this makes us out of kilter with other countries. But these politics have remained constant for nearly 90 years and now that we have a Fine Gael government with a Fianna Fail/Sinn Féin opposition we have 'civil war' politics with knobs on. We will be with these politics for quite some time yet, so we might as well try to understand how they came about and why they last. At this point in time we should surely be able to assess the issues dispassionately.

I will try to give a narrative of the basic facts that gave rise to the political division called the 'civil war.' We are often told, quite rightly, that nobody in Ireland wanted it and all tried to prevent it but it happened! How come?

The first problem is getting basic words right. There was not a 'civil war' in any meaningful sense. There was a war over the 'Treaty' but both sides were Republicans. They had no different vision for the country, unlike civil wars in the USA, Spain, Russia, England, etc. All the main people concerned were Republicans. Yet there was a very serious conflict—why?

I have headed this with 'Treaty' in inverted commas. This is deliberate. The issue began with the 'Treaty' and here we have another problem with words because there was no 'Treaty' signed—there was a collection of 'Articles of Agreement' between the people who signed them and the British Government but not between two sovereign independent states, which is the basis of any treaty worthy of the name.

And this is not playing with words because the inclusion of some and exclusion of other words became crucial elements in the conflict that emerged. And some believe the whole thing was silly because it was all about words. But of course it was not. The words had real meaning and this is what I try to show.

The only way to deal with this type of issue is to look at the actual course of what happened and put the events in their context. That's what I will try to do here. I will try to separate the wood from the trees and as there are limitless number of trees that grew then and even more that grew since we have to cut our way through quite a lot.

THE TRUCE

Let's start with the Truce of 11 July 1921. This was an indication of a great success in the fight for independence. The Government and its army, the IRA, had brought the British Empire at the height of its powers to the negotiating table after dropping several previous conditions such as giving up its arms etc. A world war had just been fought for 'the rights of small nations' and millions had died for this including up to 50,000 Irishmen, out of nearly a quarter of a million who signed up. It seemed right to most public opinion that a nation like Ireland was fully entitled to be free, and there was a feeling of optimism.

The crucial reason for the success so far was the unity of the people. This was clearly and democratically expressed three times during the war—at the 1918 General Election, the local elections in 1920 and the 1921 General Election. All these gave overwhelming support to Sinn Féin and Independence. The 1921 Election is often overlooked but in many ways it is just as important as the 1918 Election and we need to look at it a bit more closely because it had great significance afterwards.

This was the Election to set up the Government of Southern Ireland and the Government of Northern Ireland under the 1920 Government of Ireland Act. These 'governments' were newly minted bodies without national responsibilities such as raising revenue etc. As a way of rejecting the imposition of these new bodies, no candidate stood against Sinn Féin nominees, who, as result, were automatically 'elected'. In fact, there was not a single vote cast for that Government of Southern Ireland in that election. Every seat went uncontested to Sinn Féin except for the 4 appointed by Trinity College Dublin. Sinn Féin won 124 out of the 128 seats. It was the most overwhelming election result ever in any democracy and it has never been queried or challenged, then or since. Naturally there was then no question of this Government of Southern Ireland coming into existence. It was a dead letter. Please park that in your mind for the moment. Not a single vote was cast here for that Government of Ireland Act.

This overwhelming unity was the fact that impressed the world and Lloyd George and the British government in particular. And the success of the Truce created a new situation and new issues—what to do next?

THE BRITISH POSITION

The British knew precisely what to do. Retrieve and reverse the situation as much as possible. Ireland had gone outside the Empire and it must be brought back in. And people with a clear and straightforward aim like that are in a very strong position. They had lost the ball but not the game and they were determined to win the game at all costs. They had just won a world war so they were fully confident of dealing with these parvenus who were still wet behind the ears when it came to people like them—Lloyd George, Churchill, Chamberlain, and Birkenhead. They were the 'masters of the universe' as we say today. All these were very clear and obvious facts but these days, in modern histories, these facts are 'the elephant in the parlour' that are never mentioned. And the key to winning the ball back was to divide the forces that had won the victory in the first place.

And the 'newcomers' had real problems in the face of this determination and the sheer power that lay behind it. There was also what might be called a psychological problem. The Irish did not have, and do not have, a concept of unending war as an end in itself, as a way of life. You fight a war to achieve something and then you stop. The British have taken war as a way of life for over three hundred years and negotiations before or after a war as part and parcel of the war. This shone through in these events.

One major change that had occurred was the development of the struggle from a conspiracy as 1916 was, led by the Irish Republican Brotherhood, to a popular people's war led by the Irish Republican Army. They had become very different animals despite an overlap of memberships and leaders. The Irish Republican Brotherhood, because of its nature, found it difficult to adapt to the new open politics. Their great strength was their underground skills and indifference to what would be called public opinion. This had served them well and had caused the Irish Revolution in the first place by being the driving force behind 1916.

INITIAL NEGOTIATONS

There were exchanges of letters and then negotiations between Lloyd George and de Valera after the Truce to gauge attitudes. Lloyd George proposed Dominion status which de Valera rejected out of hand. The rejection led to the following exchange:

Lloyd George: "*Do you realise that this means war? Do you realise that the responsibility for it will rest on your shoulders alone?"*

de Valera: *"No Mr. Lloyd George, if you insist on attacking us it is you, not I, who will be responsible, because you will be the aggressor."*

Lloyd George: *"I could put a soldier in Ireland for every man, woman and child in it."*

de Valera: *"Very well. But you would have to keep them there."*

Lloyd George claimed that negotiating with de Valera "*was like sitting on a merry-go-round and trying to catch up with the one in front*." He also famously said that negotiating with de Valera was '*like trying to pick up mercury with a fork*' (to which de Valera replied, '*why doesn't he use a spoon?*'**)** These were compliments coming from Lloyd George, as he was not known as the 'Welsh Wizard' for nothing. He was a political genius at getting his way, as he proved later, but he got no change from de Valera on this occasion.

But de Valera learned an important lesson and that was that it was going to be difficult to maintain independence through negotiations with him and any negotiations would be a continuation of the war of independence by other means.

EXTERNAL ASSOCIATION

The concept of what kind of association should there be between Ireland and the Empire had come up in the negotiations and deciding on this seemed the way forward but 'association' alone seemed meaningless.

On 27 July 1921 de Valera

" ... was tying his bootlaces, sitting on the side of his bed in Glenvar, when the word 'external' flashed into his mind. It would clarify all that he had been trying to say ...The whole idea was that Ireland would be associated with the Commonwealth but not a member of the Commonwealth."

Lloyd George did not accept this but nevertheless he later issued the following invitation:

"We, therefore, send you herewith a fresh invitation to a conference in London on October 11th where we can meet your delegates as spokesmen of the people whom you represent with a view to ascertaining how the association of Ireland with the community of nations known as the British Empire may best be reconciled with Irish National aspirations."

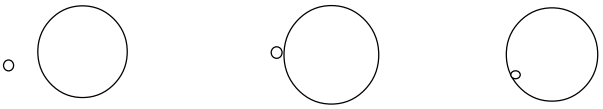
(29 September 1921).

This is a great example of what Lloyd George was capable of. Note that there is no mention of Dáil Eireann, or of the Republic that existed. The '*people you represent*' could mean what? It need not mean the same things as representing an Irish Government—simply those that voted for Sinn FÈin. It was left ambiguous. But it is important again to note the words used and the words that were not used.

Important because the source of political authority in Ireland was, and remained, the crucial question. It could be ignored but it always came back. This was clear and crucial for Lloyd George, but the Irish side did not make an issue of it, possibly because of the reality which seemed so obvious to them.

External Association envisaged independence that need not necessarily mean a Republic. The Republic was a form of Independence but not the only one. De Valera had earlier put forward the idea of a Cuban type relationship with Britain similar to what that country had with the US. It was spelt out later as Document Number 2. The crucial thing being that the people decided of their own free will. There was to be no allegiance to Britain or the King but de Valera had no objection to swear to be faithful to an agreement between equals and to be associated with the Empire/Commonwealth, where the King could be recognized as head of that arrangement. He could swear to be faithful to such an arrangement while not accepting allegiance to the King in Ireland.

At one point de Valera gave a diagrammatic version of the concept along the following lines with Ireland represented by the small circle and the British Empire by the large circle:



The First Dáil External Association The 'Treaty'

This was going to be tricky to negotiate and in October 1921 at the Sinn Féin Ard-Fheis de Valera said:

"The problem is to devise a scheme that will not detract from Irish freedom... What may happen I am not able to judge but you should realize the difficulties there are in the way, and the fact that the best people might legitimately differ on such a scheme. The worst thing that could happen would be that we should not be tolerant of honest differences of opinion."

THE NEGOTIATIONS

Then there was the question of who was to go. Brugha refused and did not go. He suggested a neutral venue which was a very good idea but not taken up. So Collins could have refused point blank like him if he wished. But he was offended at not being part of the initial negotiations so he could hardly refuse this time. Griffith was the leader and he agreed with Collins going instead of de Valera. Griffith was Minister for Foreign Affairs and there was a very pertinent point to be made in sending the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic. De Valera also argued that they would take more notice of Collins as he had the reputation of winning the actual war. He was the real thing to the British—the military leader. I think we should look at the modern example of the Adams and McGuinness double act and how one without the other would not have been as credible as negotiators. But Collins did have a real problem as an IRB man with engaging in this type of negotiation.

de Valera argued that unity at home was most essential and he would help maintain it there but he never ruled out going if necessary. That would be the last throw of the dice. In any case there was to be no signing without a reference back.

The Cabinet position was based on his concept of External Association and in fact this is what all the subsequent negotiations were about. There was an ambiguity about it but this provided for flexibility and the substance depended on the determination of each side to put the final meaning in it.

It is also important to note that there were very clear instructions given to the negotiators, who were called *Plenipotentiaries*:

"Dublin, 7 October 1921

(1) The Plenipotentiaries have full powers as defined in their credentials.

(2) It is understood however that before decisions are finally reached on the main questions that a despatch notifying the intention of making these decisions will be sent to the Members of the Cabinet in Dublin and that a reply will be awaited by the Plenipotentiaries before the final decision is made.

(3) It is also understood that the complete text of the draft treaty about to be signed will be similarly submitted to Dublin and reply awaited.

(4) In case of a break the text of final proposals from our side will be similarly submitted.

(5) It is understood that the Cabinet in Dublin will be kept regularly informed of the progress of the negotiations.

(Instructions to *Plenipotentiaries* from the Cabinet)

But when they arrived in London their credentials were not accepted. In other words they were not treated as representatives of a Government. They were treated as representing themselves and their job was to get their friends to accept an agreement. This was overlooked by the Irish but it was a crucial factor when it again came to the source of authority later on.

Lloyd George treated the delegates as two groups—Griffith and Collins were treated as one group and the rest as another and they even stayed in different hotels. After the initial meeting they never met again as a group until the final session. It was blatant divide and rule. Lloyd George divided matters further by dealing with Collins and Griffith separately whenever he felt it served his purpose.

All the negotiations centred on the actual meaning of what kind of association there would be with the British Empire. External Association provided the key but it was a struggle of wills as to which side would put real substance into it. Lloyd George used every trick and threat in the book to wear down the negotiators.

Griffith was easily convinced of working on the basis of Dominion status, i.e., within the Empire. Collins was not so inclined at this stage but clearly found the negotiating over external association very frustrating.

I will try to illustrate the issues that give a small flavour of the negotiations by looking at three versions of the Oaths that were disputed.

The first is the 'final' one proposed by Lloyd George and brought to the Cabinet in Dublin on 3 December 1921. It read:

"I... solemnly swear to bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of the Irish Free State; to the Community of Nations known as the British Empire; and to the King as Head of the State and of the Empire."

This was rejected by the cabinet.

de Valera then proposed and it was agreed, that the following oath would be acceptable,

"I do... solemnly swear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of the Irish Free State, to the Treaty of Association and to recognize the King of Great Britain as Head of the Associated States."

The Cabinet also made sure that the delegates should report back and the minutes also record that "*the President (de Valera) shall not go to London at this stage of the negotiations*". So this meant the Cabinet did not see the end of the negotiations as imminent and de Valera would go if necessary to get the maximum possible and maintain maximum unity and take the consequences if it was not acceptable.

His plan seemed to be that he could thereby best maintain Cabinet unity and be able to get to a position where he could dare Lloyd George to re-declare full scale war against a united Irish Government on what would seem a very small point of difference, a quibble to most people, while preserving the essence of political independence. Whatever the outcome, a 'civil war' would be avoided.

However, Griffith's and Collins's hearts were not in the Cabinet position. Griffith disagreed on breaking with the Crown and believed that they should sign what was on offer and then leave it to the President and the Dáil to reject it. But this was rejected as divisive and inevitably causing further division among their supporters. Collins did not agree either but did not put a position as clear as Griffith. Both agreed to take a different path, together, afterwards. They changed the agreed Cabinet oath twice and Lloyd George also changed his 'final' proposal as given above.

In the end they both accepted Dominion Status and were sure that it would find popular support. Collins reasoned that "*the advantage of Dominion Status to us, as a stepping stone to complete independence, is immeasurable*." This was the crucial decision by him. He counterposed the '*stepping stone*' approach to External Association. This meant accepting the Treaty even though it was not sufficient for him—whereas it was for Griffith.

The delegation, without Collins, went through the motions of presenting the Cabinet oath to Lloyd George and he rejected it outright. The absence of Collins in presenting it and the fact that Griffith's heart was not in it made clear the divisions to the British and that there was a real split in the Irish Delegation. Both Collins and Griffith agreed at this stage with accepting Dominion status. Lloyd George intimidated the others to agree to it by threatening "immediate and terrible war" within three days if it was rejected and he went round the table daring each individually not to sign it and be individually responsible for a new war—worse than what had already occurred. This was accepted by all as a real threat and they signed. And he insisted that there be no reference back to Dublin before signing.

They agreed to an oath that said

"I (name) do solemnly swear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of the Irish Free State as by law established, and that I will be faithful to H.M. King George V, his heirs and successors by law in virtue of the common citizenship of Ireland with Great Britain and her adherence to and membership of the group of nations forming the British Commonwealth of nations."

And this was the 'Treaty' oath.

This Oath of allegiance made the Monarch the source of authority in Ireland as it asserted common citizenship of Ireland and the Empire. So the monarch was the monarch of Ireland.

Such a change in the oath explains the shock in Dublin when this new oath was agreed without any final consultation with Dublin. This lack of consultation was unbelievable as they had plenty of time for it. This *fait accompli* approach ensured a maximisation of all differences in the Cabinet.

Collins, we must always remember, was first and foremost an IRB man rather than a Dáil Eireann man and his allegiance was primarily to the IRB. And he and they firmly believed

that they could use Dominion Status to move forward. With good reason—they were firm believers in intrigue, conspiracy and determining events, organisations and people by manoeuvre and what is now called 'entryism' and they had been extremely successful at it.

In the Dáil debate on the Treaty all accepted that a renewal of the war was possible. Liam Mellows put it well when he said that what they were dealing with was the fear of the people not the will of the people.

The Chinese have a word for such treaties—they call them 'unequal treaties' and never accept them as valid, even if they have to live with them for a century, as they did with the British claim to Hong Kong.

Collins was disingenuous on the threat of war by Lloyd George. In the '*Path to Freedom*' he argued, as he did in the Treaty debate, that:

> "I did not sign the Treaty under duress, except in the sense that the position as between Ireland and England, historically, and because of superior forces on the part of England, has always been one of duress. The element of duress was present when we agreed to the Truce, because our simple right would have been to beat the English out of Ireland. There was an element of duress in going to London to negotiate. But there was not, and could not have been, any personal duress. The threat of *'immediate and terrible war*' did not matter overmuch to me. The position appeared to be then exactly as it appears now. The British would not, I think, have declared terrible and immediate war upon us." (*The Path to Freedom*)

I don't find this convincing. Either the threat was real or not. Collins could not just detach himself and claim to be immune from the ever-present 'duress' he rightly describes. But as the British found no need to declare war when he signed the 'Treaty' it is a self fulfilling argument to say they would not have declared war.

