

## AFFAIRS OF THE NATION

FINTAN O'TOOLE  
ON ISRAEL

A RATHER Jesuitical argument from *Irish Times* resident ideologue Fintan O'Toole came in a polemic this week claiming: "It's striking how brazen incitement against Irish Jews has become."

O'Toole used the rantings of far-right journalists Gemma O'Doherty and John Waters in the freesheet they edit, the *Irish Light*, which contains a torrent of obscene, antisemitic matter, much of which came from extremists abroad.

Examples of this stuff occupied more than half of O'Toole's column before he segued into the claim that this kind of antisemitism has become so "brazen and open" in today's Ireland.

Why, where and by whom? O'Doherty and Waters? Two far-right eccentrics that have been eclipsed by the new factions on the right in the last year or so?

The point of the column appears to be Fintan's anxiety to disassociate himself from Ireland's global image as strongly pro-Palestinian and to show he believes this trend to be antisemitic.

He devotes a few dozen words to criticising the argument that pro-Palestinian equals antisemitism before asserting in the same paragraph that antisemitism is very real and has deep roots in Europe – this as the daily Israeli carnage in Gaza reaches new heights of depravity or "catastrophe", as O'Toole describes it.

Alternatively, he refers to the "Hamas pogroms" (the mortality ratio here is about 20 to one against Palestinians).

With unparalleled irony, O'Toole goes on to weep on the page about a displaced and persecuted people pining for a safe homeland – and no, he is not talking about Palestinians. He even makes a ludicrous comparison



Fintan O'Toole

between the collective punishment of Gaza civilians and the collective blaming in response of "all Jews" for Israeli behaviour.

Fintan is not a stupid man. He must know that the chief and practically sole purveyor of the notion that all Jews equals Israel is in fact the Israeli state and its supporters – not Palestinian supporters in Ireland.

O'Toole may be feeling the pressure, not from Irish political elements but from further afield. He was for some years drama critic of the *Daily News* in New York and was also a visiting lecturer in Princeton University. He was a resident of New York for a period and is currently an advising editor at the *New York Review*, for which he also writes.

The UK *Guardian* also takes a regular column from Fintan, which may help to explain the supportive reference in this week's column to British comic and fervent Israeli supporter David Baddiel, who has accused the "progressive left" of refusing to fight for Jewish people.

O'Toole has form on Israel. He once offered the fantastic argument against proposed boycotts of Israeli cultural and other entities that "boycotts will always be interpreted as an expression of antisemitism and as a prelude to worse attacks".

Did Captain Boycott's tenants realise they were embryonic Nazis?

BLOODY SUNDAY:  
KITSON AND WILFORD

COL DEREK WILFORD, the commander of 1 Para in Northern Ireland in 1972, died last November. His former superior, Brigadier (later, General) Sir Frank Kitson, passed away earlier this month. Both men brought secrets about Bloody Sunday with them to the grave. 'Soldier F', formerly of 1 Para, may now be the only living witness who knows precisely what spurred him and his comrades to murder 13 unarmed civilians in Derry on January 30, 1972.

Soldier F revealed that, shortly before the massacre, he and Soldier G received a visit from Wilford at the Presbyterian Church, adjacent to the Bogside, while they were waiting to deploy. In 1972 in a statement to

the Widgery tribunal, Soldier F said it "was a bit unusual for [Wilford] to come around like this".

Lord Saville concluded in his 2010 report that the soldiers spun out of control for no apparent reason. He ignored the possibility that they were acting in accordance with a plan to provoke the IRA to come out all guns blazing and provide 1 Para with an excuse to invade 'Free Derry'. This is exactly the type of operation in which Kitson, the British Army's counter-insurgency guru, specialised. Wilford reported to Kitson, who was his immediate superior.

The British Army was in receipt of deceitful information that IRA auxiliaries were lined up to attack British soldiers if they encroached upon 'Free Derry'. The top brass and MI5 believed the information was reliable. In reality, the IRA had resolved not to engage with the army that day.

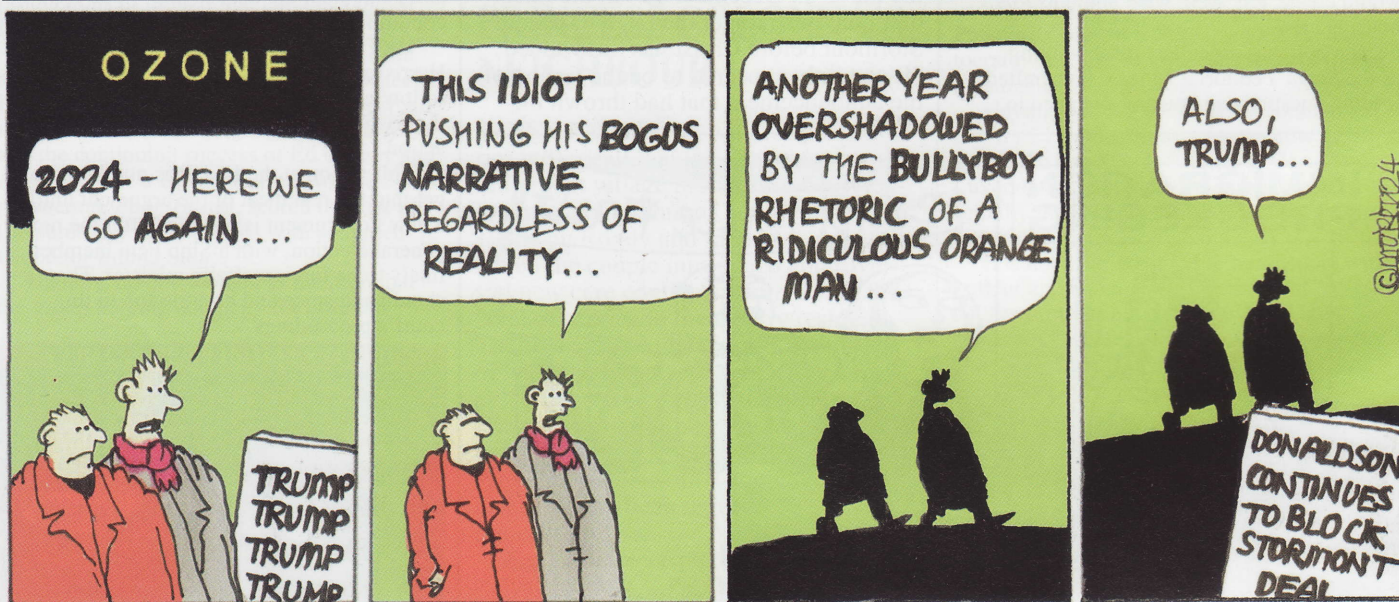
In July 1971, 1 Para had attempted to provoke the IRA in Derry into battle during Operation Hailstone but the IRA had not taken the bait. In retirement, Wilford hinted that the Bloody Sunday plan was a second attempt to provoke the IRA to come out fighting on the streets. If so, what he said to soldiers F and G at the Presbyterian Church was crucial.

Soldier G died in South Africa in the 1980s fighting for the pro-Apartheid regime there. Now, with Wilford gone, only Soldier F has first-hand knowledge about whether Wilford ordered him to shoot at civilians to apply maximum pressure on the IRA to respond.

General Sir Michael Jackson, the former head of the British Army, who served as an aide to Wilford, let slip in his memoirs that Kitson "offered a trenchant comment" to Wilford after he spoke to him upon his return to Belfast: "What I don't understand is why, having got that far in, you didn't go on and sort the whole bloody mess out."



Frank Kitson





## AFFAIRS OF THE NATION

## KITSON'S DIRTY WAR

THE RECENT demise of General Sir Frank Kitson (see *The Phoenix* 12/1/24) was a blessing in disguise for the darker elements of the British establishment: Kitson cannot now let slip anything he knows about the roots of the 'dirty war' in Ireland.

Kitson was the architect of UK state collusion with murderous loyalist 'pseudo-gangs' – ie terror cells controlled by British intelligence.

In April 1972, Kitson was edged out of the north by NI secretary of state William Whitelaw five months before the end of his tour of duty. Kitson flew out of Belfast in a helicopter but his career was far from over. He rose to become commander-in-chief in the UK's land forces and aide de camp to Queen Elizabeth II. And his counterinsurgency tactics became a permanent feature of Britain's military and security strategy during the Troubles.

One of the victims of the first phase of State-loyalist collusion was Eugene 'Paddy' Heenan, who was murdered by a UDA 'pseudo-gang' in February 1973. The gang included Albert 'Ginger' Baker, an ex-soldier turned undercover British agent. Heenan was killed when Baker lobbed a grenade into a bus carrying Catholic workmen.

In 2015, Heenan's family issued a writ against Kitson and the UK's defence ministry. It now looks like it will fall foul of the so-called 'legacy legislation' that Rishi Sunak's government is currently pushing through Westminster.

The Irish Government, of course, is preparing an intra-state action against the proposed UK legislation on the basis it contravenes the European Convention on Human Rights.

It would be a courageous observer indeed who would predict the likely fate of the Heenan family action. Some of the truth about

the murder is, however, on public record. In 1973, Baker suffered a breakdown and confessed his crimes to the Warminster Constabulary. Baker was put on trial but his links to the intelligence community were concealed. He was then thrown into prison for life.

In the mid-1980s, while Kitson was enjoying the company of Her Majesty at garden parties, Baker's displeasure at his ongoing detention was becoming more and more intense.

In the late 1980s, Baker produced a handwritten account of his murder spree. Among his revelations, he described how RUC officers had spirited guns through security check points in Belfast for distribution to loyalist assassins at designated murder sites before retrieving them for safekeeping.

Baker, who was born in 1951, was released from prison in 1992 and is still alive. He has since gone to ground.

If, as expected, Sunak's legacy legislation becomes law, the public will nonetheless be able to consult a growing library of books on the dirty war, such as *Kitson's Irish War* by David Burke (see *The Phoenix*, 10/9/21).



Frank Kitson

## DISSIDENTS SPLIT THE DIFFERENCE

WHILE SINN Féin's project has brought the republican movement close to state power north and south, the factions that split away from SF retreated into political ghettos and fruitless attempts to revive the 'armed struggle'. Now, two such dissident political groups are attempting a left-republican renewal with a unification process.

The development of a close working relationship between Éirígí and the 1916 Societies is a reversal of Brendan Behan's cynical quip that for most republican organisations "the first item on the agenda is the split". In recent months the protests, public meetings and commemorations that Éirígí and the 1916 Societies have jointly organised seem to run contrary to the long tradition of republicans splitting over ideological differences.

Both organisations split from Sinn Féin in the noughties, with Éirígí formed in 2006

by a group of mainly Dublin-based activists, including some key head office workers, while the 1916 Societies emerged in Tyrone in 2009. In the years that followed, the fortunes of both organisations have waxed and waned (mainly the latter). It now appears that the two leaders – 1916 Societies' Frankie Quinn and Éirígí's Brian Leeson – have managed to persuade members of both organisations that they should unite.

After some initial meetings last year, an Éirígí delegation – including Leeson, Mickey Moran and former Garvaghy Road protest leader Breandán Mac Cionnaith – travelled to Tyrone in September and afterwards posted on their social media accounts how the purpose of meeting was to talk about co-operation between republican organisations.

Since then, they jointly organised a debate – Where now for Irish Republicanism? – in Dublin, which was followed in December with an online talk, *The History of Fascism in Ireland*, by historian Dr Pádraig Óg Ó Ruairc. This sought to put the recent emergence of the far right in historical context.

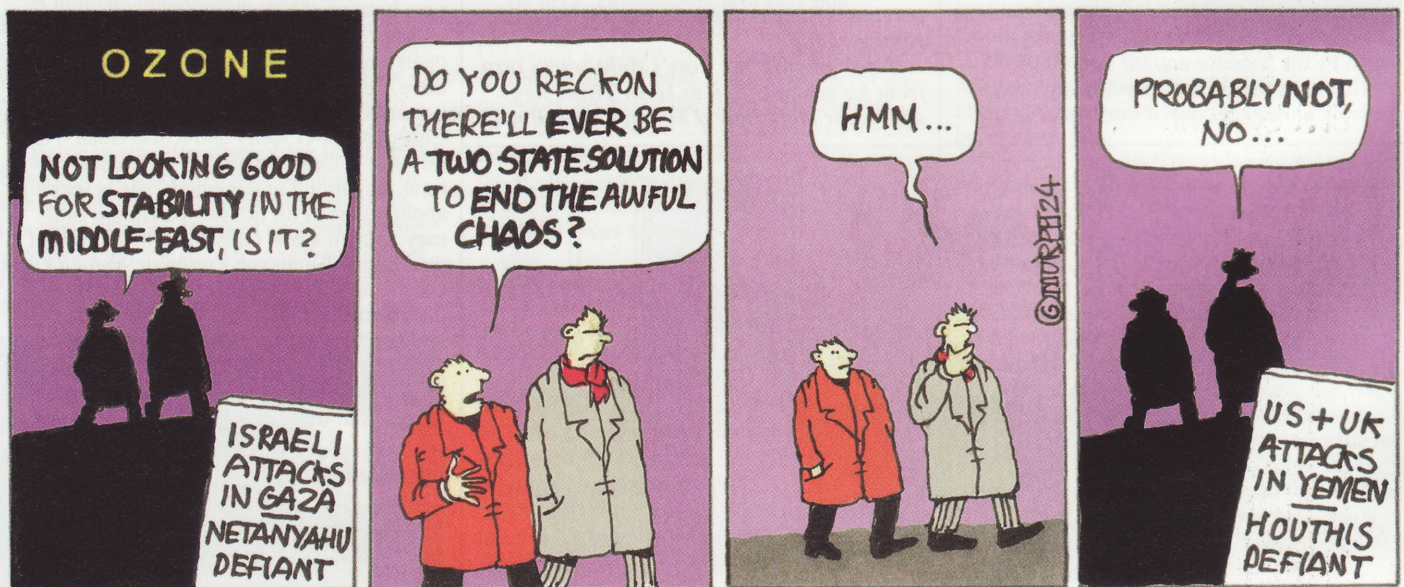
At the recent national demonstration for Palestine in Dublin, activists from Éirígí and the 1916 Societies marched together behind a banner that read "Expel the Israeli Ambassador" and which bore the logos of both organisations. They also distributed thousands of joint leaflets to marchers. Last Saturday members of both organisations came together for a meeting to discuss future co-operation.

At present, the left of the Irish political landscape is a crowded scene. Not only is SF marching towards power but the Social Democrats, Labour, People Before Profit and Independent left TDs are fighting for ascendancy of the left.

These latter groups have 20 TDs between them, so can Leeson and Quinn find a niche for their extra-parliamentary project?



Brian Leeson





## AFFAIRS OF THE NATION



## IRELAND AT NATO MEETINGS

LAST JUNE, when President Michael D Higgins commented on the Government's Forum on International Security, he talked of a dangerous "drift" away from Ireland's long-standing policy of neutrality. Tánaiste and foreign affairs minister Micheál Martin was quick to dismiss Higgins's assertions, claiming: "The Government have made clear that we do not intend to change Ireland's policy of military neutrality."

In the first weeks of 2024, the Government has continued this drift away from neutrality and towards Nato. On January 17 and 18 in Nato's Brussels headquarters, the 31 chiefs of defence forces of Nato countries came together as Nato's Military Committee – with Ireland's Defence Forces chief of staff, General Seán Clancy, in attendance. Discussions focused on Nato's defence plans, its capacity to engage in warfare and its continued support for Ukraine.

Opening the conference, committee chair Admiral Rob Bauer claimed that Nato "face[s] the most dangerous world in decades". He added: "In this new era of collective defence we must defend not only the physical safety of our one billion people and 31 (soon to be 32) nations, we are defending freedom and democracy... Today, our peace is threatened. War, terrorism, instability. Authoritarian states threaten our values. We need a strong Nato more than ever and a strong Nato is what we have."

The Military Committee also met with the chiefs of defence from Nato's Partner Interoperability Advocacy Group (PIAG), which includes Ireland. Ireland's participation in the PIAG allows it not only to participate in Nato training and exercises but also access to certain levels of classified information.

At the conference, Clancy was on hand to hear the emphasis Nato put on the interoperability of the Irish Defence Forces

with the defence forces of Nato members.

Also in January, senator Gerard Craughwell led an Irish delegation to visit the Nato Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (CCDCOE) in Tallinn, Estonia. He posted on X that the trip was really positive – although, unfortunately, he managed to leave out the acronym Nato when he tweeted: "I was delighted to lead a delegation of Irish academics & FE Trainees to #Estonia and, in particular, to visit the excellent @ccdcoe centre. My thanks to @defenceforces Comdt Hickey for his briefing and Director Mart Noorma for his excellent presentation".

Craughwell's enthusiasm for Irish involvement in the CCDCOE and positive remarks about Hickey's briefing might surprise some, considering comments the senator made regarding Ireland's Defence Forces last July, when he said: "Some people are fearful that the Government would force Ireland to join Nato, but they wouldn't want us. We have nothing to give. We big ourselves up seeking high-profile seats on the UN Security Council etc. In reality, we are now a laughing stock."

Of course, Craughwell has much military experience, having served in the British Army with the Kings Division of the Royal Irish Rangers from 1969 until 1974, at the height of the Troubles, after which he returned to Ireland to join the Irish Army, where he rose to the rank of sergeant.

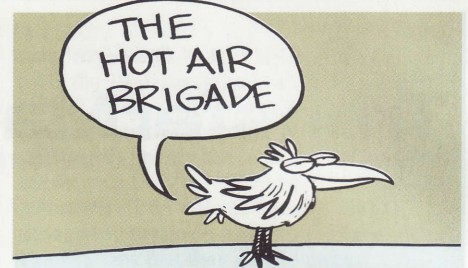
When Ireland joined Nato's CCDCOE in May 2023, it did so at the same time as Iceland, Japan and Ukraine. Ireland's participation in Nato initiatives has for long undermined the foundations of our claim to neutrality. As members of Nato's CCDCOE, we are allied in cybersecurity to Ukraine, a country at war.

Not only does the CCDCOE help Ukraine in its daily cyber conflict with Russia but last September it also held the Symposium on Cyber and International Law – Cyber in War: Lessons from the Russia-Ukraine Conflict, which looked to analyse the use of cyber tools as means and methods of warfare and at the role played by the private sector and individual actors in the war in Ukraine.

When you consider how gung-ho Craughwell is for Nato's CCDCOE, it is no surprise that he has no time for the supreme commander of the Defence Forces, President Higgins. Recently Craughwell has been tweeting and retweeting on X criticisms of the salary received by Higgins.



Michael D Higgins



It involves making intentional decisions about what to keep, donate, or discard. In doing so, we create space for new possibilities and a sense of calmness in our lives. **Darren Kennedy on throwing things away, Sunday Independent Life Magazine**



Darren Kennedy

On Zoom from his home in London, looking far younger than his 60 summers, Norton is a splash of can-do sunshine in a white t-shirt and open red shirt. **Donal O'Donoghue on Graham Norton, RTÉ Guide**

I think for 25 years there's been a combat in which unionism hasn't bothered to get on the battlefield and has sat back constantly trying to placate and appease nationalists. I think it's about time unionism took the gloves off. **Jamie Bryson, Irish Times**

It's a raw, unfiltered form of communication that transcends the polished veneer of our digital personas. **Lorraine Courtney on letters, Irish Independent**

When the storm subsided, St Thomas' and Watty Graham's Glen were left standing. In their wake, scattered around Croke Park, lay the broken dreams of O'Loughlin Gaels and St Brigid's. The closing salvos of both All-Ireland club finals landed like unsparing tornadoes. **Gordon Manning, Irish Times**

Taking time to have a bath, or to meditate, or to read. Finding a little bit of space to reflect where you're not just a human 'doing'. There's a bit more 'being' going on there. **David Flynn of The Happy Pear on his ambitions for 2024, Sunday Independent Life Magazine**

Being more intentional in clothing choices could help you reach your fitness goals. Clothing can empower, aid productivity and influence your confidence; the same can be said for activewear. **Corina Gaffey, Irish Times**

The brand's dedication to innovation and sustainability aligns perfectly with the values we cherish at Brown Thomas Arnotts. Embodying the stringent criteria we set forth, their remarkable journey showcased not only a robust sales performance but also a passionate engagement with the process. **Brown Thomas Arnotts' Vena Doyle on the winner of its Pitch 23 development fund, RTÉ Guide**

I'm just trying to stay calm. I've been doing little kind of guided meditations when I have time, just sitting staring at walls as well. **Rosanna Davison on coping with the stresses of being on Dancing with the Stars, Irish Independent**

Please send suitable contributions to: The Hot Air Brigade, The Phoenix, 44 Lr Baggot St, Dublin 2 or email: hotair@thephoenix.ie



"I never eat on an empty liver"



## AFFAIRS OF THE NATION

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IRELAND-US  
MILITARY ALLIANCE

NOT FOR decades has a Middle East crisis come so close to provoking war on a global scale of East versus West, with Ireland by now virtually dragooned into being part of it via Nato partnership groups and EU security policies. Just days ago the White House warned that US and British strikes against targets in Iraq and Syria were “the beginning, not the end” of its military actions in the region. Meanwhile, foreign minister Micheál Martin warned against the devastating consequences for the world if there was any widening of the conflict. How strange then, considering the US role in the conflict, that in January a US army general, Daniel Hokanson, who is chief of the United States National Guard, visited Dublin for discussions on security co-operation between the US and Ireland.

While the Department of Defence did publish pictures on its X account of Hokanson receiving a warm welcome from secretary general Jacqui McCrum, the accompanying text was rather vague. It merely stated: “Secretary General @McCrumsJacqui was delighted to meet with the Chief of the US National Guard Bureau, @ChiefNGB General Daniel Hokanson during his recent visit to Ireland”.

In addition to meeting McCrum, Hokanson also met with Minister of State for European Affairs and Defence Peter Burke and the Irish Defence Forces chief of staff, Lieutenant General Seán Clancy.

Hokanson was here to promote the US

Department of Defence’s National Guard State Partnership Program (NGSPP). With over a thousand events organised with partner countries each year, the NGSPP is seen as key to meeting the US’s security co-operation objectives. The National Guard aims to improve interoperability with the defence forces with which it works around the world in areas such as infantry tactics; counter-terrorism; aviation operations; and leader, staff, officer and NCO development.

Hokanson told McCrum and her officials in the Department of Defence: “When we work with like-minded partners, together we make the world a safer place for the advancement of our shared values.” Like backing Israel to the hilt with awesome multi-billion weapons of war with which to commit genocide?

According to an article on the National Guard’s website, Clancy “told Hokanson the [Irish defence] force is working to refine its culture and overhaul its structure. He also expressed a need for Ireland’s forces to be

*Continued on page 4*



Micheál Martin

**THE UBIQUITOUS** Matt Cooper was taking pops at RTÉ once again last weekend in the Business Post, a pastime neither he nor his editor feels should be qualified by any mention of the degree to which his views as an independent commentator are hopelessly compromised.

While the hack found space on a couple of occasions to plug his new podcasting gig with Ivan Yates, there was no room to mention that Matt’s day job is as a radio presenter on the independent commercial station Today FM, competing directly with RTÉ Radio 1’s Drivetime slot.

This didn’t stop the commentator explaining to Post readers that RTÉ’s funding should depend directly on the services it supplies and asking: “Is RTÉ run for the benefit of its employees or the licence fee payers?” As far as Cooper is concerned, the reform to save Montrose from “a financial crisis that would close any private sector operator” is proceeding at a glacial pace and is “far less radical than would happen in a more commercially focused media organisation”.

Widening his scope, Matt notes the potential impact of a successful Toy Show The Musical on other producers and theatres, something that would have simply been “an abuse of monopoly power”.

Cooper also notes that RTÉ must make “significant sacrifices to pay for it all rather than expecting a big transfusion of state cash that might bolster it at the expense of the competition”. Who might that be then?

AUBREY’S ELECTION  
WAR CHEST

WITH MUCH of the political speculation focused, unsurprisingly, on the possible timing of a general election, one contest that looks set to go ahead is the by-election to determine David Norris’s successor in the Seanad. One person sure to throw his hat in the ring here is businessman and philanthropist Aubrey McCarthy, whose campaign won’t be short of a few bob.

The clock started ticking as soon as Norris gave up his Trinnern seat last month. Paschal Donohoe, therefore, has until July to announce the by-election and one of those set to run is Punchestown, Co Kildare-based McCarthy, who also spun the wheel in 2022 after Ivan Bacik was elected to the Dáil.

On that occasion, Tom Clonan was elected to succeed Bacik on the Trinity panel, with Maureen Gaffney giving him a good run. Others in the contest were the likes of Hazel Chu and rugby bugger Hugo McNeill and, while they all have higher profiles than McCarthy should they run again, few will be able to best him in the financial stakes.

According to his website, McCarthy wants to contribute “with practical ideas about economy and social justice”, with the latter platform getting quite a boost late last year when he was honoured at a Trinnern alumni awards ceremony, where he received his award for having founded Tiglin. This charity helps people overcome addiction and homelessness and McCarthy even got a call out from Ukrainian ambassador Laryssa Gerasko, who thanked him for housing over 100 of her fellow citizens.

When it comes to his business operations, however, McCarthy is a bit more low profile but Goldhawk is happy to shine a little light on his impressive achievements. The biggest company in his group is AMC Removals Ltd, established back in 2001, where he owns 100% of the shares. According to the latest accounts filed, this transport company was sitting on accumulated profits of just on €3m at the end of 2022. It could be quite a campaign.

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Continued from page 3

more postured for defense and collective security”.

In response, Hokanson argued that as the National Guard – with its 453,000 strong army and air guard personnel – is the second-largest military organisation in the US after the army, the state partnership programme could provide the Irish Defence Forces with a suitable partner to overcome these challenges.

Hokanson’s visit to Ireland did not come out of the blue and last July McCrum met him in Maryland to learn more about the NGSP.

That concerns about our neutrality being threatened by such co-operative military ventures with Nato and other western armed forces are routinely dismissed by ministers as scaremongering and paranoia is disingenuous and amounts to a deliberate misleading of the public. In the current world climate, it is positively criminal.

## MARY LOU’S BACK YARD MESS

DESPITE THE ascent of Sinn Féin’s northern leader, Michelle O’Neill, to the Stormont summit, Mary Lou McDonald and SF have endured various tribulations down south in recent months. The latest setback is the Horlicks of a local election strategy in the North Inner City (NIC) electoral area located in McDonald’s Dublin Central Dáil constituency.

Initially the party had candidates in place in four neatly divided zones of the NIC, with sitting councillor Janice Boylan in zone one, Belinda Nugent in two, Tom O’Connor in three and Declan Hallissey in four.

The faffing around that then ensued – partly as a result of moving two candidates from their previous zones in the first place – saw Nugent resign from the elections. The convention last July was then expected to ratify the three remaining candidates but, shortly beforehand, O’Connor (zone three) stepped back for personal reasons.

A party organiser quickly selected an SF member, Alan Whelan, to replace O’Connor in that zone. The three candidates were then to each get a part of the remaining fourth zone, where no candidate was standing.

However, while Whelan has been parachuted into zone three (Ballybough/Sheriff St), his family was born and reared



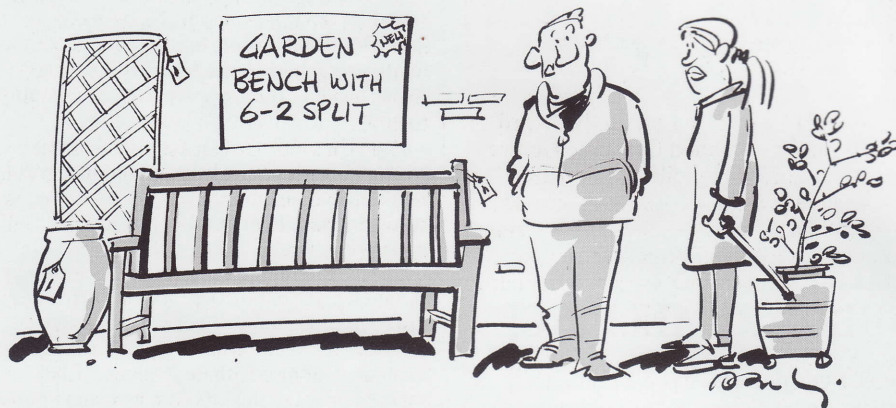
Mary Lou McDonald

### TAOISEACH TURNS THE SOD ON DEVELOPMENT



Watch where you sling that mud!

Just getting in some practice for the election



“This 6-Nations Fever is getting out of hand...”

in East Wall, which is where Hallissey is standing. Hallissey was drafted in to the local election here in 2019 at the last moment and did not fare well as a result. After four years work locally, he was expecting to win a seat this time round. He and his supporters are now rearing up in a big way as it is clear that Whelan will receive many votes in his East Wall family zone (four) – where Hallissey is running – as well as the zone (three) in which he is actually standing. Thus, Hallissey is seriously undermined in his own zone.

At three candidates, disgruntled members say that SF is running less candidates in Mary Lou’s NIC area than any other local area in the south, as calculated by the party’s electoral criteria (2020 results, local results, polling etc).

But judging by the steaming row here, it may be that the four candidate strategy – which has already declined to three – will come down to just two. Hallissey has walked away in disgust and while there may be a compromise deal worked out, his return is not at all certain.

## GROW UP, SENATORS!

MARK FOLEY, the smooth-talking CEO of Eirgrid, got quite a rude response last week from senators Alice Mary Higgins (Independent) and Lynn Boylan (Sinn Féin) at an Oireachtas climate action committee on data centres and the stratospheric rise in their electricity use.

Foley, a prominent advocate for data centre growth, had little time for the impertinent parliamentarians, saying that “we need to have an adult conversation” and telling the adolescent senators the growth in Ireland’s electricity demand was “normal” in a “prosperous, growing economy”.

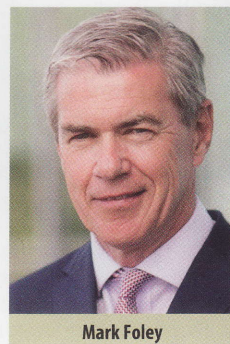
Schoolgirl Higgins then gave headmaster Foley quite some cheek, with a lesson on our Paris Agreement commitments, in particular the principle that wealthy countries benefiting from high energy use and which have done more to cause climate change must do more to reduce carbon emissions than countries that have small fractions of per capita emissions compared with Ireland’s.

Higgins asked Foley: “I want to know if it is EirGrid’s position that the rest of the world can carry the can for Ireland because we are making money and we want to keep banking it in and we do not have responsibilities...”

Foley deftly dodged the question, saying loftily it was a “philosophical question” out-

side Eirgrid’s “domain”. But he repeatedly strayed beyond the same domain, declaring that growing electricity consumption is “good for Ireland” and “good for prosperity”.

Ideology and ethics aside, even on a purely mathematical basis there is nothing “normal” about Ireland’s electricity demand. Both Higgins and Boylan pointed out that Ireland is an “outlier”, with data centres pushing up our demand while demand falls across the EU.



Mark Foley

A week earlier the International Energy Agency (IEA) warned that data centres would consume 32% of Ireland’s electricity by 2026. Foley dismissed the IEA prediction as “alarmist” but Eirgrid’s own 2026 prediction – 25.7% – is pretty alarming.

According to Foley’s X bio: “The fight against Climate Change cannot be left to others.” He could add: “Unless you’re a prosperous, growing economy.”

*IN AN obit of nearly 2,500 words, the Irish Times devoted just over 200 words to the late John Bruton’s stewardship of the peace process – damning him with faint praise on the issue – while commenting uncritically several times on his reverence for John Redmond and his condemnation of the 1916 Rising. But the newspaper’s comments on Bruton’s handling of the peace process when he was taoiseach was even less flattering.*

*Following the breaking of the IRA ceasefire in 1996, IT political correspondent Geraldine Kennedy lambasted him for his poor judgement and responsibility in the matter before going on to also question his suitability to restore it. Goldhawk wrote at the time that Fine Gael beast Big Phil Hogan attacked political commentators as being part of a Sinn Féin conspiracy. Geraldine Kennedy?!*

*Kennedy was, in fact, relatively moderate in her critique of the then taoiseach and was responding to her boss, IT editor Conor Brady, regarded by those who knew him as an FG supporter but who was agghast at Bruton’s peace process screw-up.*



## AFFAIRS OF THE NATION

## EARLY ELECTION?

REPETITIVE SPECULATION about an early general election – before the local and EU elections in June – is being argued about among ministers from the three Government parties, according to media reports. But this debate is also a burning question for backbench TDs in Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael.

Much of the present debate has been pitched as an argument about whether to take advantage of Sinn Féin's slippage in the polls. Some FG ministers want to do this, while FF ministers are less enthusiastic in line with Micheál Martin's reluctance to go early.



Leo Varadkar

However, it is at the level of FF backbench TDs – and also FG deputies – more than anywhere else that there is much anxiety about waiting until after the June EU and local elections. The reason for this is the anticipated defeat of many Government TDs and the availability of sinecures or alternative employment in the aftermath.

The 2019 local elections saw SF perform unexpectedly badly, while FF over performed, returning with 276 council seats, four times that of SF. FG, meanwhile, returned with 251 seats. These figures are vitally important for TDs for the simple reason that local councillors are the single biggest voting block for candidates running for the Seanad.

Regardless of SF's relative decline in recent polls, the two big parties can only expect to lose council seats in the locals. This guarantees a decline in the number of Seanad seats available for party TDs on the run after a general election.

However, if a general election is held a few weeks before the local elections, then the subsequent Seanad elections will be held with the old franchise from 2019, which will mean a greater safety net for a defeated TD. Anyone who thinks that TDs anticipating the loss of their seats are more preoccupied with national election strategy and SF does not know what drives politicians.

Back at the level of party leader, there is of course a difference between Vlad and Martin about election timing. The difference, though, is not about building more housing or SF's fall or rise. It is the danger that waiting until after the local elections invites the risk of a bad poll for FG and a consequent leadership heave straight away to prepare for a general election with a fresh, new leader.

## IRISH FREELOADING ON 'BRITISH ISLES'

A RECENT report by British think-tank Policy Exchange describes our foreign security policy as "persistent Irish security freeloadng" just as "Russia once more poses a maritime threat to the Western Approaches to the British Isles".

The belligerent think-tank claims that "the UK also faces a back-door threat from the growing Iranian, Russian and Chinese presence in the Republic of Ireland, a mounting challenge for a chronically deficient Irish security and intelligence apparatus". The chaps in Whitehall are also worried that a Sinn Féin-led government would be "no friend to British interests", revealing a most perceptive insight into Anglo-Irish affairs.

It is interesting how this foreign policy analysis mirrors the Irish edition of the *Sunday Times* in recent years.

Policy Exchange has been described by the right-wing *Daily Telegraph* newspaper as "the largest, but also the most influential think tank on the right". This, er, compliment gives it the authority to lecture security laggards like the Aawrish about their responsibilities to tool up and abandon neutrality.

The think-tank is stocked with mainly right-wing intellectuals and technocrats and the group's principles are described as four-fold – prosperity, people, place and patriotism.

How interesting then to find that its senior fellow on EU affairs is an Irish man – actually a former Irish diplomat and ambassador – Ray Bassett. His credentials, as Policy Exchange points out, include a stint as Irish ambassador to Canada, Jamaica and the Bahamas.

Bassett was also part of the Irish government's team at the Good Friday negotiations.

Other interesting aspects of Bassett's political activities have included his strident opposition to the EU and his support for a political project that never really got off the ground, Irexit, in September 2018. Bassett and UCD professor Ray Kinsella were the main activists with intellectual clout in the short-lived group but the driving force was Irish Freedom Party founder Hermann Kelly, a former editor of the *Irish Catholic*, who also worked for Declan Ganley's *Libertas* in the 2009 EU elections and with former UKIP leader Nigel Farage in Brussels.

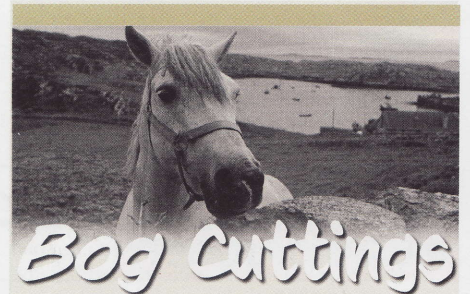
As the war of words between London and Dublin over Brexit and the backstop got increasingly heated in 2019, Bassett wrote a column for the *Irish Sun* that accused Leo Varadkar of bringing Boris Johnson to power by "his insistence on an unfair backstop".

Bassett's colleagues in Policy Exchange now want to ramp up Britain's naval and air presence in Northern Ireland "for maritime patrol missions against Russian intrusion".

The think-tank "also urges the UK and its regional partners to unite and up the ante in pressing Dublin to do its fair share for collective security".



Ray Bassett



## HIGH KING OF IRELAND

A MAN claiming to be the "king of Ireland" appeared before Thurles District Court wearing a crown and his driver's licence on a lanyard around his neck. The hearing concerned a claim notice he wanted to enforce against a Garda superintendent regarding the ownership of two roads in Tipperary. James Patrick Carey, who referred to Judge Elizabeth MacGrath as his "employee", did not specify which two roads in particular he was intending to claim, instead asserting that he "owns the world" due to his title. When MacGrath questioned the validity of the paperwork Carey had presented to her, he asked for the case to be adjourned so that representatives from Australia, New Zealand and Africa could come to help verify his claim. He added that it was a matter of some importance as his work would supposedly help mitigate the threat from Vladimir Putin and Russia. The judge put the matter back to April 16 to allow Carey to sort out his paperwork. *Offaly Express*

## TAXI!

DROGHEDA DISTRICT Court recently heard the case of a 26-year-old man who hailed a passing Garda car in Drogheda city centre to drunkenly demand they drive him home. Joseph Fitzgerald, of Bettystown, was accused of being drunk and disorderly on the night in question. Judge Eirinn McKiernan heard that when gardai pulled over to talk to the defendant, they could see he was agitated. Sergeant John O'Hehir told the court that Fitzgerald proceeded to shout abuse at gardai, telling them to do their "fucking job" and drive him home. McKiernan adjourned the case, remanding the defendant on bail, saying the charge would be struck out if he makes a €300 contribution to the Red Door addiction service by March 4. *Drogheda Leader*

## BAD HAT

ROBERT MCNAMARA (46), of Whispering Pines, Cappagh, Kinsale pleaded guilty before a sitting at Bandon District Court to charges of public intoxication and engaging in threatening and abusive behaviour following an altercation over a hat in a jazz bar. Judge James McNulty heard that on October 28 gardai were called to deal with an incident at the Blue Haven Hotel in Kinsale. They found the defendant in discussion with security staff outside the hotel. McNamara, who appeared unsteady on his feet, became agitated when questioned by gardai, yelling: "Them fuckers stole my hat". He then attempted to re-enter the hotel bar, saying to officers: "Get out of my fucking way." Defence solicitor Tony Greenway told the court that his client had been listening to some jazz when another customer at the bar put on McNamara's hat, leading to the altercation. McNulty sentenced the defendant to 200 hours of community service. *Southern Star*

• Please send suitable contributions to: *Bog Cuttings*, The Phoenix, 44 Lr Baggot St, Dublin 2, or email [bogcuttings@thephoenix.ie](mailto:bogcuttings@thephoenix.ie)

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## AFFAIRS OF THE NATION

Continued from page 3

At the launch, Slasky claimed: "This is a strategic breakthrough that will change the future battlefield... this was only possible thanks to the solid connection between the vision of the Israeli Ministry of Defense, the IAF [Israeli Air Force] and the IDF's [Israel Defense Forces] branches".