Collins later acted on the Four Courts because of the direct threat that convinced him Britain would attack if he did not act. If they were prepared to do so in June 1922 over a relatively minor law and order issue then why would they not have done so a few months earlier on the substantial issue of determining Ireland's relationship with the British Empire? The Four Courts occupants were a minority who could have been easily 'starved out' if it was not for the British insistence on confrontation and making the issue a test of Collins's and the Free State commitment to the 'Treaty'. Churchill made clear he could not take the Free State seriously until it was blooded against Republicans.

THE STEPPING STONE ARGUMENT

This was the essence of Collins's case and he must be judged as to whether he was right or wrong on the stepping stone argument. There is a simple test—did he or his successors succeed in taking a step beyond the Treaty, which they all claimed they wanted to do? If they did he was right and, if they did not, then he misjudged the situation. So what steps did he and his followers take and how successful were they?

It is fashionable to say he was proved right because of what de Valera did later. But it is no use to mix up the future with the present—things only happen in real time. Any other approach is looking at things back to front. de Valera argued and proved that the Treaty terms had to be broken, as he did in the '30s, before any steps could be taken. And that breaking proved not possible without another war with Britain which had to be won—the Economic War. This was the only feasible war the British could fight at the time and they did wage it in collaboration with the Treatyites, to again maximize divisions in Ireland to their advantage.

And of course Dev maintained the External Association position all his life and remained true to it. He never left the Commonwealth but never attended a meeting, ignored it, stayed away and therefore 'externally associated' with it and by so doing annoyed the British no end because of the ambiguous example it provided to India, Malaya, Cyprus and other countries to copy him and move away from the Empire. These countries could not be pinned down on the issue of being in or out of the Empire, to their diplomatic advantage.

THE ATTEMPTED STEPS

The stepping stone argument had problems immediately. First and foremost Britain saw the 'Treaty' as the final destination. This had to be obscured to make the stepping argument look credible, but it was the most obvious reality and the British made it obvious at every crucial stage. After all the efforts to keep Ireland in the Empire, which the Treaty achieved, they were not likely to allow anybody to just step out of it. Whoever wanted out had to break out. This was the case before, during and long after the events of 1921-2.

Another immediate problem with the stepping stone argument was that Arthur Griffith did not agree with it. He was satisfied with the 'Treaty', as were many others. So there was an open division right at the top of the Treatyites about it. Others such as the Labour Party were satisfied with it. And what was left of all the previous political forces, unionists, Home Rulers etc. were also happy with it. The Catholic hierarchy and the other churches were also satisfied with the 'Treaty'.

The real problem with taking any steps began immediately after the Dáil debate. Because the first thing that became clear was that the Dáil could not decide on the 'Treaty' as it was not a party to it. Its members could vote to "approve it" as Griffith proposed, but it could not ratify it. Those who won the debate did not and could not go on to implement the 'Treaty'. People today do not seem to appreciate that. They think naturally enough that those who win a vote in a Parliament act on that vote and the Government concerned implements the result of the vote. But this did not happen.

Accepting the 'Treaty' meant automatically abolishing the Dáil as a Government. The Treatyites then had to meet at British insistence as the Government of Southern Ireland and set themselves up as a Provisional Government under the 1920 Act and thereby accept English law on the matter. Remember this Act? This was humiliating. It met without the anti-Treatyites, could not legally have the Dáil TDs from Northern Ireland present but it did have the unelected members from TCD in attendance. It only met this once on 14 January 1922 and the only business it ever did was to ratify the 'Treaty'. To put it crudely the Treatyites were forced to eat s...t in doing this. Collins then went to Dublin Castle and was duly 'installed' by the Lord Lieutenant!

So you had the situation that a Government, based on an election that had not got a single vote in Ireland to support it originally, had now to be accepted as the new Government to implement the 'Treaty'! So the situation was that one Government, the Dáil, where every single seat was won in opposition to the Government of Ireland Act 1920 was now faced with accepting that voteless Government as the law of the land. A Government that everyone voted for was now replaced by a Government that everyone had in fact voted against! This was the fatal moral/legal flaw in the Treatyite case. It was demeaning to have to act in this way and it showed clearly the determination of the British

to reverse what had been achieved. The Treatyites also kept the Dáil going for appearances' sake even though it was not the source of their authority and therefore you had the perfect split—two Irish Governments. It was beyond the wildest hopes of the British. This was a step all right, but a step backwards!

This could not go on. Then a new mercenary army was created to serve the new Government and the volunteer army of the IRA was left politically leaderless, as it had given allegiance to the existing Dáil as elected in 1918 and 1921 and was now politically leaderless. Naturally, confusion reigned among them.

We have to try to imagine a situation where a Government acts without any accepted legal or moral authority, and is put in place of one that had these features and one moreover that people had fought and died for its establishment. That situation can only be described as putting society in a state of nature. This is rare but not unique and very real for some people in some situations. It will not be tolerated by society. As Aristotle put it—only dogs and gods can live outside the state. People can *not*. People insist on having clear political authority and the source of that authority must be morally acceptable to the vast majority. And if the legal/moral issue is not resolved then it is a case of who can impose authority through force and terror. Authority will be based on sheer power. And society will always accept force and terror in place of a state of nature sometimes described as anarchy. And this is what happened in this case.

The issue was indeed eventually resolved by terror. Cosgrave spelt it out clearly:

> "... the people who have challenged the very existence of society have put themselves outside the Constitution... there is only one way to meet it, and that is to crush it and show them that terror will be struck into them." (Dáil, 8 Dec. 1922).

And that was how the Free State was actually established. Mao Tse-Tung was often criticized for saying that politics grows out of the barrel of a gun but this was no more than the truth and crucial periods in Irish history such as this period prove his point

I think the nearest we have come to a state of nature in modern times in Ireland was when the forces of Government broke down and attacked its citizens in Northern Ireland in August 1969. The moral authority of the government there was no longer acceptable to a large section of the society. I took Jack Lynch's advice not to stand idly by at the time and I got a taste of society 'in a state of nature' when I joined a Citizens Defence Committee in the Beechmount area of the Falls Road. Such an experience is not easily forgotten. People there in that situation took the normal actions to deal with such a state by creating an army. Their actions became even more essential and more critical when Lynch changed his mind and decided *to* stand idly by. The consequences of those events at that time have shaped Northern Ireland ever since and will do so for the far foreseeable future. Therefore it is not surprising that a much more significant creation, and resolution, of a state of nature in 1922 down here should have cast so long shadow as they have done. This is quite normal. Both were defining moments in modern Irish history. Our politics are therefore quite normal.

The next stepping-stone that was to progress matters was the new Irish Constitution as promised in the Treaty and which was one of the main arguments that won the Dáil debate on it. de Valera and his supporters accepted the concept and worked with the Treatyites so closely on drawing up a Constitution that they were also able to form an Electoral Pact for the next election to form the 3rd Dáil on the basis of this Constitution. The Constitution was agreed and accepted by all and it dispensed with the Oath, the role of the Privy Council; all authority would come from the D·il and in any conflict with the Treaty, the Constitution would prevail. A leading supporter of the 'Treaty', Alfie O'Rahilly, later President of University College Cork, said quite rightly that "*...it has taken away every excuse the anti-Treaty Party may have for non-participation and non-co-operation in building up Ireland*."

All looked fine until the British read it and they rejected all the above aspects that conflicted with the Treaty and insisted that it be changed accordingly. Griffith and Collins were summoned to London and ordered to change it and it was pointed out that the Free State was an integral part of the British Empire. Both agreed to the changes but Collins was so humiliated that he could not bear to sign it and there is no record of him actually doing so. But Griffith did and it was thereby formally accepted by the Free State. By the way, that Constitution also allowed for a full franchise—something that did not yet exist in the UK. This was the end of another stepping stone.

There remained the Election Pact between the two sides whereby both agreed to vote for a new D·il in the same ratio as before on the 'Treaty' and anti-Treaty issue and thereby seek to make the 'Treaty' as much a non-issue as possible. The British saw this immediately as a threat to the 'Treaty' and a concession to the Republicans and would not have it. After all it was an election held under their authority. Again Collins was summoned and ordered to reject the Pact and eat his words which he did on the day after his return, just before the election, at a meeting in Cork.

Breaking the Pact and rejection of the agreed Constitution ruined the credibility and moral authority of the new D·il and before it ever met the Government, supervised by Britain, launched and won the 'civil war'. If the new Dáil had even met it is hard to imagine that war actually happening. But war came first at Britain's insistence and when that was won militarily the Dáil could then meet and behave in strict accordance with the 'Treaty'.

Brian P. Murphy has drawn attention to the important, independent, legal judgment that was given in an American court in 1927 which decided that the 3rd Dáil was not entitled to the funds raised in America for the First Dáil as it was not the legal successor to the First and second Dáil.

Churchill always insisted that the Free State, like any government, could not be taken seriously unless it was prepared to fight and kill its opponents, until it was blooded, and that could only be against Republicans. This was what he wanted and this is what he achieved when he made Collins attack the Four Courts or else he would. The Four Courts was a very easily managed problem in itself.

These were the main stepping stones that failed during Collins's own lifetime. After him all pretence at that argument was ended with the suppression of the 'Mutiny of the Major General' in 1924 when all vestiges of fighting for a united Ireland were abandoned and crushed.

Then the last stepping stone was the Boundary Commission which was supposed to reduce the size of Northern Ireland and make it unviable, as Lloyd George had promised during the 'Treaty' negotiations. This ended with the Report in 1926 which left the Border as it was, with no real protests from the Free State. So all the stepping stones had led back into the Empire.

And of course Collins's followers opposed tooth and nail, in the '30s, all the steps that actually led away from the Treaty and the break with the Empire, collaborated with the British government against de Valera's basic policies and also took up a fascist stand in doing so.

Is it any wonder therefore that these divisions run deep?

□

The Ottoman Road to War

by Pat Walsh

Why did the Ottoman Empire join the Great War in 1914? That is a question of very great historical and political significance.

In Ireland recently we have witnessed how history writing and politics are inextricably linked. In the 1930s, when Ireland was struggling for its political, social and economic independence from Britain, *The Catholic Bulletin* warned that, unless the idea of independence was vigorously defended, the institutions in Ireland that were left by England and which were dedicated to restoring the British view of the world would ultimately triumph again in re-establishing this view in Ireland. About a decade or two ago this idea was held up to ridicule by prominent historians like Roy Foster, and *The Catholic Bulletin* was depicted as a narrow-minded and nasty little sectarian publication of our insular times.

In the last year or so we have witnessed the fruits of Britain's work in cultivating a generation of Irish historians at places like Oxford. Over the last decade and a half Ireland rode the wave of capitalist prosperity before being dashed on the rocks. In post-modern parlance it could be said that *"we lived the dream"* and it was *"like a roller-coaster ride"*.

It could be alternatively said that he who lives by capitalism dies by capitalism—and maybe, rightly so. But it was not enough to say that. It was said that we were a hopeless bunch, ruled by gormless incompetents who had surrendered our sovereignty in the ultimate act of national betrayal. And that was just *The Irish Times*!

The Irish Times would have aborted our independent development at source if it had been able to and in this pursuit it called for the knife to be applied in 1916. But it can say *I told you so!* nearly a century later after we hit the rocks at full steam ahead. And why not! It survived through thick and thin whilst *The Catholic Bulletin* and *Irish Press* went the way of all other flesh. It remained a constant in Irish life, as Britain imagines itself, whilst the ephemeral had their day.

It could be said that Madam's day had come!

When Ireland PLC hit the rocks a curious thing happened. It was not said that the storm was too great to weather or that we had suffered the fate of the many that had gone before us. It was said that we should have never gone to sea alone in such a hopeless construction under such an inexperienced and incompetent crew.

In attempting to stay off the rocks we had surrendered our sovereignty—a sovereignty we should never have had in the first place. After all, our historians, those wise, open-minded and well-travelled men of the media (as opposed to that narrow-minded parochial shower that preceded them) had warned us. We had made a great mistake believing ourselves to be special and different when we were really useless and narrow-minded and nasty and even genocidal (in our own small-minded way).

What really did we expect? To be a success in the world?

If you surrender your history writing to the interests of a foreign power you will be in trouble—and in trouble far beyond the ivory towers of academia. Britain has known as much for generations and that is why it puts so much treasure into a job that it has largely given up in terms of the expenditure of blood.

In the last couple of years all the work of recruiting, training and patronising young Irish historians has borne fruit for England. The confusion and malaise that they have created in the national consciousness, and which has been spread by the national media in numerous 'history' programmes, has fed into all spheres of Irish society—political, social and economic—with the desired results.

When we are confronted with a problem that is primarily a systemic one and one that is periodically characteristic of the capitalist system we instead put it down to our supposed national inadequacies that are a product of our historical character. (They are not even a product of our national development, which would, of course, implicate Britain in our guilt).

War Guilt

In the early 1920s, when we were struggling for our independence and failing (after the imposition of the Treaty) *The Catholic Bulletin* told Ireland to look to Turkey for an example of how it should be done.

The links between Ireland and Turkey have been written out of our national consciousness by the historical narrative that emerged and which has increasingly prevailed in Ireland. If we are to have a link now it is to be at Gallipoli and not within our parallel struggles for freedom against a common enemy, the shutting down of our national assemblies, the arrest of our deputies, and our triumphs against British-imposed treaties (Ours in the longer run, Turkey's spectacularly, on the battlefield and at the negotiating table).

Above all, Ireland and Turkey have many shared experiences that both can learn from. And history writing about the Great War, I would say, is where most of it should begin.

The Ottoman Road to War in 1914 by Mustafa Aksakal is a 2008 publication that seeks to answer the question why Turkey joined the Great War. It is part of the Cambridge University Press, New York, military history series and comes from a dissertation written at Princeton. Having looked at this issue from the point of view of *Britain's Great War on Turkey* I found this book particularly informative, thanks to the author's ability to use sources from the Ottoman archives (which requires a knowledge of Ottoman Turkish in the Arabic script).

We have seen in Ireland how history writing about the events of the Great War and its aftermath (including 1916 and the War of Independence) has been used to rehabilitate the British narrative in Ireland. With the centenary of that war coming up I would not be surprised to see the British narrative playing a much greater role in global politics and specifically in relation to Turkey, which is becoming a major player in its region—a region that the West has become increasingly interested in and prepared to stick its nose in.

Turkey's entry into that war in late 1914 and subsequent happenings that derive from it have played a fundamental part in the way the West understands and relates to Turkey.

In my own understanding I came to the conclusion that Britain's version of events about Turkey's entry into the war in October/November 1914 was largely a propagandist fiction. I

reached this opinion when writing *The Rise and Fall of Imperial Ireland* (2003) which helped me develop an understanding of the British geopolitical outlook in the period from the ending of the Boer War up to the Great War. I investigated the issue further in *Britain's Great War on Turkey* (2009) and this confirmed my opinion that the Ottoman participation in the Great War came about largely as the result of British policy in relation to Germany from 1900 to 1914 and England's desire to add to its territories from the Ottoman region.

Mustafa Aksakal comes at the issue from a different perspective—having set himself the task of understanding why the Ottoman leadership *itself* decided on entering the war from various archival sources. In the opening pages of his very readable book he gives the gist of his argument, putting it into the political context of history writing in the intervening years:

> "Given the war's disastrous consequences and its human cost to the entire Middle East, it is not surprising that the decision taken by the leadership in 1914 has been roundly blasted by historians and memoir-writers alike. In these accounts Enver Pasha, the War Minister, a hawk in thrall to Germany, more or less single-handedly pushed the Empire into a war it did not want.
>
> Alternatively, intervention has been ascribed to the hare-brained ideas of the tiny inner-circle of the Young Turk leadership who had hijacked Ottoman policy—either because they were corrupted by German gold, blinded by German promises, pressurised by German diplomats, or moved by voracious personal ambition, megalomaniac expansionism, or naiveté, attributable to their below-average intelligence...
>
> And yet, from a global perspective, the Ottoman entry into the First World War can be seen as a reaction against the principal historical forces of the time: the steady expansion of European economic, political, and military control.
>
> This book argues that the Ottoman leaders in 1914 made the only decision they believed could save the Empire from partition and foreign rule. Envisaging outright foreign control in the near East required no great stretch of the imagination. By 1900, Europe's territorial control... extended to some 85% of the globe's surface, rendering the Ottoman Empire one of the globe's last holdouts. For the Ottomans, the path to international security ran through an alliance with one of the great powers... For reasons that will become clear the choice fell on Germany...
>
> The Ottoman Empire did not leap into war at the first opportunity. In fact, much of this book, and perhaps that is its main surprise, examines the great lengths to which the Ottomans went to stay out of the war. Once it became clear, however, that their alliance with Germany would not survive further delay, they embarked upon war confident that only the battlefield could bring the Empire the unifying and liberating experience it so desperately needed." (pp 1-2).

As Mustafa Aksakal notes, that is the *"global perspective"* of Ottoman participation in the Great War: The Ottomans were reluctant participants in the war and tried to stay out of it for as long as possible. But the geopolitical ambitions of the Great Powers made a defensive alliance with Germany necessary as a matter of survival for the Ottoman State. And through this the Ottoman Empire, after attempting to steer clear of the European war, became embroiled in the conflict in a vain attempt to preserve itself.

Enver Pasha, Not Guilty

British accounts, which originate in the propaganda output of the war effort, present a number of arguments explaining the Ottoman entry into the Great War. The first one is that the Germans lured the Turks to their doom by diplomatic and political trickery. A second argument centres on Enver Pasha and claims that he worked with the Germans so that Ottoman power could be expanded after a successful war. In other words, according to the British version, he, like the Kaiser, desired conquest and world-domination. This argument is sometimes supported by arguing that Enver was a pan-Turanian—wanting to link up all the Turkic peoples in a single state in the region—and therefore wishing to roll back the Russian Empire in the Caucasus to add the Turkic Moslems they had conquered to the Ottoman possessions.

Mustafa Aksakal gives the following verdict on Enver Pasha:

> "This re-examination of the German-Ottoman negotiations during August-November 1914 strongly suggests that the image of Enver Pasha as war hawk dazzled by Germany's military power and pan-Islamist dreams is untenable. By 1914, Enver Pasha, like the majority of the Ottoman elite, perceived the interests of the international system to oppose the continued existence of the Ottoman Empire. And, to the Ottomans, fighting back appeared possible only within the context of an Alliance with the German Empire.
>
> Nor was Enver eager to dive into the war: the Ottomans only entered after three months of foot-dragging, deception and protracted negotiations with Berlin and only after the German-Ottoman alliance came close to rupturing. Once the Ottoman leaders secured the alliance with Germany on August 2, 1914, they focussed their energies on postponing any military engagement. When the Germans... pressed Istanbul for action, the Ottomans repeatedly insisted on the necessity of an alliance with Bulgaria and for more time to complete their mobilisation efforts. It was Germany's refusal to provide further military aid, and its threat to abandon them and to conclude a separate peace with Russia, that finally drew the Ottomans into war."(pp.193-4)

The Ottoman Road to War in 1914 argues that the demonisation of Enver Pasha was enhanced by a Show Trial that was conducted by the Ottoman Government after the armistice with the *Entente* in October 1918. This was an attempt to placate the Allied powers so that the terms given to Turkey were not too drastic by putting on trial the former leaders who were implicated in going to war in 1914. The wartime Ottoman leadership were accused of entering the war *"without reason and at an untimely moment,"* deceiving the Chamber of Deputies in Istanbul about the real cause and course of events behind the declaration of war and rejecting offers by the Entente governments that may have staved off the war for the Ottoman Empire.

Mustafa Aksakal argues that these Show Trial charges framed the subsequent historical narrative of the Ottoman entry into the First World War. Those who testified depicted Enver as a loose cannon who forced the Ottoman Empire into the war through secret dealings with German agents - and this image of Enver as a single-minded manipulator prepared to join the German side at any price persisted and became the accepted version of events – the Chatham House version. In this way the British were able to confirm the account they had constructed about the Ottoman entry into the war in late 1914 through their diplomatic 'record' and impose it on the subsequent historical narrative.

The Propagandist Account

Mustafa Aksakal notes that Britain's primary purpose in putting the responsibility on the Ottomans for entering the Great War was largely aimed to justify the future partition of the Ottoman Empire and the ruling of the conquered territories and

their Moslem peoples by the British Empire.

I agree with Mustafa Aksakal on the following major points from his book: Turkey was not forced or manipulated into the war by Germany; the Ottomans did not enter the war on the basis of an expansionist pan-Turanian dream; Enver Pasha was not responsible individually for bringing Turkey into the war against the wishes of others; the alliance with Germany was primarily a result of the *Entente's* intention of destroying and partitioning the Ottoman Empire; and Turkey did what it could to postpone its entry into the war to as late a date as possible, in the gathering crisis which confronted it.

Most of the arguments attributing war guilt to Turkey were the staples of British war propaganda and might be dismissed as such if they had not taken on a life of their own since. They have been rehearsed again in a 2010 book, *The Berlin-Baghdad Express* by Assistant Professor Sean McMeekin of Bilkent University at Ankara and Yale, which has the subtitle *The Ottoman Empire and Germany's bid for world power, 1898-1918.*

The general argument of McMeekin's book is an extension and elaboration of the work of the Director of Britain's war-time Ministry of Information/Wellington House, John Buchan, suggesting that the Kaiser wished to use Islamic resentment over foreign rule to destabilize the empires of his enemies and conquer the world through an opportunistic appeal to Moslems.

This, of course, is the general plot of *Greenmantle*, the sequel to the famous *Thirty -Nine Steps*. But then again much of the publishing of Wellington House was a blending of fiction writing with political propaganda and it was accomplished through the efforts of novelists and historians gathered together in secret conclave at the start of the war in the cause of patriotic duty.

There should be nothing surprising in the discovery that the Kaiser hoped that Moslems would rise up against their Christian occupiers (and if anything that is something to be said for the Kaiser, rather than against him!) That was the general fear that the Kaiser would have read about in a multitude of books written in England before the war. But that is a world away from the notions of a German/Islamic/Jewish/Freemason plot to take over the world that obsessed Buchan and many of his contemporaries in Britain and its embassies in Istanbul and the Near East.

Through an examination of the Ottoman, Russian and German archives and correspondence, Mustafa Aksakal, in *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914*, dismisses this version of history as false and shows that Turkey's entry into the Great War was largely the consequence of Western intervention in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire.

The Balkan Wars

The Ottoman Road to War in 1914 takes the intellectual and emotional climate within the Ottoman State after the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 as a starting point to explain Turkey's participation in the Great War.

The catastrophic effect of the Balkan Wars on the Ottoman Empire are often absent from Western accounts - which seek to focus on Turkish 'atrocities' against subject peoples, particularly Christians, and ignore the widespread ethnic cleansing and genocide that was practised on Moslems by the Balkan Christians (and the Russians in the Caucasus from 1821 to 1914).

As a result of the Balkan Wars the Ottoman Empire lost 80% of its 1912 European territory, which was home to a population of almost 4,000,000, or over one in six of the Empire's total population. More than 400,000 Moslem refugees arrived in Anatolia from these former Ottoman territories in the two years before the Great War, leaving behind them 1,500,000 of their co-religionists dead. And armies of the Christian Balkan states threatened Istanbul itself in late 1912 before the capital was saved and they were turned back by Enver at Edirne/Adrianople.

The Ottoman Empire had been a tolerant multi-ethnic Empire for hundreds of years, in which different races and religions had lived side-by-side in comparative peace and harmony. The Ottomans had built their Empire through the contributions of all the diverse people they attracted to its service, Christian, Jew or Moslem. Alone out of all the States in Europe and Asia at the time, the Ottomans accepted the entry and settlement of refugees fleeing from persecution and put these people to work helping build the Empire. And while the Ottoman Empire was formally a Turkish one it was operated, and utilised, by all its races, in the pursuit of their own interests.

As a result, the Ottoman Empire became the most successful example of collaboration between different peoples in history. This collaboration was sometimes accomplished through bribery, corruption, dealing, and trade-offs; there were undoubtedly massacres, but they were small in scale, compared to later Christian inflicted ethnic cleansing, and prevented disputes between peoples from degenerating into full-blown wars. From the fourteenth to the nineteenth centuries peoples of diverse races and religions intermingled contentedly and successfully under Ottoman administrations and even the Balkans were a relatively peaceful area for the best part of five hundred years.

But the vast ethnic cleansing of Moslems in the Caucasus by Russia and in the course of the Balkan Wars by the emerging Christian nations set off a pattern of inter-ethnic violence that continued in these regions during the 20th century.

It would not be going too far to suggest that there is a connection between what happened to the Armenian and Greek communities in Anatolia between 1915 and 1922 and what was done to the Moslems of the former regions of Ottoman Empire that were conquered by Christian powers in the years before and during the Great War.

For if the Balkan Wars had one great effect on the Ottoman Empire and its Moslem inhabitants, it was to begin to shatter the long-held faith in multi-ethnic communities persisting together in mutual development, that had characterised it for centuries. And the influx of large numbers of Moslem refugees amongst the Christian communities within the Ottoman Empire must surely have had serious consequences for public order as soon as Anatolia itself was threatened by the Western powers and these people envisaged a last stand for themselves.

Mustafa Aksakal also describes the effect of the Balkan Wars within the Ottoman Chamber of Deputies at Istanbul. The first implication of the wars was felt in a lack of faith in international law after the Western powers had failed to stand up for their treaty obligations in recognising the existing borders in the Balkans. There was a consequent growth in the view that only military power and alliance were sufficient to defend the Empire and its surviving peoples in the future.

Secondly, there was a gradual losing of faith in the multi-ethnic principles of the Ottoman Empire. Some deputies called for a clear break with the Empire's Imperial past advocating a withdrawal from territories that were not predominantly Turkish and a future reliance on the Moslem people of the Anatolian heartland as the one and only trusted basis of the nation. Such sentiment began to be expressed in publications like *Will Turkey Survive in Anatolia?* Written by Naci Ismail under the pseudo-

nym 'Habil Adem', this took the Western view that the Ottoman Empire, not being based on national principles, would ultimately collapse like a house of cards.

A British View of the Ottomans

The view that the Ottoman Empire could no longer be a multi-ethnic state was not a product of the Turkish mind—it was an imposition from the West, arising from English notions of 'progress.'

There is a book about this aspect of Ottoman affairs written in England, just after the Balkan Wars, entitled *Nationalism and War In The Near East* by George Young, 'A Diplomatist', edited by Lord Courtney of Penwith, and published by Oxford University Press in 1915. (Lord Leonard Courtney was a Liberal Cabinet Minister under Gladstone who left the Party with Joseph Chamberlain and then became a Liberal Unionist. He returned to the Liberal Party of Campbell-Bannerman after the Boer War.)

Nationalism and War in the Near East argues that the Ottomans were committing *"race suicide"* because, refusing to operate a racial policy with regard to governing, they trusted the administration of their Empire to the hands of the *"lesser subject races"*. The term *"Eurasians"*, applied by "A Diplomatist", was used to define British-Indian race-mixing—a practice that was very much frowned upon because of the presumed link between racial interbreeding and degeneracy, and since it could result in the production of an inferior stock of *"half-castes"* according to the English racial theory that was common currency until quite recently.

George Young asked the question why the Ottoman Empire had declined when Britain's Imperial mission was thriving. And he made it clear that he believed the answer to lie in the good racial theory that was all the rage in Britain and which was the distinguishing feature between the success of British Imperialism and its government, where miscegenation was strongly discouraged in order to keep up a healthy racial stock, and the easy-going Turks and their Empire, which seemed to play fast and loose with this kind of thing and were losing their Empire as a result.

But the encouragement of nationalism and racial homogeneity in the region by England as a form of geopolitics which resulted in the Balkan Wars—encouragement aimed at blocking the German Berlin-Baghdad Railway—produced nothing but trouble for its inhabitants.

Nationalism was a most unsuitable thing to promote in the region covered by the Ottoman Empire where a great patch-work of peoples were inter-mingled and were inter-dependent. Its promotion by the Western powers was as disastrous for the many Moslem communities of the Balkans and the Caucasus, who were driven from their homes of centuries, as it was for Christians caught up in the inevitable consequences of the simplifying process it encouraged everywhere. We can see this because this was not just a Christian/Moslem conflict. When the various groups of Christians had turned out the Moslems, they started massacring each other and continued for the next ninety years.

It is strange that the Ottomans can still be held responsible, even today, for the working out of this process, particularly after Anatolia was invaded and occupied by the Western powers from 1915.

Genocide and Racialism

In 1915 the British Empire sent an invasion force to Turkey at Gallipoli and the Armenian deportations began. The Russian attack on Eastern Anatolia had more immediate and practical effect on the Armenian situation but it seems to have been the invasion from the West that finally triggered the Ottoman decision to act against the Armenians.

One can only speculate about why this was, because direct causality is impossible to prove in history. But a logical explanation comes to mind—the Ottoman State believed that it could cope with the Russian advance in the East and the earlier British invasion of Mesopotamia through normal means. But with the Gallipoli assault it became clear to the Ottomans that the concerted effort being mounted had as its objective the destruction of the Ottoman State, and not just a reduction of its territories. This would mean the partitioning and ethnic cleansing of the Anatolian heartlands of the Turk, if the experiences of the Balkan Wars and the records of the attackers elsewhere in the world were anything to go by. And this seems to have been the calculation that led to the decision to take extraordinary measures in relation to the Armenians.

The main forces of the British Empire that assaulted Turkey at Gallipoli came from nations that had been either ruthless practitioners of genocide or successful products and beneficiaries of this process.

Genocide and racialism are not labels that one would wish to attract these days. From the time of the Great War they have been applied to the enemies of England in the propagandist manner and have gained their possessors great odium ever since. That great admirer of English genocide and racialism, Adolf Hitler, did much to disgrace racialism and genocide after he became an enemy of England in upsetting the Balance of Power in Europe. But even his ruthless example did not entirely eradicate these English proclivities. Britain remained committed to these principles and practised them at home and abroad within living memory, as the people of Kenya found out in just one, fairly recent, example.

But there was a time when the British Empire and its highest officers of State actually boasted of its prowess as the foremost practitioner of racialism and genocide.

During 1866-7, Sir Charles Wentworth Dilke, M.P., made a voyage around the world, beginning with the United States, and visiting New Zealand, Australia, Ceylon, India and Egypt. In his famous and best-selling book, *Greater Britain*, which came as a result of his travels, Dilke wrote, in a cold matter of fact way, of the extermination of the 'inferior races' that Britain was carrying out in the name of 'progress':

> "... The English everywhere attempt to introduce civilisation, or to modify that which exists, in a rough-and-ready manner which invariably ends in failure or ends in the destruction of the native race... A gradual extinction of the inferior races is not only a law of nature, but a blessing to mankind... The Anglo-Saxon is the only extirpating race on earth. Up to the commencement of the now inevitable destruction of the Red Indians of Central North America, of the Maoris, and of the Australians by the English Colonists, no numerous race had ever been blotted out by an invader." (p.223.)

Dilke, with his racialist conception of the world, regarded America as very much part of the extension of England that was "*Greater Britain*" and he enthused about its successes in the worldwide Anglo-Saxon mission of genocide:

> "In America we have seen the struggle of the dear races against the cheap—the endeavours of the English to hold their own against the Irish and Chinese. In New Zealand, we found the stronger and more energetic race pushing from the earth the shrewd and laborious descendants of the Asian Malays; in Australia, the English triumphant, and the cheaper races excluded

from the soil not by distance merely, but by arbitrary legislation; in India we saw the solution of the problem of officering of the cheaper by the dearer race. Everywhere we have found that the difficulties which impede the progress to universal dominion of the English people lie in the conflict with the cheaper races. The result of our survey is such as to give us reason for the belief that race distinctions will long continue, that miscegenation will go but little way towards blending races; that the dearer are, on the whole, likely to destroy the cheaper peoples, and that Saxondom will rise triumphant from the doubtful struggle. The countries ruled by a race whose very scum and outcasts have founded empires in every portion of the globe, even now consist of 9 1/2 millions of square miles, and contain a population of 300 millions of people... No possible combination of circumstances can prevent the British race, reaching a total of three hundred million souls by 1970, all speaking the same language, all having the same national character. Italy, Spain, France, Russia will all be pygmies in comparison with such a people." (pp. 572-3.)