In the current conflict, Spark drones have been used to gather intelligence in Gaza, escort ground forces in the enclave and direct strikes in urban areas and against Israeli targets in high-rise buildings.

## RICHARDSON: DAME OR IRISH COMMONER?

TAOISEACH LEO Varadkar and Tánaiste Micheál Martin would have been reassured to learn that the person chairing the neutrality session at the Munich conference last week was Dame Louise

Richardson, who was so adept at dealing with pinko radicals and pacifists at Martin's security forum last year. But the awkward voice at the Munich neutrality session was anything but radical or left

wing, belonging as it did to the rather hawkish, Nato champion, Brendan Simms, an international relations professor at Cambridge University. Simms badgered Taoiseach Vlad repeatedly and demanded to know why Ireland continued to hide behind those Battle of Britain types in the RAF.

It was a pity the Irish media did not elaborate on Simms's background as his presidency of the spooky neo-con outfit, the British-based Henry Jackson Society, would explain the prof's Cold War views. According to the society's principles, it "supports the maintenance of a strong military by the United States, the countries of the European Union and other democratic powers, armed with expeditionary capabilities of a global reach, that can protect our homelands from strategic threats, forestall terrorist threats, and prevent genocide or massive ethnic cleansing". It also "supports the necessary furtherance of European military modernisation and integration under British leadership, preferably within Nato".

In the past, Simms has jointly authored articles with Declan Ganley, who addressed the society 15 years ago.



Dame Richardson

### DOHERTY BAGS MEP NOMINATION



Its patrons and signatories have included Sir Richard Dearlove OBE, head of the UK Secret Intelligence Service from 1999-2004, while CIA director James Woolsey has also been a patron. Neo-con personality and ex-US assistant defence secretary Richard Perle was another patron.

Others have included General Jack Sheehan, former supreme allied commander, Atlantic, Nato, and Margaret Thatcher's private secretary and personal adviser for defence and security, Lord Powell, is also a signatory.

Simms is a prolific writer on global power politics, with special reference to the necessity of Britain maintaining strengthened military power. He is also a strident champion of Israel, warning in 2010 at the climax of an Israeli bombardment of Gaza that "the biggest fear we should have is that the Israeli government will leave the job half done". He is presumably less fearful of such an outcome today.

Dame Louise appears not to have been fazed by the prof but then they may not share too many political differences in any case. Richardson has made clear her strident opposition to "terrorists" such as Bobby Sands and the other Irish hunger strikers.

However, it is difficult to understand why the utterly self-confident dame should be worried about her Irish nationality. She told the *Financial Times* just months before Martin's security forum that she had applied for British citizenship and that she had feared being shut out at Oxford University, where she was vice-chancellor for some years, because of her Irish nationality. She also does not believe there will be a united Ireland in her lifetime.

## IAN KEHOE'S NO-SHOW

IT IS worth quoting *The Currency* website's "over-arching philosophy", which founders Ian Kehoe and Tom Lyons proclaim as "journalism that is fearless, focused and always interesting" and is also free from "any corporate, sectoral or political interest – including our own". This detachment would, of course, be equally important in Kehoe's other job as a member of the RTÉ board as well as being on the board's audit and risk committee.

It is also worth recalling that the September

2022 minutes of the RTÉ board, acquired by the *Sunday Independent* just a year ago, make many flattering references to Kehoe's "raft of worried queries and suggestions on the parlous state of the broadcaster's finances (see *The Phoenix* 24/2/23). Kehoe, the minutes show, was deeply concerned with the station's "internal financial projections and modelling".

How disappointing then to note that Kehoe, the deputy board chair, was one of the nine members of the board and executive who declined to appear before the Oireachtas media committee. As *Irish Times* national adjudicator Fintan O'Toole wrote in his weekly column, there is no suggestion that any of them did not have a valid reason for their absence but, nevertheless, it is disappointing.

It is especially disappointing that a journalist, a financial journalist at that, of Kehoe's calibre – as indicated above – was indisposed due to illness and one presumes that he would surely have been eager to respond to probing questions from the inquisitive committee members and their chair, Niamh Smyth.

It is even more disappointing that the co-founder of *The Currency*, which presents as a significant media examining the financial affairs of the nation without fear or favour, should be stricken by illness when the finances of the national broadcaster need to be scrutinised with laser-like focus.

Goldhawk made solicitous inquiries to Kehoe as to why he did not appear before the committee and was told by Ian that he "was sick and unable to attend. I supplied a cert from my GP confirming this and I notified the committee I would be happy to attend any future meetings if invited."

Hopefully Kehoe's illness will disappear before the committee's dealings with RTÉ do.



Ian Kehoe

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## AFFAIRS OF THE NATION

## BRITISH 'DIPLOMACY' AT WORK

BARRIE GANE CMG OBE, of MI6, born on September 19, 1935, died of a stroke on December 10 last. His official resumé alleges that he was a "diplomat", a description that masks his true role as an MI6 high flier. Also concealed is the fact that he served in Ireland in the early 1980s. By the time he reached these shores, he had been involved in a myriad of questionable activities around the globe.

Gane joined MI6 in 1960 and was blooded in Laos, 1961-63, while MI6 and the CIA were helping the Lao-tian monarchy in its struggle against communist forces led by Pathet Lao.

Gane was next posted to Sarawak, Malaysia, 1963-66, in what his obituary in the London *Times* described as the "first of a number of paramilitary roles". One of these was the deployment of "skilled local trackers", a polite euphemism for the use of 'pseudo-gang' or undercover assassination teams. These units had been developed by Frank Kitson in Kenya and Malaya in the 1950s. Gane was rewarded with an OBE.

According to the Diplomatic List, in 1966 Gane returned to the Foreign Office in London, spent 1967 in Poland and then went to Kampala, Uganda, where he stayed until 1970.

Gane then returned to London. His next overseas assignment was to Hong Kong, where he became "Controller Far East", ie intelligence overlord of the Indian subcontinent, southeast Asia, Japan and China. More bloodshed and mayhem ensued.

The Soviet army invaded Afghanistan in 1979. In response, Gane played a vital role in MI6-CIA operations in support of the Mujahideen. He forged an alliance with Ahmad Shah Massoud, the commander of the Mujahideen in the Panjshir Valley. The support for the

Mujahideen backfired later when the movement became the sworn enemy of the West.

In 1982 Gane was assigned as head of a joint MI5 and MI6 station in the north. His obituarists in London have provided a rather soothing account of how he engaged in "intelligence diplomacy" involving "local special branches, police and military intelligence" who had often been "too intent on guarding their patches to contribute as well as they might to the general good".

The *Times* obituary comments without elaboration that Gane was a "meticulous and effective planner of covert operations". The best known 'covert operation' at this time was a shoot-to-kill programme involving former British soldiers, RUC officers and MI5. The combination went on a shoot-to-kill spree in the early 1980s. It was investigated by John Stalker of the Manchester police.

One of those murdered was Michael Tighe, aged 17, who stumbled across an IRA arms cache in a hay shed in Co Armagh in November 1982. The barn was bugged by MI5. Armed undercover officers stormed it, killing Tighe and wounding his companion. Neither victim had any involvement with the IRA.

MI5 refused to hand over a tape recording of the incident to Stalker because it contradicted its version of the event. After Stalker kept pressing for it, he was vilified and removed from the investigation by a dark array of forces.

Gane returned to London and continued his ascent of MI6's blood-soaked pole to become deputy chief of the organisation. He resigned in 1993 and went to work for Group 4 in the private security sector.

## MI6 HONEY TRAPS

IN 2016, an anonymous MI6 officer swore under oath to Judge Anthony Hart that MI6 had never engaged in sexual blackmail. This delicate piece of perjury was uttered during Hart's inquiry into child sexual abuse in the north. Hart lapped it up, despite the publication of confessions by a string of MI6 officers that they routinely engaged in such perverted practices.

In 1964, while Stanley Johnson, father of Boris, was training to become an MI6 officer,

sexual blackmail was very much on the curriculum. One of Stanley's instructors advised him that there was little point in taking sexually compromising photographs of Egyptian targets since they were likely to ask for copies for their friends.

Anthony Cavendish, a former MI6 officer, wrote in his memoir, *Inside Intelligence* (1990): "Then there is the agent who is set up for blackmail from the beginning. The groundwork having been laid and the agent having been photographed in bed with a small boy or his boss's wife, he is then forced to provide information."

MI6 is still hard at it. The Chinese Ministry of State Security (CMoSS) recently issued a warning to its citizens to avoid "exotic beauties" seeking to lure them into the hands of Western spies. The CMoSS revealed that a Mr Si Li, who worked for a Chinese State enterprise, had been enticed by a tour guide to visit an adult entertainment venue while on an overseas trip. He was then encouraged to "pick" several women to entertain him for the night. While he was enjoying their company in a bedroom, several "burly foreigners in uniform" barged in and photographed him naked. He had fallen into the clutches of a well-organised MI6 'honey trap'.

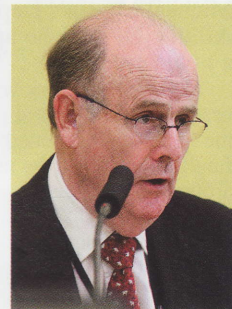
The British spies forced Mr Li to hand over his work laptop. According to the CMoSS, "the computer... contained close to 10 years of classified information" and that Mr Li's "nightmare was far from over" as he was coerced into providing MI6 with classified information upon his return to China. He now faces a "rigorous" trial.

British spooks ran a brothel known as the Gemini Health Studio in Belfast from 1970 to 1972. It was attacked by the IRA in October 1972. Nowadays, some of this sort of dirty work is performed remotely, by GCHQ, Britain's electronic snoop agency.

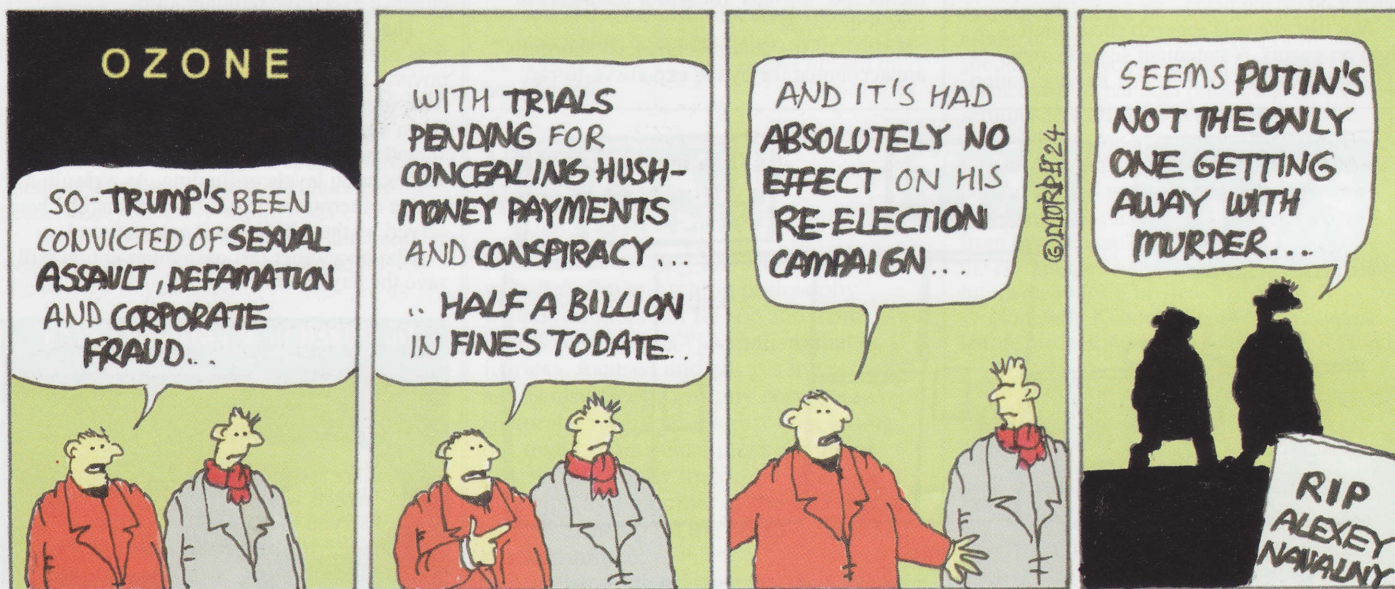
This being so, Irish VIPs thinking of visiting internet porn sites would be well advised to resist such sordid temptation.



Barrie Gane



Anthony Hart





## GLOBAL WARMING: 'NO BIG DEAL'

A RELATIVELY new farmers' lobby group, styling itself Beef Plan Movement (BPM), is pushing for full official recognition this year as a stakeholder organisation and to have a say in negotiating with Government on behalf of beef farmers.

Like many other farming groups, it takes an *à la carte* approach to science. Its website includes some novel statements about what it calls "the true nature of biogenic methane".

Recently, it enlisted the help of a heavy-hitter from the US climate sceptic circuit, Prof Richard Lindzen, a retired atmospheric physicist who rejects mainstream climate science.

Lindzen, who has done extensive consulting for both oil and coal companies, treated Irish beef farmers to a masterclass in misinformation in a series of short videos understood to have been widely circulated via WhatsApp groups.

The powerful heat-trapping greenhouse gases – carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and methane – are, Lindzen said, "not a big deal, because frankly, a few degrees, the temperature difference between breakfast and lunch, is not something we don't know how to deal with".

This is, to put it as politely as possible, nonsense that would fail on a Junior Cert science exam.

When asked by BPM vice-chair John Maloney why there was such focus in Ireland on agricultural emissions, Lindzen explained: "It's malice; politicians love power, they love pushing people around. I have often thought there is a pathology associated with politics."

While accepting that 100% of climate scientists agree that CO<sub>2</sub> causes warming, according to Lindzen: "Probably 1% agree that it is an existential threat." This too is



Richard Lindzen

patent nonsense and underlines that he is speaking as a lobbyist.

When asked by BPM chair Eamon Corley that if no action whatever is taken on climate change, would it make any difference, Lindzen replied: "The difference it will make is probably benign and beneficial, because CO<sub>2</sub> is free plant food."

This is not his first Irish rodeo. Back in 2021, Lindzen delivered a remote lecture to the Irish Climate Science Forum, a Dublin-based climate sceptic group on the 'Imaginary climate crisis'.

Corley and his BPM colleagues will presumably be seeking to meet with agriculture minister Charlie McConalogue to convince him of the merits of formally recognising their group. Will they take the opportunity to ask McConalogue if he's really in the job because of his love of power and of pushing people around?

## IS THE SAS IN GAZA?

LAST OCTOBER there was a flurry of articles in the British media about the deployment of the SAS to Cyprus. The regiment was reported as being on standby in case it was needed to rescue British hostages in Gaza. Then, suddenly, there was complete silence. This was because the British government issued a D-Notice to muzzle the press.

Reports that the SAS was preparing for a possible hostage rescue would not have resulted in the issue of a D-Notice and security observers believe something else is afoot. Israeli special forces would be able to perform a rescue mission just as well, if not better, than the SAS.

The SAS is the elite of Britain's special forces and has access to the most cutting-edge equipment developed for modern warfare. Gaza is an opportunity to test some of it in a real underworld scenario.

The SAS may have infiltrated the Gaza's labyrinthine tunnel complex, a world of narrow passageways with booby traps and ambush points, in the company of the Israeli Defence Force's (IDF) Samur or 'Weasel' unit, which specialises in underground combat.

The tunnels present opportunities to test the latest subterranean military drones and robots

in real combat conditions. Such drones are fitted with anti-collision sensors and rotor blades enclosed in protective cages. While normal drones rely on GPS or other satnav for navigation, radio waves do not travel through rocks, dirt and concrete. These obstacles can be overcome by Simultaneous Location and Mapping (Slam) software. A Slam drone can build a 3D model of its environment and track its position without an external navigation reference such as GPS, or a human operator.

In the commercial world, Slam-enabled drones have been able to map out disused mines. In 2020 a company called Exyn demonstrated that one of its vehicles could carry out a complete self-directed exploration of an underground environment and return safely.

The IDF's Weasels have access to the Legion-X system manufactured by Elbit Systems. Lanius drones – small quadcopters – which have search and destroy capabilities, are the core components here. A large octocopter drone acts as a mothership to small, sensor-carrying Lanius drones, which are ideal to explore the tunnels underneath Gaza. Lanius drones can also carry deadly grenade-sized explosive charges.

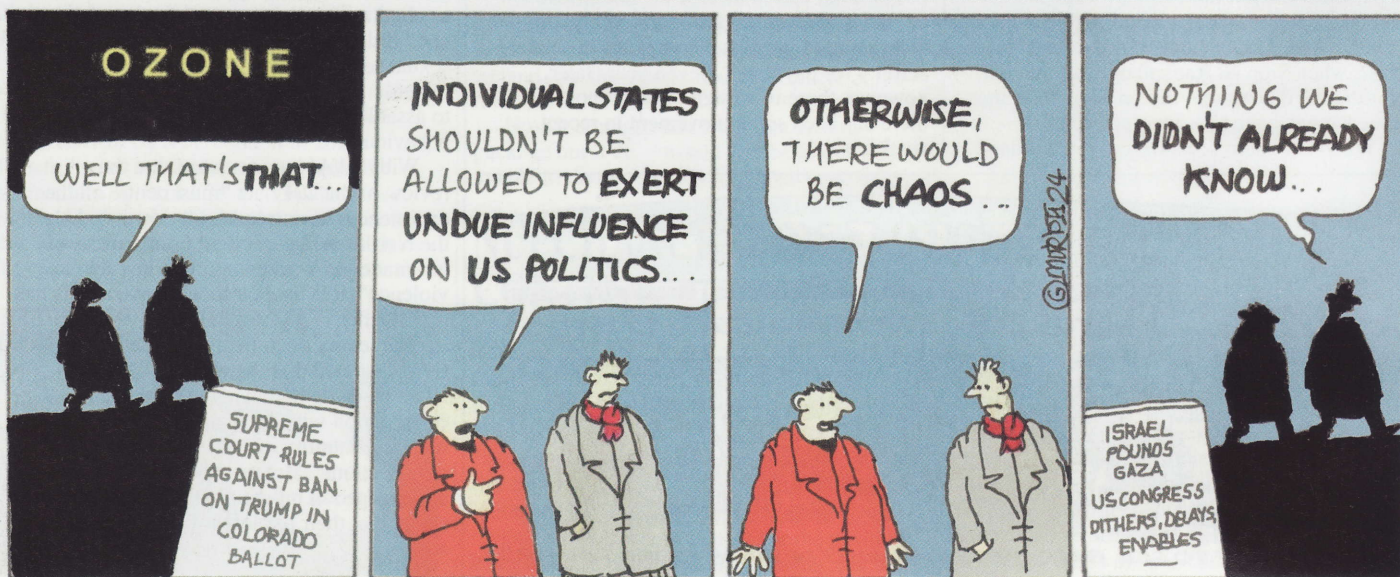
After suffering multiple casualties in Afghanistan, US special forces developed the Nova drone, which can also map and search multi-story indoor buildings and underground complexes without a human operator.

Whitehall does not seem to have pondered what will happen if an SAS soldier is killed or, even worse, captured. D-Notices are voluntary and only operate within the UK.

If this scenario is accurate, Whitehall appears to be willing to gamble the safety of the British public for the opportunity to secretly deploy the SAS in Gaza. Meanwhile, senior MI5 and GCHQ officials are issuing chilling security alerts to the British government as threat levels reach their highest peaks in 20 years. The UK's threat level is set by the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre, which sits inside MI5 headquarters in London.



An SAS soldier





## AFFAIRS OF THE NATION

Continued from page 3

to strike back at what Allister calls “Irish Sea border implementers”. At his conference he produced his secret weapon, Richard Tice, the multi-millionaire leader of Britain’s right-wing anti-immigration, anti-EU Reform party, and announced a portentous memorandum of understanding between the parties.

More seriously, the TUV and Reform will stand “agreed” candidates in the north in this year’s British general election. Allister knows his candidates will find it hard to win seats but he’ll do his damndest to unseat targeted DUP MPs. The most likely casualty is deputy DUP leader Gavin Robinson in East Belfast, who will be defending a slim majority of 1,819 against Alliance leader Naomi Long.

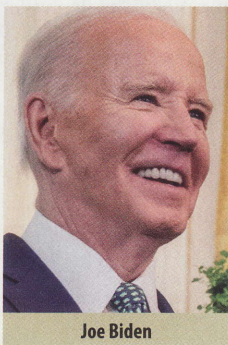
Allister’s intervention also makes it likely that Alliance’s Stephen Farry will keep North Down and means Donaldson himself is at risk in Lagan Valley.

The backing of Tice and Reform also provides Allister with access to cash for Tice has deep pockets. Ben Habib, a wealthy former UKIP MEP who bankrolled the unionist court case against the Northern Ireland Protocol, has also promised funds to the TUV/Reform campaign.

## RECOGNISING PALESTINE – AGAIN

WORDS MATTER. Taoiseach Leo Varadkar’s statements criticising Israel’s war on Gaza have helped to muster world opinion against Israeli genocide there. But words should not be a substitute for real action and, despite a decade and more of rhetoric from Fine Gael and more latterly Fianna Fáil in Government, they have used various excuses to resist two actions that would make a real difference: recognition of a Palestine state and implementation of the Occupied Territories Bill.

Most Irish people would welcome Varadkar’s St Patrick’s Day White House pledge to recognise a Palestinian state – a highly qualified pledge, it should be said. As well, Varadkar’s rhetoric was a necessary manoeuvre given many people’s distaste at the Taoiseach (and Sinn Féin) rushing to pay homage to President Biden, leader of the world’s most powerful state that has donated many billions in armaments to the Israeli war machine. This awesome weaponry was



Joe Biden

Ramadan's started so Muslims can't eat during the day

It's been like that in Gaza for months now



still being used to slaughter Palestinians like insects as the Taoiseach spoke those words about Palestinian statehood to Israel’s gun runner, Joe Biden, last Sunday.

The pledge to recognise Palestine has become one of the most specious moves the government has made in its Middle East policy in the last 10 years. The Dáil unanimously passed a Sinn Féin motion recognising Palestinian statehood in December 2014. This was included in the 2016 programme for government led by FG but the then foreign minister, Simon Coveney, repeatedly argued that this clause also said it was “as part of a lasting settlement of the conflict”. These words enabled the government to say no recognition could be granted until there is a “final settlement”.

In an even more disingenuous move, ‘Covetous’ Coveney changed his tune when he led the government’s vanity project to be elected to the UN Security Council, a goal that could only be secured with the support of developing countries. Suddenly, Coveney warned in 2018 that, if Israel continued to block peace moves, Ireland would consider recognising Palestinian statehood. Can anyone in Government seriously argue that Israel has not blocked peace moves in the years since and in recent months?

Not that Coveney meant it anyway. In the same week that Ireland won its Security Council seat in 2020, Coveney point blank refused to allow the Occupied Territories Bill – also passed by the Dáil and Seanad – into the programme for government. He also steered through a clause in the programme that pledged to “honour” the commitment “to recognise the state of Palestine as part of a lasting settlement” or, failing that, in various other qualified circumstances.

Another three years later the new foreign minister, Micheál Martin, also pledged recognition of Palestine but he added a plethora of conditions and qualifications that rendered his commitment meaningless. The “timing” was important; so was the potential “impact”; the “engagement” of other parties; and so on, he said last September.

Varadkar’s latest commitment is also qualified as he insisted in December that Ireland should only recognise Palestine along with a group of EU countries. Varadkar repeated this blocking mechanism last month. And his White House statement last Sunday was carefully crafted, as follows: “Ireland stands ready to recognise a Palestinian state with like-minded partners when it is most helpful to peace”. There are, at least three

qualifying, blocking conditions in that short sentence.

What is there to stop Ireland declaring Palestinian recognition unilaterally and then lobbying other EU countries to do the same? Apart from American disapproval, that is.

## TRIPLE LOCK TO GO?

IT OCCURRED to Goldhawk on recently reading the *Irish Times*’s political editor, Pat ‘The Brigadier’ Leahy, that he had contracted gout on some mission abroad, such was the testy, belligerent language he used to describe Irish hypocrisy and blithe indifference to earth-shaking developments afoot.

Amid sneers at Irish pacifists who speak of peace and neutrality, Leahy warned that we do not appreciate that “the EU is preparing for war”. The Brigadier knows this because he has been chatting to chaps from the war office (“two senior members of the government” who are “highly engaged at EU level”, no less) who told him so. Yet we are planning to spend a mere €1.5 billion a year on military spending by 2028 while the EU gets ready to spend billions on defending Ukraine – and Ireland, don’t forget! – from Russian invaders.

There has been a noticeable build-up of media sermonising from warlike ladies and gents recently about the need to defend Ireland from invasion and Brigadier Leahy has not hidden behind the editorial lines in the heat of this editorial battle. Indeed, his chivalrous defence of Dame Louise Richardson, chair of Micheál Martin’s anti-neutrality forum last summer, rivals the story of Walter Raleigh’s cape and Queen Elizabeth 1’s puddle. It was that forum, and the bad publicity that Irish warmongers received as a result, that first stung Leahy into delivering editorial white feathers to pinko pacifists everywhere.

Despite the forum’s poor public reception, Dame Richardson recommended the scrapping of the triple lock that deters snap decisions to embark on military adventures abroad. Martin, would you believe, has now announced plans to do just that.



Louise Richardson

## ROYALS CAGEY ON KATE'S ABSENCE





## AFFAIRS OF THE NATION

## DENTON NO-SHOW TO FOLLOW KENOVA?

OPERATION KENOVA investigated a string of murders perpetrated by Freddie Scappaticci and his associates. It did not result in a single criminal prosecution. Scappaticci, a member of the IRA, worked for British intelligence. He died in April 2023.

Operation Kenova was led by Jon Boucher, now chief constable of the PSNI. Boucher also led Operation Denton before his appointment to the top PSNI post. Operation Denton is looking at the actions of the Glenanne Gang, a group made up of UVF members with links to the UDR and RUC. The probe is examining the extent to which this network was controlled by the British state. Its report is due for release later this year.

The key figure in the gang was 'The Jackal'. Readers of *The Phoenix* were informed as long ago as May 25, 1984, that his "real name is [Robin] Jackson", he possessed information about "the vehicles used in [the] Dublin bombings" of May 1974 and had "fled to foreign climes", ie South Africa. He had, however, "returned to his native soil, unable to settle down" abroad. Jackson's group had also "been linked with weapons in the possession of SAS Captain Robert Nairac".

In 2021, Colin Wallace, a psychological operations officer at British Army HQNI in the 1970s, spoke to officers from Operation Denton and provided them with records from the 1970s concerning members of the gang. The officers told Wallace twice, at the end of last year, that they fully intended to have a further meeting with him but, since then, they have not found the time to do this.

Wallace knows what is written between the lines of these documents. He was central to the psychological operations launched against loyalist murder packs in the 1970s. Wallace



Colin Wallace

also sought clearance to target members of the Glenanne Gang, only to be told to stand aside. The killers were allowed to continue their ghastly work for the next 20 years.

A "secret" letter dated December 12, 1989, has emerged from Britain's National archives (see *The Phoenix* 24/2/23). It was written by Tom King, a Conservative MP who served as secretary of state for NI (1985-89) and as defence secretary (1989-92). It assured UK prime minister Margaret Thatcher that a then forthcoming inquiry into false accusations against Colin Wallace would not examine "alleged assassinations".

For decades the UK has denied that British officials ran assassination programmes in collusion with loyalist paramilitaries. This myth has been demolished in recent years by the British government itself, which has handed over millions in compensation to victims of collusion. The survivors and relatives of the Miami Showband are the most high profile of those compensated thus far. Three band members were murdered in 1975 by Jackson's crew.

Colin Wallace is still available to talk to the investigators from Operation Denton. Tom King should also be in a position to comment on the "alleged assassinations" to which he referred in his "secret" letter to Thatcher.

The scorching hot issue for Denton is whether it will reveal that Jackson and others in the gang were British agents.

## NATIONAL PARTY 'MODERATES'

DIVISIONS IN the far-right National Party (NP) emerged publicly last July due to a dispute over the ownership of more than €400,000 worth of gold bars, with two factions claiming to be the authentic leadership of the party. Early last month, a spokesperson for the Electoral Commission stated that a decision on which faction is the legitimate leadership was "expected shortly". On a recent Telegram live show, *The Razor's Edge*, Justin Barrett dismissed this, saying no decision would be made before nominations closed for the local and European elections.

Despite this, Barrett claimed that his faction of the NP, which he argues is the

majority, are no longer prepared to sit on their hands and are preparing to organise under another name if necessary. Barrett even conceded that, as a result of this and other controversies: "The National Party is now a joke. It is a joke in Irish politics. The media knows it and everyone knows it."

Barrett explained the split in the NP as being a result of the faction led by James Reynolds wanting to pursue a more moderate path in order to avoid clashes with protestors.

Reynolds himself echoed this in a speech uploaded to the NP YouTube channel in September. He recalled how, at the 2022 NP ard fheis in Fermanagh, Barrett "gave a Roman salute and self-described himself as a fascist". Reynolds went on to deride the fact that Barrett had posted a quote from Hitler's *Mein Kampf* on his Telegram Channel, claiming Barrett was trying "to turn the National Party into a Hollywood parody of an extremist right wing cult".

Just how moderate those who make up the Reynolds faction are, though, is a moot question given some of their activities in recent months, details of which may emerge in upcoming court hearings.

In March leading Reynolds faction supporter Keith Woods shared a video of convicted Holocaust denier David Irving on his Telegram channel. Also in March an NP member visited Italy to give a talk at the far-right Casaghi social centre in Florence.

In addition, Yan Mac Oireachtaigh of the NP led a protest at the South African embassy in March in support of Afrikaner Francois van der Merwe, leader of the Betereinders (better ends) movement, who has been charged with assaulting a police officer. At the time of the alleged assault van der Merwe was protesting in support of white farmer Piet Groenewald, who is charged with attempted murder in a case where he hit a black employee on the head with a heavy object before setting his dog on him.



James Reynolds





## AFFAIRS OF THE NATION

## AFFAIRS OF THE NATION



## EU 'WAR ECONOMY'

LAST OCTOBER *The Phoenix* quoted an impeccable authority on western political and military strategy – the *Economist* magazine – which warned that the imminent retreat of the US from the Ukrainian war with Russia would require the EU to fill this military vacuum: “Europe... has committed as much weaponry as America and far more financial aid. Yet it needs to step up further... Europe will eventually need to carry more of the burden. That means beefing up its defence industry... Pray for a speedy victory, but plan for a long struggle.”



Dame Richardson

The same *Phoenix* article (see edition 6/10/23) quoted foreign minister Micheál Martin who, after a meeting of EU foreign ministers in Kyiv that week, predicted the war would last up to five years and that Ireland would provide more military training for Ukraine. This includes his highly inventive secret weapon, the “non-lethal” rifle training (unique in the annals of warfare).

Later that month Dame Louise Richardson, chair of Martin’s pet project, the forum on security policy, happily and coincidentally endorsed Martin’s long-held opposition to the triple lock in her report on the forum’s deliberations. Even though the forum’s panels were stuffed with her fellow travellers from the West’s military, academic and intelligence ranks, Dame Richardson could hardly propose abolition of Irish neutrality (although her report derided at some length this long-held Irish foreign policy principle).

But despite stating that the forum was not

designed to make policy prescriptions, she did just that, recommending the abolition of Ireland’s triple lock, which demands endorsement from government, the Dáil and the UN Security Council for foreign missions.

On securing Dame Richardson’s approval, Martin moved fast and the following month, November 2023, he announced plans to scrap the triple lock. In January this year he said he would legislate to get rid of the triple lock “without delay”.

A fortnight later, on February 9, 2024, it emerged that Ireland had previously signed up to yet another Nato partnership entity, the Individual Tailored Partnership Programme (ITPP), a sister of Nato’s Partnership for Peace (PfP) – that masterful euphemism for western warmongering.

The *Irish Times* described the ITPP as “more streamlined and efficient” than previous Nato PfP arrangements but, when it was first proposed at a Nato meeting in Madrid in June 2022, Martin denied that it eroded Irish neutrality.

He also said then that he had proposed that a citizens’ assembly should hold a “reflective,

*Continued on page 4*

**THE MINTED** Comer family, who made hundreds of millions of euro from the building sector, has had its fair share of stumbles in the racing world, most notably the suspension of tax exile Luke Comer’s training licence for three years by the Irish Horseracing Regulatory Board (IHRB). Last month, it was Luke Comer Jnr who was unsaddled in Navan District Court and he attracted some online attention.

Racehorse owner Comer Jnr (who has not had a winner since September 2020) appeared in court as a result of prosecution by the agriculture department, which was initiated after the decomposed carcasses of nine horses were found on his lands at Summerhill in Co Meath. Luke Jnr’s barrister said his client knew nothing about the matter and was “greatly taken aback”.

Happily for Comer, the charges were struck out when he agreed to pay a €20,000 donation to the DSPCA.

Not everyone was happy with the outcome and Amy Lynam, a well-known figure in horseracing marketing and daughter of trainer Eddie Lynam, went on X to tweet: “An absolute disgrace. The court’s findings should result in his licence being revoked by the IHRB.” With the bowler hats now examining the case, Comer Jnr will be hoping that Lynam doesn’t get her way.

## DEREK RICHARDSON’S SCRUM

THE FORMER owner of bust English rugby union club Wasps – Derek Richardson – is keeping his lawyers busy. As has been reported, he is suing his legal advisers, Kennedys Law, over the demise of his Wasps club in 2022 with debts of £95m. Another front in his legal campaign features Mark

Robertson and the Hottinger Family Office, names that will ring a bell with fans of Goldhawk.

Having sold his 123.ie insurance business to RSA for big bucks, Richardson chuckled a large slice of his windfall into Wasps and oversaw the then

Premiership club’s move to Coventry. When the crowds and sponsorship failed to materialise, however, the business was benched.

Richardson paid a heavy financial price for his involvement in the project and has since claimed that his advisers – who helped create a complicated ownership structure that involved a Malta-registered entity called Moonstone – had come up with a scheme that somehow ended up actually disadvantaging him.

It will be recalled (see *The Phoenix* 9/3/18) that the then parent of Hottinger, ArchCo Ltd, was actually registered in Malta. Both law firm Kennedy’s and the Hottinger wealth management outfit (which has an office in Dublin) have been named in separate proceedings.

On the same day that Richardson filed his case against Kennedys Law and its former partner, Robert Dawbarn, he also filed a claim against Hottinger Private Office Ltd and its CEO, Mark Robertson, alleging breach of fiduciary duty. The most recent activity here was a replying affidavit dated March 21 last.



Derek Richardson

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## BRITISH AGENTS AND DUBLIN BOMBS

MAY 17 next will mark the 50th anniversary of the Dublin and Monaghan bomb massacres. One of the key figures in the Dublin leg of that operation was Robin 'The Jackal' Jackson of the UVF. He collected three devices from James Mitchell's farm at Glenanne, Co Armagh, and drove them in his poultry van to the Coachman's Inn, in north Dublin, where they were distributed to his accomplices.

The massacres are being investigated as part of the UK's Operation Denton. It is hoped this will clarify whether or not Jackson and any of his associates were MI5 or RUC special branch agents.

Campaigners on behalf of the victims of the Glenanne gang have been waiting decades for the truth. In 2010, then PSNI assistant chief constable Drew Harris wrote to them advising them that an investigation into the wider questions raised by the activities of the group was not going to take place.

The Historical Enquiries Team (HET), however, began to look at aspects of the gang's activities. The team was operationally independent from the PSNI and had its own finances.

In 2010, however, Harris brought the HET under his control as head of the PSNI's Crime Operations Branch and he removed investigative functions from HET officers. Henceforth, they could no longer arrest and question suspects. He also took control of its budget and closed down a unit that was cross-referencing disparate HET investigations for links, patterns and systems that might indicate UVF collusion with the NI state.

In 2014, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Policing found that the HET was lacking in independence when examining cases where the state was implicated.



Drew Harris

The families took the PSNI to the High Court in Belfast. In 2017, Mr Justice Treacey criticised the PSNI for an "extreme" abuse of power, adding that "the state [was] not genuinely committed" to addressing the concerns of families of the Glenanne gang's victims.

In November 2014, Harris (now deputy chief constable) found himself in the witness box at an inquest into the killing of six people by the RUC. Senior coroner John Lecky pointed out to Harris that the PSNI's engagement in the disclosure process had lasted "longer than the second World War".

The PSNI unit responsible for control of the files relating to collusion was the Legacy Support Unit (LSU). It was responsible for redacting sensitive information prior to its release to the victims' families. Harris was in control of the LSU and all of the unit's key staff were former RUC special branch officers.

In 2018, Harris became the Irish government's choice for Garda Commissioner. The public was assured that there was no possibility of a conflict of interest in the appointment.

No one was ever convicted for the 1974 bombings during which 34 people died. An Garda Síochána maintains that the files on the massacres are still open. It is not known if Harris – introduced to the Smithwick Tribunal as the PSNI link man with MI5 – took the opportunity, while working for the RUC or the PSNI, to peep into their files to see if Jackson was a British agent.

## INTERNMENT WITH TRIAL

THE WALL of silence by southern media on the recent acquittal of dissident republicans Colin Duffy and Harry Fitzsimons is in marked contrast to the sensational headlines that many carried at the start of this case back in December 2013. Following a gun attack on a convoy of PSNI Land Rovers Duffy, Fitzsimons and Alex McCrory were charged with a range of offences including preparing and directing terrorism, membership of the IRA etc. Duffy received appropriately lurid headlines in the *Irish Times*, *Irish Independent* and elsewhere in December 2013.

The prosecution's case was based on covert video footage and audio recordings from a public park in Lurgan gathered by MI5 the day after the gun attack (see *The Phoenix* 14/7/22). Over a decade later in Belfast Crown Court, the senior judge ruled that the recordings did not meet the standard to secure convictions. The trial was one of the longest running ever in Northern Ireland.

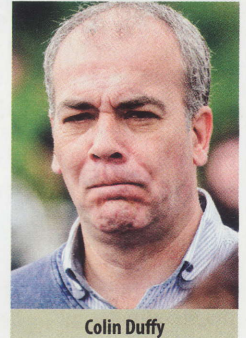
This is not the first controversial case involving Duffy. In 1995 he was convicted for the killing of retired UDR man John Lyness outside his home in Lurgan in June 1993. Lyness was gunned down by two assailants who fled the scene on racing bikes. Duffy's conviction was later quashed after a key witness in the case, Lindsey Robb, was deemed to be unreliable.

Robb had given evidence anonymously, only being identified as Witness C. When Robb himself was convicted, later in 1995, for his role in acquiring and smuggling guns on behalf of the UVF, Duffy was released – after three years in prison.

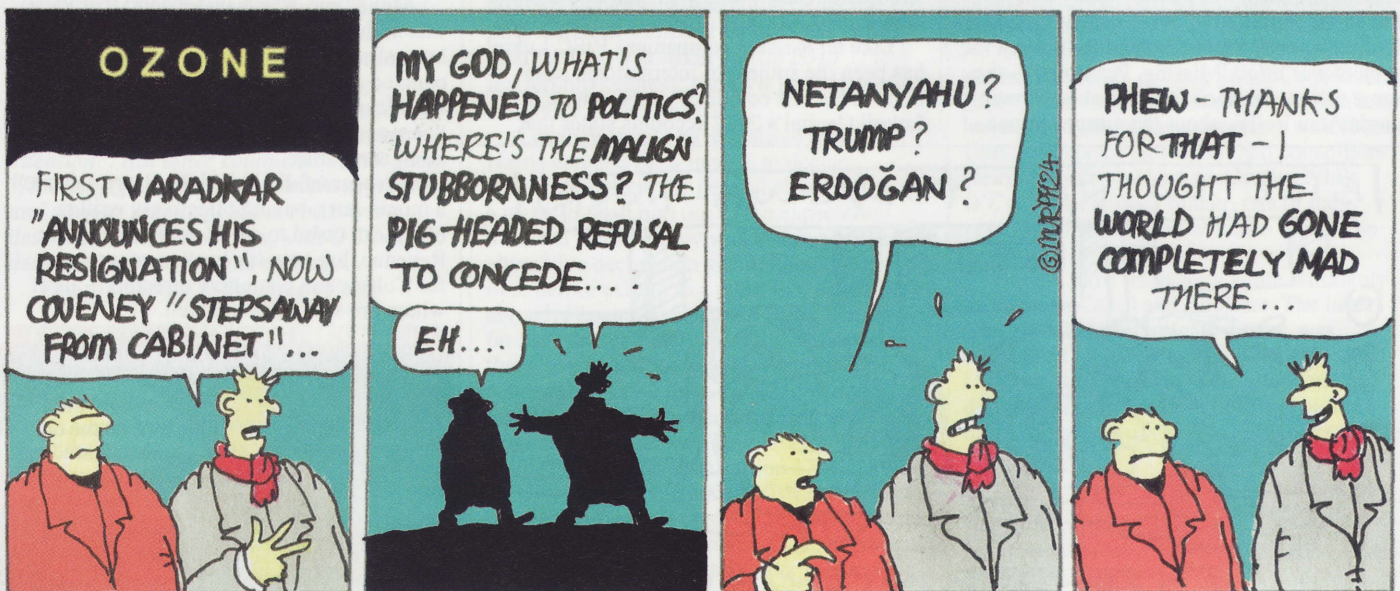
In 1997 two RUC constables on patrol were killed in Church Walk, Lurgan, the last RUC fatalities before the second IRA ceasefire. Duffy was charged with their murders but the case was dropped due to insufficient evidence.

In March 2012 Duffy was again back in court, facing two murder charges. Two British soldiers had been shot while collecting pizza outside the Massereene barracks in Antrim earlier that month. Duffy was also charged with five counts of attempted murder and one of having a firearm and ammunition. Almost three years later, having been denied bail throughout the case, the judge acquitted Duffy on the basis that there was insufficient evidence to convict him of the murders.

If you include the 27 months that Duffy spent on remand in relation to his most recent case, he has spent almost a decade of his life in custody even though there are no convictions against him.



Colin Duffy





## AFFAIRS OF THE NATION

ROBERT NAIRAC  
RE-VISITED

ROBIN 'THE Jackal' Jackson, of the Portadown UVF, was the most notorious assassin of the Troubles. Virtually all commentators on those turbulent times believe he was a British agent, run by the RUC special branch. He was a key member of the so-called Glenanne gang.

Jackson led the UVF team responsible for the Miami Showband massacre in 1975. In December 2021, the British government paid £1.5m to the surviving members of the group and the relatives of those who perished. One factor in the collapse of the State's defence was the discovery of a document that placed Captain Robert Nairac, a British Army undercover operative, at the scene of the atrocity (see *The Phoenix* 31/1/20).

The state defendants in the Miami Showband case allege that the £1.5m payment was made without an admission of liability. This was nothing more than a face-saving exercise.

The UK police inquiry, Operation Denton, is presently looking at the activities of Jackson and the Glenanne gang, which encompasses the Dublin and Monaghan bombings in May 1974. The burning issue for the probe is whether any of them were British agents.

Unfortunately, Operation Denton has yet to re-interview Colin Wallace, a former British psychological operations officer who worked at British Army HQ in the 1970s. He has much knowledge of the gang (see *The Phoenix* 22/3/2024). The inquiry was meant to finish its inquiries in the spring and report next June.

Meanwhile, the families of the Dublin and Monaghan bombings are pursuing their action against the British state.



Robert Nairac

The Jackal was involved in that atrocity too. He drove the bombs used in the attack to Dublin. The British state brought an application before the High Court in Belfast seeking to have the action by the families struck out on a variety of grounds. The motion was rejected earlier this month.

It is perplexing that the UK threw in the towel over the Miami Showband massacre – led by Jackson – yet is fighting tooth and nail over the Dublin and Monaghan atrocity – also involving Jackson. All going well, the lawyers in the Dublin and Monaghan case will be able to produce the Nairac document, which shows the British captain was linked to Jackson and the Portadown UVF, when the hearing takes place.

In the legal action taken by the families and survivors of the Dublin and Monaghan bombings, the NIO and MoD denied any involvement with the UVF gang in that atrocity. So they could hardly have admitted to the officers from Operation Denton that Jackson or any of his pack were British agents. Operation Denton, therefore, is unlikely to confirm that British agents were members of the Glenanne gang.

A new documentary on the atrocity, *17-May-74 Anatomy of a Massacre*, will receive its premiere at the Lighthouse Cinema in Smithfield, Dublin, on May 10.

GOING NUCLEAR  
IN IRISH SEA

IN RECENT years much has been made by various academics, media and politicians about Ireland's dependence on the Royal Air Force (RAF) for air defence. Independent TD and former Army Ranger Wing member, Cathal 'Gung Ho' Berry even went as far as describing the situation as a "national humiliation and embarrassment".

Strange then that the same voices, and even Gung Ho himself, have not drawn attention to other RAF activities in close proximity to Ireland.

A recent briefing document, released jointly by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) and Nukewatch,

describes how nuclear materials and warhead components for use in nuclear weapons are transported on 10 round-trip special flights annually by RAF C-17 Globemaster transport aircraft between RAF airbase Brize Norton in Oxfordshire and airbases in the US.

The RAF describes Brize Norton as "the largest RAF station" with over 7,000 personnel and contractors. Among other things, the station "provides rapid global mobility in support of UK overseas operations and exercises as well as AAR support for fast jet aircraft, both on operations and in support of UK Homeland Defence".

The station's website advises the public to read its environmental policies and major accident emergency instructions. Here's why.

The CND/Nukewatch report outlines that special nuclear materials for use in Britain's nuclear programme are on board these flights including tritium, a radioactive isotope used in nuclear warheads; highly enriched uranium; a nuclear submarine reactor fuel and nuclear warhead component; and plutonium for warhead components.

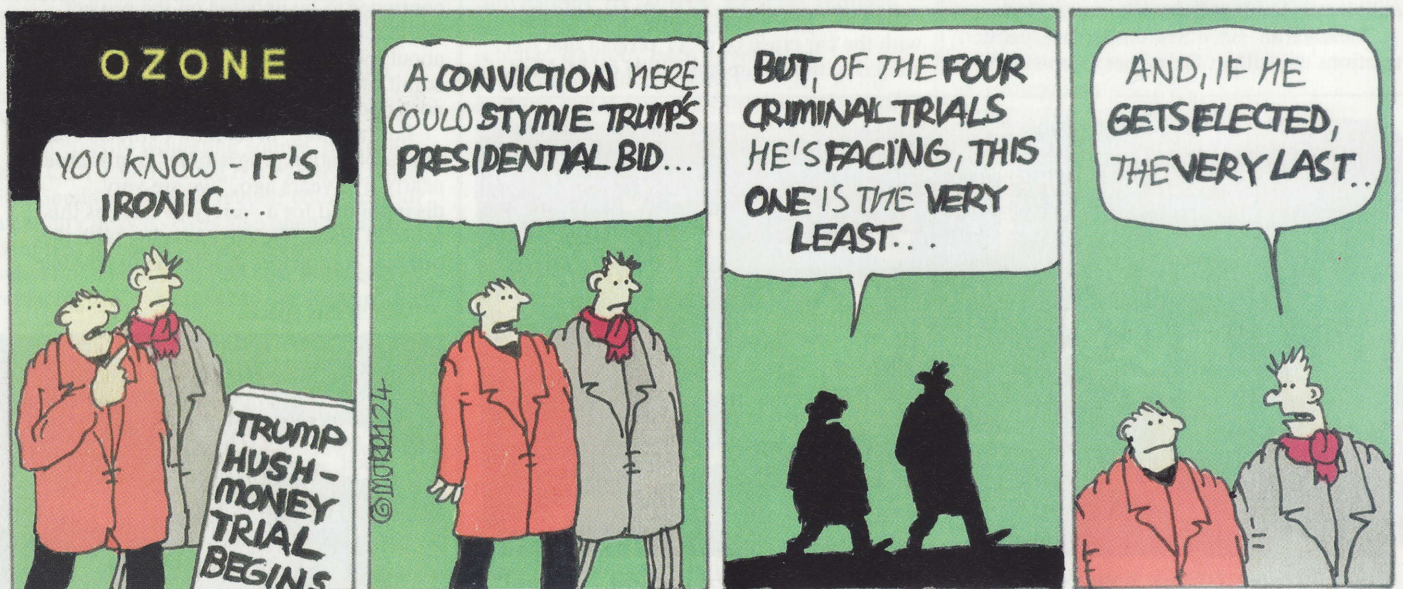
When these special nuclear flights depart from Brize Norton they take one of two routes towards the Atlantic. Both routes, and the return trips, involve flying just to the south of Ireland, 25-30 miles off the Irish coast. While just outside Irish airspace, the flights are over Irish territorial waters and if an accident were to occur, it would pose a serious risk.

The report outlines how "both plutonium and uranium are flammable metals which burn easily if exposed to heat, creating a plume of radioactive smoke which is easily ingested. Tritium is a radioactive gas which is also flammable and can easily be incorporated in water and organic compounds, in which form it may be ingested. All three materials are carcinogenic."

Have our military enthusiasts and security experts nothing to say about this nuclear traffic in the Irish Sea?



Cathal Berry





## AFFAIRS OF THE NATION



## IRISH PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

THE IRISH edition of the *Sunday Times* appears to have corrected its revisionist line on British foreign policy and has been brought to heel by the chaps in the London office, whose tutors in MI5 and Whitehall were aghast at the deviant editorial penned in the new year's Aawrish edition. Then, a stern editorial castigated the Irish Government's intention to abolish the triple lock and asked, rhetorically, if Irish voters wanted "their ministers, hungry for approval in Brussels and Washington", to have the power to send Irish troops to such hot spots as Iraq, Libya and Ukraine (see *The Phoenix* 12/1/24).



John Mooney

This was some sort of first for the *ST*'s Irish edition, which had become used to lecturing the Paddies for not standing up to Russia, China, Iran and the Palestinians, telling us we should ditch neutrality and defend the western way of life.

Last Sunday week the real *Sunday Times* in London published the usual diet of anti-Russian polemic in its editorial arguing: a) the Ukraine war had triggered a rethink at Nato; b) Donald Trump was right to lecture "delinquent" Nato members about not spending enough on weapons of war; and c) increased Nato spending was necessary even in the UK, where military cuts have bitten deep since 2010.

The Aawrish edition was written in an almost different language but its main points were: a) Nato doctrine of collective defence

was more necessary than ever because of Ukraine; b) Trump's undiplomatic words were unnecessary but his point was valid; and c) further spending by Nato was a good move, even in the UK. What an uncanny coincidence.

The *Irish Times* has aped these foreign affairs attitudes as they apply to Nato, neutrality and an EU armed force, but it appears to be more in tune with the latter than UK and US primacy in geo-political military matters. The *IT* recently ran an investigation into an Irish-based company, Irish Training Solutions (ITS), headed by Danny Cluskey, a former Army Ranger Wing soldier. ITS has been training the forces of Libyan warlord Khalifa Haftar, a rival to the UN-recognised Tripoli government.

The investigative efforts by *IT* Europe correspondent Naomi O'Leary and security and crime correspondent Conor Gallagher amounted to several thousand words and dealt with the concerns of the Irish Defence Forces about former Irish soldiers working with ITS to train Libyan forces, which is in breach of EU and UN embargoes on such work in that country.

It may be that *ST* security correspondent John Mooney – whose view of Irish foreign and security policy does not conflict with his newspaper's western world view – believes that an investigation into ITS is small beer compared to the major inquiries he conducts into the nefarious behaviour of Russia and other malign states such as China and Iran. Mooney was one of those specialists that last February addressed a Zoom webinar organised by ITS entitled, *Delivering Relevant Real World Security Skills – De-Risking the Security Threats to Ireland's FDI Success*.

## CROSS (VERY CROSS) BORDER VIEWS

*IRISH TIMES* northern editor Freya McClements wrote extensively and flatteringly about the longest-serving newspaper editor in these islands, Noel Doran, who is retiring after 25 years as editor of the *Irish News* (IN), the constitutional nationalist paper in the north. But Doran may not have been altogether flattered by the complimentary tone of McClements's article.

The article dealt with Doran's attitudes as deputy editor and editor towards major

events in the north, such as the Troubles, the peace process, Brexit and so on, as well as central personalities like John Hume, Ian Paisley, Gerry Adams etc.

Doran also touched on prospects for a border poll and argued that it would happen around "2030, maybe a bit beyond that", but it must surely happen and unionists cannot hold it back for too long.

Thankfully, the editor of the sole nationalist newspaper voice in the north appears not to have been asked what he thought of the Irish Government's attitude to his part of the, er, country and especially the sense of abandonment by Dublin that many nationalists have felt down the years. It may be that readers of the newspaper of reference would be interested in such cross-border opinions but the more mature thinkers behind the *IT*'s project, Common Ground – Evolving Islands: Ireland & Britain, would probably not approve of such naked nationalism.

It is not as if the *IN* has normally been slow to voice the most trenchant views about Dublin ministers and taoisigh, especially in the recent past. The newspaper excoriated then taoiseach Micheál Martin in 2022 in the most concerted attack on any taoiseach from the long-time voice of northern, constitutional nationalism.

Academic and writer Brian Feeney, as well as former *IN* editor Tom Collins, savaged Martin, with Feeney describing his speech at the annual Seán Lemass commemoration as a "tired deadbeat sermon... of vapid, vacuous piosity saying nothing".

Collins, like Feeney, is a respected academic, author and BBC commentator and their joint broadside reflected the angst that the southern coalition government evokes among northern nationalists, especially since FF went into coalition.

Other Dublin ministers in previous coalitions to feel the wrath of the traditionally moderate *IN* have been former tánaiste Eamon Gilmore and ex-justice minister Charlie 'BlackandTanAgain' Flanagan.

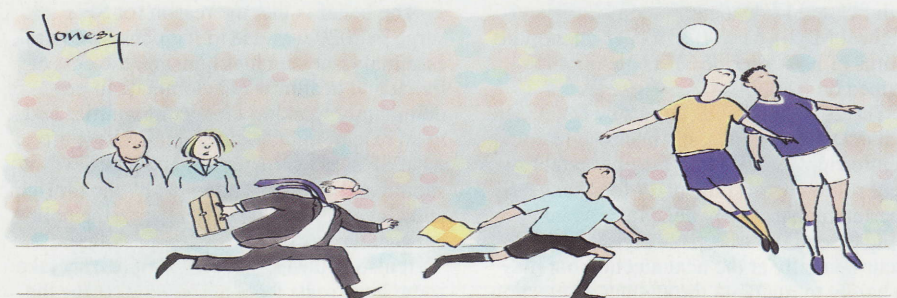
It may be just as well that the *IT* did not elicit this sense of betrayal that the northern newspaper – the long-time champion of those extremist parliamentarians in the SDLP – has come to reflect in its editorials and columns.

*IT* political editor Pat Leahy last weekend referred – unflatteringly – to Derry barrister Joe Brolly as a "spokesman for Northern nationalism's resentment of their Southern confreres" and who will bring a "bitter, personalised and partisan" discourse to discussion about a united Ireland.

In other words, Brolly does not hold any common ground with the *IT*.



Noel Doran



"About time - they're warming up the lawyer"



## DECOMMISSIONING QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY

SINCE RUSSIA'S invasion of Ukraine in 2022 business has been booming at Thales UK's weapons plants in the north. Thales designs and manufactures missiles including Starstreak, lightweight multi-role missile systems and the NLAW shoulder-launched missile system at plants in east Belfast and Crossgar, Co Down.

Since the outbreak of the war these plants have doubled production and Thales recently claimed that production is set to double again soon. It also has a partnership with Israeli company Elbit to manufacture Watchkeeper WK450 drones in Leicester, which Israel has frequently used in Gaza.

Thales CEO Alex Cresswell has dismissed criticism of the arms industry: "I don't see that I'm profiting from misery. I see the opposite: by being prepared, I'm averting more misery."

Thales has long had links to Queen's University Belfast, where it has funded research into cybersecurity at the university's Centre for Secure Information Technologies and financed studies into artificial intelligence and aerodynamics. Thales is so welcome on campus that it is part of The Chief Executives' Club at Queen's, where academics and business leaders meet for 'breakfast lectures' and 'Christmas networking drinks'.

With the protests that began at Columbia University in New York – demanding that the college divests from companies involved with Israel's military – spreading across campuses throughout the US, the question of whether similar protest camps might be initiated here would seem pertinent for Queen's.

Indeed, a referendum to "decolonise, demilitarise and democratise Queen's University Belfast" organised by its students' union last December might have started the



Hilary Clinton

process of the university's divestment and disengagement, not only from Thales but also from BAE Systems and other arms companies or those investing in such companies.

The referendum motion was also very critical of Queen's chancellor Hilary Clinton's open support for the bombing campaign against Gaza. With 89% of students who voted backing the proposal, it seemed clear that Queen's would have to take action. In the same week Thales was boasting of increased production at its factories in the north, QUB Student's Union announced that an agreement had been reached with a delegation from the university's management to start a process to deal with the issues raised in the referendum.

## BRIGADIER MACLELLAN IN DARK

WITH THE Crown's decision last month not to prosecute the paratroopers who perjured themselves at the Saville inquiry, a number of doors slammed shut on the deepest secrets of Bloody Sunday. A further possible avenue closed with the recent deaths of General Frank Kitson and Col Derek Wilford. General Patrick MacLellan, another key figure in Bloody Sunday, died at the end of April, but at least he passed some of the secrets of that foul day to an Irish author in 2020.

MacLellan, whose wife had Irish roots and relatives in Kinsale, was in command of the British Army in Derry on Bloody Sunday. He viewed Derry as a nationalist area and had developed a policy of soaking up the violence generated by nationalist rioters while the politicians strove to reach a political settlement. That meant tolerating 'Free Derry', a place that was off-limits to the RUC and the British Army. MacLellan's immediate superior, Gen Robert Ford, was aghast.

Ford was an admirer of then Brigadier Frank Kitson, who believed in hammering nationalist communities into submission. Kitson was aided and abetted by Wilford, the commander of 1 Para, during his reign of terror in Belfast. The pair produced the Ballymurphy massacre, in which 11 people were murdered by British troops.

Ford and Kitson were exasperated at

MacLellan's softly, softly approach.

Military intelligence, which reported to Ford, had an agent in Derry, James Miller. He was a lift engineer, which gave him access to the Rossville flats in the Bogside. But Miller was a conman and concocted a story in the week running up to Bloody Sunday that he had witnessed some 40 IRA auxiliaries practising to shoot at the British Army during the civil rights march scheduled for the end of that week.

Ford went to Derry on that fateful day accompanied by his own mobile communications truck and armed bodyguards. He 'lent' 1 Para to MacLellan for the day. Secretly, and contrary to MacLellan's express orders, Wilford readied the deadly C

Company of 1 Para to sweep into the Bogside.

In 2020 the discreet MacLellan told author David Burke that Miller's intelligence had been withheld from him, the man most entitled to receive it. Burke did not reveal MacLellan as one of his sources but included the information *Kitson's Irish War*. Burke concluded that Ford did not want MacLellan to learn about the IRA ambush party lest he keep the army away from the Rossville flats danger zone and the author argues that Ford wanted to invade and "retake" the Bogside.

On Bloody Sunday, Wilford chomped at the bit to deploy while MacLellan held him on a tight leash. Eventually Ford ordered MacLellan to release the paratroopers. C Company leaped out of personnel carriers with guns ablaze at the spot where Miller alleged the IRA would be waiting. But the IRA was not there. Nonetheless, the paratroopers shot all around them, including at a balcony on the Rossville flats where Miller had alleged the IRA had been training. Lord Saville failed to appreciate the significance of Miller's lies and blamed the massacre on an inexplicable rampage by 1 Para.

Soldier F is probably the last person who truly knows what happened on Bloody Sunday. He awaits his trial for murder.



Frank Kitson





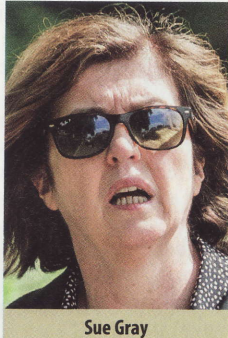
## AFFAIRS OF THE NATION

## AFFAIRS OF THE NATION



## STARMER AND SUE GRAY'S ENEMIES

THE LIKELY advent of Labour leader Keir Starmer and his chief of staff, Sue Gray, at the helm of the British government is already causing ripples in Whitehall and Northern Ireland Office (NIO) circles, both of which have experience of Gray's *modus operandi* as a watchdog for the permanent government and the deep state in recent decades.



Sue Gray

A recent splash about Gray's time in the north by senior Mediahuis editor Sam McBride in the *Belfast Telegraph* spoke of a scary conversation by senior NIO officials; a "controversial unauthorised interview to the BBC" (by Gray); and a residue of resentment against the super bureaucrat after she left her senior role there to return to the cabinet office to head up Boris Johnson's unit charged with strengthening up the union.

Also mentioned in the article was that Gray did not get the job as head of the north's civil service in 2020 "because Arlene Foster and Michelle O'Neill couldn't agree". The precise reason was that O'Neill wouldn't agree because Sinn Féin regarded Gray as a "securocrat", a view strengthened by various remarks from British establishment politicians and others (see *The Phoenix* 28/1/22).

An especially sensitive part of the article was a reference to her reaction to a BBC interview in which it was put to her that she was a spy (a British spy, that is), which she avoided answering, saying inscrutably: "I

know you had that put to you. I think if I was a spy I'd be a pretty poor spy if people are talking about me being a spy."

Gray's influence in top Whitehall circles cannot be exaggerated and she was once described by Tory cabinet minister Oliver Letwin as a "lady called Sue Gray, the head of ethics or something in the Cabinet Office. Unless she agrees, things just don't happen."

But her recruitment to Starmer's C/S position has enraged right-wing establishment and Tory figures in the British body politic and in the NIO, who see her as a traitor who has gone over to the Labour opposition and will be 'in charge' when Starmer comes to power. There is even talk of a small but significant purge in the Cabinet Office that she will take some pleasure in implementing when the hour of victory comes.

Many of the rumours about her top-level intelligence links stem from her time in the north, where at one stage in the late 1980s she ran a pub with her husband near Rathfriland. The strong hints in the leaks

*Continued on page 4*

**EARLIER THIS MONTH**, the *Business Post* published a cry to arms under a headline that warned: "The Irish media sector won't hold out against social media". The piece was written on foot of Mediahuis's proposed purchase of *The Journal*, which is where the *Biz Post* also happened to be sniffing around.

The *Business Post* Group is controlled by Enda O'Coineen, who has been on the acquisition trail for some time and has added the likes of the Red C polling company and iQuest marketing firm, while it also owns titles like *Irish Tatler* and *Food and Wine*.

When Mediahuis's interest in *The Journal* was made known, there was panic among the online organ's staff, given the Belgian giant's stringent cost cutting in recent times. Certainly, there would have been blood had the takeover actually gone through.

According to the *Irish Times*, the underbidder was the *Business Post* and O'Coineen didn't deny this to Goldhawk. No doubt he remains interested, which might explain why Ian Guider's *Post* article proclaimed: "Commercially, a takeover [of *The Journal*] makes strategic sense." It would, apparently, "secure the future" of the online newspaper.

Of course, the role of the regulator (Comisiún na Meán) would be "crucial" but it should not forget that "a strong Irish media sector can probably only thrive through a series of mergers". Hear, hear!

## PAUL HOURICAN'S SURPRISE

AN ENGLISH firm, Igniye Ltd, has just registered a judgment for a paltry €15,000 against a company owned by Goldhawk's favourite landlord, Paul Hourican. It appears to have something to do with the management of his business's reputation.

Fans of *The Phoenix* will be familiar with Hourican's rental adventures thanks to the high-profile collapse of Period Door Properties Ltd (PDP). It will be recalled (see *The Phoenix* 23/4/21) that he first made an impact when complaints by tenants in the Dublin properties he was sub-letting reached critical levels, with the Residential Tenancies Board ruling against PDP on various occasions. Among the more high-profile complainants was one Bob Geldof, whose Dún Laoghaire property had been rented to PDP at €4,500 a month.

PDP was incorporated back in 2014 to rent out upmarket properties in southside Dublin (or at least the individual bedrooms in them) to mostly Silicon Valley types. But after the pandemic kicked in, the company was wound up in the High Court by Judge Michael Quinn. By then, Hourican had exited the board, along with his wife, designer Susan Hourican.

Hourican's Station Island Holdings had net assets of €1m at the end of March 2023, according to documents just filed. This is the entity against which the €15,000 judgment has been registered by Igniye, "the reputation experts". Its mission is to "work globally with companies, brands and individuals, to deliver positive and lasting online reputations".

Given the bad press generated by PDP, maybe Hourican felt his group's reputation needed some management and it could be that he didn't think Igniye had delivered on its lofty promises. Paul wasn't about to tell Goldhawk why he engaged with Igniye, however, and also said he was unaware that the judgment had been registered.

These days, Hourican trades as Property Letting And Management, which is a business name registered by Laputa Ltd, an entity 100%-owned by Station Island Holdings.

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to the *Bel Tel* about her shadowy existence are part of this backlash against “the most powerful person you’ve never heard of”, as one senior BBC programmer once described her.

Starmer’s people are not enamoured by the storm being whipped up by Gray’s opponents – or should that be victims? – and a somewhat defensive article in the Labour-oriented *New Statesman* recently derided the sources of the ‘spy’ rumours. According to the article some right-wing Tories, outraged at Gray’s report into partygate (which she took over in December 2021), began to maliciously and falsely peddle the intelligence gossip about Sue in the aftermath of the report.

However, this explanation hardly stacks up as reports of Gray being a spook pre-date the Covid inquiry by some years.

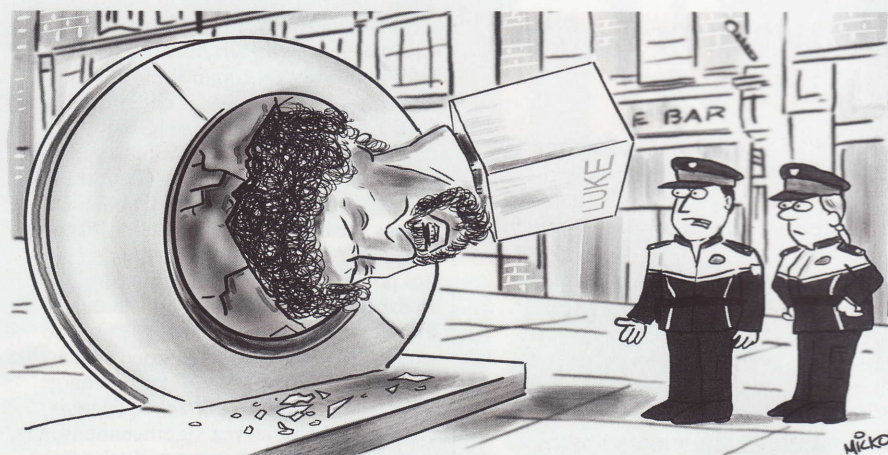
From an Irish or northern nationalist viewpoint, having Gray at Starmer’s side is not an enticing prospect. She once said her role was “to ensure and maintain the union” and whatever her links to the British intelligence apparatus are, she is hardly an ally of devolution in the north or a border poll.

## NATO: WHAT’S IN A NAME?

THE AVALANCHE of articles in mainstream media demanding that Ireland abandons neutrality has been accompanied by the Defence Forces becoming closer to both Nato and the EU’s burgeoning military forces. Every now and then reference is made in leaks from the Defence Forces about a new subgroup or project under the umbrella of Nato’s Partnership for Peace (PfP), that masterpiece of Orwellian euphemism.

Requests from Goldhawk to the Department of Defence for the full list of Nato subgroups to which Ireland has signed up since we joined the PfP 25 years ago was initially met with the insistence that the “PfP isn’t a subgroup of Nato *per se*, but it is the framework for Ireland’s entire co-operation with Nato. All co-operation comes under that.”

Following a further request for the names, dates and different agreements, projects and subgroups – whatever their description – that have been created via Ireland’s co-operation with Nato, a fuller response came. Much of this was composed of answers to questions that were not asked, such as that “participation in PfP does not involve any commitment to Nato’s common defence arrangements” and the paradoxical remark that “co-operating with Nato via Partnership for Peace on areas of mutual interest does not



“No one could have predicted it ending like this!”

indicate a move closer to Nato”.

The department also said: “Since 2015 Ireland has engaged with the Partnership Interoperability Advocacy Group (PIAG)... Ireland is not a member of any Nato subcommittee... Ireland is not part of the Nato Critical Undersea Infrastructure Coordination Cell.”

This sparse account of Irish involvement with Nato and the denial of involvement in “any Nato subcommittee” does not quite square with various references in *The Phoenix* and in other media to Nato/PfP subgroups.

Nearly two years ago *The Phoenix* reported on Ireland’s membership of Nato’s PfP and noted that western military cheerleaders, the *Irish Times*, had reported that the Government was considering membership of the Helsinki-based Nato subgroup, the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats; that the Government had just signed Ireland up to another Nato subgroup, the Malware Information Sharing Platform; and that in 2019 Ireland had joined the Estonian-based Nato Co-operative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence.

Along with the PfP and PIAG, that makes five distinct Nato subgroups that Ireland has joined.

How many other ‘groups’ or entities come under subheadings that the defence department referred to in its response to our queries? These included “women... climate change... resilience... and a number of areas that focus on Defence Forces capability development”.

Chair of the Nato Military Committee, Admiral Rob Bauer, would have had much to discuss with Irish Defence Forces chief of staff Lieutenant General Seán Clancy during his three-day visit to Ireland in late February.

## RWANDA WARNING IGNORED

THE DRAMATIC and forceful actions being taken by the current Government to address the refugee crisis, however unsympathetic they are to refugees, indicate a serious issue being tackled by a serious Government. As it happens, in Belfast’s High Court this week Mr Justice Humphreys made a ruling that may or may not have eased the crisis. That crisis is something that justice minister Helen McEntee put down to the overwhelming majority of asylum

seekers in the Republic being driven by the UK government’s Illegal Migration Act or the threat of deportation to Rwanda.

However, if the Government is all urgent can-do activity in the face of some voters disaffected by far-right demagogues, they can’t say they weren’t warned well in advance – nearly six months ago – that the Rwanda bill then being legislated would contradict terms of the Windsor Framework and the Belfast Agreement. Judge Humphreys’ ruling was made on precisely these terms.

As *The Phoenix* reported (see edition 3/5/24) British Labour MP Stella Creasy wrote to foreign minister Micheál Martin on December 7 last, warning him of the legislation’s implications and calling on him “to stand up for the Good Friday Agreement [GFA]”. She was ignored.

Creasy then contacted Irish Labour leader Ivana Bacik, who asked Martin, among other things, about his engagement with the British government on the issue. Martin was unable to answer that part of the question because he had made no approach to Downing Street about the matter.

Worse was to follow when Creasy made her own inquiries, via her foreign affairs sources, only to discover that Martin did not want to engage in another confrontation with HMG as he was about to initiate proceedings at the European Court of Human Rights on the Legacy Act.

So instead of the Irish Government being the guarantor of the GFA – as obliged by international treaty – it has been left to a British labour MP, a 16-year-old Iranian boy and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission to defend the GFA and, temporarily at least, solve the Rwanda emergency in so far as it affects Ireland.

### CORRECTION

In our edition of April 19, 2024, we described Catherine Arnold as having once worked as a “research assistant” for the Young Women’s Christian Association. In fact Arnold worked there as a “resident assistant” and she was a “research assistant” for Aladdin, helping refugees and asylum seekers.



Stella Creasy

### GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS RETROFIT PLEDGE





## AFFAIRS OF THE NATION

## 'NEITHER FANCIFUL NOR ABSURD'

FIFTY YEARS ago this month, four UVF car bombs blew apart 34 people in Dublin and Monaghan. The late Henry Barron, a retired judge of the Supreme Court, investigated the atrocities for the Irish government.

He concluded that suspicion of British intelligence involvement was "neither fanciful nor absurd".

He reached that conclusion before the emergence of a tsunami of evidence about loyalist collusion with the British

state; not to mention the millions the UK has paid in compensation to the victims of state-loyalist violence; nor Britain's desperate efforts to sweep evidence of conspiracy under the carpet with its so-called legacy legislation.

When Barron asked the British government for its files, he was rebuffed. What had the British to fear? The answer to that starts with British military intelligence and MI5's clandestine relationship with Billy Hanna and Robin Jackson, the leaders of the UVF bomb gang. Some of their former colleagues have claimed they were British agents.

British military intelligence insiders such as Fred Holroyd and Colin Wallace have also pointed the finger at British intelligence sponsorship of the atrocities. Clive Ponting, a former senior Ministry of Defence official attended meetings with MI5 officers to discuss how to prevent Wallace and Holroyd from making allegations about 'dirty tricks' in the north. Ponting revealed that MI5 officials were "genuinely worried about what Wallace might say". Wallace can point to a letter he wrote in 1975 in which he named nine of the Dublin and Monaghan bombers as British agents.

Holroyd, who had worked with military intelligence and MI6, discovered that Robin



Colin Wallace

Jackson was a British agent.

Several loyalists have claimed that British operatives supplied the bombs. This explains how the UVF managed to suddenly acquire bombs that contained ammonium nitrate, sodium nitrate and nitroglycerin. The UVF did not have the capacity to make that sort of device. The IRA, however, did. This raises the possibility that the 1974 bombs were manufactured from materials the British Army or RUC had confiscated. Alternatively, the British made them from scratch for the UVF.

Some 25 or more loyalists participated in the 1974 bombings. Within days the RUC knew who most of them were. The various inquiries led by Lord John Stevens revealed that the UK's intelligence services had hundreds of informers on their payrolls. Yet, somehow, no one was ever charged with the 1974 atrocities.

Dan Murphy, who led the short-lived Garda investigation, concluded that there was a deliberate policy by the RUC not to assist his inquiry. He felt the hand of a hidden power forcing the RUC to act that way. Only Denis Payne of MI5, the overarching spymaster at Stormont Castle, and his colleagues at the NIO, had that sort of authority.

The late Eamon Doherty and former Garda commissioner (1987-88) assisted the groundbreaking 1993 Yorkshire Television programme that pointed the finger at British intelligence involvement in the bombings.

The UK police inquiry, Operation Denton (see *The Phoenix* 18/4/24), is investigating the UVF gang responsible for the outrage. The prospect that it will produce intelligence from the secret files Henry Barron once sought is probably fanciful, if not absurd.

## BRITS ON STICKY WICKET

BRITAIN'S UNILATERAL decision to stifle victims' ability to seek truth and justice via its Legacy Act has been condemned not only by the Irish Government but also by the Council of Europe's commissioner for human rights, the UN's commissioner for human rights and all political parties in the north etc. Now the establishment of an expert advisory panel (EAP) to provide "independent advice and

guidance to the historians writing the public history of British policy during the conflict in Northern Ireland" is also proving to be fraught with difficulties.

The EAP is made up of nine academic historians and political scientists, who have oversight of all aspects of the project including the selection of qualified and independent historians to write the public history; advising on the overall structure and content; and even providing guidance on the selection and use of primary and secondary source materials including any sensitive or classified documents.

With the EAP being tasked with ensuring "a comprehensive and objective account of British policy during the Troubles", it was a surprise to see included on the panel Lord Paul Bew and Henry

Patterson, professors of politics at Queen's University Belfast and the University of Ulster respectively.

Bew and Patterson joined the Workers' Party (WP), colloquially known as the Stickies, in the early 1980s. At the time, these academic 'Marxists' were arguing that there was nothing inherently reactionary about the northern state. Patterson was co-opted on to the WP's ard chomairle in 1986. By the early 1990s, however, he was advocating that the only hope for progressive politics in the north was for the British Labour Party to establish branches there.

Around the same time in his book, *Making Sense*, Bew was arguing that the 1916 Easter Rising had been an aberration and its heritage needed to be rejected by the Irish political establishment. No surprise then that Bew went on to be an adviser to David Trimble when he was leader of the Ulster Unionist Party and was appointed as an independent peer to the House of Lords in 2006.

None of this is a state secret either and details were outlined in Brian Hanley and Scott Millar's comprehensive book, *The Lost Revolution: The Story of the Official IRA and the Workers' Party*.



Paul Bew







## BRITISH ARMS FOR A UNITED IRELAND!

WHEN EUROPEAN Commission president Ursula von der Leyen and Josep Borrell, the EU's high representative for foreign affairs and security policy, recently introduced the first ever European Defence Industrial Strategy (EDIS), they were doing so after a comprehensive process with key stakeholders. These included member states, the defence industry, the financial sector, think tanks, academics and the European Defence Agency (EDA). This momentous strategic, financial and political initiative merited precious little discussion in the Dáil or media.

The strategy sets three targets to be met by 2030. It requires intra-EU defence trade to represent at least 35% of the value of the total EU defence market; at least 40% of defence equipment should be procured in a collaborative manner; and at least half (and 60% by 2035) of defence procurement should be sourced internally in the EU.

Surprisingly, the proposals were not considered in detail during a Dáil debate on March 20, which preceded a meeting of the European Council in Brussels. Then taoiseach Leo Varadkar referred to EDIS, saying: "While defence remains a national competence, these proposals aim to stimulate production and joint procurement and to allow the EU both to aid Ukraine and develop further its industrial base."

He went on to say that the Irish policy of neutrality should not rule out identifying the "potential benefits" of the scheme for Irish industry and academic institutions, adding: "It will be important to engage maturely and constructively in these discussions."

While Labour's Brendan Howlin and Fianna Fáil's Seán Haughey both took

issue with the vagueness of Vlad's musings about the EDIS, Sinn Féin's response was more intriguing. With four SF TDs – SF spokesperson on foreign affairs and defence Matt Carthy, Mairéad Farrell, Mark Ward and Chris Andrews – contributing to the debate, it was striking that not one mentioned the EDIS.