At Gallipoli the Turks were invaded by those from England, Australia and New Zealand who had ethnically-cleansed the 'lesser races' from their traditional homelands in the name of 'progress'. They were joined by those from Ireland who had been recruited by people who wished to partake more fully in Imperial work in the future. And, it was therefore only natural that the Turks drew the obvious conclusion from this – that they were the next in line on the hit-list of 'progress.'

Michael Reynolds's book, *Shattering Empires - The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires, 1908-1918* (2011) makes some interesting points in relation to this when discussing the Armenian uprising against the Ottoman State at Van, behind the Ottoman lines:

"At the same time as the Van rebellion was unfolding, the Russians were entering from the East, the British pushing on Baghdad from the South, and, most ominously, the British and French were storming ashore at Gallipoli. The simultaneous attacks stretched the wobbling Ottoman army to breaking point. As the Unionists debated how to handle the Van uprising, an Ottoman colonel pointed to Russia's expulsion of Moslems into Ottoman territory and urged a reciprocal expulsion of the rebels and their families either into Russian territory or into the interior of Anatolia... Small scale deportations of Armenians had begun in February, but it was the combination of the Van uprising and the landings at Gallipoli that triggered the decision to deport the Armenians en masse... The destruction of the Armenians... must be understood as part of a nascent programme of ethnic homogenisation that involved the resettlement of a multitude of other population groups, including Moslem Kurds, Albanians, Circassians, and others in small, dispersed numbers so as to break up clan and tribal ties and facilitate assimilation... These measures were aimed at the long-term Turkification of Anatolia. This larger programme, in turn, was a direct response to the global order's adoption of the national idea. If the legitimacy, and security, of state borders was dependent on the degree of correspondence to ethnographic lines, the Unionists would ensure that the latter conform to the former. They would reshape the square peg of Anatolia to fit the round hole the global order favoured...

It is no coincidence that nearly half of the Unionist leadership came from the Balkan and Aegean borderlands, i.e. those territories that had witnessed repeated violent expulsions and massacres of Moslems and the establishment of nation States. Significantly, these men fostered no fantasies of irredentism in the Balkans. They nurtured no illusions about the relative power of the Ottoman State. Difficult though it must have been for them, they recognised that their homelands had been lost for good... Experience had taught them that the global community of States accorded no legitimacy to pluralistic and weak empires. As long as Anatolia remained ethnically pluralistic it would be vulnerable to subversion and partition. The homogenisation of Anatolia was the surest solution to the dilemma they faced." (pp. 147-9)

Only a decade before the rising at Van the British had repressed Boer irregular resistance in South Africa with great ruthlessness, putting families in concentration camps, thereby causing the deaths of at least forty thousand civilians (unfortunately, Britain did not keep a count of the Blacks who died in the camps, since in its racial hierarchy they counted for little).

Although this was British State policy in relation to action behind the lines, it was called 'methods of barbarism' by its detractors but never 'genocide'.

This British policy was not even instituted in the conditions that confronted the Turks during the Great War—blockade, invasion on five fronts, starvation, disease, the collapse of the state infrastructure and the presence of many local people in eastern Anatolia, victims of ethnic-cleansing themselves, with scores to settle with the Armenians in the hinterlands of invasion and war.

The global order as established by Britain demanded the establishment of national units based on racial lines and ethnic cleansing to make these units homogeneous and the preserve of the 'higher races'. The Ottoman Turks were the great aberration in this world because they persisted in ethnic diversity, racial tolerance and race mixing; they affronted progress.

What the Allied invasions of 1915 did was finally convince the Committee of Union and Progress (C.U.P.), i.e. the Young Turks, that the Ottoman State would no longer be permitted to continue in its easy-going diverse form. They would have to make concessions to the new world order that was bearing down upon them. They would have to adapt or die—taking on some of the practices of the Western invaders in order to survive. The question was no longer whether the Ottoman Empire should become Turkey but whether they were able to bring about Turkey before even that option would be substantially taken away from them.

What happened to the Armenians should be primarily seen in this context and responsibility for it based upon an understanding of this.

The Search for Allies

As a result of the Balkan Wars, the view developed within the Ottoman elite that allies were indispensable to the survival of the Empire. But the Ottomans found all their attempts at alliance with Britain, France and Russia rebuffed, as Lord Kinross noted. The Ottomans concluded that they were not wanted as allies because of their perceived weakness and because more of their territories (the Arab parts particularly) were desired by those who they wished to become allies with.

In June 1914, after the assassination of Franz Ferdinand and the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia, European war looked likely. The Ottoman government was presented with a dilemma regarding the desirability of alliance.

The best scenario for the Ottomans after the Balkan Wars was to stay out of the war and use the opportunity to rebuild their shattered forces and dire financial position. However, failing that, it was calculated that the Ottoman Empire might procure an ally that would guarantee its security during and after the war.

The Ottoman Empire again turned to the *Entente* powers to guarantee its security. There were good reasons to approach the *Entente* powers since they presented the greatest threat to the Ottoman Empire and would be useful to it in the post-war situation when a different balance of power would prevail. But the Ottomans found Britain, France and Russia again unwilling to conclude a deal, owing to the terms of the *Entente* and the objectives they had set themselves as part of the war on Germany.

The Russian desire to have control of Constantinople was fundamental to the *Entente*. This was because Britain was an island nation and it was primarily a sea power. It did not have a large army and it had been traditionally opposed to military conscription. It would have been impossible for Britain to have defeated Germany by itself. Therefore, it needed the large French army and the even larger Russian army to do most of the fighting on the continent for it. The Russian army was particularly important and it was seen to be like a 'steamroller' that would roll all the way to Berlin, crushing German resistance by its sheer weight of numbers.

The problem for Britain was that the Russians (unlike the French who wanted to recapture Alsace-Lorraine after their loss in 1871) had no real reason to fight Germany. Therefore, something had to be promised to the Czar for his help in destroying Germany. That something was Constantinople. That fact should always be borne in mind when people suggest that Turkey brought the war on itself. The fact of the matter was that, in order to defeat Germany, Britain had to promise Constantinople to Russia and in order for the Russians to get Constantinople, there had to be a war on Turkey.

Since the time of Peter the Great, Russia had sought to obtain freedom for its shipping from the Black Sea to the Aegean and Mediterranean. The reason for this urge, first of all, was geographical. Russia's northern coast is icebound for most of the year. Its Baltic Coast was difficult to emerge from, due to length of passage and interference of other Powers, particularly the Royal Navy. And its Siberian seacoast was too far from the important, western, part of Russia to make it valuable as a trade route.

Russia aspired to be a power in the world for a century before 1914 at least. But the vast Czarist Empire, with a population of around 150 million, was severely impeded in its industrial and commercial development at a time when the world market was developing and the process of economic growth was essential to global power. In a world that had been globalized by the Royal Navy, to be a world power Russia had to become a sea power. And it was impossible to be a sea power with only one port and with the rest of the country's vast territory hemmed in by ice and hostile foreign navies.

In the decade prior to the Great War, the Russian desire to get hold of Constantinople increased. This happened because of the great Russian expansion in the Caucasus which expanded the economy but which also increased Russia's dependence on the Black Sea Straits for exports. By 1912, nearly half of all Russia's exports went through the Straits. Coupled with this, the decline of the Ottomans in Europe presented the unnerving possibility that another Power might manage to exploit the situation to establish a presence on Russia's southern border, along the Black Sea, or even at Constantinople itself.

The problem of the Straits was exposed to Russia when the Ottomans closed access to the Black Sea for a couple of weeks during the Libyan War. After its invasion of the last Ottoman territory in Africa, Italy bombarded targets on the Ottoman Aegean and Levantine coastlines and in response Turkey closed the Straits. The impact upon Russia was severe as its grain exports, on which industrialisation depended, fell by half.

Much of the driving force behind Britain's Great Game against the Czar emanated from its insistence at blocking Russia's need for port facilities to ensure its economic development. This was neatly summed up in the musical hall hit *'The Russians shall not have Constantinople'.* But now that the Great Game was up, after the settling of British accounts with Russia in 1907, and the priority was to enlist the Russian steamroller against Germany, the basis of the issue of Constantinople changed.

Britain decided to play on Russia's worries with regard to the Straits in order to hold out the prospect of awarding Constantinople to the Czar, as a reward for employing his forces against Germany in a future war.

The Seizure of the Ottoman Battleships

Michael Reynolds's *Shattering Empires* provides revealing information on the Ottoman road to war in relation to Russian designs on the Straits and the seizure of the Ottoman Battleships:

> "The Ottomans and outsiders alike recognised that the question of the next onslaught against the Empire was when, not if. In order to survive even into the near future, the Empire had to obtain outside support. Germany was the most logical choice of ally. It was powerful and a rival of Britain, France, and Russia, and held no immediate pretensions to Ottoman territory. Ties between Berlin and Istanbul were already good, and in May 1913 the Ottoman government requested Berlin to provide a military mission to help train and reorganise its army. . There was nothing in particular unusual about the agreement; Britain already had a naval mission in the Ottoman Empire and the French were training the Ottoman gendarmerie... But the announcement that Liman von Sanders would take command of the army corps responsible for defending the Straits provoked a scandal. The idea of a German in control of the Straits was intolerable for Saint Petersburg... In February 1914 Russia's Council of ministers met to review the options for taking the Straits... the optimal time to seize the Straits, they concurred, would be during a general European war. Nicholas II approved the councils plan on 5 April 1914, committing Russia to the creation of the forces it needed to seize Istanbul and the Straits. In the meantime, Saint Petersburg's task was to avoid a general European war and blunt the Ottoman's efforts to bolster their own fleet. Istanbul had ordered two dreadnoughts from Britain, scheduled for completion in 1914, and was attempting to purchase a third from Chile and Argentina. These two or three warships would give the Ottoman's supremacy on the Black Sea onto at least 1917 when Russia would launch four planned dreadnoughts. St. Petersburg attempted to prevent the Ottomans from acquiring dreadnoughts by pre-emptively purchasing those ordered from Chile and Argentina and by pressurising London into slow construction of the vessels ordered by the Ottomans. Sazonov succeeded in the latter, and when World War I broke out right before their scheduled delivery, Britain would claim them as its own in a move that produced large and unforeseen ramifications." (*Shattering Empires - The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires*, 1908-1918, p.41)

It is sometimes argued by British historians that England desired Turkey to remain neutral in the Great War. However, there are good reasons to doubt this argument. For one thing, whilst Turkey had little to gain in entering the war, it was necessary from Britain and Russia's position that the Ottoman Empire should be engaged in the conflict. How else was Constantinople to be got for the Russians?

Secondly, the Young Turks, who had overthrown the Sultan, Abdul Hamid, in 1908, were mostly admirers of Britain and France. Many of them had been educated in London and Paris and had got their political ideas from there. They wished to disentangle Ottoman Turkey from the German connection and to establish closer ties with Britain, France and even the Russians to secure the future of the Ottoman State.

Between November 1908 and June 1914, according to Lord Kinross, the Young Turk Government made at least six attempts to establish defensive alliances with Britain, Russia and France—but all were rejected. Then, in an attempt at placating the aggressors, some humiliating economic concessions were granted to Britain along with recognition of British control in the Persian Gulf and Kuwait. England was granted a monopoly on navigation of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers in Mesopotamia; concerning the Berlin-Baghdad Railway, two concessions were made, one, that it should not terminate at Basra and the other, that it should have two British directors on its board.

Furthermore, as part of this conciliation process, and as a token of general goodwill, the Young Turks entered into a naval agreement with Britain in which British dockyards took orders for two Turkish battleships, and a British naval mission was established at Constantinople. By 1914 the size of this naval mission was as large as the German military mission, and they were looked on as a counter-balance to each other by the Turks. In this way Turkey had a naval alliance with England alongside its military alliance with Germany.

In other words, the Ottoman Government entrusted Britain with the most vital components of the defence of their capital city, as well as giving it extraordinary positions of influence in the Ottoman State.

So the last thing on the minds of the Ottomans was to wage war on Britain.

Lastly, the view that Britain wished the Ottomans to remain neutral is undermined by the highly provocative behaviour that it began to engage in toward Istanbul. The major example of this was the seizure by Winston Churchill of the two Turkish battleships being built by the Royal Navy that were being paid for by popular subscription. These were seized illegally and confiscated without compensation by the British—effectively signalling the end of the naval alliance with Turkey.

Hussein Rauf Bey, who had been in London to collect the battleships, went to the British Embassy in Istanbul immediately on his return. He pleaded with the British to provide compensation for the seizure of the ships so that the Ottomans had an alternate source of finance to the German offer. Rauf reasoned that this was the only way in which the considerable pro-Entente element at Istanbul could be strengthened. However, upon being rebuffed he concluded: *"England made every effort to get Honduras, Paraguay and Greece into the war on the side of the Allies, but for us she had no word."* (Clair Price, *The Rebirth of Turkey*, p.70)

According to Reynolds, this was a significant part of the British procurement of the Russian steamroller against Germany. For a number of years Russia had protested against the British building of these Turkish ships—which could be used against England's ally in the Black Sea. But the useful purpose of this contract, from Britain's point of view, becomes clear with Reynolds's revelation. How the contract served England was as part of the naval alliance at Istanbul that gave Britain an inside knowledge of the defence of the Straits and a controlling position with regard to Russia. In this naval alliance and its shipbuilding aspect, Britain had the key to Russian designs on the Straits and, if the Czar was not forthcoming with his steamroller, Britain could lock the Straits to him. The slowing up of the building these ships was a useful demonstration of the power of the hand on the key.

In August 1914, the Russians obliged in the war with Germany, and Churchill confiscated the battleships.

But, as Reynolds points out, it is difficult not to conclude that the manner of their seizure was designed to give the maximum provocation to the Turks and to drive the Turks toward Germany.

The German Alliance

Enver Pasha was the first Committee of Union and Progress leader to calculate the facts of the situation that was developing and he approached the Germans on the question of alliance in July. He realised that the British alliances with Russia and France removed all restraint on the Czar for seizing Istanbul. And the European war provided the cover for a general attack of the Christian Powers on the Islamic territories and Turkey itself.

Enver's chief objective was to use the discussions with the *Entente* powers as an incentive to Germany to conclude an alliance that would, first and foremost, safeguard Ottoman neutrality and guarantee its security in the future.

On 2nd August Enver, Talaat and the Grand Vizier signed a secret alliance with Germany that gave a German guarantee of Ottoman integrity for five years, in return for an Ottoman commitment to assist Germany if Russia declared war. However, the intention from the Ottoman point of view was to delay joining the war for as long as possible, with the hope of it finishing before German patience with Turkey ran out. Therefore, continued obstacles were put up by the Ottomans to their entry into the conflict, such as the time needed for full mobilisation, the entry of Bulgaria into the war on the German side etc. Although Russia had already declared war on Germany, the Ottomans declared armed neutrality and played for time with the Germans.