In April a discussion paper, entitled *Defence Spending in the European Union*, from the European Commission's Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs put the EDIS proposals in context. The paper rightly articulated that EU defence policy has gone through four stages, starting with the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. The report highlights that through the Permanent Structured Cooperation, the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence, the European Peace Facility (EPF), the EDA and the European Defence Fund (EDF), the EU has achieved significant levels of collaboration in the terms of security and defence policy.

This has all been achieved by disregarding Article 41(2) of the Treaty on European Union, which prohibits the EU's budget including "expenditure arising from operations having military or defence implications". Expenditure on the EDF will be close to €10 billion for 2021-2027, while in the same period the EPF will spend €17 billion, but all this is kept "off budget".

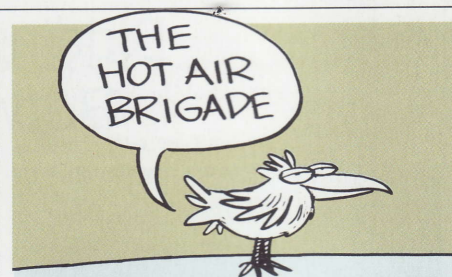
Of course, none of this would be shocking to Irish politicians, who have long debated the effects of such manoeuvring on Irish neutrality. Indeed, back in March Independent TD and former Army Ranger Wing member Cathal 'Gung Ho' Berry lauded the EDIS proposals, arguing that while it is looked on suspiciously in Ireland, as we need to arm our Defence Forces, we should be producing weapons and armoured vehicles ourselves.

Perhaps sensing the uneasiness of SF about all this, Gung Ho attempted to deliver a killer argument, claiming that having a defence industry "is part of the all-island agenda". Berry referred to the 1,200 workers at Harland & Wolff making, maintaining and refitting naval ships, while another 800 workers at Thales two plants in the north help to produce various missile systems.

Clearly satisfied that he had outflanked his opponents, Gung Ho charged: "If we are looking towards some kind of reunification over the next decade or so, that is something we must factor in and not run away from."



Ursula von der Leyen



I know there's a lot of celebrity people that sign their names to certain whiskeys. This is absolutely not the case with what we're doing.

**Michael Flatley on the launch of Flatley Whiskey, Business Post**



Michael Flatley

I remember the beautiful plainness of the event, the quiet dignity and respect displayed by working people – a butcher here, a mechanic there – heads bowed as the hearse passed. **Una Mullally recalls John McGahern's funeral in 2006, Irish Times**

The accent of the singer is the most essential component of country music and that's the genius of the Texas native's new album. **Conor Caldwell discusses Beyoncé's Cowboy Carter, rte.ie**

However, when she bought her own place, she realised there was something in the Irish DNA about owning property... What made the situation all the more emotional was that the day she had to close was also the day of the ultra-exclusive Met Gala fashion fundraiser. **Barry Egan on Samatha Barry buying her apartment in New York, Sunday Independent**

I was struck by the almost poignant way the married couple demonstrated their respect for the proceedings. I imagine that Lady Donaldson, who tilted her head and briefly smiled at points and even spoke a few words to the custody officer beside her, was – understandably – trying to convey a sense of confidence, ease and dignity amid an appearance that even the most accomplished public performer would find gruelling. **Ben Lowry reports on Jeffrey Donaldson's court hearing, Belfast News Letter, submitted by reader**

The simplest and most authentic way to channel the *Bridgerton* look is by investing in a series of sophisticated corsets. Although they can sometimes have a lingerie-esque feel, there are plenty of ways to wear a corset to achieve a chic and timeless look. **RTÉ Guide**

There was a famous British politician called Enoch Powell [who said]... politicians giving out about journalism is like a sailor giving out about the weather. It's completely pointless. That's what you have to live with. It's the same with the pay figures. Them's the rules, suck it up. **Bryan Dobson on his €200k salary, Irish Independent**

Irish men – with the bashful modesty we're unused to with movie stars, and their tendency towards the mysterious (neither Scott, Mescal nor Murphy have public social media accounts) – are approachable, desirable and sensitive enough to be considered leading men. **Kate Demolder, RTÉ Guide**

Please send suitable contributions to: The Hot Air Brigade, The Phoenix, 44 Lr Baggot St, Dublin 2 or email: hotair@thephoenix.ie





## AFFAIRS OF THE NATION



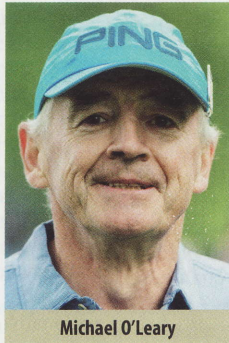
## CARELESS TCD

FOR THE embattled dons of Trinity College Dublin (TCD), one PR disaster – being forced by its students to divest from Israeli companies on a UN investment blacklist – was unfortunate. Two, and it's beginning to look like carelessness.

First, TCD climbed down after sustained student protests – and loss of income at its lucrative Book of Kells money pit – over its investments in Israeli companies involved in illegal settlements on Palestinian land. Within hours, it was embroiled in a fresh controversy involving Ireland's number one carbon polluter.

On May 8, TCD confirmed it would "complete a divestment from investments in Israeli companies that have activities in the Occupied Territories", a statement greeted as "historic" by TCD's Students' Union.

The next day Trinity announced that it had



Michael O'Leary

received €2.5m from what it cloyingly termed "Europe's no. 1 airline", bringing to €4m the total investment in its Ryanair Sustainable Aviation Research Centre.

It's easy money for cash-strapped TCD or as provost Linda Doyle put it: "Research must be central to combating climate change and promoting sustainable transport."

In December 2016, then provost Patrick Prendergast proudly declared the college had become Ireland's first to go "fossil-free" by pulling its investments in fossil fuels.

Clearly, that move eight years ago didn't extend to not taking cash from Michael O'Leary's Ryanair, one of Europe's 10 most polluting corporations. In 2023 it was responsible for a whopping 13.3 million tonnes of carbon emissions.

The silver bullet for the industry is to develop sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) that, it claims, would allow it to grow without worsening climate change. It appears to be a vain hope. It's reckoned that only 0.1% of all aviation is currently fuelled by SAFs, which are biofuels made from plant or animal materials.

But SAFs cost a lot more than jet kerosene and providing even a chunk of the 350 billion litres a year in fuel burned by the world's airlines via SAFs would require converting many millions of hectares of farmland away from food production.

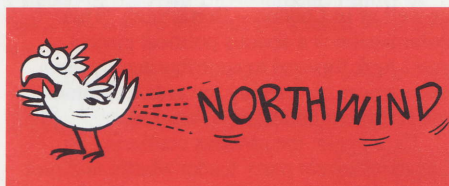
Right now, at a time of rising food insecurity as a result of climate-driven weather

extremes, seems like a really bad time to be diverting scarce food resources into a sector that is helping to accelerate climate change.

Whatever benefits TCD's research centre might ever provide in terms of cutting aviation emissions, the likely reason for this sponsorship largesse from a company headed by a man who has long scoffed at climate change is that it's a handy piece of academic greenwashing. It distracts from the reality that, like the whole industry, Ryanair has no plans to bring its emissions back down to earth.

**WON'T ANYONE think of Dublin Airport? Journalist and The Currency CEO Tom Lyons this week bemoaned the "myopic unwillingness" of our lily-livered politicians to make the "brave but necessary call" and expand Dublin Airport. Yes, Lyons acknowledged, we need to develop greener ways of flying but clearly this is a mere trifle compared with the really urgent imperative, which is, of course, ever more growth.**

**Lyons is in synch with his former Business Post colleagues in lobbying hard for expansion of the already huge numbers flying through this airport. The deepening global climate emergency cuts no ice with most Irish business journalists. Absolute physical emission limits are just waved away by the supposedly hard-nosed and ultra-rational business press with vague mutterings about non-existent technologies. Meanwhile, airports in Dubai and Brazil were recently left under several feet of water after 'extreme' flooding events. Who's next?**



## NO PHONE UNTAPPED

INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALIST Barry McCaffrey and journalist film maker Trevor Birney got more than they bargained for when their case against the PSNI's unlawful snooping on them finally came before Britain's Investigatory Powers Tribunal (IPT) a fortnight ago in London. The IPT is a superior court with a judge presiding. It considers complaints about covert action by public authorities, including the intelligence services, that may infringe human rights under the European Convention on Human Rights.

McCaffrey and Birney took their case in 2019 after their unlawful arrest the previous year by the PSNI, which was hoping to ferret out their sources for the 2017 award-winning film *No Stone Unturned* about a loyalist multiple killing in Loughinisland, Co Down, in 1994. The police wanted to discover their source for a document from the Police Ombudsman's Office that was cited in the film.

The two journalists sued the PSNI and it emerged that they had been arrested, their homes ransacked and electronic devices seized as "a distraction tactic" by the police in the hope that, on their release, one of them

might immediately contact their source, thereby revealing him or her to the spying police. The court found the police actions unlawful and awarded £875,000 damages plus costs against the PSNI.

Since 2019 McCaffrey and Birney have been dragging the PSNI "kicking and screaming", as Birney said, before the IPT. The PSNI had asked Durham Constabulary to investigate how the Police Ombudsman document fell into the journalists' hands. Ironically it was 600 pages of evidence from the Durham police, not the PSNI, which revealed to the IPT the extent of the PSNI's surveillance.

Minutes of a 2017 meeting of Durham police with two PSNI officers disclosed that the PSNI has a database that was trawled through twice a year for the phone records of selected journalists, believed to number eight.

McCaffrey's barrister, Ben Jaffey KC, said the PSNI called this procedure "a defensive operation" against journalists in NI.

How did they select journalists? "Troublemaker journalists who wrote disobliging things about the PSNI". Also journalists "who were always looking for a story". In other words journalists who were being journalists.

McCaffrey must have been very obviously a journalist because the IPT, which is an inquisitorial court, conducted its own inquiries and disclosed that the Metropolitan police had illegally accessed his phone data in 2011 and handed it to the PSNI in 2018. McCaffrey was placed under surveillance five times since 2011.

The IPT's inquiries also led to allegations that the PSNI had spied on Vincent



Vincent Kearney

Kearney, then a BBC journalist, now RTÉ's northern editor, when he was probing the independence of the Police Ombudsman's Office for a BBC *Spotlight* programme in 2011. The then ombudsman resigned shortly after Kearney's programme aired. The BBC has now joined in the action.

McCaffrey told the BBC last week that "police were physically following an individual from the Police Ombudsman's Office" to see who he met.

After the IPT hearing, Birney said: "The PSNI is absolutely obsessed with journalists and their sources. I think we need to remind the PSNI and remind the authorities in Belfast that journalism isn't a crime, that journalists all over the world have sources and that is lawful and that is what journalists are there to do."

But the PSNI's 'obsession' does not stop with journalists. The IPT heard that it tried to access data from Birney's wife and considered accessing personal data belonging to Birney's solicitor, Niall Murphy.

"The revelations exposed in court are chilling. The industrial-scale harvesting of sensitive data by the PSNI is akin to East German secret police in the early 1980s," Murphy said.

SDLP leader Colum Eastwood, who attended the hearing, said the revelations were "a scandal", while the Society of Editors condemned the PSNI's actions. The NUJ's Irish organiser, Ian McGuinness, called "yet again for the PSNI to come clean."

The PSNI is due to respond to the allegations in July.



## AFFAIRS OF THE NATION



## 'INDEPENDENT' MEDIA FUNDING

FOREIGN MINISTER and Tanáiste Micheál Martin continues to publicly and loudly mount a heroic defence against media minister Catherine Martin's proposals for the state to fund RTÉ. The Tanáiste has described the media minister's proposal as something that could lead to "unhealthy consequences" for democracy. But there is something of a contradiction between this virtuous stance by Mee-Hole and the ease with which he has presided over the disbursement of several million euros to deserving media via his department's Global Ireland Media Challenge Fund (GIMCF) set up in 2020.



Catherine Martin

A voluble Micheál Martin has warned that "separation between the government of the day and media funding" is an "important principle" and a "very serious issue which can't be just fudged". More recently, he warned that in other countries government funding of media shows "how that can erode democracy and undermine democracy". Dear me.

Such rhetoric contrasts sharply with the global, statesman-like tones of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) announcement of its €900,000 pa funding by GIMCF of various Irish media beginning in 2020. This was part of the Global Ireland 2025 strategy to expand Ireland's trade, culture and diaspora links as well as "support Ireland's foreign policy objectives". These objectives were based heavily on "Ireland's campaign for membership of the UN Security Council" which, having been achieved, required that

the Government now "communicate Ireland's enlarged role in the United Nations".

Significantly, the announcement made clear that the target audience was not global but rather domestic and that "the overall objective of the initiative is to deepen and broaden the understanding of the Irish public of significant global issues and Ireland's role in the wider world".

A stirring statement attached to the GIMCF declaration says: "Editorial independence, within the terms of the overall partnership agreement, will be preserved as a core principle [of the fund]." But of course.

As *The Phoenix* has repeatedly reported, Irish governments in the 21st century have moved mountains in trying to jettison traditional, neutral and non-aligned policies – policies that have earned the country an honourable role and profile in the world. The support of the domestic media, in particular coverage of the forum on international security led by Dame Louise Richardson (DBE), was regarded as vital in this campaign to throw out our foreign policy.

The list of media that have secured funding for this year is as follows: Reach, a group that includes the *Mirror*, *Irish Daily Star* and *RSVP*, received €100,000; the *Examiner*, part of the Irish Times group, received €100,000; and so too did the *Business Post*. Bauer Media (the German media group that owns Newstalk, Today FM and other radio stations) received €55,000.

In 2022 *The Phoenix* requested information under the Freedom of Information Act about records relating to the following funds dished out by the GIMCF: RTÉ, €360,000; Virgin Media TV, €200,000; and the *Journal*, €90,000 (see edition 29/7/22). Despite the GIMCF's ringing declaration that it wanted to "advance the principle of open government", the DFA refused to provide such information, saying that any documents that did exist had been "submitted to the Government for its consideration by a Minister or the Attorney General" or "contained statements made at a meeting of the Government".

**AN INTERESTING, alternative treatment of the 1974 Dublin/Monaghan bombings – one that involves award-winning actor Stephen Rae – is Frank Connolly's novel, *A Conspiracy of Lies*, which was recently released as an audiobook. Rea's smouldering narration signals the leap into the conspiracy of lies that gives the book its title. He brings various characters and the story to life in a powerful performance.**

*Listeners will know that this is not*

*an investigative work of journalism but a drama in which the British and Irish governments as well as northern loyalism are brought to life via various characters. Rae's unpleasant, Dublin-based British diplomat is played with verve and conviction.*

## O'DEA'S MEDIA MESSAGE TO MARTIN

MICHEÁL MARTIN'S media maestro, Paul Clarkson, and Martin's political brain, Deirdre Gillane, will have been very interested in former minister Willie O'Dea's take on the upcoming local and EU elections in the *Sunday Independent*, which contain a cryptic message – threat even – about possible adverse results for Fianna Fáil early next month. This message, however, is delivered in a roundabout sort of way by the wily O'Dea, who professes to be optimistic about his party's prospects at the elections.

According to O'Dea, the strong record and enthusiasm of FF candidates in these elections are such that the party should return with more councillors than any other

party but also with an increase in MEPs from its current two seats.

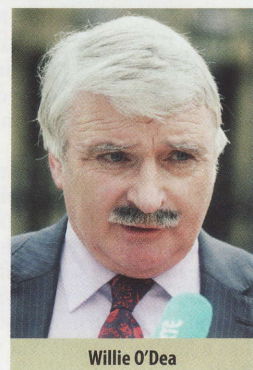
Whatever about an increase in MEPs (50:50), the chance of FF improving on its 276 councillors on 26.9% of the vote in 2019 is most unlikely and it's hard to believe that O'Dea himself believes it. He does qualify his prediction by saying: "With the right message and direction, this is achievable."

In a political party, the "message and direction" comes, of course, from the top – the leadership – and the subtext in O'Dea's article is that these qualities will determine June's election results. The other part of this not-so-subtle message is that Martin will have to bear responsibility for a bad election result.

In anticipation of a pre-electoral defensive argument from Martin's handlers – one which has already been wafting around media punditry – that local elections are similar to unreliable, mid-term elections, O'Dea said that a general election will come within months and the local results in particular would be the "best indicator" we will get of the general election results.

Last month O'Dea claimed, again in the *Sindo*, that allowing Fine Gael to reset after new leader Simon Harris took charge, while FF was content to stand idly by, was the "antithesis of partnership" in a coalition government. It allowed FG to reassert its identity while FF's already blurred image receded even further.

O'Dea went on to make even more strident criticisms of his party leadership's strategy in that article, to which Martin responded within 24 hours. Will he reply to the latest provocation?



Willie O'Dea





Continued from page 3

metaphor, was politically timely. It came just two months away from the elections and at a time when middle Ireland was becoming more and more exercised by Israeli genocide in Gaza.

Whatever about Martin's moves, Fine Gael cannot claim a better record given Coveney's manoeuvring as foreign minister for over five years to December 2022. Ten long years ago the Dáil unanimously passed a motion – not from FF/FG but Sinn Féin – recognising Palestinian statehood. It became part of the 2016 programme for government led by FG but foreign minister Coveney repeatedly argued that this clause also said that such recognition was “as part of a lasting settlement of the conflict”. These Jesuitical words enabled the government to say no recognition could be granted until there is a “final settlement”, ie not in the foreseeable future.

In an even more disingenuous move, ‘Covetous’ Coveney changed his tune when he led the Government’s vanity project to be elected to the UN Security Council, a goal that could only be secured with the support of developing countries. Suddenly in 2018, Coveney warned that, if Israel continued to block peace moves, Ireland would consider recognising Palestinian statehood. How very provocative – as were some thundering speeches supporting the Palestinians the then foreign minister made at the UN and elsewhere as he pursued the bauble of a place on the Security Council.

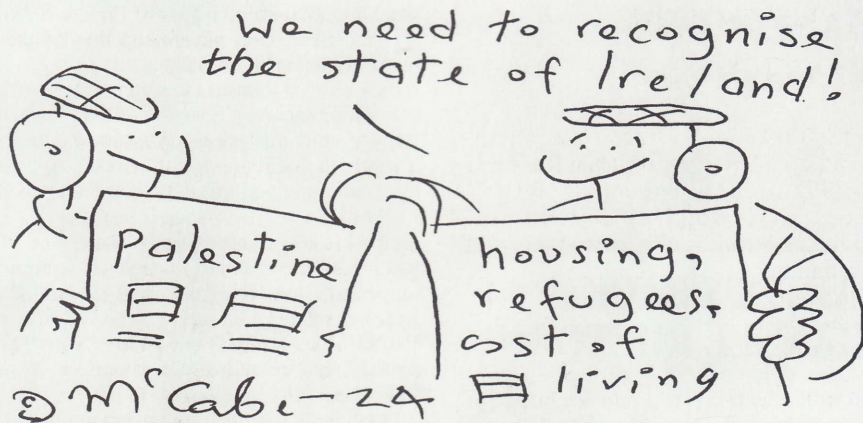
Not that Coveney meant any of it. In the same week that Ireland won its council seat in 2020, Coveney point blank refused to allow the Occupied Territories Bill – also passed by the Dáil and Seanad – into the programme for government, something the Greens were pushing for and Fianna Fáil had also agreed to. He also steered through a clause in the programme that pledged to “honour” the commitment “to recognise the state of Palestine” – but only as “part of a lasting settlement” or, failing that, in various other qualified circumstances.

Having won the UN prize the FG/FF-led Government simply dropped the Palestinians, while Coveney went as far as playing footsie with the team led by Donald Trump’s son-in-law, Jared Kushner, who presented the most pro-Israeli ‘peace’ plan the west has attempted to foist on the region (see *The Phoenix* 26/2/21).

Returning to the present state of play: Can we expect the current verbal solidarity with Palestinians to survive the electoral atmosphere and will words be translated into actions?

**NEWTALK WEEKEND presenter Anton Savage pitched into the 2FM crisis of its departing stars – Jennifer Zamparelli, Doireann Garrihy and the 2 Johnnies – with**

**IRELAND TO MISS EMISSIONS TARGETS**



*enthusiasm, and then some, last Saturday and Sunday. So voluble did Anton become he felt it necessary to tell listeners that they would be wrong to think that Newstalk and its owners, Bauer Media, were trying to take advantage of the 2FM issue to grab audience share. He also argued that the demands RTÉ was placing on stars such as those under discussion were over restrictive.*

*As diversions go this was impressive but Anton's guest journalist, Gráinne Ní Aodha, was having none of it and she said she did not believe the stars were being over restricted. She argued: "As far as I understand, it is a declaration of other interests."*

*With RTÉ still the subject of discussion, Savage said one could "make an argument that says that if you are in news and current affairs that you need to do that kind of declaration".*

*For some reason the commercial radio sector was not dragged into this conversation. In fact two other panellists insisted that RTÉ should have a register of interests because it was paid for by public funds.*

*But the issue is not public money but potential conflicts of interest for listeners of radio stations no matter how they are funded.*

*Savage is a co-owner, along with his mother, Terry Prone, of the Communications Clinic, which has trained more Fine Gael TDs and ministers as well as other politicians than any other such company. Savage and Prone regularly comment on politics and current affairs and right now Savage is focusing on the local and EU elections.*

*Goldhawk has lost count of the number of times The Phoenix has asked Savage to say if the list of clients on his company's website is exhaustive or if he has ever declared any conflict of interest in a story he was covering. The normally talkative broadcaster declined to answer each time.*

## CLANCY STANDS NEUTRALITY ON HEAD

THE TOP BRASS may not be able to put a ship to sea and may soon have to bring back press gangs to replace voluntary recruitment to the armed forces but they know how to manipulate the media and public opinion.

For months Irish ministers, as well as military and foreign policy chiefs, have been

eyeing up the next chair of the European Union Military Committee (EUMC) with almost sexual desire. When chief of staff Lieut General Seán Clancy recently beat off competition from Poland and Slovenia, there was euphoria in these circles.

The *Irish Times* editorialised with warm congratulations on Clancy “having been voted in by his EU peers who clearly have confidence in him despite the travails of the force he leads”.

In early April the *IT* wrote excitedly that, if Clancy were to take the post, he would be promoted from a three-star general to one with four stars. Oh joy!

According to the EU diplomatic service, the EUMC is the highest military body set up within the council

and is composed of the chiefs of defence of member states. It directs all military activities within the EU framework, in particular the planning and execution of military missions and operations under the Common Security and Defence Policy and the development of military capabilities.

The *IT* may wish to believe that Irish attachment to neutrality (a commitment the newspaper itself does not share) will allow Clancy to act as an “honest broker” in the EU debate about a new and enhanced military role required by the Ukrainian situation.

In fact Poland, one of Ireland’s two competitors for the post, was considered by some EU states as perhaps too close to Nato while the third applicant, Slovenia, was regarded as balancing between Nato and the EU. Ireland, alternatively, is regarded as a ‘good’ EU state and true.

You have to hand it to Clancy, though, who showed more sophistication and political nuance than foreign minister Micheál Martin with his blunderbuss approach last year via Dame Richardson’s forum on security. Aware that Ireland’s seizure of the EU’s top military job would confirm for many Irish voters that neutrality is being gradually undermined, Clancy claimed that Ireland’s neutrality was what earned him the post.

Most security experts believe that Ireland being placed at the head of the EUMC is a clever move designed to lock a willing Ireland into the EU’s burgeoning military force. In other words, it is the polar opposite of respect for Irish neutrality.





## AFFAIRS OF THE NATION

## SHANE ROSS'S RECORD

MANY YEARS after he had honed it to a fine art, *Sindo* columnist Shane Ross was back puffing up his former boss, Tony O'Reilly, in his weekly column last weekend, with a gushing tribute headlined: "A Titan and treasured family man".

His was of course only one of many such tributes from former employees to the one-time Independent News and Media supremo, as would be expected in the circumstances. Ross, who had been *in situ* as business editor at the *Sindo*, was eager to dispel any suggestions that O'Reilly had ever

dreamt of interfering in editorial content in his various media organs.

Of course, it is unlikely that the one-time media magnate would ever have had to lift the phone to Ross given the obsequious tone of his coverage of the great man. In his tribute last weekend, Lord Ross did manage to recall the one time Sir Anto had indeed got involved in editorial matters – by suggesting to his loyal business editor that probing questions be put to him about INM just as they were put to the chairs of other listed Irish companies. Nothing to hide here, ye see?

Ross also recalled how, at the lavish Castlemartin dinner parties the business editor would attend, Tony would sometimes make "oblique" reference to the *Sindo*'s coverage of the banks who were causing him difficulties "but his words were always spoken in jest".

Of course, attacking Tony's enemies rather than simply sucking up to him would have been a canny move by the outspoken *Sindo* business editor. And boy, did Ross deliver, most notably when one Denis O'Brien stumped up a wedge of cash to help the FAI to pay Giovanni Trapattoni's managerial salary in 2008.

In a multi-pronged attack on Dinny, Ross led the charge, expressing contempt for O'Brien's "army of spinners" and "squadron of PR spivs". He also made various references to DOB's tax-exile status and remarked that O'Brien was driven to personalised attacks on the O'Reillys because his pride had been

wounded following his loss of Eircom to Tony.

No wonder Tony never needed to lift the phone to his business editor.

*THE TIMES* of London published a lovingly crafted obituary of Bruce Arnold this week under the headline: "Writer who needled the Irish establishment". But did it accidentally unmask the man who for long was suspected by malevolent forces in the service of Aawrish Teeshock, Squire Hockey, of being a British agent?

The obit indulged in the English caricature of a civilised, aesthete labouring under the weight of political authority in a backward, church-dominated Ireland in which he was never fully accepted. He had arrived in Dublin to study at the oasis of Trinnern, "when the university was still dominated by Anglo-Irish Protestants and God Save the Queen was sung on formal occasions", the obit writer wistfully recounted.

Unfortunately, Brucie's obit ended on a strange note with the following paragraph: "A proud Briton who never took Irish citizenship, Arnold was appointed OBE in 2003 for services to journalism and Anglo-Irish relations. At his investiture and with typical boldness he asked Elizabeth II: 'When are you going to come to Ireland ma'am?' She gave him just a hint of an enigmatic smile as if to say 'in my own sweet time'.

"He was overjoyed when she finally died in 2011."

The author had earlier decried the view of some local upstarts that Arnold was a British spy. But did the inadvertent reference to Brucie's apparently virulent republicanism indicate that he was a double agent?

## SIMON PAYS

THE LIQUIDATOR is now in place at the homelessness charity, North West Simon Community (NWSC), which ran out of moolah less than two years after a meeting with the housing department

to plead its case. Donegal TD Thomas Pringle was in the chair here and had been vocal about the need for support for the agency from housing minister Darragh O'Brien, to no avail. Given the high profile of homelessness, this could yet turn into a subject that impacts on Fianna Fáil in Donegal, Sligo and Leitrim – part of the bitterly contested (by FF candidates!) Midlands-North-West Euro constituency.

The writing was on the wall at the agency (one of the eight Simon Community operations nationwide) for quite some time and the 2022 accounts, signed off at the end of last year, reveal that NWSC has been dipping into its reserves, a practice the directors admitted was "unsustainable" and had led to "a funding dilemma".

The collapse comes less than two years after the charity adopted a new strategic plan covering the period 2022 to 2026. It highlighted the money that the board claimed could be saved by the state if the recommendations were adopted by the Government, rather than big bucks being directed to emergency accommodation providers.

According to the annual report, since the coalition published its Housing For All strategy in 2021, the incidence of homelessness in the north-west region increased by "almost 80%". Not surprisingly then, spending by NWSC increased significantly, at the same time as income was actually reducing.

The charity had recorded income in 2018 of €553,000 (which includes fundraising and rental income as well as grants) and expenditure of €633,000, resulting in a deficit for that year of €80,000. In 2022, income had fallen to €400,000, while expenditure had jumped to a chunky €994,000, resulting in a deficit of almost €600,000. Clearly something had to give.

In the directors' report it was noted: "Throughout 2023, NWSC unsuccessfully pursued increased statutory funding to maintain its existing support to people at risk of homelessness."

The parent charity, Simon Communities of Ireland, was also approached but the reaction of the Mick Price-chaired board was to "commission an independent review... and undertake an evaluation of the strategic options available".

The end result has been the appointment earlier this month of Aengus Burns of Grant Thornton as liquidator. Meanwhile, Government spending on emergency accommodation has continued to rocket in the north west and elsewhere.



Shane Ross



Bruce Arnold



Thomas Pringle



"I don't have a problem with it."

## PÓGING THE THÓIN

His phrasing is exquisite, conveying all the frustration of a life unfulfilled in a few short lines. Long Island will deservedly cement Tóibín's place at the top table of novelists, not just in Ireland but across the world, as an astute and precious chronicler of the human heart in all its foibles. Exquisite. John Walshe, *Sunday Business Post* on Colm Tóibín's new novel *Long Island*



## OPERATION DENTON RE-VISITED

OPERATION DENTON is examining the decades-long homicidal rampage of the UVF's infamous Glenanne Gang. Its members operated in the mid-Ulster area during the three decades of the Troubles and were responsible for multiple atrocities, including the 1974 Dublin and Monaghan bombings. There is a considerable body of evidence that points to the fact the gang was a wholly-owned concern of the British deep state (see *The Phoenix* 17/5/24).

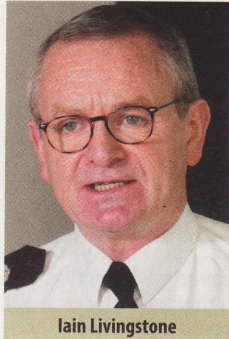
Sir Iain Livingstone leads the Operation Denton probe. Jaws dropped across the country earlier this month when he told RTÉ: "I can say categorically there was collusion. We know that to be true... What we are going to do... is define the character, the nature and the extent of that collusion."

Many understood this as a disclosure from a well-informed insider that MI5 exercised a level of control over the Glenanne death squad.

Livingstone, however, was hardly preparing the ground for a future (and more formal) seismic disclosure to be made in his report, due to be published in 2025. On the contrary, it is unlikely that he will link MI5 or any wing of British intelligence to the exploitation of the mid-Ulster UVF as a 'pseudo-gang', ie a proxy assassination arm of the state.

It has long been established that members of the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) and RUC were Glenanne members. John Weir, a self-confessed affiliate, served in the RUC's Special Patrol Group while commensurately murdering nationalists with his UVF associates.

When Livingstone spoke about collusion, he was referring to the overlap at ground level between gang members such as Weir and not the MI5 spooks in the lofty turrets at Stormont Castle.



Iain Livingstone

Livingstone will be relying heavily upon the files the PSNI and MI5 have already turned over to his team. It is not difficult to hazard a guess as to their contents: absolutely nothing concerning high-level collusion.

This is discernible from the stance MI5 and Whitehall have assumed in the defence of the civil action that the Dublin-Monaghan families are pursuing against the British state. A full riposte has been delivered denying state-level collusion. MI5 has hardly given Operation Denton files that will contradict the official defence being deployed to repel the Dublin-Monaghan families.

If Operation Denton was to determine that Billy Hanna and Robin Jackson, the key UVF planners of the Dublin-Monaghan atrocity, were British agents who acted on orders from MI5, the political heavens would fall. The gods of Whitehall will prevent that at any cost.

Readers of *The Phoenix* will recall that in 2021 Colin Wallace, a psychological operations officer at British Army HQNI in the 1970s, spoke to Operation Denton and provided it with records from the 1970s relating to the gang. Despite assurances in late 2023 from officers connected with the probe that they would engage in a further meeting with him, none had materialised by March last (see *The Phoenix* 23/3/24). By way of an update however, whilst Wallace has yet to have a face-to-face meeting with Operation Denton about what he knows, contact has finally been re-established with him.

We await developments, if any.

## STEENSON MELTDOWN

PROMINENT ANTI-IMMIGRATION activist Malachy Steenson is standing as an Independent candidate in Dublin's North Inner City local electoral area and the Dublin EU Parliament election. The cut and thrust of the campaign seems to have got to Steenson and on May 19 he had somewhat of a meltdown on his X account, publicly haranguing Sinn Féin candidates standing in the same constituency.

Steenson gained some notoriety and a media profile recently as spokesperson for East Wall Says No, a group campaigning

against the use of a former ESB building to house asylum seekers in November 2022. A series of marches and rallies he organised has kept Steenson to the fore of the anti-immigration movement in the 18 months since the initial protests.

Steenson ran before in the North Inner City, firstly as a candidate for the Workers' Party in 2009, when he received 281 votes, and then as an Independent in 2014, when he received 217 votes. On both occasions he failed to win a seat.

Coming into this election Steenson, on a number of podcasts and livestreams, was bullish about his chances in both elections. His campaign, however, has not been straightforward.

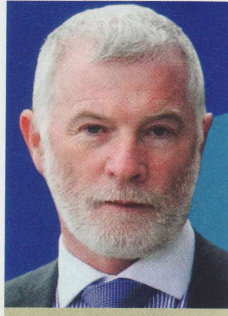
In the last month a series of three short videos have appeared on social media making all sorts of accusations against him, including having links to far-right activists in Ireland and Britain. The videos have been downloaded and shared on other social media platforms and have had a massive reach. One shared on X has had over 40,000 views.

On top of having this malign content distributed online, Steenson did not fare well in an *Irish Times* poll, which showed him languishing at 2% in the Dublin EU election, a similar figure to other new-right candidates.

Then on May 19, SF candidate Alan Whelan posted a quote from British trade unionist Mick Lynch speaking at the Tressell Festival about why every trade unionist must fight racism. But the cruellest cut of all came when Whelan reposted a *Phoenix* profile of Steenson (see edition 16/12/22).

In a series of posts that followed, Steenson went off the deep end. A flavour of the tweets came when Steenson replied to Whelan saying: "The Provos should keep clowns like you off social media as you really haven't a clue."

When Whelan responded that Steenson had not said a word when they had met two days earlier canvassing in the area, Steenson lashed back with: "What did you want me to say I don't normally speak to scum."



Malachy Steenson





## GOLDEN BOY'S TARNISHED IMAGE



IT IS natural that Tony O'Reilly's grown-up children would praise their father's qualities in funeral eulogies, as would any bereaved family members and friends. But the selection of tributes paid to the businessman focused heavily on his contribution as a publisher and, to a lesser extent, his commitment to politics and peace in Ireland. Whatever about his family, there is only so much licence that should be granted to media revisionists in repeating such cant about one of the wealthiest and most powerful men in modern Irish history. And O'Reilly did not hesitate to use that wealth and power to his advantage.

Mourners at his funeral heard his son, Cameron, tell of "the time and effort Mr O'Reilly put into his charity Ireland's Funds, which supported reconciliation projects north and south of the border during the Troubles. Along with the Irish papers he owned, he did this as he would 'never support men of violence'."

Son Gavin followed, saying that John Hume was one of "his political heroes in Ireland".

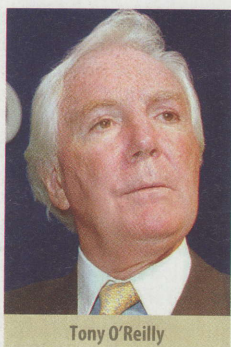
## VILIFICATION OF HUME

One of the stand-out features of southern reaction to the Troubles in the north was the vilification delivered to Hume on a weekly basis by the most profitable and best-selling of O'Reilly's titles, the *Sunday Independent*, when the SDLP leader was doing his best to bring the 'men of violence' into the peace process.

A small taste of that abuse came when Eoghan Harris argued: "If we persist with the peace process it will end with sectarian slaughter in the north, with bombs in Dublin, Cork and Galway, and with the ruthless reign by provisional gangs over the ghettos of Dublin. The only way to avoid this abyss is to cut the cord to John Hume."

Eamon Dunphy described Hume in the same period as "the political bomber flying over unionists' heads trying to kill them".

In the same year, 1993, one edition of the *Sindo* carried six articles attacking Hume, concluding with a cartoon depicting blood dripping from Hume's hands. O'Reilly's hero?



Tony O'Reilly

A cruder and more direct form of political interference came on the day of the 1997 general election, with the infamous front-page headline in the *Irish Independent* saying: "For years we have been bled white – now it's payback time". Underneath was an article attacking the Fine Gael/Labour coalition.

O'Reilly later denied that any of the self-interested arguments he had been having with that government over commercial issues had anything to do with the 'payback' article or that he had instructed the *Indo* to publish it.

Ten years later Goldhawk reported how O'Reilly interfered in the not-inconsiderable matter of a general election for the second time – or at least the second time that we know of. The *Sindo* was then savaging Bertie Ahern's Fianna Fáil-led coalition with the Progressive Democrats, largely because of its refusal to reform stamp duty to the satisfaction of various property owners at the newspaper.

## POW-WOW WITH BERTIE

On May 18, 2007, Goldhawk wrote: "Four weeks ago, Goldhawk predicted that FF heads would have a little talk with O'Reilly and persuade him to whip his newspapers into line (see *The Phoenix* 20/04/07). Just four days later, Bertie's state car glided round to Tony's town house in Fitzwilliam Square and An Taoiseach was ushered in to pow-wow with the man who appears to wield more power than Ireland's elected leaders. Shortly afterwards, Bertie was joined by the Minister for Finance, Brian Cowen, and the two made a political sales pitch to the Rupert Murdoch of Ireland. Bertie and Biff asked Tony if he really wanted to see a disparate, inept government like the last two FG-led coalitions, with a Labour Party led this time by former Workers' Party heads, installed in Government Buildings."

Suddenly the *Sindo*'s editorial line was reversed and criticism of Bertie and his murky financial dealings was dismissed as the work of the IRA, the "British-owned" *Daily Mail*, Fine Gael types and other malign forces.

Brendan O'Connor wrote that "there is no viable alternative to Ahern as Taoiseach" and Eoghan Harris recommended a vote for FF and Labour in an election that Bertie went on to win.

Another O'Reilly initiative via "the Irish papers he owned", this time in the business of media and publishing, came when the Irish Press group of newspapers fell into serious decline before closing in 1995. In December 1994 O'Reilly's benevolent Independent Newspapers bought a 24.9% stake in the Press titles, in a move described by the competition authority as an abuse of the Independent's dominant market position.



Brendan O'Connor

What the purchase actually meant was that it became next to impossible for any investor to buy the titles and the *Indo* had captured an apparently unassailable position in the Irish newspaper market, while the Press titles disappeared forever.

By 2011 O'Reilly had other competitors to worry about (as well as a most aggressive Denis O'Brien), with one of these being the Irish edition of the *Sunday Times*, which threatened to eat into the sales of O'Reilly's cash cow, the *Sindo*. O'Reilly's INM invested in the *Sunday Tribune* in 1992 but always treated the newspaper as a buffer against the *Sunday Times* rather than a title to be developed editorially and with adequate investment. The inevitable result was that the *Turbine*, being on a drip feed from INM for some years, continued to make heavy losses and O'Reilly closed it in 2011.

It is the *Sindo* which, until recent years, came to epitomise the success – and the values – of the INM group because of its commercial success.

O'Reilly was known to be embarrassed a little (too little) by the *Sindo*'s excesses, which resulted at one point in the newspaper being described – in an internal report by a marketing consultant firm hired to analyse the newspaper – as "trivial and trashy". But he was unwilling to tamper with the culture at the newspaper that was continuing to enrich him.

Nor would he move against the editorial line in his newspapers that traduced Hume because of his creation of the peace process, even though it seriously embarrassed him in Irish-American circles.

## EDITORIAL HORROR STORIES

Other results of the increasing devotion to 'trivial and trashy' editorial standards came with the O3 Girls, who frolicked weekly in seductive attire and penned a few paragraphs about modern tastes and whims.

Of far more serious consequence was the paper's coverage of Liam Lawlor's fatal car crash in Moscow, which erroneously reported that he had died in the company of a prostitute.

Other editorial horror stories included the murder of journalist Veronica Guerin nearly 30 years ago, which led to claims by her brother, Jimmy Guerin, that the *Sindo* had taken more care to "protect the circulation of the newspaper than they did to protect Veronica".

The picture of the take-over of INM from the 'good' Tony O'Reilly by the 'bad' Denis O'Brien was partly a result of the Moriarty Tribunal into O'Brien's capture of the mobile phone licence. It was also due to many journalists' deferential attitude towards what pliant headline writers called the golden boy of Irish business.



John Hume



## NEUTRALITY ANNOYS EU, FG AND BRITS

AFTER A European Parliament election campaign dominated by the issue of immigration, which was put centre stage by a cohort of ideologically committed hard-right parties and then amplified by more opportunistic politicians, the possibility that neutrality and not immigration will be the key issue for the newly elected parliamentarians, as well as Nato cheerleaders in Blighty, might sound fanciful.

The big guns, however, have already trained their sights on Ireland's policy of neutrality. The British Secretary of State for Defence, Grant Shapps, did not name Ireland, Malta, Austria and Switzerland in a speech to the London Defence Conference on May 22 but he was clearly referring to these neutral states when he said: "I will make the case for Nato to bring all those who benefit from the alliance's umbrella of protection into the organisation."

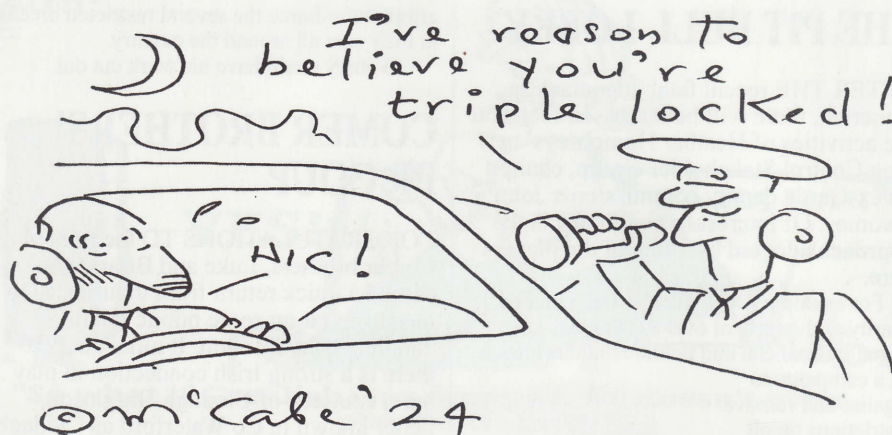
He added: "Some European countries effectively benefit from Nato coverage, they enjoy the benefits of freedom and liberty, and yet fail to sign up to the continent's collective deterrence."

While the speech was covered in the British press, you would search in vain for any mention of Shapps assertions regarding our neutrality in the *Irish Independent*, *Irish Times* etc. In the last month RTÉ managed to cover Shapps musings on Russian interference in Georgia and on the Rwanda scheme for migrants but nothing regarding his bellicose address on Irish neutrality.

A week later Dr Eoin Drea weighed in with an article on *Politico.eu*, entitled: "Ireland's the ultimate defense freeloader". Drea is a researcher in the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies, the official think-tank of the European People's Party, to which Fine Gael MEPs are aligned. Indeed, from 2020 to 2022 Drea was also a board member of FG's Policy Lab, which he describes as "an innovative new way of developing public policy".



Eoin Drea



During that time the Brussels boffin courted controversy, with articles in the *IT* condemning the hounding from office of Phil Hogan as a result of Golfgate and penning another *IT* article that critiqued the Government's hotel quarantine system as an international embarrassment.

The *IT* published two pieces by Drea musing on Irish engagement with the EU in 2023 but when he set out to pillory Irish neutrality in the lead up to the European Parliament elections it was a Brussels-based outlet that published his thoughts.

Drea did not hold back. Among other claims, he charged that Ireland "has, in effect, abdicated responsibility for protecting the Europe's north-western borders".

He added: "Unfortunately, so entrenched are the country's policymakers in their formula for defenseless neutrality that no major shift in policy is possible."

## DUBLIN-MONAGHAN BOMBING FILES

LAST MONTH President Michael D Higgins told the survivors and victims' relatives of the 1974 Dublin-Monaghan bomb atrocities that it was "not morally acceptable, nor is it politically feasible, to request that those affected by such tragedy should forget about the past, draw a line or move on..."

The Dublin-Monaghan victims want to see the files the Irish Government holds on the attacks. Tánaiste Micheál Martin said recently: "I've a general view that any files we have in Dublin, or within the Department of Justice or in An Garda Síochána, should be released to all inquiries in respect of atrocities

in Northern Ireland."

There are two ongoing UK inquiries: the Police Ombudsman Northern Ireland is probing the RUC's dealings with the UVF unit which perpetrated the bombings, while Operation Denton, led by Sir Iain Livingstone, is also looking at the bombers.

The Tánaiste may have opened a can of worms. In the 1990s, Garda Special Branch placed some of the Dublin-Monaghan campaigners under surveillance. One of them, the late Colonel John Morgan of Irish military intelligence, described in his book on the bombings: "Strange

things began to happen to me. Strange men were looking at me... Fit, hard-looking men. They were of a type. Big and brawny. Tough... Holding up newspapers. Not reading them. Peeping over the page... Getting flustered and looking away, hurriedly,

when they saw I saw them looking at me... They were Special Branchmen. They were tailing me...

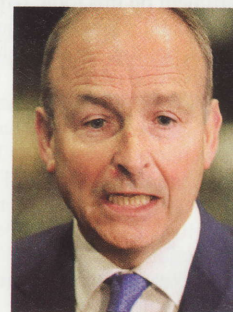
"At home, my phone began to act up. Sometimes it would emit noises. Rustling sounds... As time went by, I noticed these incidents would increase when matters became more urgent... When you don't hear the rustling sounds, it means they are not actively listening. However, they may still be tapping and taping..."

"One later afternoon I came home to find that, in my absence, a man had called to my door. He identified himself as a Branchman... He'd only wanted to talk to me, he'd said..."

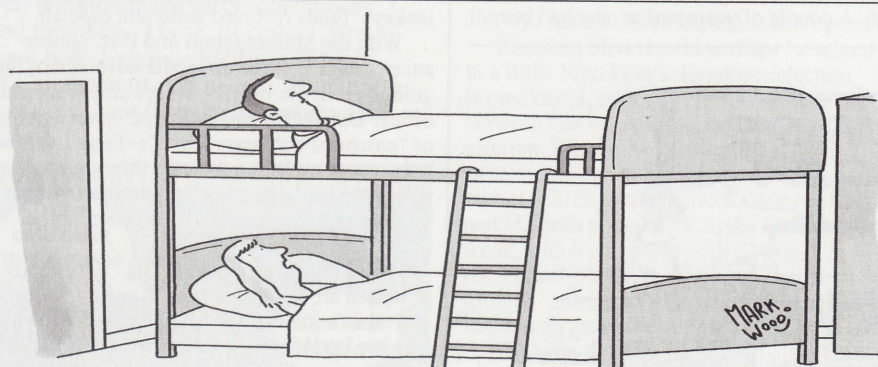
He called back on a later occasion, again while the colonel was out.

At the time, Morgan was assisting Yorkshire TV in investigating potential MI5 involvement in the attacks. He was not the sole activist to raise concerns about Garda surveillance.

The Tánaiste has mentioned giving "any" files to the UK inquiries. Heaven forbid that Dublin might furnish them with the surveillance files from the 1990s. Instead, they should be handed over to the targets of the scrutiny. What conceivable 'national security' concern could justify their concealment (aside from hiding the shady dealings of certain Special Branch men being manipulated by MI5)?



Micheál Martin



'When you invited me back to your place, I didn't realise you still lived with your parents.'



## MI6, HAUGHEY AND THE MAFIA

AN UPCOMING book on British intelligence in Ireland, *The Puppet Masters*, includes new material on Patrick Crinnion of Garda intelligence, who worked for MI6 in the 1960s and early 1970s. Author David Burke has gained access to papers written by Crinnion, which provide the backbone of the volume and shine new light on a string of historical events, including MI6's role in the Arms Crisis that split Fianna Fáil.

Burke delves into an MI6 smear plot directed against Charles Haughey that involved Crinnion. The scheme began after MI6 acquired an FBI report about the Mafia.

According to Crinnion, the report "set out [a list of] registered shareholders of [a] company in [Dublin] allegedly linked to the Mafia", which manufactured slot machines.

MI6 had passed the FBI extract to Thomas Mullen, a former Garda intelligence officer on MI6's payroll. Mullen and Crinnion set about manufacturing a connection between Haughey and the company.

Crinnion wrote later that he knew "from reading reports that the Mafia [were] active in international gun-running. I could think of no better cover for importing arms illegally than this arrangement involving slot machines..."

He went on to say that "some Mafia leaders had travelled to Dublin allegedly to meet Charles Haughey, TD."

Burke argues that Crinnion knew full well that he was involved in a smear plot with no basis in truth.

The FBI extract presented problems for Crinnion when it was discovered in his possession at the end of 1972 because it was a foreign intelligence document that had not



Charles Haughey

been sent to An Garda Síochána through the normal channels.

Crinnion defended his actions by claiming that "Tom Mullen [asked me] if I had ever known of any Mafia executives visiting Ireland to conduct business with Charles Haughey TD" and that the FBI information "might have [had] some police interest." Yet, he withheld the information from his superiors.

If any link could have been found between a shareholder or employee of the company and Haughey, MI6 had the skill to transform such an encounter into an appetising treat for Dublin's army of gossips.

Burke's book also delves into the role of John Wyman of MI6, who acted as Crinnion's handler. Wyman's roster boasted the notorious Littlejohn brothers, who spied on the Official IRA, robbed banks and were asked to carry out assassinations in the Republic.

Another topic covered is British collusion with the UVF in the bombing of Dublin in 1972, an outrage that ensured the passage of anti-IRA legislation.

There is also new information about MI6's tracking of Rita O'Hare (later the general secretary of Sinn Féin and the party's representative to Washington, 1998-2023) to Leopardstown and Foxrock in south Co Dublin. Wyman tipped off Crinnion as to her whereabouts, a development that led to the tapping of her phone. Through this, the gardaí gained access to the goings-on of the Provisional IRA's GHQ in Dublin.

## BIG JOBS FOR BIG IRISH SOLDIERS

FOLLOWING THE appointment of Defence Forces chief of staff Seán Clancy as the first Irish chairman of the EU Military Committee, Irish ex-officer Seán White was appointed by the European Defence Agency (EDA) as director for industry, synergies and enablers (ISE). Thus, the integration of the top brass of the Irish Defence Forces into joint EU military initiatives continues apace.

White is a former Irish Defence Forces brigadier general, who prior to moving to the EDA was director of communications,

information systems and cyber defence for the European Union Military Staff.

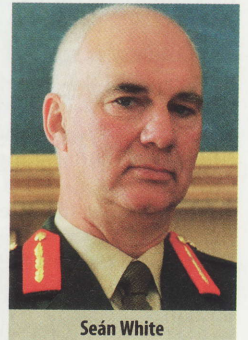
A native of Sligo, White's appointment comes at a critical juncture for the EDA – at the end of May EU defence ministers expanded the EDA's core tasks from three to five. Despite some criticism and reluctance of some countries to use EDA in this role, it was given the task of facilitating joint procurement and enabling collaborative defence research, technology and innovation.

In steps Brigadier General White who, as director of ISE for the EDA, is responsible for its industry strategy and EU policies unit, which will be central to the area of procurement.

The expansion of the EDA's remit and White's appointment should be assessed in the context of the recently approved European Defence Industrial Strategy (EDIS), which has three clear targets to be achieved by 2030 (see *The Phoenix* 17/5/24). This requires intra-EU defence trade to represent at least 35% of the value of the total EU defence market; that at least 40% of defence equipment should be procured in a collaborative manner; and at least half (and 60% by 2035) of defence procurement should be sourced internally in the EU.

It is unlikely that White's appointment is out of step with the aspirations of the Irish Government. It is telling too that, in May, Amy Graham wrote a piece for the Institute of International and European Affairs (IIEA), which posited that Irish small and medium-sized enterprises could benefit hugely from EDIS expenditure. Graham also claimed that, in the context of "Ireland's ambiguously neutral stance", it "must re-evaluate its posturing and determine if its legacy ideas of defence are compatible with the needs of the future".

The IIEA is that pro-EU quango founded by Brendan Halligan in 1991, which over the decades has received millions in funding from various Irish government sources.



Seán White





## AFFAIRS OF THE NATION

McNamara's victory in South at the recent EU elections.

Within minutes of the Independent TD's triumph, Timmy tweeted: "Congratulations to my neighbour and friend Michael McNamara who has tonight been elected to the European Parliament. Delighted for his wife Sarah Jane and his extended family, friends & campaign workers".

A senior front-bench spokesperson for FF in the past, Timmy has been in and out of the Dáil and Seanad since 2002 and was a TD from 2007 to 2020. At the 2020 general election count in Clare, Dooley found himself neck and neck with McNamara – not for the first time – before he was pipped by his 'neighbour and friend' on the 10th and last count, meaning Timmy had to accept a nomination to the Seanad from another great friend, Micheál Martin.

McNamara, formerly of the Labour Party, is now on the verge of joining the Renew group in the EU parliament, of which FF is also a member.

Timmy must be even more delighted – as long as his neighbour does not return from Europe any time soon.

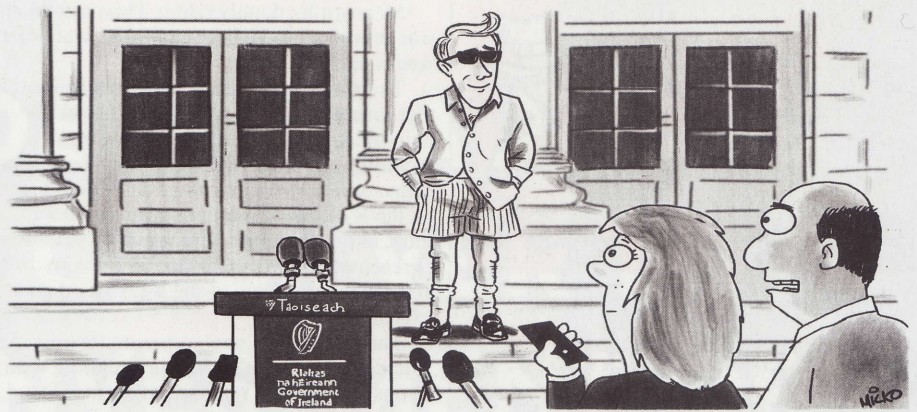
## DUBLIN DANGER FOR FIANNA Fáil

MICHEÁL MARTIN'S appointment of Jack Chambers as finance minister and also as deputy leader of Fianna Fáil, a post that had been vacant for four years, was doubtless a recognition of the party's need to project a Dublin image in these divisive times. It was also a reward for the party's unexpected success in the local elections, in which Chambers was FF's director of elections. But the awarding of these posts was hardly a form of approval for Jack's electoral leadership role in Dublin, where the party performed very poorly compared to the rest of the state.

Fine Gael had a good election in Dublin, taking 43 seats out of the 183 in Dublin City Council (DCC), Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown (DLR), South Dublin County Council (SDCC) and Fingal County Council, or 23.5% of the total number. This compares very well to FF's 24 seats in the same Dublin councils, or 13.1%. And while FF ministers expressed joy at their party's national vote percentage of 23% in the local results, the Dublin results should have raised many red flags.

Going through the different Dublin regions, the overwhelming picture is of FG mopping up seats in the four areas well ahead of their rivals in FF in the unspoken competition for top dog between the two governing centre parties. In DCC it was FG 11-FF 8; DLR, FG 16-FF 5; SDCC, FG 9-FF 5; and Fingal, FG 7-FF 6.

In the 2019 local elections, FF took 18.2% of the first-preference vote in Dublin and 26.9% nationally. Eight months later in the general election of 2020, it produced a



national share of 22.2%.

With dozens of Dublin Dáil seats in contention, it will be interesting to see the ratio of seats that will result from FF's local election share in Dublin of 13.1%.

Based on these local election figures, it is hard to see any Dublin constituency producing a gain for the party at the general election, (while FG can expect gains, especially in south Dublin). There could even be FF losses in constituencies such as Dublin South-West, where TD John Lahart could suffer from a weak vote in the locals (12.5% in SDCC). And another backbencher, Dún Laoghaire TD Cormac Devlin – where FG took 16 local seats to FF's five in DLR this month – faces a tough general election.

Much will depend on whether Sinn Féin manages to revive itself for the second time in five years and if so, by how much. Any revival, however, will damage FF more than FG, especially in Dublin.

Martin last week said that Chambers had received a great reaction to his role as director of elections from "around the country", an interesting qualification on the compliment. But Jack will need to improve the party's standing and vote share in the capital city at the general election if he is to proceed along the designated route of finance minister and party leader, as described by excited party 'sources' last week.

## GARDA BUGGERS

TD RICHARD Boyd Barrett hauled justice minister Helen McEntee over the coals in the Dáil last week regarding Garda surveillance of the survivors and families of those butchered during the Dublin-Monaghan (D-M) bombings (see *The Phoenix* 13/6/24).

Boyd Barrett asked the minister about the presence of undercover special branch officers at Garden of Remembrance ceremonies for the D-M victims in the 1990s.

In an earlier response to a written question, McEntee had informed Boyd Barrett that the issue was an operational matter for An Garda Síochána, not her department.

In the Dáil, she refused to engage any further with the scandal. Crucially, she did not deny that it had happened.

The D-M survivors were not the only victims of shadowing by the force. John Hume – a key architect of the peace process, a Nobel Peace Prize winner and former leader of the SDLP – was also a target.

During the all-party discussions of Dáil

parties at the New Ireland Forum in Dublin in the 1980s, members of a Garda unit availed of their access to the phone exchange in the basement of the Burlington Hotel. They frequently placed

recording devices on the phone lines leading to rooms occupied by guests.

The handpieces in the hotel acted as microphones, which picked up what was being discussed inside.

A connection to a room Hume was using was tapped. Details of Hume's discussions somehow wound their way to the Northern Ireland Office (NIO).

Hume realised what was afoot after an encounter with a spooky civil servant at the NIO, who tried to coerce him into conforming with NIO policy. The NIO man threatened to publicise information derived from the hotel as leverage.

Sir Garret FitzGerald, then taoiseach, intervened, approaching one of Thatcher's ministers in protest. The politician realised that if the sensitive information made its way to the press, he would be implicated in a political blackmail plot. The bloodhounds on Hume's tail were called off.

The Burlington scandal was kept under wraps but an indication of the uproar that might have erupted became apparent after the same Garda unit bugged a house in which Seamus Mallon was staying in Kilbarrack, Co Dublin, at this time. Mallon was the then deputy leader of the SDLP. The snoopers secreted a bugging device in the kitchen at the residence. After it was discovered, a media furore exploded.

Garda commissioner Larry Wren covered up the role played by his officers and sat back – as did FitzGerald – as the State prosecuted two innocent republicans for the intrusion, Patrick Stagg and John Doherty.

It is inconceivable that FitzGerald did not realise what was afoot at Kilbarrack, especially in light of what he knew about the activity at the Burlington. Yet he left Wren and his subordinates in place.

In a parallel development, solicitor Kevin Winters has resorted to warning the Government he will sue An Garda Síochána to ensure that it hands over all the relevant D-M files to the Police Ombudsman in NI.



Helen McEntee



Jack Chambers



## AFFAIRS OF THE NATION

## AFFAIRS OF THE NATION



## SPOOKY STARMER

AT LONG last, Britain's Deep State can breathe a sigh of relief as the keys to 10 Downing Street are finally in a safe pair of hands – those of Sir Kier Starmer.

Gone are the days when Britain's spies withheld intelligence from Boris Johnson, a politician who – against the wishes of MI5 and MI6 – socialised with, and ennobled, oligarchs with links to Russian intelligence (see *The Phoenix* 12/8/22).

Sue Gray, a woman with multiple links to the intelligence services, wounded Johnson with her 'Partygate' report (see *The Phoenix* 30/6/23).

Sir Simon McDonald, the former chief at the Foreign Office (and ex-MI6), administered the *coup de grace* to Johnson by exposing his lies over the Chris Pincher sexual harassment affair (see *The Phoenix* 9/9/22).

Jeremy Corbyn was another recent victim of dirty tricks. Jan Sarkocy, a former Czech spy, alleged he met Corbyn 10 times in 1986 and 1987 and that Corbyn was code-named 'Agent Cob'.

"He was our asset... He was getting money from us," said Sarkocy.

No one took any of this seriously.

No attempts have been made by the Deep State to undermine Starmer. Czech intelligence opened a file on him in 1986. It turned up in 2023 in the "Foreign Intelligence Main Directorate – Operative Files" archive. The British media presented it as innocuous. Corbyn would hardly have fared so well.

Starmer went on to become a successful human rights barrister and a supporter of an array of left-wing causes.

In 2005 he said: "I got made a Queen's Counsel, which is odd since I often used to propose the abolition of the monarchy."



Keir Starmer

Somewhere along the way, he mended his errant ways and sidled into bed with the establishment.

In 2008 he was appointed director of public prosecutions and head of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). As head, he chose not to prosecute MI5 for its role in the torture of Binyam Mohamed, an Ethiopian national and UK resident in Morocco. This "delighted" Jonathan Evans, the then director general of MI5. Starmer attended MI5's leaving party for Evans on April 16, 2013.

Leaked emails have shown how, under Starmer, the CPS colluded with their Swedish counterparts in the pursuit of Julian Assange.

Starmer retired from the CPS in 2013 and was knighted by the then Prince Charles. He became an MP in 2015.

Two years later Sir Kier earned another feather for his cap when he joined the spooky Trilateral Commission. He did so behind the back of Corbyn, his then party leader, while serving as a member of Corbyn's shadow cabinet.

The commission is a magnet for former

*Continued on page 4*

**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS** heavy-hitter Rory Godson doesn't spend much time tweeting but he clearly likes to get some things off his chest.

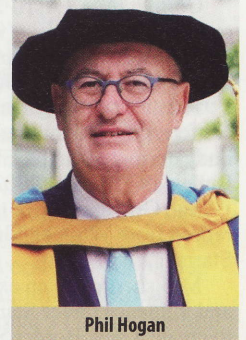
Last month, he was walking down the leafy street where he lives in London's SW1 when he spotted a chap pissing on his neighbour's doorstep. Rory made his disdain clear to the "guy, who says his name is Craig", only to be told he was "an Irish c\*\*\*" and then followed home "looking for a fight". Happily, Godson had snapped a pic of Craig ("who says he is very rich") and posted the story on X using his personal account emblazoned with the Powerscourt brand.

Many of the comments on the post were pretty negative, however, asking if the rather rich PR whizz was "trying to destroy [Craig] and his reputation" or wondering if a strategic communications consultant should be "engaging in this sort of outing activity". One comment even repeated the "c\*\*\*" epithet and expressed the hope that 'Craig' would sue poor Rory.

The fuss died down, however, when Godson deleted his provocative tweet. Presumably, he doesn't need to be dealing with keyboard warriors when he could be counting his money, having offloaded Powerscourt last year for a reported £50m. Rory owned 85% of the company, with the balance held by his wife, Hilary. The last accounts filed before the sale revealed dividends lashed out to the happy couple of just on £2m in 2022.

## PHIL HOGAN'S DOCTORATE

CONGRATULATIONS TO former EU commissioner and current unofficial advisor to Simon Harris, Phil Hogan, who landed an honorary doctorate in science from UCD. Goldhawk was eager to read the citation for the controversial lobbyist, who was forced to step down from his EU gig after the controversy that arose when Hogan was found to have taken a Dominic Cummings-type tour of Kildare shortly after he attended that infamous Oireachtas golf dinner in Clifden in 2020.



Phil Hogan

Among those who hung him out to dry were Leo Varadkar and Simon Coveney, neither now senior figures in FG.

Oddly, the press releases on UCD's website do not include anything trumpeting Dr Phil's award, so Goldhawk asked for some detail. Alas, there was no explanation for Hogan's hon doc in the material provided – maybe it is related to Phil's hugely lucrative lobbying operation in Brussels?

This operates under Triton Advisory, a company registered in Ireland, where Hogan is not a director (the two *in situ* are his sister, Joan Teehan, and his London-based son, Edward) but he does hold 100% of the shares.

The press release that was made available did at least include some words of wisdom from Phil, who expounded on "the profound wisdom of local communities" and quoted Tip O'Neill and Arthur Miller. He also took a swipe at the far right, stating that "identity is not threatened by newcomers but, rather, enhanced by embracing them".

Then it was back home to Brussels to start earning more moolah.

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...INITIALLY (AT LEAST) UNIONISTS WELCOMED MR BENN'S APPOINTMENT AS NEW NORTHERN IRELAND SECRETARY...



## AFFAIRS OF THE NATION

Continued from page 3

intelligence types and Starmer served alongside two former CIA heads. By now, he was set on ousting Corbyn.

Another figure set on removing Corbyn was Mike Pompeo, US Secretary of State, 2018-21, and a former director of the CIA, 2017-18. In June 2019 Pompeo leaked to the press his determination to “do [his] level best” to prevent a Corbyn premiership. A vitriolic media campaign was soon under way.

Corbyn fell in April 2020 and was replaced by Sir Kier. A smiling Pompeo and Starmer were photographed together at a meeting in London on July 21, 2020.

Starmer next became a guest speaker at conferences at Chatham House, a secretive body currently run by Eliza Manningham-Buller, DG of MI5, 2002-07.

Sue Gray, author of the ‘Partygate’ report, retired from Whitehall last year and became Starmer’s enforcer.

MI5 should see an expansion of its power and influence under Starmer. He has promised to create a new Border Security Command, which will employ hundreds of additional intelligence agents.

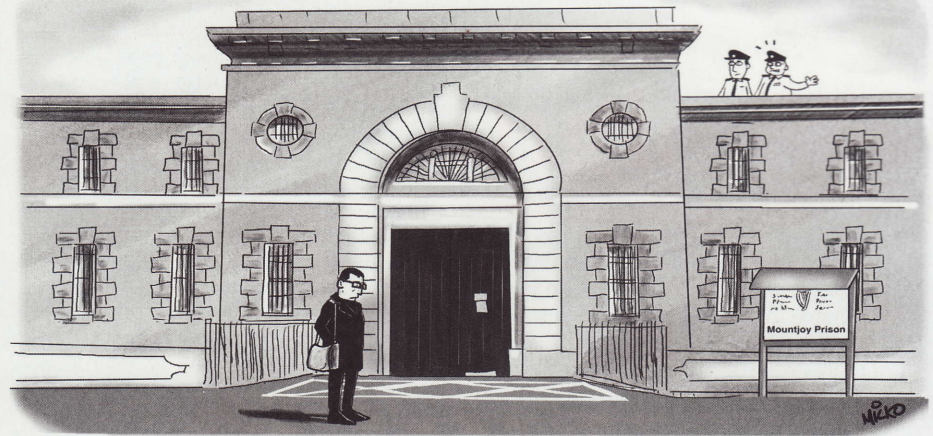
Time will tell if Starmer’s close relationship with the Deep State will stymie the attempts of Hilary Benn, the new NI secretary, to reverse the Conservatives’ legacy legislation, a universally disliked enactment (except among spooks) designed to conceal the truth about dirty tricks perpetrated by UK operatives in Ireland.

## MACRON’S FRENCH EMPIRE CRUMBLES

WITH FRENCH president Emmanuel Macron grappling with a complicated loss of power at home, his illusions about restoring the glory days of the French empire have also taken a battering with the announcement by Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger that they are forming an Alliance of Sahel States, which will support each other against external and internal threats. Irish military involvement in the region was as a fig leaf in support of traditional French colonialism.

This alliance follows on from the military government of Niger breaking with the French state and nationalising mining enterprises that previously were owned by French companies. France relies heavily on uranium from these Sahel states to power its nuclear-fired electricity generation in France. Niger, a major supplier (it produces 7% of the world’s uranium), has pointed out that its own population is for the most part without electricity even as the country gives France the wherewithal to generate its own.

Equally, the three states have pointed out that, despite having many gold mines, none



“No, Enoch! No!”

of their states have significant gold deposits, while France, which has no gold mines, has considerable deposits.

The three military governments have now required Germany to also withdraw military bases it had established in the region by insisting that all soldiers – French, German or whatever – will be subject to local law.

Pressure is also growing on US bases, especially in Niger, as all three states look to Russia to give them political and military backing as they confront the West.

Ireland is involved in this situation, of course, because Irish troops were sent to Mali as part of a French-led military intervention in that country. The Mali government, however, has severed its links with France and the whole enterprise calls into question once again why and for what purpose Irish troops were sent there – supposedly to train a Mali army that was expected to act in French interests.

How this is compatible with Irish neutrality is again something that is known only to God and Micheál Martin.

This also comes on foot of serious unrest in the French overseas territory of New Caledonia, where France is attempting to change the constitution to bring in recently established French settlers as citizens, with a vote that would outnumber the indigenous Melanesian Kanak population.

Macron is determined to strengthen French control of the territory which is the world’s third-largest producer of nickel, but Jean-Luc Mélenchon, leader of La France Insoumise, the main left party in France, has indicated his sympathy for the Kanak population.

Poor Macron. How is he supposed to re-establish France as a major influence in the world if he has to depend on the left at home to stay in power – the very left that is totally opposed to everything he wants to do.

**AN OMNI Air aircraft, N351AX, on contract to the US military, landed at Shannon last weekend from Rzeszow airport in the southeast of Poland. Rzeszow is the main supply airport for munitions and Nato**

**soldiers going into Ukraine. The plane also made a stop at Tallinn in Estonia, which neutrality activists in Shannon say shows that the plane was part of what they call the US proxy war in Ukraine against Russia. After refuelling, the plane took off on its way back to America.**

**These US military flights are not subject to any examination when they land in Shannon. Peace activist group Shannonwatch insists that we just do not know to what extent the flights are part of the Nato war machine but the indications are that they are indeed part of that enterprise.**

**This again raises the question of what is meant by Irish neutrality. Tánaiste and defence minister Micheál Martin got quite testy in the Dáil when challenged on this point.**

**“What planet are you living on?” he plaintively asked TDs who posed questions to him.**

**It seems that neutrality means to the Government whatever they want it to mean. So instead of trying to play a role to encourage an end to war and to find a way to peace, our role is to play a small but still valuable role in the West’s war effort.**

**Meanwhile military flights continue – and indeed are increasing in frequency. This begs the question as to whether the Russians or anybody else might consider Shannon a legitimate target in the event of Ukrainian hostilities increasing to a direct military confrontation between Nato and Russia.**

**Perhaps it’s not so much a question as what planet we are living on but will we have any planet left to live on at all?**



Emmanuel Macron



Micheál Martin

## SHORTALL & MURPHY TO STAND DOWN



It's time to give younger politicians a chance

That's what they're saying to Biden

## Correction

In the last issue, reference was made in an article on the Abbey Theatre to “the €700,000 payment to exiting co-directors Graham McLaren and Neil Murray”. This figure actually includes legal and other costs incurred by the Abbey in relation to the departure of the two directors. The redundancy packages were €63,333 each, with a further settlement of €110,000 to Mr McLaren in relation to the mishandling of the HR process. We are happy to correct this matter.



## MICHEÁL MARTIN'S TALL THALES

THE NUMBER and intensity of protests, including pickets and blockades of weapons manufacturer Thales UK plants, have ratcheted up significantly in recent months.

The ire of pro-Palestinian and anti-war protesters has been provoked by a contract Thales UK has to supply parts for Watchkeeper drones to Israeli company Elbit Systems.

The Watchkeepers were developed by Elbit and Thales UK with £1.4bn of funding from Britain's defence minister. Today Thales UK continues to supply parts for the 54 drones manufactured.

Early this month, 14 protesters were arrested after a blockade of Thales UK's Glasgow plant in Govan. In May there were also clashes between protesters and police at the same factory, with four activists arrested. There have also been pickets of the Thales UK plant in east Belfast, a site which was previously home to Short's Missile Systems.

Tánaiste and foreign affairs and defence minister Micheál Martin has made much of the Irish and Spanish request for a review of the EU-Israel Association Agreement, which governs trade between the EU and Israel, in response to Israel's carpet bombing of Gaza.

In May he asserted: "We're calling for a review by the Commission of the Association Agreement and particularly the degree to which Israel is fulfilling the mandatory human rights clauses of that agreement... We are of the view in Ireland that humanitarian law has been breached and broken time and time again now, and that the level of civilians dying, women and children, is quite shocking."

It did not come as a shock to Goldhawk, however, when the defence department issued a press release in June announcing that it had

just awarded a €76.1m contract to the Thales Group for a software-defined radio system for the Defence Forces. The systems will be produced by Thales UK and Thales France.

There is a clear link between Thales UK and the Watchtower drones deployed in Gaza. And the fact is that the Irish defence department has paid over €5m to Israeli company Aeronautics Defence Systems Ltd (see *The Phoenix* 23/2/24) since 2015 for a fleet of drones and the continuing maintenance of the fleet and the purchase of new batteries.

Is it any wonder European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen appears to be less than proactive in responding to the joint letter from Spain and Ireland last February demanding a review of the EU-Israel Association Agreement. That agreement contains human rights clauses that few reasonable people could argue have been observed in the last nine months or so.

## LABOUR'S LAMENTABLE LAMMY

NEW BRITISH foreign secretary David Lammy is a keen supporter of Nato. Appointed shadow foreign secretary by Kier Starmer in November 2021, he was quickly reassuring his new pals in Washington that the Corbyn era was over and there would be no change in UK foreign policy under Labour to that of the Tories.

In June 2022, Lammy attended the pro-Nato spookfest known as Bilderberg, in Washington DC. The trip cost £6,200 and was funded by Newbridge Advisory, a firm run by John Sawyers, MI6 chief, 2009-2014. At the time Sawyers was a director of British Petroleum. Lammy disclosed the benefaction in his parliamentary returns later that month.

Lammy also attended the 2023 Bilderberg conference, which was held in Lisburn.

Immediately after his appointment as foreign secretary, Lammy announced that he would be "delivering on European security [and] global security".

He claims his role model is Ernest Bevan, the trans-Atlanticist Labour foreign secretary who helped create Nato. One of Nato's most important trans-Atlantic security issues at the moment is the security of the undersea fibre-

optic cables that link the US and Europe and run through Ireland.

Last year Tánaiste Micheál Martin attempted to bamboozle the Irish public into supporting a closer relationship with Nato, EU militarism and the array of tribute acts that orbit them. Martin's vehicle of choice was the Consultative Forum on International Security Policy. It was a less than spectacular success. The Irish public was not in the mood to tug the forelock to the array of academic, security and intellectual beauties lined up by Martin.

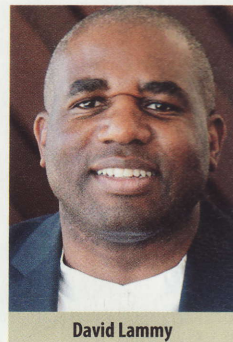
Under Lammy and his propaganda assets, Ireland can expect more lectures from our betters, not to mention frightening stories about maritime Russian bogeymen.

On July 1, 2024, *Bloomberg News* reported that a "Russian sub had reportedly been chased away from Cork Harbour". Worse still, "Russian attack submarines have conducted missions around the Irish Sea twice since [2022]... an unprecedented move by the Kremlin that forced the UK military to take steps to protect British and Irish waters."

Tell that to the Irish fishermen who have been dragged along by Royal Navy submarines that smashed into their nets.

Last June the recalcitrant Irish public was told what was what by the *Telegraph's* Tom Sharpe. The former defence ministry communications officer would have us believe the Russians are preparing to attack the Corrib gas field off the Mayo coast. He was indignant that a Norwegian submarine-hunting aircraft was allegedly deployed to follow a Russian submarine in Irish waters. "Ireland has a GDP larger than Norway's and yet, here it is, reliant on Norway's real maritime patrol aircraft to help defend it. The difference is that Norwegians are not freeloaders."

Right-thinking Irish citizens must have been mortified by Sharpe's supplementary assertion that "the Irish, who can't do anything for themselves, or worse, can't be bothered to and assume someone will do it for them..."



David Lammy



Ursula von der Leyen





## FRED HOLROYD'S ORWELLIAN TRAUMA

OPERATION DENTON has recently interviewed Fred Holroyd as part of its investigation into the 1974 Dublin-Monaghan (D-M) bombings, perpetrated by the notorious Glenanne gang. Holroyd served as a Military Intelligence Officer in the Special Military Intelligence Unit, NI, 1973-75. He was attached to the 3 Brigade area where members of the Glenanne gang operated.

Holroyd also worked for MI5. He has described how their "policy was basic and short sighted – use whatever means, legal or illegal". This included blackmail to force terrorists "to carry out operations that cannot be traced back to" MI5.

Holroyd kept detailed notes of what was happening around him. One reveals that William Hanna of the UVF, the leader of the D-M bomb gang, was providing bomb-making classes to his subordinates in the months before the D-M atrocities. He was not arrested, something that only makes sense if Hanna was a British agent.

Holroyd and his colleagues were ordered not to interfere with Robin 'The Jackal' Jackson, because Jackson "was working on behalf of the RUC Special Branch." Jackson was the man who drove the three bombs to Dublin in 1974.

Holroyd has also asserted that: "The RUC Special Branch 'ran' a number of Protestant paramilitaries in the Portadown area that I was aware of, some of them who operated with Robin Jackson. I, like most of my Army colleagues, was disgusted by this but was assured by my senior officers to 'go along with it'."

Holroyd objected to MI5's lethal programme of dirty tricks. In 1975 he was



Fred Holroyd

detained in the military wing of Musgrave Park Hospital in south Belfast. "I have evidence, through the recent disclosure of my British Army medical file, of a tortuous malicious conspiracy to unlawfully detain me in a military psychiatric institution and to force me to resign from the British Army," he stated in 2018. He is presently suing the British government for conspiracy.

Dr Hugh Thomas, a major with the Royal Army Medical Corp at Musgrave Park, revealed in 2018, "The first I knew about it was when a senior physician colleague of mine came into the theatre and sought sanctuary ... because he had been ordered to section Fred, and had found that an abhorrent request, which it was. ... It was an appalling thing to ask someone to section someone for a political reason."

Holroyd's Orwellian nightmare was far from over. Dark forces arranged for him to be transported to Netley military hospital in England in May 1975 where he was confined. That ended his military career.

Holroyd blew the whistle in the 1980s.

This was countered by a campaign of vilification against him by elements of the British press which ultimately failed.