Michael Reynolds writes the following:

> "What divided the Ottoman leadership was not disagreement over the ultimate ends of policy—the preservation of their state—but rather the tactical question of how best to achieve the external security that would make it possible to carry out the deep and wide ranging internal reforms the Empire required for survival. All recognised the Empire's tremendous weakness and that expressions of good intent, conventions, and notions of international law ultimately counted for little and indeed at times served as tools that the strong used to exploit the weak. The Empire needed a great power patron that could provide some degree of protection. They differed, however, over how to respond to the outbreak of war in Europe. Enver identified Germany as the best potential patron on account of its geopolitical compatibility and the likelihood of winning the war, and believed it would be better to act sooner while the Ottoman Empire's offer of an alliance still held value. Once he obtained that alliance, he delayed the entry into the war in the hope that the war would be over before the Ottomans would have to join in. Enver was no pacifist, but he understood the sorry state of the Ottoman army.
>
> The plans and thinking of Russian diplomats and military officials even before the war demonstrated that Enver's assessment of the Empire's strategic dilemma—that if it did not act now, when it had a chance of joining a victorious coalition, it would be snuffed out sooner or later—was sound.
>
> St Petersburg's desire for the Ottoman Empire to stay out of the war was equivocal. Some officials welcomed Ottoman entrance

into the war as an opportunity to destroy it once and for all and fulfil Russia's ambitions in the Straits and Anatolia. Those who preferred to keep the Ottomans out of the war did so because they believed that it was more important to concentrate on defeating Germany, not because they lacked ambitions in the Ottoman lands." (*Shattering Empires - The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires*, 1908-1918, pp. 114-5)

Reynolds makes it clear that the minority in Russian governing circles who wished the Ottoman Empire to remain neutral in the Great War were calculating that it could be picked off more easily in the aftermath of the war by the victorious *Entente*.

In Mustafa Aksakal's book the point is made that French Foreign Ministry thinking with regard to the Ottoman Empire was similar to that of their Russian allies. It was divided between those who wished to issue a guarantee of territorial integrity to the Ottomans to obtain their neutrality—so that it could be ripped up after the war—and those who wanted to take an aggressive line to drive Turkey into the ranks of the enemy.

The Ottomans actually acquired a note from the Russian Ambassador at Istanbul advising his government to keep the Turks neutral until the Straits could be seized. So any guarantee offered by the *Entente* was seen in Istanbul as an empty promise designed to isolate the Ottomans and deter them from German protection.

The Obscure Incident in the Black Sea

The occasion for the British declaration of war on the Ottoman Empire was an obscure incident in the Black Sea in October 1914, when two formerly German ships engaged Russian ships that were apparently attempting to lay mines on the approaches to Istanbul.

The opportunity of finding a cause of war against Turkey developed in early August, after the Royal Navy forced two German ships trapped in the Mediterranean into neutral Constantinople. The German crews, faced with the prospect of destruction at the hands of the British if they re-entered the Aegean, handed the ships over to the Turks. The Turks accepted them in place of the two battleships owed to them by Britain.

Churchill laid a blockade on the Dardanelles to prevent the ships coming out. This, in itself, was an act of war against Turkey which the Ottoman government could have used for the occasion for war if it had so desired.

Then Churchill organised a series of meetings in the first days of September to discuss a pre-emptive strike on Constantinople—in other words, how to *"Copenhagen"* the city, as Nelson had done in destroying the Danish fleet in its port in neutral Denmark in 1801 before a declaration of war.

The *Goeben* and *Breslau* were enlisted in the Ottoman Navy, as compensation for the two battleships seized by Churchill, and in order to save them from the Royal Navy, which had chased them into the Straits and laid a blockade across their escape. The German ships had retained their German officers upon being signed over to the Ottoman crews; having been trapped at Istanbul, they had nowhere to go but the Black Sea.

The Black Sea incident that provided the cause for war is an unusually obscure event and it was difficult to find a detailed account of it published in English—despite the fact that many detailed accounts exist about the events leading to the war on Germany.

Mustafa Aksakal in *The Ottoman Road to War* attempts to piece together the events that led up to the incident. The gist of his account is as follows: In mid-September the Ottoman Turks came under enormous pressure from the Germans to make good the alliance they had secretly signed, and to join the war. The Germans let the Ottomans know that they were in real danger of squandering any claims to a role in peace negotiations at war's end—which was a veiled threat to Istanbul that German protection would be withdrawn. Then, Souchon, the German Admiral, requested authorisation to take the two battleships into the Black Sea on manoeuvres. The Ottoman Cabinet, fearing that the Germans would engage Russian ships and involve them in the war, vetoed this proposal.

Towards the end of the month the Germans renewed their pressure and enquired if the Ottoman mobilisation had been completed. The Ottomans complained that, without a substantial loan from the Germans, mobilisation would have to be halted since the Ottoman Treasury could only sustain the army at that point on half pay. The Germans agreed to put aside 2 million Ottoman pounds on condition that Istanbul authorise a naval attack on Russia by the two battleships. Aksakal claims that Cemal, Talaat, Halil and Enver all agreed to the Black Sea operation on this basis.

However, having countenanced the German proposal, the Ottomans then began a series of delaying tactics to prevent its actually taking place. This involved trying to sow the seeds of doubt in German minds as to the wisdom of such an operation. Firstly, they argued that an attack on Russia would bring Italy into the war on the side of the *Entente*. Secondly, they tried to convince the Germans that a naval attack upon the Russians would not be enough for the Moslem populations of the region to rise up against their British, French and Russian occupiers. What was also needed, they argued, was military action against Egypt and the Russian Caucasus, which the Ottoman army was at present unprepared for.

The Ottoman stalling tactics failed to deter the Germans who desired a new front in the war for Russia to deal with, to take the pressure off their Eastern front.

Admiral Souchon put to sea in late October but agreed to wait for an order from Enver before engaging the Russian minelayers to the North of the Straits. Orders in Turkish had been placed in envelopes that were to be given to the Turkish crews upon Enver's signal to ensure that the Turkish crews did not see the operation as a German initiative and then disobey the German officers. Enver insisted that Souchon wait for his order in case he did not obtain Cabinet approval for the operation, whereupon Enver was to signal for a cancellation. In a final twist Enver sent no order at all and Souchon decided to act on his own initiative by attacking Russian minelayers and gunboats and then bombarding some Russian ports from where the vessels emanated.

In Istanbul the incident was presented as a case of Russian aggression, an attempt to cut off the Ottoman fleet that was guarding the Northern Turkish communications along the shore of the Black Sea. Enver stated in a report to the Cabinet that the Russian intention was to draw the Ottoman fleet in the Bosphorus out onto the mines after its Black Sea fleet was attacked. However, a conciliatory statement was sent to the Russians from the Grand Vizier, promising an enquiry and suggesting a demilitarisation of the Black Sea to avoid further incidents.

The Russians, however, ignored the Ottoman conciliation and declared war.

Mustafa Aksakal argues that Enver's account of the incident was false and the Russians were deliberately attacked by Admiral Souchon in order to bring on the war—whether Enver gave the order or not. He suggests that Enver and other members of the

cabinet realised that they could not hold back from the war any longer with German patience running out and vital financial assistance needed for the defence of the Empire—which was inevitably going to be attacked by the *Entente* anyway. It was therefore a question of fighting with German assistance or being left in the lurch to resist the *Entente* alone.

His argument is that Enver and his comrades, who had decided that war was inevitable and who saw the importance of the German alliance for the long-term security of the Ottoman Empire against the Entente predators, required an incident for which the Russians would be blamed to win over the rest of the Cabinet, the Committee of Union and Progress, and the Turkish people for the war effort—for which most were disinclined.

Ottoman Responsibility?

One aspect of this book that I am uncomfortable with is the implicit suggestion that, by entering the Great War, Turkey was in some way responsible for the Middle East as it developed after the War. Mustafa Aksakal does not attempt to develop this notion as a full-blown argument, as *The Berlin-Baghdad Express* by Sean McMeekin does, but it is implied in a number of places within the book. For instance, on page 1 Aksakal says:

> "Given the war's disastrous consequences and its human cost to the entire Middle East, it is not surprising that the decision taken by the leadership in 1914 has been roundly blasted by historians and memoir-writers alike."

And on the back cover it is stated:

> "The Ottoman leadership sought the German alliance as the only way out of a web of international threats and domestic insecurities, opting for an escape whose catastrophic consequences for the empire and seismic impact on the Middle East are felt even today."

Now, Aksakal, in my view, is expressing two contradictory ideas here. Firstly, he argues that the geopolitical designs of the Great Powers are the primary cause of Ottoman participation in the war. Secondly, he states that the Ottoman decision led to the creation of the modern Middle East and its myriad problems.

It is ridiculous to lay the blame for the Middle East on the Ottomans on the basis of the Black Sea incident. If the *Entente* were set on making war and carving up the Ottoman Empire, which Aksakal believes they were, and all the empirical evidence shows to have been the case, the responsibility for the incident is irrelevant.

The old, largely peaceful, Middle East died with the Ottoman Empire and the new Middle East of Palestine, Iraq etc. was entirely a creation of Britain, and to a lesser extent France.

Historians, even those who are sympathetic to the Turkish position, do not attribute enough responsibility to the British State for the Ottoman involvement in the war. They tend to ignore the wider context of the war and get tied up in the diplomatic detail, which can be very confusing—and intentionally so. The British State is expert at diplomacy, at covering its tracks and producing a narrative that, if it does not exonerate it, sufficiently confuses people into tacit acceptance of the British position.

In the British account, who fired first in the Black Sea brought down the catastrophe on the region. Britain's hands are always clean.

Mustafa Aksakal mentions the Ottoman declaration of war on Russia, France and Britain on 10th November as if it was a choice. But that was a week after the Royal Navy had begun bombarding the Dardanelles, a British army had invaded the Ottoman territories at Basra and the Russians had sent their forces into Erzurum. It was also nearly a week since Britain and France had joined Russia in declaring war on the Ottomans.

A description of the war must take into account much more than the decision-making process within the Ottoman elite. It must include the historical relationship between the Ottoman Empire and the West and the great change in British policy that was made between 1904 and 1907 and led to the reorientation against Germany. It must also take into account the perception of the Ottoman-German relationship that emerged in England in relation to this reorientation and which manifested itself so markedly in the hostility directed toward the Berlin-Baghdad Railway.

It is only within this historical and geopolitical context that the Ottoman road to war can become understandable beyond the details and manoeuvrings of diplomacy.

This is because the Ottoman decision to go to war took place in a context, imposed by the *Entente* upon the government at Istanbul, that left them very little room to manoeuvre—and intentionally so. It was a case of "*damned if they do, and damned if they don't"* in the old British saying. And, of course, we will never know what would have happened if they had somehow managed to avoid entering the war—although an understanding of the war intentions of the *Entente* gives us a very good indication.

In late 1914 the Ottomans were confronted by a number of massive extraneous events including a British understanding with Russia that left the field clear for the annexation of Istanbul and the division of the desirable parts of the Ottoman Empire between the Western Imperialist powers, a European war that could provide for a radical restructuring of Europe and its Asian hinterland, and the probable destruction of the Ottomans' only substantial ally.

Within this vast, over-bearing context the Ottoman leadership struggled to find a way out of their predicament and various points of view emerged at Istanbul. One point of view won out—not because of the deviousness of its proponents or their political trickery nor indeed because it was the majority view. But because it was the only course of action that was left to the Ottoman State as events took their course. All other possibilities were carefully closed off to Istanbul, despite all the wishful thinking and diplomatic efforts.

If a prisoner is killed in an attempt to escape the prison, should we condemn him for having attempted to escape?

In Ireland recently there has been much history constructed with little reference to the Imperial prison constructed by Britain. In this recent history, it seems, we were the authors of our own misfortunes and we mostly fought and slaughtered each other, with relish. Britain had nothing to do with it, or else it acted with a kind of benign benevolence, of course.

That has led to the view that the Anglo-Irish Treaty War was an Irish Civil War and that Michael Collins took the Treaty by choice and waged a fratricidal war on his comrades because he was an upholder of democracy. And, of course, all this can be imagined, if Britain is left out of the equation.

Collins made a choice in 1922 all right—but it was a choice confined by circumstances that were imposed by the realities of the presence of British power. It was never a free choice that war should result.

And the choice that confronted Enver and the Ottoman government in October 1914 was really something similar and designed by those who really knew about how to do these things well. □

Desmond FitzGerald

by Brendan Clifford

The article on *Problems Facing Catholic Rulers* by Desmond FitzGerald, reprinted here, was published in *The Review Of Politics*, July 1939 (Vol.1, No.3). It was a magazine founded and edited by Waldemar Gurian, and published by Notre Dame University in Indiana, USA.

Its author, Desmond FitzGerald, should be better remembered than he is. The reason he is not well remembered is connected with the lop-sided system of party politics that has characterised the Irish State ever since that State—a State established on British authority in the form of an Unequal Treaty and imposed by British arms under pressure of a British ultimatum in 1922—asserted its independence in 1932.

FitzGerald was a member of the Sinn Féin faction that undertook to impose the Treaty State in 1922, and to do so by fighting a 'civil war' with British arms and on British authority, lest worse should happen. The worse that was threatened was a simple British re-conquest by means of Total War. By acting as Britain's proxy against those who would not disown the Republic based on an Irish electoral mandate in 1919, the Treatyites hoped to preserve an Irish political base from which independence could be re-asserted at some future date when British power had declined.

But, in doing what was necessary to placate Britain in 1922, the Treaty faction of Sinn Féin lost the sense of itself as Sinn Féin—or its leadership did. It could not remain Sinn Féin while making war on Sinn Féin. After it ceased to be Sinn Féin it had no clear idea of what it was.

It held power in the subordinate Irish State from 1922 to 1932. It achieved utter military supremacy in 1922-3, but its political basis was unclear and insecure. No clear issue was put to the electorate in June 1922. The most definite thing about that election was the understanding that, if the electorate rejected the Treaty in a clear assertion of will, the most powerful Empire in the world would take Irish affairs directly in hand again. Elections held under such duress would not generally be regarded as free and democratic today—and nor would they have been so regarded by Britain in 1922-3 anywhere else but in its own back yard.

The Treaty Party governed for ten years, always invoking the British threat as a reason for voting for it. But, as the credibility of the British threat diminished, support for the Anti-Treaty side grew.

The Treatyites came close to losing power in the hung Dáil of 1927, but were saved by chicanery. They lost power in 1932, and only returned to office in 1948 as part of a Rainbow Coalition.

The main Anti-Treaty Party was Sinn Féin from 1922 to 1926. In 1926 Fianna Fáil was formed out of Sinn Féin when a Sinn Féin Conference rejected a motion that it should subvert the Treaty from within by participating in the Treaty Dáil. Fianna Fáil came close to taking office in 1927—only four years after comprehensive military defeat in the 'Civil War'. It took office with Labour support in 1932. It won the 1933 Election outright.

The Treaty Party was called Cumann na nGaedheal at first. After Fianna Fáil's conclusive victory in 1933 Cumann na nGaedheal merged with a fringe party of Redmondite outlook and called itself Fine Gael. And Fine Gael adopted a Fascist programme in defence of the Treaty which Fianna Fáil was taking apart.

There were Republican survivals from the Sinn Féin era (1919-21) in the Treaty Party. Michael Collins, in his attempt to get the IRA to support the Treaty, said that his purpose was to use the Treaty State as a base for future struggle for unity and independence. When he got killed in a madcap episode in September 1922 his approach was set aside by his successors. As this became clear in the mid-1920s, there was a movement of Republican Treatyites to Fianna Fáil. In the 1930s there were still Republican Treatyites in Fine Gael, who remained with Fine Gael even while the Treatyite curbs on Republicanism were being removed by Fianna Fáil.

I don't know if there was substantial Parliamentary democratic dissent within Fine Gael in the mid 1930s from the Fascist position adopted by the leadership. It seems probable, from what I recall of the situation in which I grew up, that there was.

Desmond FitzGerald was not on the Republican wing of Cumann na nGaedheal/Fine Gael; and if there was an Anti-Fascist wing of Fine Gael, he was not in that either.

So who was Desmond FitzGerald?

He was the son of upwardly-mobile, well-to-do Cork/Kerry parents who made good economically in Dublin. He was educated in England and became a bit of a *littérateur* in London and France. He was also a Gaelic Leaguer, became a member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and an organiser of the Irish Volunteers. When John Redmond split the Volunteers in September 1914 by committing them to support for Britain's war on Germany, FitzGerald stayed with the Irish Volunteers. In 1916 he agreed with Eoin MacNeill's countermanding of the order for the Insurrection, but when he saw that it would go ahead despite MacNeill he took part in it. He had the usual experience of English jails and internment camps. He was elected in 1918 and became D·il Director of Publicity and organiser of the *Irish Bulletin*.