If Operation Denton dismisses Holroyd's evidence as lacking credibility because of his detention at Netley Hospital, its officers will have serious questions to answer, especially if Holroyd's legal action is successful.

## MERCIFUL TORY MERCER

KEIR STARMER'S pledge to repeal the controversial Legacy Act, opposed by all political parties in the north, must come as a blow to former Tory Minister of State for Veterans' Affairs Johnny Mercer. The act set out to provide indemnity and immunity from prosecution for some perpetrators of crimes during the Troubles.

In introducing the act, Mercer had set out to provide succour to retired British security personnel who may have faced civil and criminal cases as well as their political masters. Ironically Mercer, who this month lost his Plymouth Moor View parliamentary seat,

which he had held since 2015, faces legal troubles himself in relation to the Independent Afghanistan Inquiry (IAI). The Afghanistan Inquiry was established in 2022 to investigate allegations that British Special Forces deployed to Afghanistan between 2010 and 2013 had engaged in war crimes.

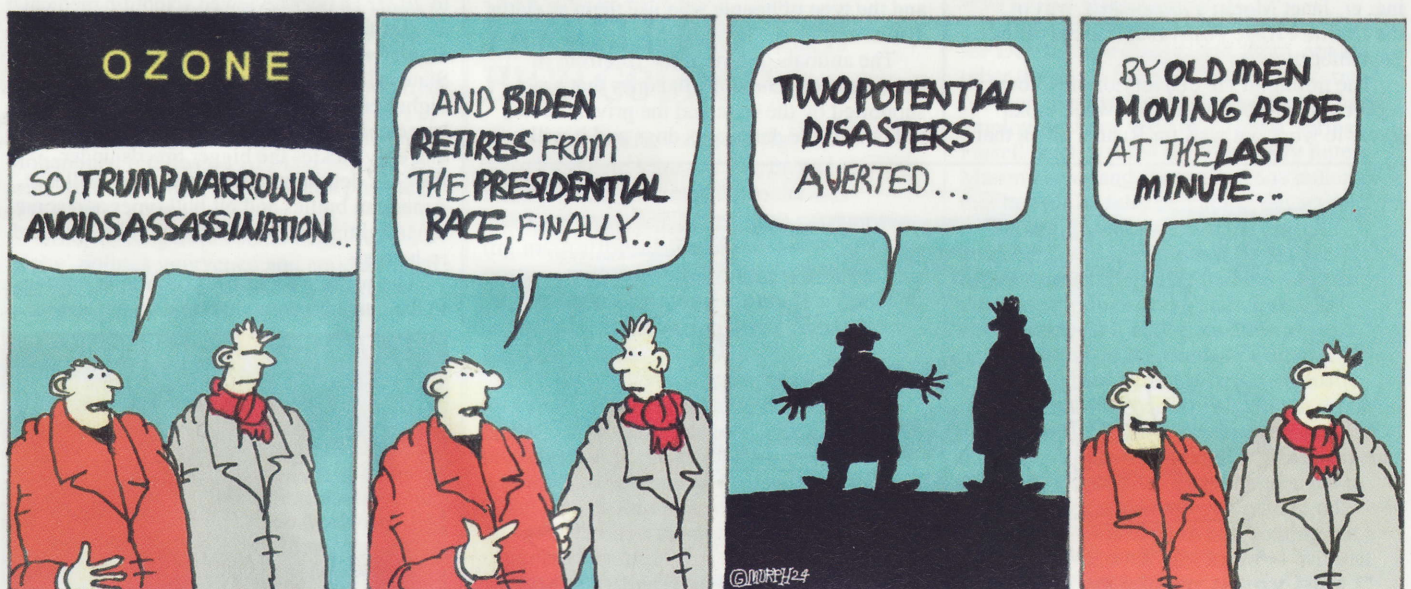
While Mercer laudably told the IAI in February that he believed members of the SAS had engaged in dozens of unlawful killings of Afghan civilians between 2010 and 2013, he has refused to identify the "multiple sources" who confided details of these atrocities to him as a backbench MP. Mercer himself served three tours in

Afghanistan as a captain with the Royal Artillery but attached to a Special Forces Unit. So when the Chair of the IAI Sir Charles Haddon-Cave ruled that Mercer must hand over the names of his sources by July 25 it was understandable that Mercer took it personally. Mercer said, "Mr Haddon-Cave must now stop fixating on attempting to bully me — I have done nothing wrong." He went on, "I gave my word to junior personnel who approached me. I intend to keep it."

The IAI is investigating up to 80 suspicious deaths resulting from SAS counter-terrorism night raids in Helmand province in Afghanistan. Allegations include that in one raid nine people were allegedly killed while sleeping; that Afghan males already detained and cable tied were taken back into buildings during searches and summarily executed; that so called 'drop weapons', AK-47s, were planted at scenes to justify the killings of unarmed persons; and that SAS units were competing with each other and Australian special forces to get the most kills. Add to that a cover up of these crimes by UK Special Forces headquarters and it all sounds very familiar. The controversial role of the SAS in Ireland during the Troubles is well documented and yet while Mercer is supportive of demands for justice by Afghan families, he hoped to shut down similar efforts by Irish victims and their families.



Johnny Mercer





## AFFAIRS OF THE NATION



## 'MY CHURCH, RIGHT OR WRONG'

Last December, *The Irish Times* published a statement from the Church of Ireland in a report by Arthur Beesley saying that it "neither owned nor operated" mother and baby institutions. Griffith College media academic Niall Meehan responded in a letter, based on research on behalf of survivors, that CoI clergy oversaw the Bethany Home and the aptly named Church of Ireland Magdalen Asylum (from 1979 called Denny House). The CoI Archbishop of Dublin, no less, sat on a Magdalen Asylum management committee.



Niall Meehan

You might think the *IT* would be keen to clarify an error published through no fault of its own. Alas on this issue, far from it, as Goldhawk has enumerated too often. The *IT* has a de facto policy of denying Meehan an opportunity to question CoI treatment of single mothers and abandoned or abused children. Ralph Walker, the *IT*'s chief executive from 1959 to 73, was heavily involved with the Protestant evangelical Bethany Home run by Hettie Walker, his aunt (see *The Phoenix*, 29/1/21).

The paper last published a letter from Meehan in January 2020. It was two months old and appeared only after then Press Ombudsman Peter Feeney's intervention. Meehan pinpointed the *Times*'s misreporting concerning an error in the Ryan Commission's report on child abuse.

Facts matter on this occasion also. The paper refused to publish Meehan's letter and

ignored his subsequent complaint. He wrote to the Press Ombudsman and, as in 2019-20, 'mediation' was attempted. Unlike then, the newspaper was having none of it. Editor Ruadhan Mac Cormaic responded, "The Church of Ireland statement is accurately quoted in an article... There is no need to 'correct the error' because there is no error in our reporting".

In light of this argument, that errors within inverted commas don't count, Press Ombudsman Susan McKay's task seemed clear: tell the newspaper to allow correction of an inaccurate or "distorted report" (as the Press Council Code of Practice puts it), howsoever attributed.

In May McKay came up with a tortured finding that "The Press Ombudsman finds that *The Irish Times* published in quotation marks an assertion made by the Church of Ireland as part of a news report about an ongoing process in relation to redress. The newspaper was not under any obligation to editorialise as to whether it believed the statement to be true or false."

Meehan appealed to the Press Council, the body that oversees ombudsman decisions, what he described as McKay's inability to apply what the Code of Practice plainly states. He had not argued, he wrote, that the paper was obliged to report (or 'editorialise') on the day of publication that the CoI statement was false. The paper, he argued, was obliged afterwards to assess contrary evidence and to publish a correction, explanation or clarification, as set out in the code.

Two months later the Council decided, in a curt statement, as follows: "There was no evidence that the Press Ombudsman had erred in her application of principle 1.2 of the Code, which was clearly encompassed in her decision".

That's it, in full. The majority of press council judgments usually detail reasons for decisions. Meehan asked the council to explain its new approach. "Why not, as is normal practice", he wrote, "explain how the code was, in your view, correctly applied?" 'Chairman' Rory Montgomery, a long-time department of foreign affairs mandarin, replied that the Council does not explain itself.

## IT'S NOT CRICKET

ONE OF the most enduring lines peddled by post peace process British securocrats, and enthusiastically relayed by the UK and Dublin media's security

'experts', is that British intelligence forced the IRA to negotiate in the early 1990s because they had infiltrated the paramilitary group at every level. Now Sam McBride, perhaps the most respected and sophisticated Unionist commentator in the media, north and south, has unearthed British government security documents that reveal this to be a myth.

McBride writes that British defence secretary Sir Malcom Rifkind told Prime Minister John Major in 1992, "Better intelligence is the key to significant attrition of terrorist capabilities, but PIRA maintain such tight security that intelligence of that quality is rarely attainable." Also in 1992, Rifkind told Major in a highly confidential memo marked, 'Secret UK eyes A', that "the diversity and degree of the PIRA threat has grown steadily since 1988".

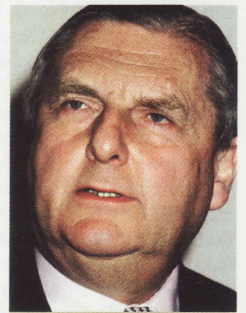
McBride also quoted senior cabinet official Pauline Neville Jones — later chair of the powerful joint intelligence committee (JIC) — who said it was "not right to keep extra army resources pinned down indefinitely merely because continuing shortcomings in intelligence co-ordination have to be compensated by increases in manpower".

The then northern secretary, Sir Patrick Mayhew, wanted changes to the law to allow for intelligence surveillance via technical devices, saying that while the political situation had improved, "the security problem was more stubborn".

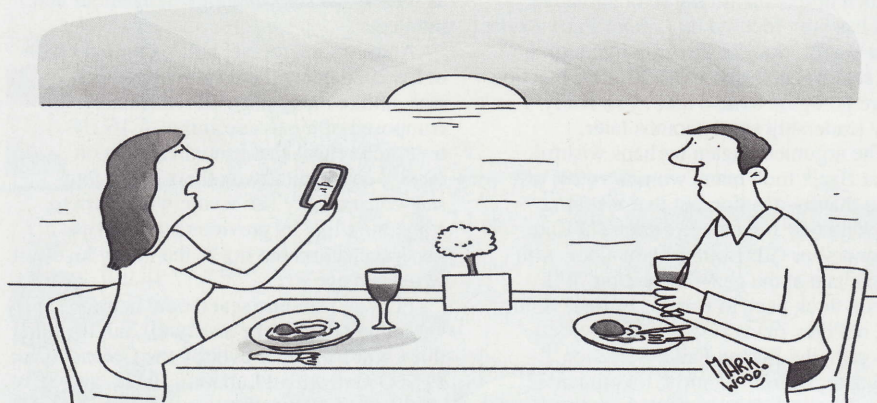
None of this information from the horses' mouths about the low level of intel the British Army had on the IRA squares with the repetitive, expert media analysis that says the IRA was hopelessly compromised by British penetration. But it does help to explain the high level of IRA activity like the Brighton bomb, the mortar attack on 10 Downing Street, attacks on the City of London, massive arms supplies from Libya, and so on during the period in which British security was supposed to be in control of the organisation.

McBride's detailed article was published in a Mediahuis title, the *Belfast Telegraph*, last Saturday, revealing the content of a number of secret memos that had "lain buried in Government archives for more than three decades, until now".

A day later, Mediahuis's southern flagship, the *Sunday Independent*, also ran a riveting article by McBride — on the modern history of cricket in Ireland.



Patrick Mayhew



'We're here to create content, not memories.'

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## AFFAIRS OF THE NATION

## AFFAIRS OF THE NATION

HUW EDWARDS  
AND MI5

HOW DID Huw Edwards, the former face of BBC News, maintain virtual immunity for so long given the evidence of his crimes involving sexual pictures of children? Police presented evidence at Westminster Magistrates' Court last week of Edwards sharing indecent images of children as far back as December, 2020. Yet the extent of MI5 surveillance of BBC programmers has been disseminated by main stream media and books in years long since past. Did MI5 really not know of the criminal, abusive activities of people like Edwards for so many years?

Edwards has a long history of sexual transgression at the BBC. His eventual undoing was a complaint made last year by the parents of a 17-year-old youth who was supplying him with indecent photographs and had received £35,000 in return. He was using the money to fund a cocaine habit.

Edwards presented the BBC's coverage of Prince Philip's funeral in 2021 during Covid restrictions. On the eve of the funeral, he suggested to a junior BBC producer that he stay with him in his hotel room for the night. Edwards sent the young man a photo of the room as an allurement.

The BBC has admitted that it has evidence of "inappropriate" behaviour on the part of Edwards towards other junior employees.

Edwards, on a salary of £529,999, carried enormous clout at the BBC. He was formerly chief political correspondent for BBC News, and spent more than 14 years reporting



Huw Edwards

politics from Westminster, featuring on *Newsnight* and *Panorama*. His career with the BBC stretches back to 1984.

His celebrity status was confirmed in 2012 when he played himself in the James Bond movie, *Skyfall*, where he presented a news report based on a fictionalised attack on the HQ of MI6.

Edwards now joins the BBC's rogues gallery of paedophiles that includes Jimmy Savile, Rolf Harris, Jonathan King, Stuart Hall, Chris Langham, Chris Denning and Benjamin Thomas.

Meanwhile, BBC DJ Tim Westwood, 66, is facing multiple allegations by women of sexual misconduct. The BBC has delayed publishing its report about him because of an ongoing police investigation into allegations going back four decades.

People are scratching their heads wondering how BBC attracted so many sexual deviants over the decades and who survived without being outed for so long. One explanation is the all pervasive role of MI5, an organisation that was obsessed – for

*Continued on page 4*

**GOLDHAWK'S OLD friend, Tom Ryan, has just had a judgment registered in Stubbs Gazette against him in London for no less than €3m by the dreaded taxman.**

*The hapless Ryan has had his fair share of setbacks in recent years and in 2022 he failed to have substantial judgments against him in the UK overturned.*

*He first popped up on this side of the Irish Sea with his Ryan's Irish Cream liqueur business, where he was joined at various stages by other familiar names such as moneylender extraordinaire Ron Weisz.*

*Ryan – or Thomas G Ryan or sometimes Thomas GF Ryan – let his tax affairs slide, however, with the result that in 2016 he ended up in the Dublin High Court, where he failed to have a €1.6m tax judgment against him set aside on the grounds that he enjoyed non-residency status.*

*By that stage Ryan had made headlines in the English media – including the front page of the Financial Times – after issuing a press release announcing his plans to acquire a £120m site and build a 75-storey tower block of apartments in Canary Wharf, which was to be the tallest residential building in Europe.*

*Alas, despite the impressive scale of his ambition, Tom never got his audacious skyscraper off the ground. Given the appetite of the taxman here to get his pound of flesh, however, it is perhaps not all that surprising.*

KATY BROWN'S  
HANDICAP

FANS OF *The Phoenix* will be familiar with outspoken racehorse trainer Katy Brown, who started last month with a second win in two runs for *Petrol Head*, in the €50,000 Bia Energy handicap at Bellewstown (see *The Phoenix* 26/7/24). What makes this horse interesting is that the gelding had previously been trained by no less than two subsequently disqualified trainers – David Dunne and Ronan McNally – before moving to Brown's Friarstown stables at the end of April.

Last Friday, the stage was set for the fancied *Petrol Head* to impress in the €270,000 Guinness Galway Hurdle but the nag was dramatically pulled at the last minute by the bowler hats of the Irish Horseracing Regulatory Board (IHRB). This was done on foot of test results received that very morning from hair samples taken after the Bellewstown race.

This decision has proven controversial, especially given that traces hang around in hair samples for long periods and, in this case, the substance (clenbuterol) was presumably administered before Brown took charge. (The anti-inflammatory may be prescribed for medical treatment but not in the run-up to a race.)

Given that *Petrol Head* had previously been with the controversial McNally, who was banned for no less than 12 years in 2023 for race fixing, his horses have been on the IHRB's radar. Another factor, no doubt, was last year's embarrassment in the wake of the €120,000 auction of a horse called *Flemens-face* being able to proceed three weeks after its trainer had been made aware by the IHRB of a positive test for clenbuterol.

What punters – and Brown – now want to know is why *Petrol Head* was selected for the hair test. IHRB boss Darragh O'Loughlin has refused to say if it was totally random or based on intelligence and there will be a lot of interest in the hearing into the horse's last-minute withdrawal from the richest handicap race in Ireland.

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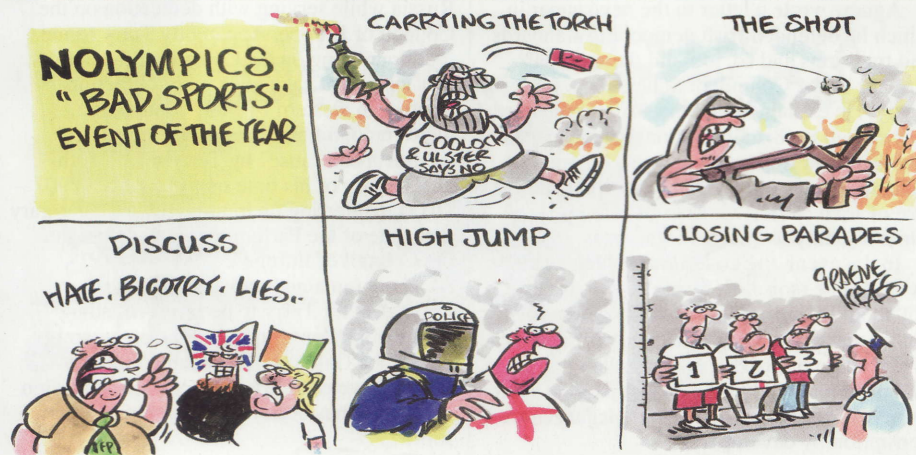
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## AFFAIRS OF THE NATION

Continued from page 3

malevolent reasons – with the sordid sex lives of public figures. During the 1970s-1980s and beyond, MI5 collected sexual ‘kompromat’ to exploit public figures. In this period MI5 had an office at the BBC’s HQ from where its snoopers crept out to spy on and control those employed at the station.

If the MI5 curtain twitchers knew about Edwards’s secret life, they may well have been pleased to see him climb the corporate ladder knowing they could control him. The BBC, after all, is regarded (rightly or wrongly) as too left wing as well as an ever present threat to MI5 and the British establishment.

This was the culture of the time. Peter Morrison MP was Margaret Thatcher’s private secretary and deputy chairman of the Conservative Party. Morrison was also a notorious paedophile. In 1985, MI5 director-general Antony Duff discussed his predilections with Cabinet secretary Robert Armstrong. Armstrong later admitted that he knew Morrison was a child rapist yet did nothing. Neither did Duff.

At the time MI5 was deeply involved in covering up the rape of children in the north, particularly at Kincora Boys’ Home in Belfast. The paedophile network that MI5 monitored included senior unionist politicians.

One would like to think that MI5’s exploitation of powerful paedophile circles is a thing of the past but, if so, how come Edwards was still running amok inside the BBC as late as 2023?

## IRELAND SAID ‘NO’ TO PINOCHET

THE CHILEAN Supreme Court demanded Irish government co-operation in establishing the alleged guilt of the two Shannon sisters, Dubliners Frances and Christine, in a helicopter jail break of four anti-government guerrillas in December 1996. This was allegedly organised by the pair in an IRA gesture of solidarity with the Chilean resistance. It led to diplomatic friction between the two countries and internal recrimination between Ireland’s foreign affairs department and the Garda Special Branch unit, with the latter refusing to believe that the two sisters were involved in the jail break.

The military dictator, General Pinochet, was no longer in power when the prison escape took place but he was still head of the armed forces and two of the escapees had been jailed for trying to assassinate him.

Recent efforts by Chile to extradite Frances Shannon – Christine died in 2022 –



from Croatia failed. In 1997, however, the Chileans put serious pressure on the Irish government to deliver the two women to that country.

When the Chileans demanded co-operation from An Garda Síochána and also that the two sisters be extradited – despite there being no extradition treaty between the two countries – the Argentinian-based Irish ambassador to Chile, Art Agnew, urged the government to co-operate fully as Ireland’s image would otherwise be damaged. This was reported in 2022 when the mainstream media caught up with the story – 25 years after it was first broken by Goldhawk shortly after the jail break (see *The Phoenix* 15/8/97).



General Pinochet

Agnew’s sensitivity followed a near hysterical reaction in Chile, with President Eduardo Frei calling an emergency meeting of the National Security Council for only the third time in the country’s history.

The main pro-government newspaper, *El Mercurio* – once a supporter of Pinochet but then a supporter of the conservative, Christian Democrat government party – led a media campaign, making allegations against all things Irish. It claimed the Irish Troubles had caused “violence and terrorism to infiltrate every area of Irish society” and that this explained why Irish priests and nuns had lent their support to “Marxist terrorism during the military government”.

Agnew wrote a letter to the newspaper in which he defended Irish democratic standards and traditions and so, too, did the regional director of the Columban fathers, Derry Healy. He explained that the strife in the north was caused by Britain’s denial of civil rights and that most Irish people wanted change by peaceful means only. Healy also defended the role of Irish clerics working with the poor in Chile’s shanty towns and rural areas.

In the event, the government, then headed by first-time taoiseach Bertie Ahern, was not about to deliver two Irish women to the tender mercies of the Chilean government. And foreign minister Ray Burke had other things on his mind as it was just months away from his resignation following allegations of corruption by developers.

## LEYDEN AT LARGE

AFTER MANY years of ducking and diving and not a little in-fighting in Roscommon politics, as well as 43 years in the Dáil and Seanad, former Fianna Fáil junior minister Terry Leyden has not in fact retired from public life but has segued into the world of international diplomacy.

Members of the Oireachtas recently received notice of Terry’s elevation to the role of honorary consul of the Republic of Azerbaijan in Dublin with jurisdiction for Ireland. Some weeks ago Leyden received his exequatur document – appointed by the Tánaiste and FF leader Micheál Martin on the nomination of Azerbaijan’s president, Ilham Aliyev – from Elin Suleymanov, ambassador to the United Kingdom and Ireland.

Before he could slip into the ranks of the diplomatic corps, Terry was compelled to resign from FF. A consul cannot be a member of a political party or be a political office holder, so he tendered his resignation to FF – an “honourable” resignation, he assured Goldhawk – last year in advance of his diplomatic posting.

Leyden has no business interests involving Azerbaijan but he developed a relationship with that country and other East European countries such as Ukraine, Armenia and Russia while serving with dedication on the Council of Europe. Apparently Terry found that flourishing on the Council of Europe was a piece of cake after years of faction fighting in western FF. The council, too, gave “recognition of services rendered to the European cause” by Terry on the 10th anniversary of his time on the council (2007 – 2017), conferring on him the title of “honorary associate of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe”.

There remained only, after all these accolades, for Terry to be received, along with the speaker of the Azerbaijan assembly, Dr Sahiba Gafarova, by ceann comhairle Seán Ó Fearghaíl, whose reception of foreign dignitaries has been refined to that of an art form.



Terry Leyden

## NCH BUILDERS ‘UNDER-RESOURCED’





## BRITISH AND IRISH FAR RIGHT

THAT A section of the anti-immigrant movement in the south was prepared to line up alongside Ulster loyalists and British fascists in racist attacks in Belfast last weekend indicates extreme stupidity as much as extreme politics. When the 'Coolock Says No' banner was brought to an anti-immigrant demo at Garda HQ two days later, some of their comrades attacked the banner and told them to leave because of their new pals, UDA sectarian killers.

That night a BBC news broadcaster described far-right activist Tommy Robinson as the main instigator of riots across the UK.

Robinson appeared to be as enthusiastic about the riots in Belfast as anywhere else, posting a picture of the crowd and the text: "Do people understand the importance of this photo. If Catholics & Protestants don't unite to stop the Islamic invasion Ireland will be unrecognisable".

The heart of loyalist darkness was made evident to their new Dublin pals when they reached the Lower Ormeau Road bookies, Sean Graham, the scene of a loyalist triumph in 1992 when they murdered five Catholic civilians. The marchers rushed towards the bookies holding up five fingers, making shouting signs and shouting UDA, UFF.

Ormeau residents emerged from their houses to scatter these ecumenical racists, who later reassembled in a Sandy Row bar, where they swapped yarns about republican traitors.

While most leading figures in the anti-immigration movement in the south were not on the ground in Belfast and did not call the protests, many were later prepared to justify those that did travel north.

In a post (later deleted) on X, Irish



Malachy Steenson

Freedom Party councillor Glen Moore argued: "I could see and hear in the voices of those waving the Tricolour and Union Jack together as one that these people were distressed at what is happening to Northern Ireland. Love for each others nation has brought us closer together".

Moore's party leader, Hermann Kelly, echoed this sentiment when he tweeted: "Irish Nationalists & British Unionists in the North of Ireland, have common interests in a # of things. More socially conservative and Eurosceptic than in culturally self-loathing South Dublin; Neither Catholics nor Protestants in #Belfast want part of Caliphate by immigration."

Derek Blighe, leader of Ireland First, posted on X to complain that only right-wing gatherings were unacceptable on an all-Ireland basis such as protests on "border control" or the "Islamification of Europe".

Whatever nuance and subtlety was employed by Moore, Kelly and Blighe, National Party leader Justin Barrett threw caution to the wind and posted a video of an Enoch Powell interview and was free on both X and Telegram to infer a racist epithet when describing the perpetrator of the Southport attack.

Many prominent figures in the new Irish right have in recent years refused to distance themselves from Robinson and other personalities on the British far right. Despite Robinson making the news in 2019 by giving support to Soldier F (charged with murder on Bloody Sunday), Malachy Steenson – who makes much of his republican pedigree – declined to comment on his visit to Ireland last year, saying only: "He's a distraction. He's not important."

Meanwhile, Derek Blighe has shared dozens of posts from Robinson and has also repeatedly shared posts by Mark Collett, leader of British fascist party Patriotic Alternative and who in the past has been active in the National Front and was leader of the youth wing of the British National Party. Blighe has also shared posts from Britain First.

The links between British fascist groups and the UDA and UVF have existed for years. But for the new Irish right to be playing footsie with the same elements may be a bridge too far.

## PUTIN'S IRISH GUN SLINGERS

THE TABLOID-reading British public is losing sleep over an alleged disinformation operation being directed by Vladimir Putin to subvert the United Kingdom. Britain has been reliably informed by undisclosed security sources that the Kremlin is responsible for sparking the recent riots in the UK.

Last week the *Mail* reported: "Russia linked to fake news that sparked mosque riot." According to the article, Putin's

propagandists enraged right-wing protesters with a report that the knifeman who killed three children in Southport was a "migrant on MI6 watchlist". The notion was circulated via a "Russian-linked fake news website [which] fuelled lies" that led "to an attack on a mosque". Apparently, the right-wing hooligans in Southport might otherwise have behaved themselves.

A similar story appeared in the UK's *Independent*. It cited "Home Office" sources. MI5 is part of the Home Office.

Irish readers of the *Belfast Telegraph* on August 2 were treated to an equally shocking exposé. According to "security service" (the official name of MI5) sources, the INLA is in receipt of "Russian State 'dark money' amid Republican support for war in Ukraine".

According to the newspaper, the "INLA are just one of the many groups supposedly supported by the Russian Government in its efforts to destabilise the west". Putin, it is claimed, is responsible for "an upsurge in [INLA] activity over the summer, including an attack on a homeless charity last month". The INLA has also allegedly received weapons from the Kremlin.

Surely Irish pro-neutrality groups will blush a deep red at having being caught in the same bed as Putin and his Irish paramilitaries.



Vladimir Putin





## AFFAIRS OF THE NATION



## RTÉ'S CLIMATE 'STRATEGY'

FOR YEARS RTÉ's coverage of the climate emergency has vacillated between lukewarm and non-existent. It reached such a low point that in July 2021 its then managing director of news, Jon Williams, was forced to admit how dire its performance had been.

Williams promised the immediate establishment of a team "working across RTÉ News and Current Affairs, dedicated to reporting the climate crisis" and all news journalists were to be required to attend workshops on climate science reporting.

Fast forward to 2024 and the crisis-wracked broadcaster's strategy document for 2025-2029, A New Direction, has been published – after the Government committed €725m in support for the broadcaster over the next three years.

According to director general Kevin Bakhurst, public service media "has a vital

role to play in countering disinformation, informing and empowering citizens in relation to climate change and other societal challenges". In the strategy's timeline, the creation of a "dedicated Climate Unit in Cork within RTÉ's News and Current Affairs" is flagged up as an action – for 2026, five years after Williams made this same commitment.

What is a 'climate unit' and why will it be in Cork? For €¾bn in taxpayers' money, we had hoped to get a little more detail on how RTÉ is going to finally start covering the most consequential story of the 21st century but, alas, the strategy document has nothing to say.

If it actually happens, this unit may well end up as one or two staff being told to come up with something to tick the 'climate' box

every few months. This may seem unduly cynical but, for a station whose first reflex in covering almost any climate issue is to immediately platform farm or industry lobbyists attacking whatever is being proposed, it's understandable.

Goldhawk has watched incredulously over the last decade and more as RTÉ stumbled from ignoring major climate science reports to actually promoting climate deniers on its current affairs programmes on the vanishingly rare occasions it even

paused to acknowledge the issue. Evidence of its rudderless approach came in the form of a shambolic docu-drama in late 2023 called *Tonight Tomorrow*, which featured an "interview" with a Bond-villain type character living... on the moon.



Joe Duffy

While RTÉ has a handful of journalists with a strong interest in ensuring the public understands the climate crisis, their voices are drowned out by curmudgeons such as its highest-paid broadcaster, Joe Duffy. He routinely uses his *Liveline* show to ridicule climate issues and claim that the "family motorist" is under attack from nefarious interests who want to hammer drivers "under the guise of helping the environment".

Given RTÉ's heavy dependence on car advertising and multiple controversies involving some stars being "ambassadors" for various car brands, ie getting freebie motors, it may be seen as a real missed opportunity in that bailing out RTÉ, the Government did not insist that the broadcaster follow the BBC route and eschew all advertising and commercial sponsorship and, in so doing, help rebuild its battered reputation.

*SLIGHT REDUCTIONS in emissions from agriculture in 2023 have been attributed to cuts in the use of chemical nitrogen and was celebrated by farm advisory agency Teagasc as proving the sector was on the right track at last. What then to make of agriculture minister Charlie McConalogue recently urging farmers to use more nitrogen?*

*"My sense is that farmers are going softer on the pedal than they need to be on the fertiliser side", he told the Farming Independent.*

*Hiss bizarre intervention underlines the chaotic state of the sector on emissions reductions, with the minister and state agencies at complete cross-purposes.*



## PSNI SNOOPS

THE PLOT thickens in the ongoing saga of the PSNI snooping on journalists and lawyers. Investigative journalist Barry McCaffrey and film maker Trevor Birney finally dragged the PSNI, as Birney said, "kicking and screaming" before the Investigatory Powers Tribunal (IPT) in London in April for unlawfully trying to find the journalists' sources for their film, *No Stone Unturned*, about RUC/UVF collusion in the multiple killings in a bar in Loughinisland, Co Down in 1994 (see *The Phoenix* 17/5/2024).

The IPT is a superior court with a judge presiding. It considers complaints about covert actions by public authorities including the intelligence services that may infringe human rights under the European Convention on Human Rights. In the tribunal it emerged that McCaffrey and Birney were far from the only journalists the PSNI were monitoring but that lawyers and people in the Police Ombudsman's Office were also subject to police surveillance. It revealed the PSNI held a database of 'troublemaker journalists' that it monitored routinely. The BBC asked the IPT to be allowed to join with McCaffrey and Birney in their complaint because it suspected

that Vincent Kearney, now RTÉ's northern editor, was also on the surveillance list when working for BBC *Spotlight* in the north.

In response to the revelations at the IPT, the north's Policing Board demanded an inquiry, which the chief constable duly set up under senior counsel Angus McCullough. In the meantime, the PSNI reported to the board that it had made 823 applications for communications data for journalists and lawyers from 2011-24 including 10 applications to identify journalistic sources. In light of this information, the NUJ also asked to join the action before the IPT.

At the latest IPT hearing on July 18, where the NUJ and BBC made their cases to be included, more startling details came to light. An English police force was also monitoring journalists but it's not known if its action was at the request of the PSNI.

Approximately 4,000 communications, including text messages and the location of calls made, were logged from July-October 2011. They concentrated on 12 (unnamed) journalists including well-known award-winners and other media figures.

The IPT only allowed the NUJ to supply written submissions on the importance of journalists protecting their sources but there was an intervention by a lawyer representing a party the IPT referred to as "respondent three" – MI5. The IPT went into closed session, excluding the lawyers for McCaffrey and Birney and everyone else, for two hours. On resumption, the court refused the BBC's

application, which will now be considered at a later date. The reason given was that lawyers for MI5 and GCHQ said the spy agencies have such voluminous material they are unable to work through it before the full hearing of McCaffrey and Birney's case in October. December is the earliest date they could offer but only if they can recruit more security-vetted legal staff.

Hiding behind the McCullough inquiry, the PSNI is refusing to comment on any of this.

McCaffrey and Birney are asking for a public inquiry – pigs might fly. Their lawyer, Niall Murphy said: "Every journalist working in this jurisdiction should be appalled and concerned as to whether they also have been a victim of this routine harvesting of protected confidential information and I encourage anyone concerned to engage immediately with the McCullough

Review," adding that police were engaged in surveillance on "an industrial scale".

While Murphy talked about "this jurisdiction", is there anyone who doesn't believe with some justification that monitoring communications doesn't happen in the south too? Does anyone believe the PSNI and An Garda Síochána don't liaise on such matters? The only difference seems to be that there's no equivalent of the IPT to turn to, however unsatisfactory it is.

In the Dáil in July, Peadar Tóibín complained that the PSNI monitored his communications. He was told to apply to the IPT.



Vincent Kearney



## AFFAIRS OF THE NATION

## MI5'S MISSING SCAPPATICCI FILES

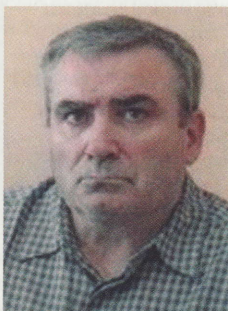
NO ONE familiar with the manner in which the UK has conducted inquiries into allegations of British dirty tricks over the last half century will be surprised that MI5 failed to furnish Operation Kenova with all of its Freddie Scappaticci files. Scappaticci was a British agent in the IRA and was responsible for a string of murders while on MI5's payroll. It now transpires that hundreds of pages from relevant documents were not delivered to Kenova.

Sir Iain Livingstone, who leads Kenova, has described the new records as "significant new material, which appears to point to new investigative leads not previously known".

PSNI chief constable Jon Boucher, who originally oversaw Kenova, described the development as an "unacceptable" state of affairs. Baroness O'Loan, the former Police Ombudsman NI and a member of Kenova's steering committee, has accused MI5 of having behaved "appallingly".

Kenova began its probe in 2016. It produced a preliminary report earlier this year. That means the newly discovered files were withheld for eight years. They were allegedly discovered when MI5 was digitising some of its archive. Kenova's final report, which was due before Christmas and has already cost Stg£40m, will now be delayed until some stage in 2025.

But MI5 has made Livingstone and Boucher look like a Laurel and Hardy tribute act. Livingstone told RTÉ last May: "I think we've had unprecedented support from the agencies of the UK state, MI5, the MoD, the PSNI in terms of RUC files." He also stated: "You don't know what you don't know and in the back of one's mind there is always



Freddie Scappaticci

a concern... is there a file somewhere that hasn't been disclosed to us. I genuinely don't think that is the case."

Kenova's interim report on Scappaticci failed to identify the ghastly role he performed for MI5. Scappaticci murdered IRA volunteers so RUC and MI5 agents inside the IRA could step into their place. He was also allowed to torture and murder other state agents to preserve his cover.

The fact that Boucher and Livingstone displayed such faith in MI5 is deeply disturbing. Boucher originally ran Operation Denton, a probe into the UVF's Glenanne gang. Livingstone also took this over from him. The gang perpetrated the 1974 Dublin-Monaghan bombings and the Denton report on those bombings is due next year.

There is no reason to believe that MI5 will deliver to Livingstone the pertinent files it holds on Robin Jackson and Billy Hanna of the Glenanne Gang. The pair were the key figures – in so far as the UVF was concerned – in the Dublin-Monaghan attacks. Virtually all researchers into the gang believe they were British agents.

Livingstone may or may not clear MI5 of any involvement in the Dublin-Monaghan outrage but he is surely unlikely to again express his full confidence that MI5 furnished him with all the relevant records.

## VIRTUAL SOLDIERS

DOES THE Government and defence minister Micheál Martin believe they have solved the recruitment crisis in the Defence Forces with pretend soldiers?

RTÉ News recently ran a fluff piece on how the army is expanding its use of virtual reality (VR) simulators, with footage of a soldier driving an armoured car and the chief instructor of the Cavalry School, Commandant Joe Tynan mansplaining the technology's advantages.

The RTÉ report failed to mention that in recent years the Defence Forces have had a particularly close relationship with VRAI Simulation, which created the simulator. Was this coyness because, despite being an Irish company with its headquarters in Dublin's Temple Bar, VRAI has been deepening its ties to the British military in recent months? This

would hardly help recruitment into the Irish Defence Forces.

The Defence Forces operate a fleet of 80 MOWAG Piranha III armoured fighting vehicles. As the fleet cost tens of millions to acquire, the MOWAG simulator can significantly reduce accidents while using equipment and weaponry. Also, soldiers can carry out more repetitions of exercises and their performance can be recorded in detail.

Along with VRAI, the Defence Forces developed these simulators, which use VR headsets and software as well as a layout identical to the vehicles with controls, steering wheels, seats and weapons systems.

VRAI's own account of the simulator outlines how it is "key to the army's requirements to engage with the public, educate them on what peace keeping involves and for the simulation to support recruitment campaigns".