He was arrested again early in 1921, released in July, and was on the negotiating delegation that signed the Treaty. He was External Affairs Minister in the Provisional Government set up by the British in 1922 and in the Free State Government that followed. He attended the Imperial Conferences (Conferences of the British Empire) in 1923, 1926 and 1930. He was Minister for Defence in the late 1920s, with responsibility for prosecutions under the Public Safety Act in the last phase of Cumann na nGaedheal rule. It was in this phase, when it made war on a phantom, that the Treatyites did themselves damage from which they never recovered.

As the game ebbed away from it, the Treaty Party increased the stakes, increasing its losses when it lost.

It began to set itself against the reality of things when it began to use the Treaty Oath as a device for disfranchising the powerful Anti-Treaty movement that began within a couple of years of the Treatyite military victory. The possibility arose that the elected

representatives of a majority of the electorate would be locked out of the Dáil because they refused to take the Treaty Oath to the King. Cumann na nGaedheal seemed to view that prospect with equanimity. It was averted when a devious Speaker sensibly let the Fianna Fáil Deputies into the Dáil, in August 1927, without taking any Oath. They signed a book, said nothing, and did not touch a Bible.

With Fianna Fáil inside the Dáil, the Treatyites began to treat the party as a Trojan Horse, inside which the IRA was lurking, and the IRA was held to be the vanguard of the Bolshevik revolution in Ireland. Hence the draconian Public Safety measures of the last phase of Treatyite Government, 1927-31.

Then, with Fianna Fáil in office in 1932, De Valera was seen as the Irish Kerensky, whose historical role was to soften up the situation for a Bolshevik *coup*. Dev was the front man for the Bolshevik IRA, therefore a Fascist movement was required in order to save civilisation.

There is no doubt that there was a special relationship between Fianna Fáil and the IRA. It would have been a poor show if there wasn't. There might have been a real Civil War if there wasn't—the 1922 affair being a proxy war for Britain.

A party which is convinced that civilisation depends on it does not give way to a vote. Was it not President Hindenberg's crime before history the following year that he let Hitler in on a mere vote? If Fianna Fáil had been entirely without military force of its own in 1932, who can say what might have happened?

(It is one of the unmentionables of recent Irish history that the effective military is not the Army of the State, which is not even called an Army, but the 'illegal organisation'. The Treaty Army, the Defence Force, was an instrument of internal suppression, and was drastically run down, once the Treaty State was enforced, by a succession of Defence Ministers, including FitzGerald. It would have been a doubtful instrument for use in 1932 for that reason, and because Republican sentiment had not been completely extracted from it. That is a justification for Cumann na nGaedheal opening the door for an "Irish Kerensky" on the basis of a mere vote in 1932, and then setting about organising a Fascist movement in the country.

These things are very much a matter of judgment made by particular people in a particular place and time. The Treatyites, through making a fetish of the Treaty after the threat of British reconquest had diminished—as it did when the British War Coalition fell late in 1922—and by identifying the Treaty with civilisation, rendered itself incapable of judging the political character of the strong force that had arisen against them.

At any rate FitzGerald, who was quite a bit of a cosmopolitan, had his eyes on the world, deduced the position of Ireland from the position of the world, and lost sight of what was actually in Ireland. He saw the choice in general terms as lying between Bolshevism and Fascism and, as a civilised *littérateur*, he chose Fascism.

In earlier years, in London and Paris, he had become acquainted with Ezra Pound, the Fascist creator of T.S. Eliot and James Joyce and many others. At least Eliot and Joyce would not have become quite what they were but for Pound. I find Pound's poetry unreadable. If he had not helped to create Joyce, I would not feel that something of value was missing from the world. But I have a soft spot for him because of Eliot.

Eliot became acquainted with FitzGerald in T.E. Hulme's Poets' Cub in Soho (London) in 1907 and kept up the acquaintance into the 1930s, when he and FitzGerald were both Fascists. Pound, who lived in Italy, was tried for treason in America after 1945. He was roundly denounced by American intellectuals. Arthur Miller said he was worse than Hitler. But his influence was so intermingled with the work of right-living contemporaries that he still remains far away from the rubbish bin of history.

I suppose his correspondence with FitzGerald must survive somewhere, but I have not seen that it was published. Nor have I seen FitzGerald's verse, which Pound thought was not too bad.

FitzGerald is mentioned in a letter in French from Pound to René Taupin in 1928, given in *Letters Of Pound 1907-1941* (1951), edited by D.D. Paigel:

"Vienna, May

Cher Monsieur: Naturellement, si vous accordez une inversion du temps, dans une relativité Einsteinienne, il vous semblera probable que j'ai reçu l'idée de l'image par des poemes d'H. D. ecrits *après* que cette idée etait reçue. Voir les *dates* des livres divers.

J'ai tant écrit et publié à ce sujet—et je ne peux pas écrire sans machine à écrire.

En 1908-9 à Londres (avant le début de H.D.): cénacle T.E. Hulme, Flint, D. FitzGerald, moi, etc. Flint, beaucoup français-ifié, jamais arrivé à condensation. {concentration}

{avoir centre}. Symbolistes français > les '90's' à Londres..."

[cénacle=gathering of a small number of literary and artistic personalities-Ed.]

Pound's biographer, Humphrey Carpenter, comments on the London poetry scene around 1909:

"...it was a dull period. Vague memories of the Decadents and the Celtic Twilight predominated in the fashionable poetry style, producing something that Ezra rightly called 'a horrible agglomerate compost... a doughey mass of third-hand Keats, Wordsworth, heaven knows what, fourth-rate Elizabethan sonority, blunted, half-melted, lumpy"..." (*A Serious Character*, p113).

The members of the Poets' Club aspired to create a new kind of poetry. They have all been pretty well forgotten—Flint, Storer, Tancred, Hulme—except, perhaps, Hulme. FitzGerald—*"who journalizes & poeticizes somewhat"*—has been forgotten as a poet, apparently without ever appearing in print, although *"Ezra said he himself preferred Desmond FitzGerald's verse to either Storer's or Flint's"* (Carpenter p116).

The *H.D.* of Pound's letter is Hilda Doolittle, who is not forgotten but is not well remembered either. She married a member of that London group, Richard Aldington, whose poems I once looked at but recall nothing of. I do not find *"Imagist"* poetry memorable.

Joyce wrote a memorable poem which seems to me to comply with the rules of Imagism—stark presentation of an image/object in pared-down language. I forget the title. It begins, *"Wind whines and whines the shingle"*. It is superbly Imagist but I have not noticed it referred to in Imagist literature.

Aldington is remembered, or ought to be, for his demytholigising biography of Lawrence of Arabia, and his Great War novel, *Death Of A Hero*, was reprinted a few times.

Whatever one thinks of the output of those pre-1914 literary coteries in London and Paris, they were a presence on the European scene and to be one of them was not to be nobody. FitzGerald was one of them, and he remained known to them. And, as a *littérateur* who became a man of action, he figures in one of Pound's *Cantos*:

"Life to make mock of motion:
For the husks, before me, move,
The words rattle: shells given out by shells
The live man, out of lands and prisons,
Shakes the dry pods,
Probes for old wills and friendships, and the big locust-casques
Bend to the tawdry table,
Lift up their spoons to mouths, put forks in cutlets,
And make sound like the sound of voices..."
(Canto VII)

The introduction to the *Memoirs Of Desmond FitzGerald 1913-16* by F.F.G. (1968) says that those lines refer to Desmond.

As man of action, Desmond was present at the GPO; produced the *Irish Bulletin* on the run in 1920, telling the world what Britain was doing in Ireland; took part in defeating the Anti-Treatyites and dismantling the Republic; and was a Minister in the Treatyite Governments of 1922-31. Pound wrote a poem about him, after the passing of the Censorship Act, and sent it to Joyce:

"O Paddy dear an' did you hear
The news that's going round
The Censorship is on the land
And sailors can be found
ExPurgating the stories
That they used to tell wid ease
And yeh can not find a prostichoot
Will speak above her knees.

I met Esmond Fitzguggles
And the old souse says to me:
'I fought and bled and died, by Xroist!
That Oireland should be free
But you mustn't now say 'buggar' nor
'bitch' nor yet 'bastard'
Or the black-maria will take you
To our howly prison-yard.'

They've had up the damn boible
To examine its parts and hole
And now we know that Adam
Used to practice birt-controll,
In accardance wid St. Thomas
And dhe faders of the church,
And when pore Eve would waant to fuck
He'd lambaste her wid a birch.'

'We must prothect our virchoos',
Lowsy Esmong says to me,
'And be chaste, begob, and holy
As our Lord was wont to be
And we must select our language
So that it shall not offend
The fat ould buggerin' bishops
Or their woives, world widout end.'

Sure I t'ought of Mr Griffeth
And of Nelson and Parnell
And of the howly rebels
Now roastin' down in hell
For havin't said 'Oh, deary me',
Or 'blow' or even 'blawst'
An' I says to lowsy Esmond:
'Shure owld Oireland's free at last'.

There seems to be no public record of FitzGerald's life among the Bohemians; of what his contribution was, if any, to the creation of Imagism, whose influence is still all too much with us; of his later discussions with Pound when they were both Fascists, but Pound remained rakish; and of what he thought of Pound's second remarkable godchild, Joyce. Did he have a secret copy of *Ulysses*? If not, why not? And did he destroy it when his Government brought in the Censorship Act? And if not why not?

In the mid 1950s, having heard on the BBC Third Programme that there was a novel called *Ulysses* by an Irish writer called James Joyce, and that it was one of the greatest novels ever written, I wrote to a Cork City bookshop for it, but it wouldn't try to get it for me. A few years later I rented a copy for a week from a dirty bookshop in London and was glad I hadn't spent good money on it out of my labourer's pay in Slieve Luacra.

Richard Aldington, co-founder of Imagism with Pound, and successor to him as Hilda Doolittle's husband, thought *Ulysses* was a remarkable achievement but would exercise a deplorable influence on literary standards. I have never been able to see the achievement. And I have never come across an Irish review of it that could be called anything but gush—unless one counts Gogarty's review published in James Murphy's magazine in Germany. But the fact remains that, though it is little read, it is widely sold; that the big Irish Sea Ferry is festooned with images connected with it; and that it, or its imagist spin-offs, are one of the big earners of foreign currency. It stands between Ireland and the world. And it seemed to me, when I first came across Dublin *literati* in London, that Crazes Joyst was beginning to stand between Ireland and itself.

Under English compulsion, *Ulysses* became the classic Irish novel—a frozen image, or series of images, of Home Rule Dublin before the Great War, in the interlude between the 2nd and 3rd Home Rule Bills. It was not that the book became very popular in England and that Ireland followed the English fashion. It was not, and is not, popular in England. A couple of years ago I heard some middle-brow English intellectuals discussing on radio how they might get through it before they died. And on Radio Eireann I heard D. Kiberd telling people that they really must make an effort to read it, and assuring them that it would be alright to get through it by skipping bits.

So the great Irish novel—if novel is what it is—is the greatest unread book in the world and is widely reckoned to be close to unreadable. It is a cult novel, established in transcendental prestige by cosmopolitan *literati*, gathered in London before 1914, who became arbiters of taste in the chaos that followed 1918. And it was somehow imposed on the Irish, as a disabling gift.

FitzGerald preferred the *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas. That is the kind of Fascist he was.

Pound lived in Italy during the 2nd World War and broadcast on Fascist radio. It is pretended that that war was not a vulgar power conflict between national States, but was a high-minded war of ideologies, but because Pound was true to his ideology he was held to have been a traitor. A great many respectable and influential people were of his way of thinking before the war, but, when they rallied to the call of the national flag at war, ideology was set aside. All that mattered was nationalist/Imperialist loyalty. So Pound was a traitor. But, because of his literary prestige, the Americans dealt with him by treating him as a lunatic and putting him in an asylum.

Irish Fascism has been dismissed by Fine Gael academics of recent times as not really having been Fascist at all: as being a kind of misunderstanding. Because it did not succeed, it is treated

as not having been in earnest. But it was in earnest. The misunderstanding lay in its reading of the situation.

The state of affairs for which Fascism was the remedy in Europe between the wars did not come about in Ireland. Political society did not split apart into its elements and produce anarchy, with Bolshevism in the offing, when De Valera came into office. The coming to power of Fianna Fáil, with the reinsurance of IRA backing, produced a stable party-political democracy.

As the obnoxious domestic features of the 'Treaty' were removed, most Republicans accepted that Dev had done enough to be going on with. The great rupture in the political fabric caused by the Treaty, and aggravated by the Treaty Party during its last period in power, was overcome. The Fascist movement, developed by the Treatyites in the expectation that the revocation of the Treaty would lead to chaos, found itself without a function, and was progressively marginalised. Its 'March on Rome' was called off. It suffered a succession of electoral defeats in a system of Parliamentary democracy that produced stable government and therefore could not be replaced. The Fascist movement evaporated, and ceased to be of any consequence when Fine Gael supported Dev's neutrality policy in Britain's second World War.

But John Dillon remained a Fascist—and wanted to support Britain in the war. Elizabeth Bowen, in her espionage survey of Irish opinion for Churchill during the war, found that Dillon was the only major political figure who was discontented with neutrality and wanted to join Britain. And she also found that he was a Fascist in outlook.

Desmond FitzGerald also supported Britain in the War. But he went to England to do it. He went there to manage a chemical factory owned by a brother who was killed.

The life-cycle of Irish Fascism has been concealed in manufactured obscurity. Insofar as there have been Irish historians in Irish academia during the past quarter century, they have been on the Fine Gael side of things. Fine Gael was the party of the professional classes. Fianna Fáil was the party with an aptitude for politics. There was therefore a chasm between actual history and written history. And the writers of history did not care to dwell on the fact that Fine Gael began as a Fascist party.

In early 1939, when Fascism was doing rather well in Europe (Franco having won), but had run out of steam in Ireland, FitzGerald published a book, *Preface To Statecraft*, and the magazine article reprinted here. The book is rigorously schematic and intellectually impressive. The article is livelier, broader in scope, and more relevant to the present day.

The magazine in which it appeared was founded and edited by Waldemar Gurian.

I first came across Gurian back in the 1970s, when I was trying to get to grips with Northern Ireland. He was quoted in a remarkable article published in the *Capuchin Annual* in the early 1940s. The author used the pseudonym "*Ultach.*". The article was re-issued as a pamphlet under the title *Orange Terror*. I reprinted it as an issue of *A Belfast Magazine*. (President-to-be McAleese ended the commercial circulation of *A Belfast Magazine*, to the slight extent that it ever had one, by bringing a libel action against me for publishing a true account of her appointment as head of the Institute of Professional Legal Studies in Belfast. Her biographers, including the authorised biographer, claim that I paid her damages and costs. I did not pay her a penny for either, and I cost her a pretty penny in solicitors' and barristers' fees before she called off the action for nothing just before the trial. And I had the interesting experience of conducting my own defence, as I could not afford to buy any law. Since then, the *Belfast Magazine* has appeared as occasional pamphlets.)

Waldemar Gurian was a German political theorist who at the start was associated with Carl Schmitt. Schmitt was an influential theorist in the Weimar Republic. He continued to be an influential theorist in the Nazi regime. And, during the past twenty years, his writings have been influential in governing circles in the United States. Gurian parted company with Schmitt, I assume, when Schmitt became a Nazi and he continued to support parliamentary democracy.

Sustaining a democratic position on liberal grounds was problematic in the 1930s. Gurian did so on Catholic grounds.

He emigrated to the USA and got a position at the Catholic University of Notre Dame in Indiana, where FitzGerald lectured for a period in the late 1930s. Gurian launched the magazine, *The Review Of Politics* in January 1939 and published FitzGerald's article in issue No. 3, in July.

FitzGerald was a Fascist on the Catholic side. There was a Catholic side to Fascism. That fact has been used, in the stereotypes by which England handles the world, to present Fascism (after Britain bungled its way into war with a couple of Fascist States after being supportive of Fascism until then) as being essentially a Catholic phenomenon, arising logically out of Catholicism. The London *Times*, in Norman Stone's review of Roger Eatwell's book on *Fascism* in its issue of 14th August 1995, illustrated the piece with a very large photograph of De Valera in Rome, with the caption:

> "Irish premier Eamon de Valera (in silk hat, third from left) with Fascists in Rome in 1939; under his 1937 constitution, he styled himself Taoiseach in imitation of *Duce*".

There is nothing about Fascism in Ireland in the book being reviewed, or any mention at all of Ireland, but Stone injects the following comment into the review:

> "The forms of fascism—partly borrowed from Italian, especially Christian-Socialist models—spread. They gave us, for example, the title 'Taoiseach' (leader) for the Irish prime minister, a gaelicisation of *Duce*. Was it intended to display the Indo-Germanic origins of Irish Gaelic?"

De Valera was in Rome for the Coronation of Pope Pius XII. As was customary when heads of Government visited the Vatican, he had a brief formal meeting with Mussolini. However, Churchill, as a British Cabinet Minister, made a pilgrimage to Rome in order to praise Mussolini and say that, if he lived in Italy, he would be a Fascist. Dev had a discussion meeting with members of the British Government on the way back from Rome.

I did not notice any protest at the *Times's* travesty of historical fact by the Irish intelligentsia. I imagine that, being basically Fine Gael in outlook, they were happy to see the reverse of the truth being accepted by a prestigious English newspaper—as the *Times* still was then. England is not comfortable with embarrassing truths about itself, and the truth that the Empire party in Ireland was the Fascist party, and was comprehensively outplayed by the democratic parliamentary party, which was Republican, was embarrassing.

As to De Valera and Mussolini: it struck me when writing an Introduction to James Murphy's writings on Italy and Germany that, if there had been an Italian statesman of Dev's calibre, the world might never have heard of Mussolini. What was required was a politician of basically Constitutional outlook who could sail close to the revolutionary wind for the purpose of establishing Constitutional order. It seemed to me that Giolitti was the man for that in Italy. He was a hard-headed democratic reformer who had opposed the Italian lurch into war under British influence in 1915. But he was too Constitutionalist to be able to save the

Constitution from the chaos resulting from the War. Riding the tiger was beyond him.

(His *Memoirs* were published in London in 1923 in a translation made by Edward Storer. I assume this is the same Edward Storer who was a member of the Poets' Club along with FitzGerald before the War and wrote some of the better poems.)

Fascism had its sources in all strains of European politics opposed to Bolshevism, including the Catholic strain, but it was not particularly out of the Catholic strain that it grew. Mussolini, Churchill's hero in the 1920s, was a radical socialist who collaborated with Britain to bring Italy into the First World War on irredentist grounds, against the opposition of the Vatican, and it was out of his triumphalist militarism that Fascism arose in the post-War chaos.

Furthermore, it was on the ground of Catholicism that coherent resistance to Fascism was sustained throughout the Fascist period. And it was on the basis of that internal Catholic resistance—and not on the basis of the terrorist resistance parachuted into Europe by Churchill's SOE (his Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare)—that the post-1945 political order of Western Europe was constructed so rapidly.

The Fascist vision in Ireland had spent itself in futile conflict with Dev's Parliamentarian democracy when FitzGerald wrote this article. I take that to be the reason why, rigorous Catholic intellectual though he had become, there is a resigned air about it, and the possibility of Catholic socio-political development is dismissed. Treatyite Catholicism had committed itself to the Fascist vision and, when that proved to be a mirage, the political resourcefulness of Fine Gael was exhausted. All that remained was to accept that *"we have no divine promise that economic misery can be avoided"*.

FitzGerald despaired when he heard that Dollfuss intended to be guided by Papal Encyclicals. But Austria, as far as I have been able to understand it, has been governed, post-1945, by a stubborn collaboration between Papalist Christian Socialism and a chastened Social Democracy.

Some years ago I heard Garret FitzGerald, Desmond's son, on BBC radio, hailing Winston Churchill as the greatest statesman of the 20th century. I would have thought that the greatest West European statesman—the greatest statesman of what is in fact our world—was Konrad Adenauer. And Adenauer was a Papal Encyclicalist. As Mayor of Cologne in the 1920s, he implemented a kind of Christian Socialism and refused to be Chancellor because his party—the formally Catholic *Centre Party*—was committed to Weimar economic liberalism. He was ousted by the Nazis, retreated to some monastery or convent, and re-emerged in 1945 to construct the Christian Democracy of post-War Europe, along De Gasperi in Italy and the Benelux leaders. And his immediate object, post-1945, was to thwart British plans for German reconstruction—he had experienced British conduct as Mayor of Cologne post 1918—and to pre-empt the German Social Democracy, which he saw as a mere instrument of British influence.

Two generations later the Christian Democratic structure of Western Europe was being undermined by Britain, which the generation of statesmen after Adenauer and de Gaulle had foolishly admitted to the EU. Kim Howells, Arthur Scargill's revolutionary social lieutenant, became Tony Blair's Minister for Competition in Europe, with the job of getting rid of the stubborn remnants of Christian Democratic socialism, and making the EU properly capitalist. And the Irish Government, except in the Haughey period, assisted Britain in that project.

There was no Christian Democracy in Ireland. Fine Gael was the party of pious Catholics, but there was no Christian Democratic flavour to it. Fianna Fáil was the party of nominal Catholics and rakes, but there was a taste of Christian Democratic flavour to it. But Fianna Fáil bred no intelligentsia. It hasn't had a worthwhile intellectual since Dev—who had much in common with Adenauer but had to operate without the social Catholic medium that was at Adenauer's disposal.

When I discovered Gurian's books it brought home to me how superficial, brittle, unsubstantially dogmatic, nationalist Ireland was in its religion. If it had not been, Gurian would have been a standard item in its academic life. Likewise with Maritain. And Adenauer would have become its lodestar.

Fine Gael was the Catholic party—or the party of the Catholics—rigorously pious and socially arid. Fianna Fáil was the party of the excommunicated.

About twenty-five years ago, before the brittle veneer of Catholicism sustained by Fine Gael had crumbled—a veneer not in the sense of being hypocritical but of being surface-deep though intensely believed in—I heard on Radio Eireann an interview with an Austrian who had married into the British Royal Family. She tried to explain that Austria was so thoroughly Catholic that religion was not thought about. Catholicism was simply a universal cultural medium, effectively beyond thought, within which people acted and thought about other things. It was an unproblematic part of being Austrian. And I thought that in Ireland that came close to describing Fianna Fáil.

For Fine Gael, Catholic theology—as a kind of timeless metaphysics—was a major object of thought, and its logical implications were asserted as obligations which people should be compelled to live by.

The Papal Encyclicals, which Desmond FitzGerald rejected as guides to political action, were not statements of eternal doctrine. They were suggestions as to what might be done to make life tolerable under Capitalism. They were permissive rather than restrictive. Their outcome was the social market, which was the economic form of the post-1945 union of Western Europe until Britain, with Irish assistance, succeeded in breaking it up to make way for free-ranging Capitalism.

FitzGerald's *Preface To Statecraft* never reaches the point of actual statecraft in this time and this place—which was where the Papal Encyclicals that he rejected started. But, in the lively opening paragraphs of his article, he outlines the predicament of Irish rulers after 1922, without, however, relating them to that predicament. He might have intended his remarks to apply generally, but I can think of nowhere else that they applied with such force as in Ireland.

Where else did national Governments have the problem of governing societies that they had played no part in shaping? And of doing so in close proximity, and initially under the supervision of, the State which had governed that society for centuries—on the basis of no sort of consent by the governed, except the consent of helpless submissions to irresistible physical force.

Through so many centuries of destructively intimate rule by England, the Irish had escaped extermination, though there was sound English opinion from the 16th to the 19th centuries that extermination would be good for them. They escaped because of a contemptuous English assumption that they would always be manageable.

It was only in 1912 that collaboration began between a British Government and an Irish Party to establish a kind of subordinate national government in Ireland—within the UK and the Empire.

But that collaboration, for that object, was vehemently opposed by the Opposition Party in Britain, and it was ended a couple of years later when the British Government and Opposition joined forces for war on Germany and Turkey, and Ireland was once again treated as a mere source of cannon-fodder. The country then asserted independence, voted for it, fought for it when Britain did not heed its vote, and fought well enough to set itself on the way to independence. It constituted itself a foreign country to the country that had tormented it for centuries, with the task of undoing of what had been done to it, while that other country did not intend to allow itself to be made a foreign country in Ireland. And the Irish political body which undertook this enormous task was only a couple of years old, and was compelled by Britain to fight a war against itself at the start. □

Document

Problems Facing Catholic Rulers
By Desmond Fitzgerald

When a ruler inherits authority he inherits a responsibility for ordering the relations of living people whom he has not created himself, and therefore has not formed with a view to the order that he conceives as most suitable. Moreover he inherits an existing order in which the relations of the members of that society operate. That order, the result of a long historical process, has itself conditioned the people who live within it to suit its requirements, and those people have themselves given to it a certain mode which they, wittingly or unconsciously, have evolved as best suited to give them the conditions that they desire.

Let us note the peculiar complexity that this implies. Society is a living thing differing from all other organisms in this, that the parts of which it is composed are intelligent autonomous beings each directed to a personal end that transcends the end of society itself. Those autonomous beings are ordained to live here in time, to live human lives for which society is necessary. Their outlook on things, their way of life, their needs have been determined to some extent by an historical development. They and those who went before them have made society as it is, and society, through its development and as it is, has to a large extent made them to be as they are; for it has determined the conditions in which tghey live. And the ruler inherits the responsibilities for the ordering of that society in such a way that its members will be able to live the good human life. But he cannot change the people who form that society except through the order that he imposes upon that society. But that order is a most complex inter-relationship between society and its members, between those members and society and between those members among themselves.

He sees that his work to create conditions that will be favourable to their leading the good human life requires a change in the totality of society including a change in those who constitute it. But he knows that when he exercises his authority to bring about a change directed to the elimination of certain obvious evils, he must also take responsibility for any other effects that may flow from his action by repercussion, and those other effects may more than counter-balance the good that he anticipated—they may even be disastrous. The existing evils may be obvious for the very reason that they are evils, just as a pain may make us aware of some abnormality in our body. But if that abnormality has developed through slow growth, it may well be that the organ involved has adapted itself to that abnormality, and now its drastic and sudden removal would affect the whole body adversely.

If the order in which we live, or those elements of it that we are conscious of as evil, as detrimental to the true human good, had been suddenly imposed in one bloc and immediately observed to be so detrimental, then it might be possible to bring about a simple solution by merely removing what had been so imposed. But that is not the case. If we look over the development that the flux of time has brought about during the last four hundred years, say, we can see that in a general way, each change was welcomed in its aspect of good. After the decay of scholasticism the new learning was ushered in as calculated to enrich the lives of men. Scientific discoveries were also such an enrichment, and when these gave man a control over the forces of nature, so that they could be harnessed to his service, that also could be seen as an enrichment of man. Indeed it might reasonably have been conceived as a means to provide for his material needs with a minimum of labour, so that he would have greater opportunity to develop his intellectual and moral being. Again it might be said that to condemn man to long hours of dreary labour for the production of some thing that might be produced in a tithe of the time with the aid of machines would be a wanton condemnation to slavery.

But now when we see men huddled together in vast industrial towns spending their hours of labour ministering to the machine, we cry out against it. We see the evil, but we accept what it produces as necessities of our daily life. What we want is that we should be able to reap all the material benefits that the developments of the last few centuries have produced without any of the concomitant evils. And even if we were prepared to forego some of those benefits we should still require to act with caution. We might find that the decision to do without certain things that we now have would promote a certain disorganisation, as for instance the disemployment without prospect of re-employment in any other sphere.

Thus it sometimes seems that the modern ruler inherits a race of deformed men subsisting in an order made to the image of their deformity. But that order is undermined by a grave and growing discontent, for in spite of his deformity human man still persists. His specifically human nature cries out against that order, and yet he is only inclined to listen to promises that appeal to his deformity.

It is more than two thousand years now since Socrates said that his sole business in going about the streets was persuading old and young not to be pre-occupied with their body or with their fortune as passionately as with their soul; to make it as good as possible: “Yes,” he said, “my task is to tell you that fortune does not make virtue, but that from virtue comes fortune and all that is advantageous whether to private persons or to the state.”

May we not assume that even at that time, if his message had been different, if he had been explaining how to add to fortune, how to multiply the creation of goods for the satisfaction of men’s desires, he would not have been brought before the court, and would not have received the sentence to death.

It will be noted that he did not condemn the desire for fortune *per se*, but rather a wrong ratio between the pre-occupation with external goods and the concern with the soul.

I have no time even to attempt to disentangle the forces that have operated in our later history and their interplay in the life of man. But we may observe that alongside the development of the multiplication of goods, proceeds the decay and rejection of religious affirmation. The great discoverers, the great inventors gave new continents for man's exploitation, and new modes of production. We cannot say that they were the enemies of man—quite the contrary. But these new spheres for man's activity, this enrichment of his temporal life, required more than ever that he should maintain the proper ratio between the things of the body and the things of the soul. But they coincided with a progressive denial of the soul. So that the new things offered to men were, as one might say, seized upon to fill a void. If man were a purely temporal being, or even if he merely assumed that his temporal life were dissociated from, and autonomous with regard to, his spiritual life, then all that his life in time had to offer to him were the things of time. But as a spiritual being his thirst was for the infinite, and could be assuaged by no multiplicity of finite things. But the ever increasing multitude of things made available to him created a conviction that it was indeed possible to satisfy his desires to the full out of his mastery over nature and the things she provides. Thus he tended to look for the coming of Utopia.

But that hope for Utopia is rooted in a deep-seated despair. It is nearly a hundred years since Kierkegaard observed that the marks of life outside religion are doubt, sensuality, and despair. Despairing man must needs believe that all the good things that the modern world makes available to him can be multiplied indefinitely and no man be enslaved in the process. His very acceptance of society is to some extent conditioned by his assumption that it can provide him with what he desires, —that it can bring him about the promised Utopia and make it acceptable and utterly satisfying to him. But to do that society would have to destroy him as a human person. It has, at the command of man, to some extent de-humanised him. But his human personality persists operating like a revolutionary leaven. Man directs society to minister to him as an individual, to use the distinction so beautifully elaborated by M. Maritain. He demands that it shall use all the forces at its command to that end. But the forces it commands are seated in the human beings that form it. Society becomes non-human directed to a non-human, or only partly human end and subordinates man to the requirements of that end. And the human being revolts because the life allocated to him outrages him as a human person while at the same time it fails to satisfy the demands he makes as an individual.

I have suggested that one of the most powerful elements operating in the development of the form of man's life has been the decay of religion. But it by no means follows that those in whom decay has not taken place have remained completely unaffected. They necessarily live in society and adapt their lives to its conditions. They have to live their physical lives and must needs draw upon society and be part of it. And its effect upon them does not remain superficial. It affects their very mode of thought. Generally they live as isolated individual person, or as small groups, mere units in the social mass. Their numbers offer them no proximate likelihood that they will be able to determine the action of the state authority.

In such a position a man is far from being without responsibility. He knows that each member of society is like an abyss out of which action flows informing the totality. He knows that each man is master of his act and therefore determines as it were the leaven that he will pour into the social body. But he also knows that he is master of his own act only. In the complex interplay of social relations he must order his own mode of life so that it will conform with the order in which it has to be lived. Truth may live in his own heart, and as a man he may accept in the most integral fashion the command of justice, and regulate his personal acts according to that command. He knows that by council and example he must endeavour to communicate that truth and that mode of action to those with whom he is in contact, and even to society itself. But when his conscience is thus satisfied he can regard things objectively and condemn in one relationship and commend in another. He rightly feels that he, one unit among many millions, cannot be justly condemned for failing to impose his own rectitude upon the mass of his fellows, or to impose upon the unity of society the form that his mind has declared to be good, as being in harmony with the reality of man, and such as would procure the good human life for the multitude. But when it is so abundantly clear that there is so much wrong with the world, the very impotence of, or restricted power of efficacious action in the one so placed tempts him to seek to assess blame. He may indeed be able to point to a visible and concrete evil which he can attribute to a visible and contemporary cause. And he marvels that those vested with authority should permit this thing to continue. But even in such a case I think it would be well for him to be very sure that he has examined the matter carefully before he condemns. What appears to be a contemporary cause may in fact have evolved through an historical development, and be so closely knit in the very fabric of society that the change that seems to be so obviously good might also bring about certain evils of greater magnitude than those that will be removed. For the ruler who is responsible for the right ordering of society is also responsible for all the results that flow from his acts. And what, considered *in abstracto*, may seem to be entirely good, may, when it is incorporated into the social organism turn out to be productive of certain evils.