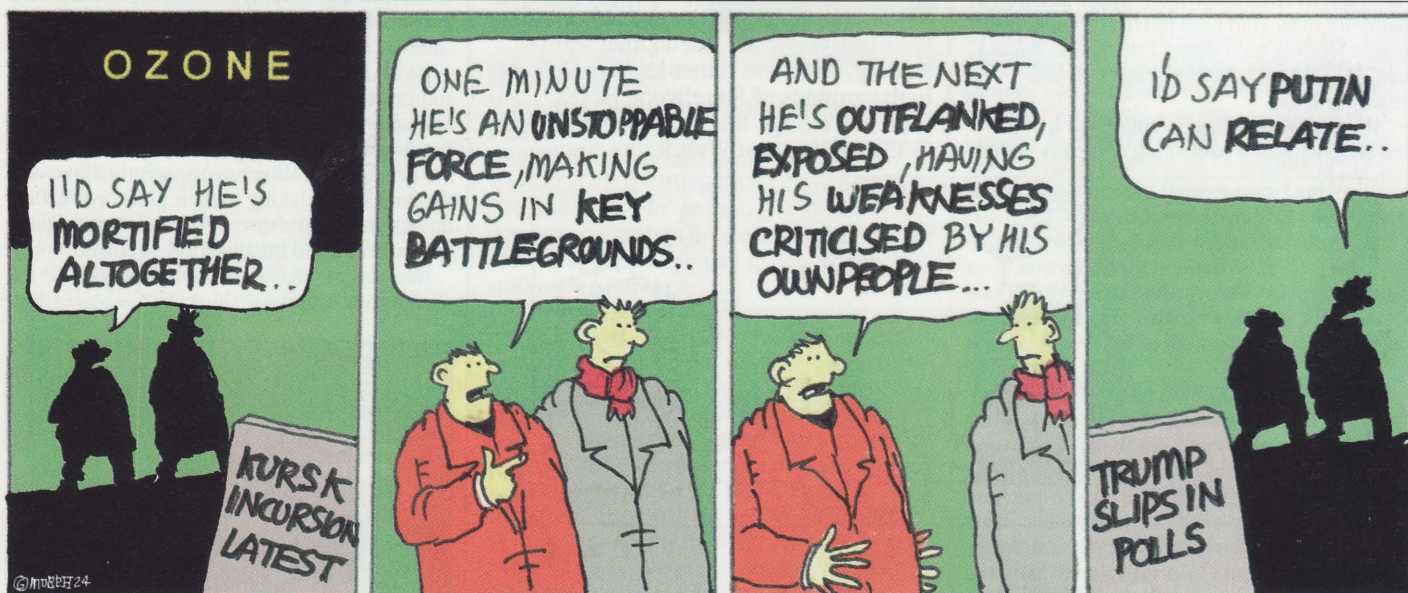
VRAI was founded in 2017 by Pat O'Connor and Niall Campion. Having joined the Defence Forces in 2000 as a reconnaissance officer, O'Connor's LinkedIn profile tracks his progress from a "Media Training & Communications Lecturer" and then "Press and Information Officer" to becoming a "Deputy Director Defence Forces PR Branch". Campion in turn worked for over 15 years in the film and TV industry not only as a visual effects artist but also as an editor and director.

Recently VRAI signed a £288,000 contract to develop a multi-launch rocket system tactical simulator for the British Army. This follows on from its experience with the Royal Air Force, where it used a combination of VR and data capture technology to measure and predict the performance of training pilots.

Goldhawk wonders whether O'Connor who, as well as being a managing director of VRAI has been chairman of the Irish Defence and Security Association since 2020, will be advising the association's members to seek similar contracts from the various arms of Britain's military.



Niall Campion





## AFFAIRS OF THE NATION

DREW HARRIS  
AND MI5

DREW HARRIS became Garda commissioner in 2018, having served as deputy chief constable of the PSNI, 2014-18. His RUC/PSNI duties once involved liaison with MI5. The selection committee for his appointment included the interim chief constable of the Scottish police, Iain Livingstone.

In 2011, a report by the Historical Enquiries Team raised concerns about the involvement of an RUC Special Branch agent in the UVF's Glenanne Gang (GG).

A potential point of friction loomed due to Harris's knowledge of MI5 operations in the south. Like all UK police officers, Harris signed a life-long oath to uphold Britain's Official Secrets Act. In 2018, a number of commentators expressed concerns that his Garda appointment might generate a conflict of interest because Harris would have to remain silent about some of the intelligence secrets from his time in the north.

In response in October that year, Harris told the joint Oireachtas committee on justice and equality that "some of that commentary has been ill-founded".

Stephen Travers, who survived the Miami Showband massacre in 1975, disagreed. He and others were pursuing a legal action against the PSNI chief constable and the British defence ministry over the massacre, alleging state collusion with the UVF.

In 2018, Travers told RTE that, during the preceding eight years, "the Office of the Chief Constable, of which Drew Harris is the second most senior officer, has blocked, delayed and frustrated our every effort to access the files on those who murdered our three lads and who shot me. And just last week they gave us notice that they're seeking a Public Interest Immunity certificate to block us from getting their files on the notorious RUC Special Branch agent and mass murderer Robin Jackson, often referred to as 'The Jackal'."

The Jackal and others in the GG were also

responsible for the worst crime in the history of the Irish state, the 1974 Dublin-Monaghan bombings. The Irish government had asked London on various occasions for the GG files, only to be rebuffed. Livingstone and his colleagues missed the potential Dublin-Monaghan conflict of interest.

Livingstone has great faith in the *bona fides* of MI5. Hence, the notion that anyone – let alone Harris – might have discovered something untoward in the files did not occur to him. Yet, there must be something atrocious somewhere in the archives. Why else did the PSNI and defence ministry eventually pay the Miami litigants £1.4m in compensation?

On September 6 last, Travers tweeted: "Before his tenure ends, [Harris] must come before an Oireachtas committee to answer questions about The Glenanne Gang. Nobody knows more about those responsible for the Dublin and Monaghan bombings than him."

Alas, unless Kier Starmer's government gives Harris a dispensation, he will have to remain silent.



Drew Harris

## MEAT AND THE CITY

A YEAR ago this month, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a light-hearted tweet featuring a photo of Kim Cattrall of *Sex and the City* with the tagline: "Ready to be healthier, wealthier and more fabulous? Cut down your red meat intake." This was the proverbial red rag to the oh-so-touchy agri lobby, with "horrified" then-IFA president Tim Cullinan clutching his pearls as he explained the "huge rage" (really) among members.

The agri sector is constantly pushing out pro-meat and pro-dairy messaging, much of it of highly dubious provenance, through the media, advertising and directly into schools. But this does not inhibit it from wanting to censor others who express views at variance with industry talking points.

A chastened EPA duly complied and deleted the offending tweet, despite scientists

and medical experts agreeing that the basic advice to eat less red meat made sense from a health and climate standpoint.

Author of the ill-starred tweet, digital media specialist Aileen Moon, was hauled over the coals by senior EPA management. In a LinkedIn post she described the fallout as "horrible", adding that in an internal meeting she was made to feel like a "trouble-making little girl" and had lost faith in the EPA. She quit shortly afterwards.

In a stinging rebuff, Moon said: "There are some wonderful, whip-smart and passionate people working for the EPA. But they are not being well used currently."

In a recent interview, Moon confirmed that she had got approval to issue the controversial tweet from her "boss and boss's boss", so clearly the decision to pull the plug was taken at the highest level.

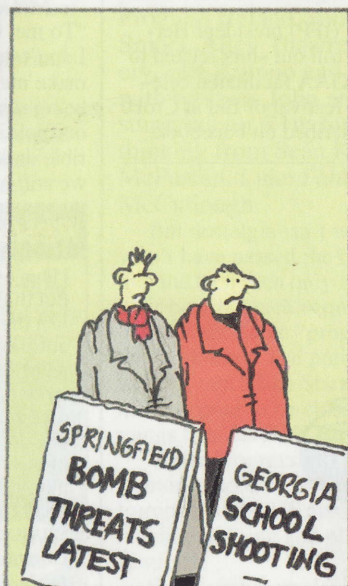
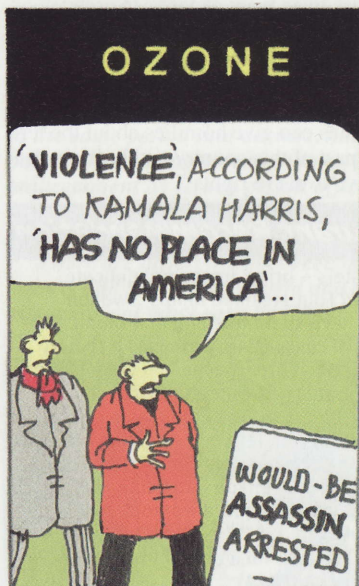
While EPA director general Laura Burke is not mentioned by name, the decision to capitulate on this tweet ultimately lies with her. The whole episode represents an ongoing embarrassment for the agency, first for its craven capitulation to sectoral bullying and second for its failure to stand by its own staff when attacked by vested interests.

A 2016 research paper by the Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Climate Science notes that the state's choice of person to head the EPA reflects how it ranks the environment and that Burke's previous role was in an incineration company, Indaver, while her immediate predecessor worked for industry lobby group Ibec before being appointed.

As Goldhawk previously reported (see *The Phoenix* 21/3/23), the EPA issues licences to operate large-scale pig and poultry farms but, thanks to a glaring loophole, giant livestock farms with hundreds of cattle producing tens of thousands of tons of slurry are exempt – an anomaly farm pressure groups are lobbying hard to maintain. Plugging this loophole might be a more useful objective for EPA management than policing social media posts.



Kim Cattrall





## AFFAIRS OF THE NATION

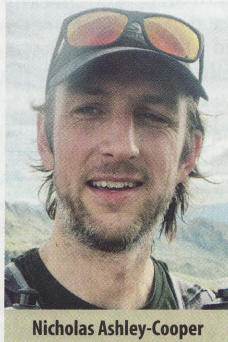


## LOUGH NEAGH OWNER

THE EARL of Shaftesbury, a Dorset aristocrat and former DJ who somehow owns the bed of Lough Neagh, has been enjoying considerable kudos from his big announcement in June that he would “hand back” ownership of Ireland’s biggest lake.

Among coverage of the toxic blue-green algae that has turned the lake into an ecological dead zone have been lots of references to his benevolent gesture. John Manley in the *Irish News* even speculated the earl “may well turn out to be Lough Neagh’s saviour”.

But he never really promised to hand it back. What the earl, aka Nicholas Ashley-Cooper, actually said was he “would like” to transfer it to “a charity or community trust model”. It sounded like the way a parent “would like” to give a child’s



Nicholas Ashley-Cooper

toy back if the child behaved. The earl’s offer came in a 3,000-word blog post in which he also said that “this may take time”. He added: “There is currently no entity that is offering to take it or who can guarantee to improve the environmental health of the lough.”

There you have it – the Irish aren’t up to looking after it so I’ll hang on to it for now.

Frustration among the natives boiled over into some rather ungentlemanly conduct in August when a cup of lake water was thrown at the earl during a visit to Belfast.

Nick earns handsome royalties from the industrial dredging of over a million tonnes of sand from the lake bed annually, an ecologically harmful practice, but the causes of Lough Neagh’s problems are bigger than just dredging and colonial ownership.

A few days after Nick’s water incident came another unseemly spectacle – a ‘vomit protest’ outside a chicken slaughtering factory in Craigavon. Hundreds of activists from around Ireland, who had gathered for this year’s Climate Camp on the lake shore, appeared to throw up gallons of green sludge at the gates of the Moy Park factory.

They were drawing attention to the main cause of the lake’s demise – a lethal combination of intensive farming and poor regulation, resulting in vast quantities of run-off from fertiliser and slurry flowing into waterways.

The Stormont government has massively incentivised food production while simultane-

ously underfunding environmental protection. Factory farms have proliferated in the counties around the lake. In Co Antrim alone, 20 million farm animals live in cages.

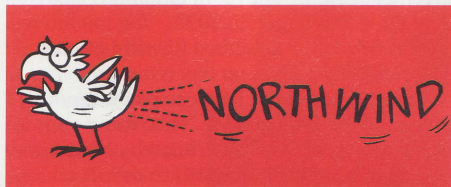
Moy Park, the north’s largest business by turnover, has breached environmental laws hundreds of times in relation to the discharge of effluent from its facilities, a BBC investigation revealed in June.

A basic first step in saving Lough Neagh, which supplies 43% of the north’s drinking water, would be an independent environmental protection agency (EPA) – something the north remarkably still doesn’t have thanks to the hugely powerful agri lobby.

When the first and deputy first ministers launched their draft Programme for Government last week, campaigners were dismayed to see no mention of an independent EPA in Michelle O’Neill and Emma Little-Pengelly’s document. The lobbyists can take a bow.

**MARIE DONNELLY** has had some baffling media outings since taking over as Climate Change Advisory Council chair in 2021 but a recent comment on RTÉ’s *Morning Ireland* was her most baffling yet. On the subject of what consumers can do to help reduce agricultural emissions, she said we should eat less sugar and more fruit and vegetables.

Sugar? She didn’t mention red meat or dairy, by far the biggest culprits when it comes to emissions. Is she auditioning for a job as a health guru? Or could it be that old chestnut – fear of incurring the wrath of Ireland’s all-powerful agri-food lobby?



## UNFULFILLED LEGACY

MANY PEOPLE presume that the British government’s decision to repeal the 2023 Legacy Act, which halted Troubles-related inquests and inquiries, is a major success for the Government here, all northern parties, and victims’ groups and human rights organisations in the north. Not so fast. Northern secretary Hilary Benn maintains the curious position of keeping in place the so-called Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery (ICRIR).

The Legacy Act created the ICRIR, which relatives and victims groups have repudiated. Human rights groups such as Amnesty and the Committee on the Administration of Justice also maintain the ICRIR is incapable of acting independently and that the northern secretary retains too much control. For them, the ICRIR is fatally tainted by its origin in the Legacy Act, which Conservatives made no bones about admitting was designed to prevent investigation of killings and injuries committed by British soldiers.

Further criticism is levelled at the body because its chief investigator is the Northern

Ireland Office’s favourite former RUC man, ex-assistant chief constable Peter Sheridan. Critics ask how he can investigate actions of his former colleagues. Relatives For Justice called the recruitment of personnel with “intelligence experience” a “spookfest”.

It’s no good for the body’s chair, former lord chief justice Sir Declan Morgan, to talk about its “unprecedented powers” to compel individuals and organisations to provide information if its ability to investigate is inherently flawed. The ICRIR lacks any credibility. Benn admits it needs some changes but won’t say what. Even Tánaiste Micheál Martin said a fortnight ago that it needs “root-and-branch reform”.

Other credible figures have gone further. Former police ombudsman Baroness O’Loan says simply that the ICRIR should be scrapped, while victims groups and relatives are boycotting it.

After initially refusing to answer questions about its workload, the body issued an “accountability update” late on Sunday September 8, which was anything but accountability. Since it began operating in May, it seems there have been only 85 inquiries, which have initiated eight cases.

It appears that most of the inquiries have come from English victims of the IRA rather than from people in the north. The only case the ICRIR has said it’s investigating is the 1974 Guildford pub bombing with English casualties, although everyone knows who carried it out. Given there are 3,600 deaths and 40,000 injuries that’s hardly a rush of interest.

Compare the hundreds of cases with the

Police Ombudsman’s office and inquests that the Legacy Act shut down.

It’s pretty obvious the ICRIR won’t do and that Benn is keeping it on the stocks until something else is agreed. He can’t take action now anyway because there’s a legal challenge to the ICRIR to be heard in the Court of Appeal in the coming months. What Benn has made clear is that the long-promised public

inquiry into the 1989 murder of Pat Finucane will be the last one, despite a High Court judge recommending one into the LVF killing of GAA man Seán Brown.

In any case, inquiries are one-offs with each costing millions and which don’t take the legacy question any further on.

The question is what to replace the ICRIR with? Sinn Féin want to go back to the 2014 Stormont House agreement that was ratified by both governments in January 2020. Unionists don’t want to do

that but so far haven’t proposed anything else.

It looks like another round-table conference with both governments and all parties trying for the umpteenth time to devise a process. The difference this time is that – unlike the Conservatives, who are complicit in the most egregious cases of collusion and undercover security force killings in the 1980s – Labour’s excesses were mostly 50 years ago and concerned individual security force operations rather than political direction and securocrat connivance that the last Conservative government was anxious to conceal.

Nevertheless, the inevitable delay means more victims and relatives will die before they know the truth.



Hilary Benn



Continued from page 3

way out of that clause given the savagery of the last 10 months in Gaza.

Harris and Martin have argued that their new legal inquiries have been triggered by the ICJ's ruling on the occupied territories and its demand that all countries abstain from trade with Israel.

We have been here before.

In the run-up to the formation of the coalition Government in 2020, then foreign minister Simon Coveney made repeated and bombastic claims at the United Nations and elsewhere that Ireland was the Palestinians' best friend – a cynical tactic that helped the Government to outmanoeuvre rivals Canada for a slot on the UN Security Council.

Within days of this strategy working as we snaffled the council seat in June 2020, Coveney returned to negotiations for the coalition Government and blocked Black's bill – an easy mark given the manner in which the Cabinet-hungry Fianna Fáil and Greens collapsed with a whimper.

Could it be that FF and FG are becoming exercised by Irish anger at Israeli genocide and the imminence of a general election? And will their new mood survive that election?

## PEACE-WASHING CAPTAIN NAIRAC

EVERY TIME the Independent Commission for the Location of Victims' Remains (ICLVR) makes an initiative, behind the scenes 'sources' swing into action with stories depicting British Army undercover operative Robert Nairac as a most virtuous man – a latter day 'Gentle Black and Tan'. Now that the ICLVR is hinting that it has located Nairac's remains, there is a renewed effort to peace-wash his memory.



Robert Nairac

*The Irish Independent* last week published an article by Nairac's biographer, Alistair Kerr, who reports some aspects of the soldier's life accurately but denies the core of Nairac's activities, namely, his liaison and collusion with loyalist murder gangs, in particular the notorious Glennane gang. It has been reported by multiple sources that Nairac was involved in the planning of the Miami Showband murders and the Dublin-Monaghan bombings, among other atrocities.

Kerr admits that Nairac was an SAS liaison officer but not that he was a member of the SAS and says he was elsewhere when various atrocities in which he was accused of "complicity, if not active involvement" occurred. He states that between May 1975 and June 1976 he was either with his regiment, the Grenadier Guards, or training. Presumably impeccable British Army sources will rush to confirm this alibi.

Kerr also says that Nairac was a member of the innocuous sounding Northern Ireland Training and Advisory Team, which gathered intelligence at the time.



Here is what Goldhawk had to say about this (see *The Phoenix* 31/5/19). Nairac was "part of a secret army unit that went under a variety of names such as the Det or the Northern Ireland Training and Advisory Teams (NITAT). NITAT, a cover name for the Special Reconnaissance Unit (SRU), provided information as to the whereabouts of targets for the SAS and RUC Special Branch, and ran British Army agents who were the trigger pullers in black ops".

Even Kerr's account of Nairac's innocent sojourn in Belfast and South Armagh indicates that Nairac was involved in undercover work during a period (mid 1970s) when little was known about collusion but which we now know was rampant.

Kerr has an interesting CV that proves he has good sources at the top level in the British security apparatus as it includes periods as a special projects advisor at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) in the counter-terrorism department, as he describes it.

Also in the FCO, Alistair claims to have "reduced parliamentary team's and counter-terrorism department's workload by dealing directly with MPs who tabled large numbers of written parliamentary questions (2006) to resolve their concerns quickly and efficiently".

Kerr is a British military history geek and he has also written a work entitled *Dublin University Officers' Training Corps and the Easter Rising*, which he describes as an account of the "successful defence against the rebels by its Officers' Training Corps of Trinity College, Dublin".

Sounds like a ripping yarn.

## NUI CHANCELLOR ELECTION

THE PATRICIAN Seanad may be under threat from a vulgar populism in these menacing times but standards have been maintained in academia where a small portion of the 250,000 or so graduates of UCD, UCC, UofG, Maynooth University, the RCSI and the IPA will next month vote for the sixth chancellor of the National University of Ireland (NUI) in 116 years.

The famous five academics include Eamon de Valera, Sir Garret FitzGerald and recently retired mandarin Maurice Manning, himself a former senator and an academic of some distinction. Do the two current aspirants

to this exalted position – chair of the NUI convocation, Linda O'Shea Farren; and Michael B Murphy, immediate past president of the European University Association and former UCC president, among other things – compare to these titans of public service and academic excellence?

Linda certainly exhibits a sense of the confidence required for such a position and in a 15-page, 4,000-plus-word appeal to graduates, she recounts the many campaigns and activities that she has engaged in over the years. These include her work in government as programme manager after she was appointed to, or rather imposed on, then justice minister Nora Owen by taoiseach John Bruton in 1995.

Murphy has a stellar record in senior NUI positions, with perhaps more impressive academic distinctions, although he did not need 15 pages to list the multiple national and international posts he has held in places such as Chicago, London and third-level European institutions.

Despite her impressive CV, her connection with Bruton and indeed Bill and Hillary Clinton (she raised funds for the latter's presidential campaign 16 years ago) as well as her campaigning and undeniable ambition, O'Shea Farren has an unfortunate electioneering record of almost unprecedented disappointment.

Linda's four attempts at securing a Seanad seat on the NUI panel as an Independent between 1997 and 2011 failed, as did her three efforts to win a Dublin City Council seat in the Pembroke area standing for Fine Gael in 2014, 2019 and more recently last June.

The earlier mooted candidacy of the super Irish EU bureaucrat, now retired, Catherine Day, as the next chancellor looked to be an insuperable obstacle for Linda until Day rebuffed overtures to stand from senior NUI persons.

But Murphy's impressive record and his base among graduates of UCC, of which he was for some years the president, should swing it for him.

Sure, there's always the Áras.



Linda O'Shea Farren



## NATO CODS IRELAND

WHEN IRELAND concluded its individually tailored partnership programme (ITPP) governing continued co-operation with Nato under Partnership for Peace from 2024 to 2028 in February, protection against threats to undersea infrastructure was floated as central to the logic of the agreement. The argument was that the undersea explosions that damaged the Nord Stream gas pipelines in the Baltic Sea in 2022 meant the threat to subsea cables, gas pipelines and the Celtic Interconnector in Irish waters had risen substantially.

Whether it was Nato deputy secretary general Mircea Geoană, speaking in March 2023 to Dublin-based think-tank the Institute of International and European Affairs, or then taoiseach Leo Varadkar at a European security conference in Moldova in June 2023 or even foreign affairs and defence minister Micheál Martin speaking this May to the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, the Nord Stream attack has long been cited as an example of the threat to undersea infrastructure in our territorial waters.

On each occasion the speakers also spoke directly about the threat posed by Russia to Irish security. Whether openly stated, implied or alluded to, the connection between our vulnerable undersea infrastructure and Russian aggression was clear. Poor Róisín Dubh needed protection from a rampaging Russian bear.

But evidence presented in a series of reports – firstly by the *New York Times*; then in a joint report from *ARD*, *SWR* and *Die Zeit* in Germany; and last month by the *Wall Street Journal* – points to a Ukrainian cell carrying out the Nord Stream attack. The reports claim Ukraine's then commander in chief, Valerii Zaluzhnyi, signed off on the attack.

Conveniently, however, while the CIA and

other European intelligence agencies were aware of the plans before the attack, they are not implicated in these reports.

German prosecutors last month issued the first arrest warrant for a Ukrainian diving instructor identified only as Volodymyr Z., who, a number of days before the arrest warrant was issued, fled from Poland to Ukraine in a Ukrainian embassy car.

As the Nord Stream investigation gets ever murkier and with western intelligence agencies seemingly around every corner, you would think that the Irish Government might reassess its reliance on Nato for the security of undersea infrastructure. Instead, the relationship, if anything, is deepening.

From September 9-27, Irish navy divers will participate in the robotic experimentation and prototyping maritime unmanned systems (Repmus) organised by Nato maritime entities in conjunction with the Portuguese navy.

Repmus takes place annually in Portugal's Troia Bay and last year more than 1,400 civilian and military personnel were involved in the Nato exercise. Some 150 underwater drones, drone boats and drones were deployed alongside 10 warships from Britain, France, Spain, Portugal and Italy.

## MI5 BOSS: 'I KNOW NAWTHING'

FREDDIE SCAPPATICCI was the UK's most lethal mole in the IRA. His codename was Stakeknife. Last March the interim report of Operation Kenova concluded that a string of murders he perpetrated "could and should have been prevented [but] were allowed to take place with the knowledge of the security forces and those responsible for murder were not brought to justice and were instead left free to reoffend again."

One of Kenova's challenges was to identify the UK spy agency that ran Scappaticci. Kenova concluded: "MI5 was not responsible for how Stakeknife was targeted or run".

No less a figure than Baroness Eliza Manningham-Buller purred with delight at this finding. In the early 1990s she ran the MI5 unit responsible for countering the IRA. In 2002 she became the DG of MI5, a post she held for five years. She now runs Chatham

House, which supplies RTÉ with guest speakers to educate ignorant Irish peasants about the merits of abandoning neutrality.

After the Kenova report's publication, the baroness confirmed, on a popular podcast hosted by Alastair Campbell and Rory Stewart, that MI5 had not been "aware" of Stakeknife until it was asked to place him in witness protection after his identity had been compromised in the late 1990s. The operation was a "bad" one, not to mention "a disgraceful" one.

"I think, I hope, had it been our operation, we would have aborted it very early on," she added. "You have to have some moral parameters to intelligence work. If you abandon ethics and say anything goes, you become like the people you are trying to penetrate and you have to maintain that sense of proportion, necessity, the law etc."

The blame for the atrocious Stakeknife operation lay with the Force Reconnaissance Unit (FRU) of the British army. A "former DG of MI5" told Kenova that "the FRU had an attitude that was 'gung ho, not well managed, with little meaningful oversight'".

Alas, the baroness now has a splash of egg on her face. Embarrassing newly discovered MI5 files have emerged (see *The Phoenix* 23/8/24). According to sources close to Kenova, they show that MI5 was "actively tasking Scappaticci" through the FRU "when he was out and about in Northern Ireland".

"It is now clear to me", the baroness has conceded "that MI5 had some limited knowledge [about Scappaticci], earlier than I had previously understood."

A key duty of MI5 is to detect hostile Russian and Chinese secret agents operating in the UK. It will fortify the courage of these dastardly fiends to discover that MI5's former DG – a specialist in anti-IRA operations no less – was not even aware of the identity of the most important anti-IRA secret agent on her books.

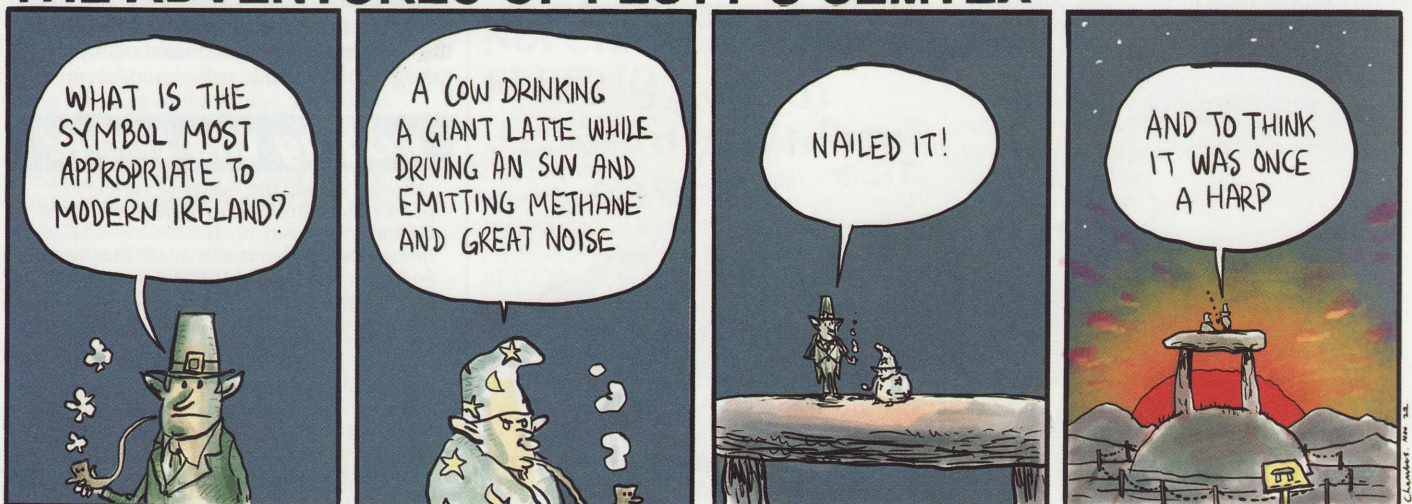


Eliza Manningham-Buller



Micheál Martin

## THE ADVENTURES OF FESTY O'SEMTEX





## THATCHER'S IRON PRINCIPLES

IN THE last edition of *The Phoenix*, Goldhawk reported how three former Irish diplomats had rallied to defend the reputation of the late Robert Armstrong, Margaret Thatcher's cabinet secretary. And last week's BBC special on the Brighton bomb underlined what an obdurate and even principled politician the 'Iron Lady' was when it came to the Troubles. But there are other sides to this picture.

The Irish trio were clearly not aware that, shortly after they and Armstrong had helped conclude the Anglo-Irish agreement of 1985, Armstrong had safeguarded Sir Peter Morrison MP, a prolific paedophile, from arrest.

Morrison was Thatcher's private secretary. The closest he ever came to accountability was when he received a caution for cottaging with underage boys in public toilets.

In 1982 Morrison took a boy to Elm Guest House in London where the boy was abused. The assault was reported to Scotland Yard by the boy and his family just hours later. He provided a statement and was examined by a doctor. After a few months Scotland Yard contacted the boy's father and told him that the culprit had been sent to prison.

The family later discovered they had been duped by Scotland Yard. Morrison had not even been charged, let alone imprisoned.

In October 2012, a former MP and ex-leader of the Welsh Conservatives, Rod Richards, implicated Morrison in abuse in Wales. He maintained that between 1974 and 1990 approximately 650 children from 40 children's homes had been sexually, physically and emotionally abused. Morrison and another high-profile Conservative politician were implicated as regular visitors



Margaret Thatcher

to the child care homes such as Bryn Estate care home in Wrexham, north Wales.

In July 2014, former Thatcher bodyguard Barry Stevens revealed he told Thatcher that Morrison hosted sex parties at which underage boys were abused. Stevens said that, despite passing on the allegations to Thatcher, she later promoted Morrison to the position of deputy chair of the Conservative party.

On November 4, 1986, Antony Duff, MI5 director general (1985-88), wrote to Armstrong about Morrison's abuse of children. Duff opined that Morrison was only a minor "security danger" and at the "present stage... the risk of political embarrassment to the Government is rather greater than the security danger". There was no consideration of the ongoing risk posed by Morrison to children.

After the Morrison memo came to light in July 2015, Armstrong conceded: "Clearly, I was aware of it... but I was not concerned with the personal aspect of it, whether he should or should not be pursued. That was something for the police to consider. My concern was implications of national security and international relations."

Morrison walked free to abuse boys unhindered for nearly another decade. He died from a heart attack in 1995.

## IRISH 'ACTIVE CLUBS'

LAST OCTOBER *The Phoenix* (see edition 20/10/23) detailed the activities of Comhaltas na nGaedheal (CnG), which is a local manifestation of the global network of right-wing combat sports groups or 'active clubs' that have developed throughout the US and Europe in recent years. With over 100 active clubs worldwide, it is notable the close links CnG has with the international right.

As with other active clubs, CnG promotes physical fitness and its social media channels regularly post images and videos of members either masked or with faces pixelated working out in gyms, training with boxing pads or out on multi-day and overnight hikes.

This aesthetic of hyper masculinity is augmented by a regular stream of right-wing propaganda. Initially CnG seemed happy to repost articles from the likes of the *Burkean*

and the *Meon Journal*. But for over a year CnG has also published its own *Substack* newsletter, which not only focuses on anti-immigration protests at centres such as Coolock and Newtownmountkennedy but also pontificates on such topics as security culture in right-wing groups; the CnG vision of a Gaelstát; and the groups vehement anti-communism.

The report last October noted that CnG had welcomed active club members from Scotland, France and Switzerland, who had visited Ireland and even participated in anti-immigration protests alongside their international contacts. In August and September this year CnG was promoting on X and Telegram the fact that its members had travelled to train alongside Active Club Scotland, Active Club France, Active Club Tallinn and Active Club Latvia.

CnG was not the only right-wing group from the island of Ireland to make waves in September. When Red Flare, a collective of anti-fascist investigators, revealed on X that Kenny Smith's far-right Homeland Party in Britain was holding a secret conference at Wirksworth Town Hall in the Derbyshire Dales, it was no surprise to Goldhawk to learn that Gareth Falls, chairperson of the NI People's (NIP) party, was a guest speaker.

Falls's X and Facebook accounts continually post and repost messages circulating conspiracy theories about Covid-19 vaccination, the Paris Olympics opening ceremony and sex education in schools. Falls tries hard to dissociate himself from traditional politics the north, posting that "unionism/nationalism is mute now" and that neither "the king nor republicanism care about us. Pawns in a system until we object". This all rings hollow, though, with Falls also reposting prominent loyalist Jamie Bryson on his X account.

Indeed, NIP leader Tony Mallon was pictured in 2023 with his arm around the shoulder of loyalist Jolene Bunting after a meeting of right-wing activists in Belfast.

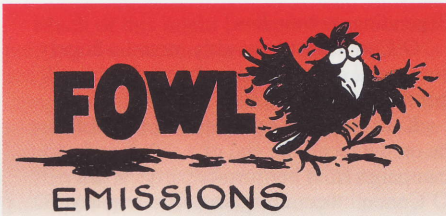


Kenny Smith





## AFFAIRS OF THE NATION



## GREENS' AN TAISCE PLANNING BILL

"A SHAMEFUL attack on [An Taisce's] good work has been massively defeated." So said Green TD Steven Matthews last week on X, celebrating the defeat of a vindictive bill that sought to remove An Taisce's prescribed role as a statutory consultee in Ireland's planning system.

Matthews' party colleague, Brian Leddin TD, explained that the bill sought to reduce An Taisce's "crucial role as a watchdog on planning", while Fine Gael junior minister Alan Dillon told the Dáil of the NGO's "important role in our planning system".

The bill – brought by Mattie McGrath and supported by Michael Healy-Rae and other rural Independents – was defeated by 120 votes to 10. On the same day, however, the Government voted through another bill that An Taisce warned would make its job much harder.

Goldhawk wonders whether Leddin, Mat-

thews and Dillon had noticed just how active An Taisce had been during that week – and for many months – fulfilling its "crucial role" as a planning watchdog by raising the alarm about the Planning Bill. It warned the bill was "full of unlawful provisions and will not help deliver homes, renewable energy and critical infrastructure. It will only cause more delay."

The bill's "centralisation of power with Government" will enable more ministerial interference in planning.

"These are fast-track procedures sending major policy changes cascading through the planning system with almost no oversight or democratic input," it said.

To borrow a phrase from Matthews, the Planning Bill is a shameful attack on the good work of numerous NGOs and thousands of members of the public who challenge unlawful decisions. It's a developers' charter whose authors clearly set out to restrict access to justice.

The bill has profound climate implications. It will help fast-track fossil fuel infrastructure and even data centres, giving future ministers more power to classify any project as "strategic" (and thus harder to object to) and reducing public participation in planning.

Sinead Mercier, an academic who previously worked for the Green Party, wrote on *The Ditch* website that the Government was "setting in train the largest amount of high carbon infrastructure ever built in the history of the state". She asked: "Why would Green Party members allow their party to leave such a legacy?"

A specific legacy could be a giant LNG

terminal on the Shannon Estuary. The bill passed just days after a High Court victory for Shannon LNG – the court ruled that Eamon Ryan's 2021 'Policy Statement' supposedly banning LNG was too flimsy and ordered An Bord Pleanála to reconsider Shannon LNG's planning application. And the bill itself included last-minute Government amendments that specifically designated LNG as "strategic" infrastructure.

Shameful indeed.

*ONE OF the features of our post-truth, Trumpian world is the increasing confidence of some commentators to disregard science, logic and other boring stuff peddled by what one of George W Bush's aides derisively called the "reality-based community".*

*Take Matt Cooper's column in last Sunday's Business Post. In one of the more disturbing comment pieces of the year, he demanded more data centres, more fossil fuel projects and more airport passengers. By limiting these we are committing "acts of self-sabotage", he claimed with no apparent irony.*

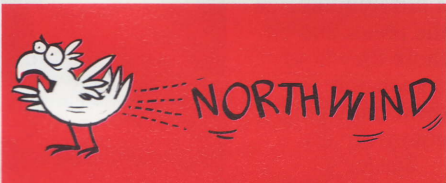
*It was like reading about a fictional world in which fossil fuels, data centres and flying were not accelerating us towards what climate scientists warn is a point of no return. "Ireland should build, build, build, as many of these new data centres as possible," Cooper proclaimed, "to surf that wave of where the AI revolution is taking the world."*

*Where the AI revolution is taking the world is several dangerous places, including an exponential rise in energy consumption.*

*Embracing AI uncritically is the real act of self-sabotage.*



Steven Matthews



## DUBLIN BOMBS: MORE DISCLOSURES

WHEN DREW Harris was appointed Garda commissioner in 2018, the public was assured that there was no conflict of interest between his new post and his former RUC/PSNI role. Harris had served as deputy chief constable of the PSNI and was deeply involved in RUC-MI5 liaison.

Yet, a conflict arose over the greatest crime in the history of the state, the UVF's Dublin-Monaghan bombings of 1974.

An army of researchers, family members and many politicians are convinced the RUC and MI5 had foreknowledge of the attack (see *The Phoenix* 17/4/24). A lot of suspicion falls on the parts played by Billy Hanna and Robin Jackson, two UVF leaders with links to British intelligence.

If any member of the UVF gang was a British agent, it follows that the archives of the RUC/PSNI and MI5 could help solve the crime. The British government has repeatedly refused to share the files. Harris was once

responsible for the RUC archive.

John O'Brien, a retired Garda chief superintendent, is the author of *The Great Deception*, published earlier this year, about the bombings. He has called for Harris to divulge what he knows – something that could occur if the north's new secretary of state, Hilary Benn, and his cabinet colleagues in London, give Harris the green light to talk.

O'Brien's intervention prompted a response from the Garda's director of communications, which confirms Harris's conflict of interest: "Information and intelligence gathered by a police officer belongs to the police service they worked for at the time. It does not belong to the individual police officer after they leave that police service."

O'Brien's book reveals the depth of Garda co-operation with *The Hidden Hand*, the groundbreaking 1993 Yorkshire Television documentary about the 1974 bombings. During the broadcast, the late Eamon Doherty, Garda commissioner (1987-88) – appointed by Charles Haughey – pointed the finger at British intelligence involvement.

O'Brien reveals that D/Sup Tom Connolly acted as liaison with the programme and that: "Formal overt [Garda] co-operation with the media was unheard of in the force. I served at that time and I can wholeheartedly confirm that the media posture was conservative

and closed. It suggests that there was a very strong desire to set the record straight insofar as the car bombings were concerned."

O'Brien highlights the fact that the UVF lacked the skill to make recrystallised ammonium nitrate, the key ingredient of the Dublin bombs. (Nitrate was not used in the Monaghan bomb.) The Provisional IRA, however, had mastered the process.

O'Brien quotes Lt Col Wyld of the British Army, who said that "throughout the summer of 1974 we recovered at least 1,000 lbs" of the IRA's nitrate "every week". No account ledgers were maintained.

O'Brien argues convincingly that British operatives could have supplied the impounded nitrate to the UVF bomb gang.

Underlying this, O'Brien focuses on the evidence of Lt Col George Styles, also of the British Army, who revealed that captured IRA nitrate was used in bombs detonated by undercover British operatives. This was done to give the military an excuse to search locations of interest to them adjacent to the areas the dirty tricks unit had just bombed. This could have provided the blueprint for the Dublin attacks.



Drew Harris





## BRIT SPIES TARGET RUSSIAN SPIES

THE *SUNDAY TIMES* has over-reached itself with that story about a Putin "agent in the Oireachtas". Stories about the use of a honeytrap – "a striking looking female agent (used) to entertain the politician romantically", as the recent *ST* story put it – and other James Bond-type fantasies provoked much hilarity. That the story became the subject of mockery in the Seanad last week indicates how seriously it has been taken, even by Government politicians.