I should like to give an instance that I have heard of, but cannot guarantee to exact truth of: The civic authorities of a great city in order to remove a slum evil built what amounted to a small town outside the city area. In this new town which was composed of modern houses with modern equipment it was soon observed that there was an epidemic of suicides amongst the women who had been summoned from the slums and who found the tedium of life in the new town with its modern houses unbearable.

In such a case we see that the persons concerned had been so moulded by their pitiful conditions during their own lives that they were unsuited to a more normal condition. They were like the caged bird that has become so inured to its captivity that release would be disastrous: it would leave its cage to face death from starvation or from other birds.

But I think that we can also say that the historical process that has made despair the key-note of modern man had also left its mark upon those poor souls. The millionaire who committed suicide when he lost his wealth in the great slump of ten years ago was akin to them in that. He could conceive of no happiness, no purpose in life when the external things that vast wealth could procure were no longer available to him. Both in the case of the extreme rich and the extreme poor the significance of life had been centered in those things and those circumstances external to the self. Their eyes looked outward to them, and were thereby prevented from looking inward to the dead despair that resided within. Let us give our pity to those poor millionaires as well as to those poor women, for charity must flow up the social ladder as well as down it, though that is a doctrine that one does not often hear preached.

The objective observer of society might well have decided that it was unfortunate for those people to live in slums, and for

those others to be millionaires. And, considering the matter *in abstracto*, he might decide that it would be well to provide such houses for the first and remove the wealth from the second. But the ruler is required to be responsible for all that flows from his acts. If he wishes to provide greater services he must also recognize that he may be required to impose greater taxation, and therefore he must take into account what the effect of the greater taxation may be on the general well-being. And in relation to the people he governs he must realise that they are concrete human beings, not dead things. He has received authority to govern them for the right ordering of their society and of their relations together. And to that end he is also invested with coercive power. But he has always to remember that those human beings for whom he is responsible have been formed by an historical process, by heredity, by their own internal and external acts, by national tradition. No matter how much he may regret their imperfections it would be to sin against prudence if he were to act as though they were other than they are. He has a certain perfection in mind that he hopes to give to the society that he rules. But that perfection is to be brought about by an harmonious action in which he and his people co-operate together. They are intelligent beings who receive communication from him as the mason receives communication from the architect with regard to the complete building. But the architect leaves to the mason what belongs to the specific art of masonry. And yet the perfection of the building cannot be attained unless the mason fulfils his function properly. If, in fact, the masons are inadequate as masons, that fact will be revealed in the complete structure.

St. Thomas reminds us that the human government derives from the divine government and should imitate it. But God, although He is all powerful and sovereignly good, allows evils that He could prevent to happen in the world, lest in suppressing them greater goods should also be suppressed or worse evil come about. Thus in the government of men those who are in power should tolerate certain evils in order not to prevent certain goods or not to give place to worse evils.

If the ruler overlooks this fact, conceiving in his mind a perfection or order as attainable if only men were different and more perfect, he may well seek, as it were, to take the place of the reason in the human person and to usurp the function of the personal will, and so establish a totalitarian regime of the most extreme form. He may hope thus to create the perfection of order that we find in the ant hill. But the very end for which that order is required is the perfection of the human beings who are incorporated within it. But the effect of such an usurpation is a mutilation of their humanity. I cannot say the destruction of their humanity, for it cannot be completely destroyed. It remains in its mutilated form to breed further evils in an order thus established and maintained.

I am well aware that to stress difficulties unduly tends to discourage all activity, but on the other hand I also know that if we desire (as we must desire) to bring about a change that penetrates into the very depths of society and to change the whole movement of historical development, then an oversimplification of the task may easily result in disaster. We cannot force a man to be happy, or to be free, or to be a person. "The end of the multitude gathered together in society is to live according to virtue." But you cannot force a man to be virtuous by external constraint. For the movement towards virtue is rooted in what is most intimately the man himself. You can remove obstacles to virtue. But even in this the ruler can only advance a very short distance unless there is a corresponding movement in the persons who form the society that he rules. He must seek to foster a new evolutionary process in the public thing that he controls. But the individual may assist that evolution by a revolution in his own self.

Deep-seated in the revolutionary ferment that stirs in men's hearts to-day is a revolt against the limitations innate in human life itself. The ruler has to distinguish between that discontent and the discontent that flows from a hunger and thirst for a justice that is being withheld or distorted. His task might appear to be simplified if he chose to favour one class of the community and disregard the just rights of another. But the essence of his problem is one of real justice. The appetite for gain, that deadly cupidity that is perverted love, and that flows from an interior despair is not the peculiarity of one section of the community; it is general.

He may impose mild restraints in one direction, and try to inject certain stimulants to encourage a movement in another direction. But even in this he is aware that he must move with extreme prudence. And meanwhile a vast stream is pouring into society from the press, from the films, from popular novelists and from other and similar sources that are all informing the very society that he is trying to reform in a new or more perfectly human image. If, moved by impatience, or by his own zeal, conscious of the purity of his own intention and of the desirability of his pre-conceived image, he seeks to obstruct or destroy all other forces so that state action shall be the sole informing element, he is already embarked upon the course of totalitarianism. And this has its own natural dialectic that is almost certain to overcome the purity of his original intention. An exact justice may be received with a universal tepidity, while it may be clear that by sacrificing the few to the many, powerful and enthusiastic co-operation will be obtained. The end can only be achieved by communal action. To outrage some of the intensest desires and strongest passions in men is not an apt means for securing this. There are passions latent in all men at all times, and others that have been developed historically, bearing certain aspects of good, that seem to clamour to be invoked and harnessed to the work in hand. It is so easy to stress that aspect of good, to the point where it seems mere madness not to allow them to subserve the good that is to be attained.

I recognize that implicit in what I have said is the suggestion that in the earnest man who is deeply wounded by the present order there is an impetus towards a dictatorial tendency which requires to be governed by a most exact prudence. And it is natural that Catholics should be even more earnest than others. For they are aware of the tragedy in its innermost reality. Therefore, their judgement should be controlled by the most careful prudence.

And yet how often we meet those who speak as though a simple expedient, a simple panacea, only needs to be applied and the face of the earth will be changed. They seem to forget that what they recognise as hideous in that face derived from the hearts of men. And that the most that any external agency can do is to make it less difficult for a man to change his own heart.

There are those who seem to think that nothing more is required than that rulers should enact papal encyclicals as Civil law, and that then every problem is solved. The assumption seems to be that certain encyclicals are proposals directed to governments so that those governments may give them the force of law. How simple it would be for Catholic rulers if that were the case. How they would welcome it.

Mr. Dollfuss was a man for whom I felt something of affection. His sincerity I considered to be above question. When it was announced that he was going to govern according to the papal encyclicals I heard many Catholics rejoice at this as a triumph for

the Church. I was far from rejoicing. The very circumstances of his country were such as to suggest that she must face more than the average amount of human difficulties. And the means to face them must be chosen according to the judgment of poor defectible human minds. Even if the means were well-chosen they would depend for their effect upon the co-operation of citizens, and of powers outside the state. And yet upon the concrete results of government under those circumstances the teaching of the Church might be judged.

I do not know Mr. Salazar of Portugal, but all that I know of him suggests a great integrity, selflessness of purpose, an informed mind, and wise prudence. Nevertheless I am oppressed when I hear it said that his policy also is the implementation of papal teaching. We have no divine promise that economic misery can be avoided. The material resources of a state are the results of the productive energies of its citizens. The interior conditions of a country benefit and suffer according to changes in world conditions. And a thousand other forces operate that cannot be completely controlled by an individual ruler. And yet a divine institution may be judged by the concrete results of that ruler's government. His own integrity of mind and will will count for little in the balance used by the world when it weighs up.

The government with which I was associated was singularly fortunate in this that the vast majority of those we ruled were sincere Catholics. We did not describe ourselves formally as a Catholic Government. Perhaps we were to some extent conscious of our own inadequacy. We also knew that apart from the ills that are natural to mankind at all times, our people could not entirely escape from certain ills that were peculiar to those post war years. Also there were other things that had grown out of our particular history and that could only be eliminated or reduced with the process of time. We thought that much could be done, but we knew that even though we acted with the most complete integrity of mind and will the technique of means would not permit the creation of such a material utopia as the world demands as proof of the spiritual truths of the religion that we affirm.

Even in certain matters where it might be thought that the Catholicism of our people would facilitate action on certain lines, there are difficulties. Thus the corporative formation of society which seems to have the strength of papal commendation might appear for that reason to be a simple matter to create. But our society has the form that it received from its historical process. We adopted Trades Unions from England and on the English model. In the past they have certainly benefited town workers. Anything that might even interfere with their functioning exactly as they now do would be represented as an insidious attempt to rob workers of their rights and to impose upon them a Fascist rule. The corporative form can only come about, as far as one can judge at present, from within the body of society itself. One can do no more than try to stimulate its development, and even that must be prudently done.

M. Maritain's proposed pluralism already exists in a certain way with regard to the control of our education. It may be that at some later time that pluralist arrangement might be extended. There is considerable social and economic injustice. But minor attempts at remedy reveal a danger of creating greater evils. Thus the fixing of conditions of industrial labour in towns brings out in high relief, the disparity between those conditions and the conditions of workers on the land. By repercussion they increase the cost of what the land worker buys and, to that extent, depress his condition. The fixing of wages on the land is delimited by the prices received for agricultural produce, which itself is determined by world forces. The combination of these effects tends to lure the people from the land to the towns where the conditions are so much more favourable, and it can easily be seen that if that were to go on unchecked, new social evils would develop.

I could indeed go on with a list of reforms that seem to be as simple as they are desirable, but even if they are instituted with a most careful prudence and advertence to the parallel effects that they are likely to produce, they may very well bring about more bad effects than good.

I have merely referred to these things, because I have met with so many Catholics who seem to think that so much can be achieved by a simple stroke of the government pen. If we are to face up to and to overcome the crisis of the modern world, we must realise that it cannot be done by over-simplification. The effects of an historical process that has proceeded for four or five hundred years cannot be reversed over night. The society of man that has received its form from that process cannot be changed by external action. For it is fed by roots that lie in the deeps of society, and in the hearts of men. When certain organs of a human body have streptococcus as one of their elements, we do not marvel that the body itself should be unhealthy. We know that the organs of that body must first be freed of their infection. How then shall we demand a healthy society when we who compose it, as a result of historical formation and personal act, have not the true form of men?

A short time ago I visited two old people, both over eighty, peasants, living in dire poverty. They had lived all their lives in conditions that were certainly unjust. Their forebears had suffered persecution for generations. And yet I think that I could describe them as persons. Generations of social injustice and of government tyranny had failed to destroy personality in them and others of their like. And it is much easier to destroy than to create.

As I have said before, I think that we should aim at revolution in the man himself, and at no more than a slow evolution in society, though at the same time we should also work for that evolution. Let us remember when we think that encyclicals are addressed to the rulers of states that they are generally addressed to all men. And each one of us falls within that category. Therefore, before we cry out against the ruler and society itself, we should first be satisfied that we have fulfilled the command that was addressed to us in our sphere as well as to the rulers of men. □

Book Review: *A Man in Full* by Tom Wolfe

by John Martin

Examining foreign countries enables a better understanding of one's own country. It is not very meaningful to evaluate the condition of a country in isolation. For example, what is the answer to the question: is the Irish State corrupt? It is certainly the case that some Irish politicians have engaged in malpractice, but that response is rather trite. It is hardly more informative than the statement that human beings succumb to temptation. To form a rounded view of a country it is necessary to compare it with other countries. Comparative statistics tell a story, but complex human behaviour can not always be reduced to numbers on a page.

A great work of literature can tell more about a society than a library full of government statistics and reports. It can also be far more influential. By engaging the imagination it can influence how people perceive themselves, which in turn can have a profound influence on how they relate to their society.

This reviewer's opinion of some Irish commentators is that they evaluate social ills in terms of absolute ideals. There is rarely a rigorous comparison with other countries, which would give a realistic standard enabling a measured evaluation. Also, there is no attempt to understand the human motivations, which are involved in the behaviour they denounce.

In his recent book *Ship of Fools* Fintan O'Toole comments on the dearth of literature on the contemporary phenomenon known as the *Celtic Tiger*. The fault, it appears, is not with Irish writers, but the society itself! Irish society is so superficial that it has proved impossible for the fine minds of our cultural elite to engage with it. To paraphrase Yeats, we have disgraced ourselves yet again!

There are many threads to the fabric of Tom Wolfe's epic novel *A Man in Full*. The pattern he weaves has the texture of an authentic depiction of American life. There is courage, greed, hypocrisy, deception, hubris and what we in Ireland might call gombeen politics. Nothing of interest or significance is beneath the author's gaze.

Although, the story spans the United States, the plot revolves around one character and one city. The main character is Charlie Croker, a property developer from Atlanta, Georgia, who has overreached himself and is on the verge of bankruptcy owing hundreds of millions to the banks. He comes from a poor, rural background. From such modest beginnings he became a college football star and attained through luck, determination, skill and a judicious marriage the means to live the life of a southern aristocrat. He is loud, brash and vulgar but his redeeming feature is that he knows what he is and doesn't try to pretend that he is something else.

The reader is really given an insight into the mentality of a property developer. As the main character struggles against the banks, he compares his situation to that of one of his wealthy friends who is an owner of a pharmaceutical company. Whereas the latter has an infrastructure of accountants, engineers and various layers of management behind him, the property developer is ultimately on his own wheeling and dealing with other people's money.

The book also shows how banks deal with delinquent debtors. The people who lent are not the people who chase the money. This task is left to a "workout" team which demoralises the debtor in order to bend him to the bank's will.

The book is not just about individuals; it is about individuals in a social context. In particular, it is about

Atlanta City and its view of itself and relationship to the rest of the world. The civic leaders want to rival New York and the author suggests that every so often they manage to pull it off, such as hosting the Olympic Games in 1996, before falling back again. But, for all its ambition, the city feels inferior to New York. This sense of inferiority is most manifest in the wives of the bourgeoisie. Nothing is of cultural value unless it receives the imprimatur of New York.

New York critics discover a Gay Artist from Atlanta who has been neglected. The Atlanta wives want to redeem themselves in the eyes of New York by holding an exhibition devoted to this neglected artist. The husbands go along with it but Charlie Croker doesn't like this "queer" art and particularly resents the invitation to self loathing which is implied in the curator's speech opening the exhibition. The Black Mayor of Atlanta refuses to attend. He thinks this type of stuff does not go down well with the "brothers" and that it is an example of the whites pretending that the only art of value is from their own cultural background. Why should this be celebrated in a predominantly Black city? Also, he resents the fact that the Gays equate THEIR struggle with OUR struggle.

As with Wolfe's other classic work, the *Bonfire of the Vanities*, racial politics is a major theme in this book. Some of the racial tension is caused by sociological changes such as the emergence of a black middle class. The whites find it difficult to cope with this phenomenon. They are torn between dislike of the development and the need to accommodate it. The tension is also felt within the Black community. The black middle class in order to advance must adapt to what are perceived as white middle class values. The rival to the Black Mayor accuses him of abandoning his black brothers, of selling out.

There are so many layers to this marvellous book. Many of the themes could be transposed to an Irish setting in our post Celtic Tiger malaise. In terms of scale, the failures of our own property developers were at least as heroic as those of Atlanta and had more profound social consequences. This American book shows up the failure of Irish writers to explain Irish society.

In response to Fintan O'Toole, the reviewer can only conclude that the dearth of fictional works on the Celtic Tiger is the fault not of Irish society but of Irish writers. □