This 'scoop' will undermine the revived Cold War narratives purveyed by the Aawrish edition of the *ST* in recent years, which has painted Russia, Iran, China and various other entities as 'the enemy' and the West as a haven of democracy and goodwill towards all nations.

The article by *ST* security correspondent John Mooney boasts that the existence of agent "Cobalt" was "one of the state's most closely guarded secrets". Apparently, his willingness to arrange for contact for his Russian handler with northern paramilitaries was part of a plan to "undermine relations between the UK, Ireland and the EU and draw attention away from Ukraine". Cunning, hey?

Unfortunately for his readers, Mooney explained that "Agent Cobalt has engaged in many activities that have undermined public trust in institutions, though for legal reasons we cannot say how" and "the full scale of Cobalt's activities is still a mystery". How disappointing.

What Goldhawk finds even more disappointing is that after years of reporting on spies in Ireland, Mooney and the Irish *ST* newsroom appear not to have cracked the real

espionage story – namely, the infiltration of a raft of institutions in this country by British intel over decades. It is a fact that most embassies, and certainly those of powerful western states, house diplomats and spies whose duties involve intelligence gathering as a matter of course. The notion that our 'nearest neighbours' would not be so impolite is laughable.

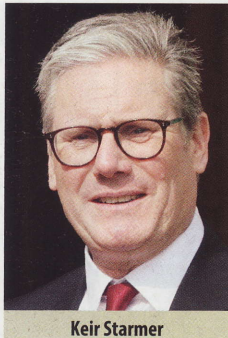
It is also a fact that British intelligence, like their allies in EU states and the US, use political, business, diplomatic and media cover to influence people and gather information in key areas of society. The *ST* may have no such agents in its employment in Ireland but the newspaper is widely regarded in media and security circles to be a favoured outlet for MI5 in particular.

It must be frustrating for Irish journalists working for the *ST* that they rarely, if ever, receive scoops about – or from – a much nearer intelligence agency in Blighty. After all, these are the same sources that are so helpful in providing information about 'enemy' states in the east and even republicanism in the north during the Troubles and since.

The *ST* and Mooney have instead been forced to focus on China, Iran and Russia, as well as Muslim and other non-western states, with lurid stories about dastardly plots and much sermonising about how we are not pulling our weight in defence of the west. One presumes this bent is down to the control exercised by *ST* overlords in London and their intel sources there.

Recently, the real *ST* in London editorialised about how the Ukraine war had triggered a rethink about Nato's greater relevance; how Donald Trump was correct to lecture those Nato members that did not spend enough on arms; and how all Nato members should spend more on Nato. The Irish edition editorialised in agreement, with no difference in meaning and little difference in phraseology, even though our Government insists we are not Nato members (see *The Phoenix* 19/4/24).

In the same edition that recently carried the Putin agent story, the *ST*'s Irish edition also editorialised about the plight of Irish peace keepers in south Lebanon as Israel became more threatening. The advice proffered was as follows: "Now the fiction underpinning Unifil's 'peacekeeping' mandate has disappeared, it's time to get our troops out of Lebanon."



Keir Starmer

Is this because British PM Keir Starmer edging even closer to Israel with continue arms supplies and other forms of military support?

## ISRAEL'S ALLIES

ISRAELI DIPLOMATS and PR spinners are aghast at the Irish response to the carnage in Gaza but they may have been pleasantly surprised at the benign treatment their state and the mad bomb of the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) received from the *Irish Times* recently.

*IT* journalist Ronan McGreevy reported recently on the anniversary of the Hamas invasion of Israel, the killing of 1,200 Israelis and the capture of many hostages with copious quotes from Ireland's new chief rabbi, Roni Wieder. These went along the lines of: "There is immense sadness [among the Jewish community] at the suffering of innocent Palestinians but most attribute that to the tactic of Hamas".

Jewish Representative Council of Ireland chair, Maurice Cohen, was quoted as saying: "Everybody is horrified by civilian deaths [in Lebanon] but there was no war on October 6th [the day before the Hamas invasion last year]".

Cohen also said: "The Irish Government seemingly victim-blaming Israel."

Wieder also said that Jews here "strongly agree with the necessity of the war and its aims" but that not all of them agree with every action Israel has taken. This naturally led to the story being headlined, "Jewish community strongly backs war, says chief rabbi".

This led to a complaint to the newspaper from Wieder and a statement in its correction and clarifications section saying the headline "did not fully reflect" Wieder's comments (even though his mild qualifications were quoted in the story). The *IT* obligingly repeated these quotes in its clarification, ie "that not all Irish Jews agree with every action Israel has taken" and other quotes.

It is a pity then that the rather supportive, uncritical article did not give a full flavour of the group that organised the anniversary event, the Ireland Israel Alliance (IIA), by publishing a few of its quotes.

The alliance is headed by Christian fundamentalist Jackie Goodall, who hails from north Kerry. The IIA is the third group in the last decade to battle for Israel in Ireland, with the endorsement of the Israeli Embassy, reflecting the increasingly religiously confessional tone of the Israeli government as it moved towards the creation of an exclusive sectarian state.

Goodall describes herself as a "Christian Zionist" and she warned some years ago that our "Judeo-Christian heritage" faces three enemies: "humanism... political correctness... and the growth of Islam".

Whatever about Islam, the first two of these characteristics would be shared by many *IT* readers and sensibly the newspaper did not share this information with them.



Jackie Goodall



...VODKA AND CAVIAR.....WHO ORDERED THE VODKA AND CAVIAR?...



Continued from page 3

jobbing money go? Into SF's coffers obviously – whoever knew about this jiggery-pokery didn't design it to benefit a party official.

Given these circumstances, it is entirely possible that when O'Neill denied she noticed McMonagle standing a few feet from her while working for the British Heart Foundation (BHF) after being expelled from SF, it could have been because she never knew he worked for her.

More questions arise. How many people in SF knew McMonagle had been sacked from his job and expelled from the party before it became public knowledge he was charged? Is it possible that the HR manager whom the BHF phoned to check McMonagle's references didn't know why he had left SF's employ?

McDonald's response that the imbroglia in the north calls for a "complete overhaul of governance" in the party puts it mildly to say the least. Someone knew what was going on but kept the lid on it until it blew off.

At least in the north it will fade away because no one wants to provoke another crisis leading to a collapse of the executive. A TUV attempt to propose a vote of no confidence in O'Neill got no support at all. It is and will continue to be a different matter in the Dáil and perhaps during the general election.

## A SPOOK NAMED SUE

AS GOLDBLAWK commented recently, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer's recently deposed chief of staff (C/S), the spooky Sue Gray, had become a target for a variety of top Whitehall mandarins as well as jealous Labour Party staffers, some ministers and disappointed MPs who had not become ministers (see *The Phoenix* 23/8/24). On top of all that, there was a fear that Gray's alleged control freakery would result in a purge of senior cabinet officials, especially those who had ruttet up against her in the past and those that had greatly resented her damning inquiry into Borisgate.

The news of Gray's own demise – instead of those who felt they were targeted – was thus greeted with the popping of champagne corks around Whitehall a fortnight ago. One man who may have felt enveloped in a warm thrill of *schadenfreude* is cabinet secretary Simon Case, regarded by some – especially Simon – as Gray's number one target.

A recent biography of Kemi Badenoch by British peer Lord Ashcroft revealed that Simon had blocked Sue from becoming Badenoch's chief handler when she was secretary of state for trade two years ago. A large part of Case's motivation was down to Gray causing serious disruption to Case's masters in the cabinet with her Partygate

report, which led to the resignation of Boris Johnson as PM.

As Goldhawk also noted, Case discreetly let it be known recently that he intended to step down in the near future due to "health problems". It was reported at the time that this move came as Gray was just getting into her stride, with moves to shake up Whitehall and overhaul the civil service.

Oh, the irony then when it emerged that the purge was in fact implemented in reverse. Even worse for Gray is that, while she is now in that most meaningful of jobs – Starmer's envoy to the regions and nations – she was despatched to Case's office to negotiate with her nemesis the terms of her departure from the top job as the PM's C/S.

There are further ironies in the semi-public brawling among Starmer's advisors, with both Gray and Morgan McSweeney – who has now taken her C/S post – being described as friends of Ireland (Gray because of her time in various government capacities in the north and McSweeney because of his Macroom, Co Cork origins).

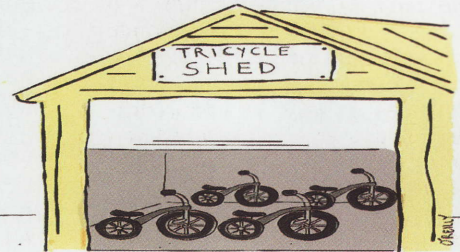
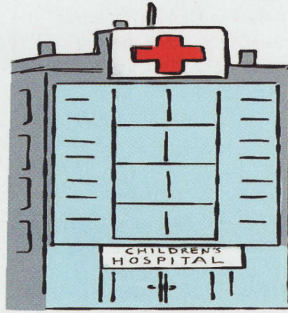
The most interesting aspect of Gray's CV, however, came with repeated assertions by senior Whitehall figures that she was a spook and certainly Sinn Féin in the north regarded her as a securocrat.

McSweeney, alternatively, earned the image of a political mastermind who won the general election for Labour.

The amount of spinning from Gray and her enemies – ie from Gray and McSweeney's respective handlers – resulted in one particular charge, as levelled in the Tory-leaning *Times* of London. This was that she had been accused of "subverting cabinet ministers in an effort to secure a government bailout to cover the £310 million cost of rebuilding a derelict stadium in Belfast... a dilapidated Gaelic games venue to host matches at the 2028 European football championship".

That would be Casement Park, which became the focus of angry protests from the DUP and others as it was situated in Catholic West Belfast. The *Times* added sweetly that Gray had become "very close" to SF finance

Adding to expenses at  
the new children's hospital...



minister Conor Murphy.

Gray may have been a spook but she knew from her time in the north that rejuvenation of Casement would be good politics.

It is not known what line the broth of a boy from Macroom took on this issue but he hardly gave Gray much support as he moved heaven and earth to grab her job.

## DREARY EU RHETORIC

EOIN DREA wrote in *Politico.ie* last May that, despite the Ukraine war, "there's one [EU] member country that won't be helping to defend Europe any time soon. That country is Ireland." He concluded his article saying: "Two things are certain: Ukraine will keep fighting; Ireland will keep freeloading."

A fortnight ago, again in *Politico.ie*, Dreary referred to Ireland's "lazy and increasingly dangerous economic dependency on Washington. Fundamentally weakening its role in the EU." In the *Irish Times* last month he said Ireland was failing to enforce EU data protection rules; had a creative approach to rules on taxing US multinational; sacrificed senior EU trade commissioner (Phil Hogan) in an act of kamikaze politics; and failed to spend money on arms.

Dreary's output of Euromaniac rants contains much more like this but the researcher is employed by the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies, the official think-tank of the European People's Party, the European Parliament group that Fine Gael MEPs belong to.

After he joined the big boys in Europe, Dreary maintained other, more direct links with the Blueshirts and was a board member of the party's Policy Lab, during which time he also lobbied ideological, EU hand grenades into party leader Leo Varadkar's bunker.



Sue Gray



Eoin Drea

## ARNOTTS UNVEILS NEW SAUDI MANNEQUINS



THE PHOENIX

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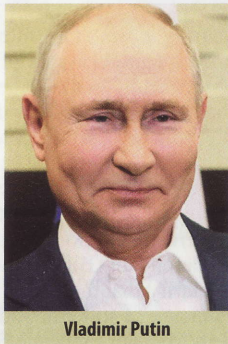


## AFFAIRS OF THE NATION

## AFFAIRS OF THE NATION

HONEY TRAP:  
RUSSIAN OR BRITISH?

THE *SUNDAY TIMES* may have unintentionally opened a can of worms with recent articles claiming that the Russian secret service was running an agent dubbed 'Cobalt' in the Oireachtas. The real scandal more likely relates to a British secret service asset operating inside Garda intelligence, who was responsible for the leak of the fishy allegation to the newspaper in the first place.



The *ST* reported that Garda intelligence allegedly came to "believe the Russians might have obtained Kompromat (compromising information) on [Cobalt], possibly during his travels abroad."

When an intelligence service sets out to entrap a male target through sexual blackmail, it is not always necessary to lure him into bed with a 'swallow', a female sexual partner in the pay of a spy agency. Such operations often fail for various reasons, ie because the target is faithful to his partner.

Instead, dirty trick operators can resort to a tactic that produces the same result: the incapacitation of a target. In this scenario, drops of Rohypnol or a similar substance are injected into the victim's glass and he is then carried to a hotel bedroom where all sorts of photographs can be staged while he is unconscious.

Goldhawk and others have reason to believe that Cobalt was the entirely innocent victim of such a drugging.

The Cobalt affair apparently began in 2019. Why has it only emerged now, after five years? Is it because the target of the leak

recently launched an initiative that displeased UK security services?

A number of disturbing points have been raised in a forensic examination of the Cobalt affair in a blog by Michael C Murphy, the CEO of security and intelligence firm SITARMS, who was formerly Lt-Col Murphy and is the retired director of J2, the Defence Forces intelligence arm. His article is entitled, "Never Mind Cobalt Who is Hansen?"

'Hansen' is the name Murphy attributes to the source of the Cobalt story. Murphy's immediate reaction upon reading the *ST* article was that "there was a serious leak of state TOP SECRET intelligence to the media".

Murphy proceeds to quote the section of the *ST* article where Hansen alleged that "Cobalt's finances were initially examined to try to establish whether he was receiving money, but their inquiries produced nothing suspicious".

Murphy asks: "Did the then Minister for Justice, Mr Flanagan, approve the Gardaí

*Continued on page 6*

**READERS OF last weekend's *Business Post* will have spotted a grovelling apology to one Ronan Minahan. But it looks like the issue has not gone away, with a High Court outing still pencilled in for November 11 as part of legal proceedings that kicked off in 2019.**

**The *Post's* mea culpa related to a December 2018 story it published, headlined "Ex-Aryzta executive fails in his unfair dismissal action". It identified Minahan as the ex-Aryzta exec in question and said he had issued proceedings before the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) claiming to have been unfairly dismissed, as well as parallel proceedings in the High Court.**

**The paper was interested in the Aryzta (formerly IAWS) story because it was once one of the success stories on the stock market, at least until it migrated its listing to Switzerland. As the company struggled, senior executives exited in early 2017, while Minahan was promoted to head of the group's Americas division before also exiting the company later that year.**

**According to the *Post* apology, its article was "entirely incorrect" as Minahan "had no involvement whatsoever in the WRC and High Court proceedings mentioned".**

**In December 2019, proceedings were initiated in the Four Goldmines by Minahan against *Post* Publications and that case is up again later this month. Neither Minahan's legal eagles, McInnes Dunne Solicitors, nor *Post* editor Daniel McConnell responded to Goldhawk's queries about the spat.**

## HIGH-FLYING KITE

IT HAS BEEN an eventful month for Darren Smith's Kite Entertainment TV production outfit. Last weekend, its new series for RTÉ of *Ireland's Fittest Families* was postponed following the tragic death of one of the young participants. A week earlier, however, Kite had landed the gig for an Irish version of the hugely popular BBC show, *The Traitors*. This turns out to be good news for concert promoter extraordinaire, Denis Desmond.

Kite has been involved in an array of forgettable Irish light entertainment shows, including *Love in the Country* and *The Deirdre O'Kane Show*. Where Smith earns his crust is by landing contracts to produce local versions of proven hit international shows. Hence Kite, is behind *Gogglebox Ireland*, *Ireland's Got Talent* and, now, the Dutch-created reality show *The Traitors*.

The latter announcement got the journos salivating and countless pics of the presenter of the UK show, Claudia Winkleman, suddenly appeared in the Irish media under headlines like, "Battle to be Ireland's Claudia Winkleman", while the *Irish Times* news section even referred to the "nail-biting game of deception" (not a reference to management's dealings with the paper's hacks). Within a couple of days the *Indo* reported that Kite had received over 5,000 applications.

While this is good news for managing director Smith, it is also going down well with MCD moneybags Denis Desmond and his partner, Caroline Downey, whose Gaiety Investments vehicle took a 45% stake in Kite when the company was incorporated in 2004. Given the size of the Desmond coffers, this was a smart move for Smith and he has done rather well out of the arrangement, even emerging unscathed after Kite produced the flop show, *Anglo: The Musical*, back in 2012.

Financially, Kite has been good to its 55% shareholder and recently filed accounts reveal that "emoluments" for him and his fellow director and wife, Rachel Towel, topped a very handsome €550,000 in the year to June 2023.

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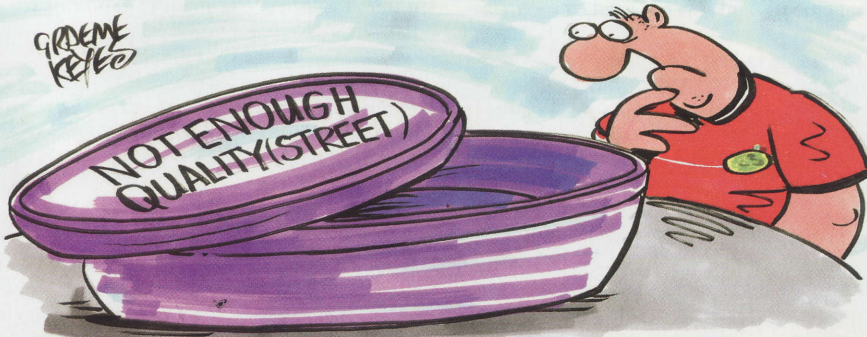
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ROWNTREE DESELECTION BOX



## AFFAIRS OF THE NATION

Continued from page 3

investigating the finances of a member of the Oireachtas? Did the Minister sign a warrant to do so? If not, by what authority was the search conducted and at what rank?"

The *ST* also reported that, according "to flight dates seen by the *Sunday Times*, Cobalt has travelled to countries, including outside the European Union, where Russian services operate without fear".

Murphy asks: "How did the [ST] obtain flight records? Were they given to [the newspaper] by the Gardaí? Was there a breach of GDPR?"

And what of the *ST*'s assertion that there is no "evidence of payment into [Cobalt's] known bank accounts. So, it was suspected that he might have been personally compromised or his internet history intercepted during travels abroad where Russian intelligence operate."

Murphy wants to know: "How did the Gardaí know there was no payment into Cobalt's bank accounts? By what authority did they investigate a member of parliament?... Who signed the Warrant to search his bank account?"

Cobalt was placed under surveillance, with at least one of his conversations being "recorded". This raises more questions in Murphy's trained intelligence mind about the existence of a warrant for the monitoring of Cobalt: "If there is no warrant [for the surveillance] by what authority was the surveillance conducted?"

Murphy derides the *ST*'s assertion that this "is the first known infiltration of the Oireachtas by a hostile intelligence service". He says this "displays naivety. There is no such thing as a friendly foreign intelligence service... it would be very naïve to think that the Oireachtas is not heavily infiltrated by a number of intelligence services."

Murphy has a chilling take on the *ST*'s assertion that "experts believe there may be others yet to be discovered". He feels that this "statement is a threat to any politician who does not agree with government policy and wishes to speak out regarding neutrality, Ukraine, NATO, EU militarisation, etc. What politician wants to be accused of being a Russian agent? Speak out and be called a Putin Puppet. This is a totalitarian state method to quieten opposition. Is this the real

reason for this article at this time?"

Only two things are certain at this point: first, there was a leak by at least one Irish/British intelligence official to a newspaper in breach of the Official Secrets Act. Second, the Government is not making any noise about finding out who was the source of the leak.

An even uglier picture is slowly swimming into focus in the background. The Cobalt yarn dates back to 2019. In recent times Cobalt was involved in a perfectly legitimate political campaign, which can only have infuriated certain interests in London. The leak of the Cobalt story in 2024 might have been designed to damage that initiative and tarnish its author.

The worst-case scenario is that an ally of the British secret service, MI6, in Garda intelligence is responsible for the leak and that Cobalt, a victim of a drugging operation while on a foreign trip, has been very badly treated indeed by all and sundry.

## SIR GARRET MISLED BY HAROLD WILSON

OPERATION DENTON, led by Sir Iain Livingstone, is looking at the 1974 Dublin-Monaghan bomb atrocities. It lays much emphasis on the fact it is an analytical review that is diligently scrutinising all of the relevant files. Goldhawk would like to suggest that it digs out the briefing papers prepared for PM Harold Wilson prior to two meetings he had with the Irish government in 1974.

A Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) memo recorded that Wilson stated on September 11, 1974, that in "recent months some very nasty men had been lifted on the Unionist side. On the Friday and Saturday of the [Ulster Workers' Council] strike, 25 interim custody orders had been signed and the perpetrators of the Dublin bomb outrages had been picked up and were now detained, but it was impossible to get the evidence to try them in ordinary courts."

A similar statement was prepared by the DFA after a meeting in Dublin on November 21, 1974. At it, Wilson "emphasised again that the people who bombed Dublin were now interned... They were certain they had the

right people, but they could not bring them to trial."

This was not the case. The two key UVF figures in the bombing, Billy Hanna and Robin Jackson, were not interned nor were others along the chain of command such as Billy Hanna and Robin Jackson, who were British agents.

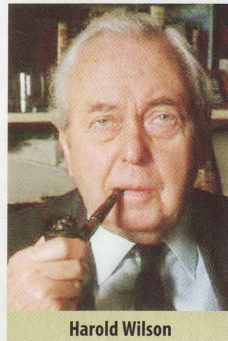
Those at the September 11 meeting included Garret FitzGerald, then Fine Gael foreign affairs minister. Henry Barron, the retired Supreme Court judge who inquired into the bombings, was critical of the fact the Irish contingent did not ask Wilson

for details such as the names of the bombers. Barron could find no paper trail indicating that what Wilson said was even passed to the justice department or gardaí.

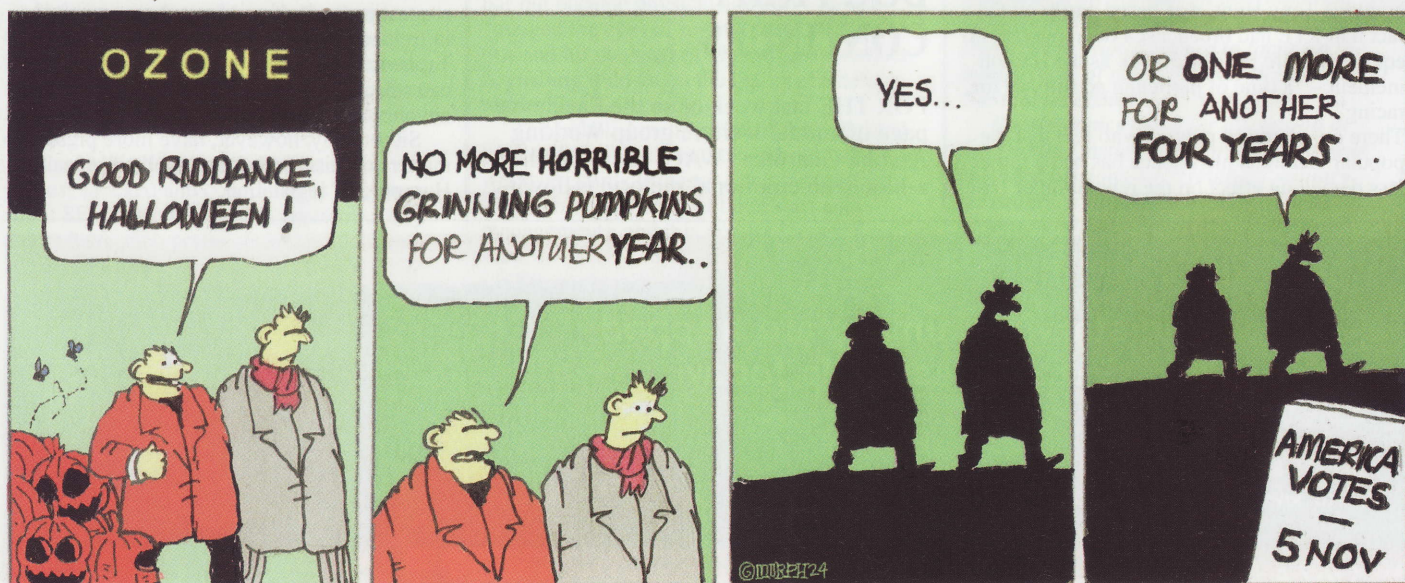
FitzGerald, who was interviewed by Barron, stated that he would not have thought it appropriate to respond to, or get involved in, individual cases as this "would have cut across the correct channels."

FitzGerald emphasised that Irish governments should not normally take a proactive approach in the investigation of such matters. Yet he intervened in a number of investigations, most notably the phone-tap inquiry, led by deputy Garda commissioner Larry Wren in 1982-83, into the tapping of the phones of journalists Bruce Arnold and Geraldine Kennedy, which caused enormous turmoil for Fianna Fáil and nearly saw Charles Haughey deposed as the party's leader. Why was that an acceptable intervention but not the probe into the slaughter of 34 people?

British prime ministers are routinely furnished with briefing papers prior to Anglo-Irish meetings. Britain's National Archive has declassified hundreds of them. Livingstone should acquire the ones prepared for Wilson in 1974 and trace them back to their root authors, almost certainly MI5 and the RUC special branch. After he ascertains who misled Wilson back then, he can ask himself: "Why did MI5 and the RUC muddy the waters thus?"



Harold Wilson





## AFFAIRS OF THE NATION



## EU'S BEST FORM OF DEFENCE

THE EUROPEAN Union's appointment this autumn of Lithuania's Andrius Kubilius as the bloc's first defence commissioner is a clear sign of an increase in the momentum towards militarisation of the alliance. At the same time, the EU is negotiating defence partnerships with Britain, South Korea and Japan. While the Government's much-vaunted Consultative Forum on International Security Policy last year proved to be a damp squib, the enthusiasm of the Government for increased integration into EU and Nato military projects continues unabated.

As chair of the European Union Military Committee, Irish Defence Forces Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Seán Clancy recently travelled to the US to meet with General Charles Q Brown Jr, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (the US's highest-ranking military officer). Afterwards Clancy posted on X that he was "grateful for the invitation to visit and discuss areas of mutual interest including Ukraine, Middle East, @defenceforces transformation programme and EU-NATO relations".

On the same day (October 24) as Clancy was being welcomed to the Pentagon, a delegation from the Department of Defence, led by secretary general Jacqui McCrum, travelled to Brussels to meet with European Defence Agency (EDA) chief executive Jiří Šedivý. The EDA is responsible for facilitating the integration of EU states within the bloc's Common Security and Defence Policy.

Ireland is currently involved in 16 EDA projects and programmes including the joint procurement of ammunition and chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear-protection equipment, as well as training relating to improvised explosive devices, military search and maritime surveillance.

Just last June Seán White (see *The*



Lt Gen Seán Clancy

Phoenix 28/6/24), a former Irish Defence Forces brigadier general, was appointed by the EDA as director for industry, synergies and enablers. In a statement acknowledging his appointment, White talked about how he saw his role with the EDA, saying: "This work is especially important in contributing to the promotion and strengthening of the union's defence technological and industrial base as well as focusing on the 2023 EU capability development priorities."

In the June edition of *European Defence Matters*, the EDA's bi-annually published magazine, the lead article, "Building a

Common European Defence Policy in Troubled Times", was forthright in its fervour for increased militarisation of the alliance. It praised the fact that EU states are now spending significantly more on defence, with an increase of 40% in defence budgets over the last 10 years and a €50bn jump between 2022 and 2023.

The article asserted that, while in the past European defence policy was not without controversy – with heated debates about "strategic autonomy" and

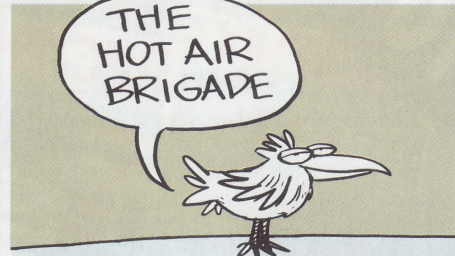
the link between EU defence policy and Nato – these issues were now resolved.

Without any mention of Ireland or other neutral EU states Austria and Malta, the article claimed: "Since the war of aggression against Ukraine, everyone in Europe recognises that Nato remains more essential than ever to ensure the continent's security, particularly after Sweden and Finland joined the organisation."

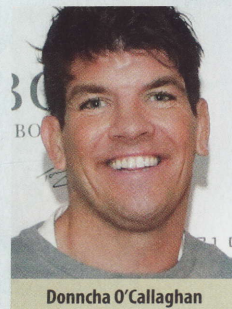
In July 58 TDs voted against the Government's plan to join two new EU Pesco (Permanent Structured Co-operation) projects and two new EDA projects. Paul Murphy of People Before Profit castigated the proposal. "It is part of the ramp-up of military spending and militarisation around the world, above all in Europe," he said.

Sinn Féin too has long held a similar critique of this process of militarisation. As far back as November 2018 then MEP Matt Carthy posted a video of himself and other SF members protesting in Brussels as "the European Defence Agency is hosting a conference with EU politicians, defence ministers & the arms industry. This is part of the EU's ambitious & dangerous militarisation agenda."

The question over the next month is whether PBP and SF can make this an election issue.



Like, I look at someone like Ian Dempsey and I feel like genuflecting. Anyone that sees that man should hug him. To have done what he has done [presenting breakfast shows] for well over 30 years is amazing. **Donncha O'Callaghan,**



Donncha O'Callaghan

**Sunday Independent Life Magazine**

If you've been holding your breath since the news arrived in 2023 that Cillian Murphy was making author Claire Keegan's *Small Things Like These* for the big screen, and then really began counting down the days when it had its world premiere at the Berlin International Film Festival, well, you can now stop with the maths and exhale. **Harry Guerin, RTÉ Guide**

The lawyers on this list work hard for their clients and while many are recognised by third-party ranking firms, much of their work goes unnoticed by the general public. **Catherine Sanz on the Business Post's vital Top 100 Lawyers list**

Its butter-coloured shelves bend and journey. There are cosy, lamp-lit nooks for sitting and browsing. Its ceiling and walls are mirrored, creating little infinities in a space the size of a large living room. **Pól Ó Conghaile on London bookshop, Liberia, Irish Independent**

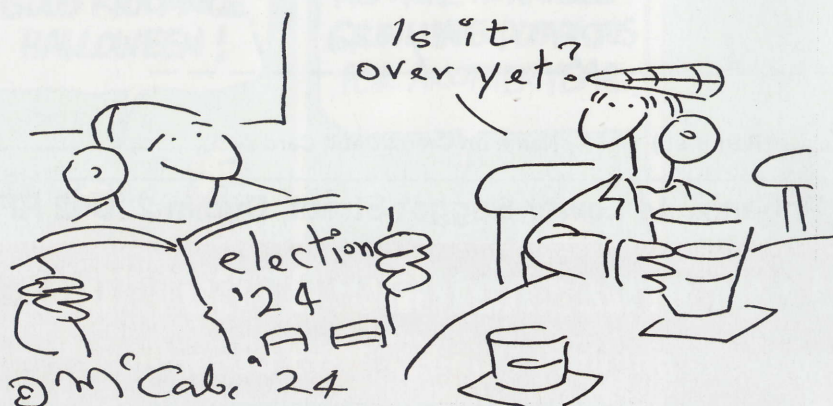
Through eyes made compassionate in her forge, we see the irreducible, unique mystery that is each of us. **Adrienne Murphy on Laura Kennedy's first book, Some of Our Parts, Irish Times**

A peaceful, clutter-free environment is crucial for restful sleep, and when we surround ourselves with fewer, well-made items that align with our values, the bedroom becomes a sanctuary of calm and intentionality rather than a source of stress or excess. **Pat Kane, Irish Tatler**

She also describes a new experiment, called the "for you" team internally, which is trying to create content that reflects people's lives back at them. **Irish Times group MD on her paper's fascinating new editorial strategy, as described to The Currency**

Thanks to Sally Rooney, older women will soon be shopping around for younger lads. **Katy Hayes, Irish Independent**

To come after Patrick Kielty – of all people – was a cringey act in biting the hand that feeds them. Kielty has led the biggest cultural change towards unification in Irish broadcasting, making *The Late Late Show* a truly all-Ireland affair. **Larissa Nolan on Sinn Féin's criticism of Patrick Kielty's Late Late monologue, Irish Mirror**



Please send suitable contributions to: The Hot Air Brigade, The Phoenix, 44 Lr Baggot St, Dublin 2 or email: hotair@thephoenix.ie





## THE 'REAL' SPIES IN IRELAND

IT'S WHAT is behind that recent story in the Irish edition of the *Sunday Times* alleging that a current Oireachtas member is a Russian agent – a man they labelled 'Cobalt' – that is the real story. Goldhawk's sources insist that the real security concern here is that this story is a 'black op' inspired by a British intelligence asset in Garda intelligence (see *The Phoenix* 1/11/24).

Disconcertingly, gardaí have yet to apprehend the source of the leak. He is guilty of breaching the Official Secrets Act. This is unnerving as the source disclosed that the leak relates to "one of the most significant national security issues in recent history".

In the meantime, the elusive source has been dubbed 'Hansen'.

Hansen portrayed the malevolent Cobalt as someone who was helping Vladimir Putin to reignite the Troubles. Hansen, however, looks suspiciously like a British secret service mouthpiece operating from within Garda intelligence. His alarmist claims have the appearance of an old-fashioned black propaganda ploy designed to undermine the reputation of Cobalt and derail a political initiative that the Irish politician is pursuing – one that has irked London.

Is it a coincidence that MI5 director general Ken McCallum delivered a speech at the Counter Terrorism Operations Centre in London that reinforced the jolting revelations Hansen is making about Russian dirty tricks? The MI5 boss made his remarks two days after Hansen grabbed the headlines in Ireland.

McCallum asserted that, while "the Russian military grinds away on the battlefield [in Ukraine]... we're also seeing Putin's henchmen seeking to strike elsewhere".

He stressed that the "more eye-catching shift this year has been Russian state actors turning to proxies for their dirty work, including private intelligence operatives and criminals from both the UK and third countries".

There was more: Russian military intelligence, the GRU, "in particular is on a sustained mission to generate mayhem on British and European streets: we've seen arson, sabotage and more. Dangerous actions conducted with increasing recklessness."

None of this would have surprised readers of the story inspired by Hansen in the Irish edition of the *ST*. The *Sunday* broadsheet been treated them to a sweeping account of the secret adventures of the GRU's Sergey Prokoviev of the GRU two days earlier.

Prokoviev had posed as a Russian diplomat until his expulsion from Ireland by the Department of Foreign Affairs in March 2022. He was portrayed as Cobalt's GRU spy handler.

McCallum's warning that the GRU was not merely active on the battlefield but "seeking to strike elsewhere" resonated pitch perfect with what Irish readers of the *ST* had been told – that Prokoviev and the GRU had been involved in a "new phase of political warfare against the West".

McCallum added that the GRU was "turning to proxies" such as "criminals". Again, old hat to *ST* readers. The paper had reported the previous Sunday that Putin's spies were "also using criminal gangs, republican paramilitaries in left-wing fringe groups and far-right extremists as proxies. The threat is continuing to evolve."

The similarity is striking between the DG's dire message and that fed to the *ST* by Hansen at an earlier stage. Can this be a mere coincidence or was Hansen regurgitating a script written by British propagandists fixed to a timetable set in London?

The *ST* told its Irish readers that Prokoviev was "particularly interested in establishing contacts with loyalist and republican paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland, which had sprung to life during the breaks in negotiations between the European Union and Britain".

At this time the UVF and other loyalists were "threatening violence over the negotiations, which proposed creating an invisible border in the Irish Sea to prevent the return of a land border. The Kremlin was interested in exploiting these tensions as part

of its covert efforts to destabilise relations between Ireland and Britain and the West."

Prokoviev's mission was to launch "active measures" or "political warfare tactics" of a kind that had been employed "by the KGB during the Cold War". On this occasion, the mission included nothing less than an attempt to inflame loyalists and reignite the Troubles.

Cobalt was allegedly a part of this ignoble operation. Gardaí, *ST* readers were informed, had followed Prokoviev on a trip that took him to a clandestine rendezvous outside Dublin where, Hansen alleges, he met the dastardly Cobalt, who "offered to do whatever he could to assist" the Russian link up with republicans and loyalists, "despite never having engaged with paramilitaries in his career".

Is it likely that Putin is suffering bouts of depression in the Kremlin as he turns the pages of GRU reports from the Irish directorate and learns that the GRU has still not reignited the Troubles? Or is the entire story a mishmash of convoluted poppycock inspired by London and foisted on an unwitting *ST*?

Perhaps we will find out when gardaí finally arrest Hansen – something that, of course, presupposes they are looking for him.

## NICK CAVE(MAN) PLAYS ISRAEL

IT WAS interesting but not surprising to hear adverts for Nick Cave's concerts at Dublin's 3Arena still being broadcast right up to the day before his two concerts on Tuesday and Wednesday this week, indicating that ticket sales were not going at all well. This is most unusual for artists of this fame and the obvious lesson is that the global Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement against Israel and its horrific genocide of Palestinians has begun to bite.

Caveman's rejection of the campaign began some years ago and he responded with indignation to the cultural boycott of Israel, which he described as "cowardly and shameful" as well as "antisemitic at heart".

Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign (IPSC) chair Zoe Lawlor replied: "Trying to dress it all up as some morally superior act, when really it's just about the cash, is beyond contempt."

This polemic was some time before the carnage in Gaza that started in October last year.

More recently, IPSC press officer Betty Purcell tweeted: "Israel supporter, Nick Cave not selling well in Ireland. Radio ads still running, and seats available. I guess supporting genocide does not a fun night make".

Those who thought that Cave might have softened his attitude to the Palestinians as they endured the depravity of the last 14 months or so were sadly mistaken. In what deserves some sort of prize for the most euphemistic phrase of the millennium, the *Jerusalem Post* last August, 10 months into the slaughter, quoted Caveman as saying: "Regardless of all the horrific complications going on in Israel at the moment, deep down, I have a sort of abiding love for that place."

So, it's love, not money.



Ken McCallum





## CONOR MCGREGOR'S NEW-RIGHT SUPPORT

OVER THE last year much was made of Conor McGregor's posts on X about his plan to run for the presidency. With Elon Musk backing him online, it was no surprise to see many who should have known better expressing support for the Dublin MMA fighter's political ambitions. But given the recent civil court guilty verdict of assaulting Nikita Hand, it is dismaying that some of Ireland's new right-leaning politicians have maintained their public support for him.

McGregor quickly took to X to claim he would appeal the decision. The post was taken down but screenshots of it and the replies were already spreading across social media and messaging apps.

One of those that replied to McGregor was Margaret Alacoque Maguire, the Ireland First (IF) general election candidate in Longford Westmeath. In response to McGregor's post, McGuire said: "Disgraceful from the judge and jury".

In June Maguire ran unsuccessfully in both the local elections in Mullingar and in the European Parliament elections in Midlands North-West.

While neither of IF's other two candidates in the European Parliament elections, Philip Dwyer or Derek Blighe, have commented publicly about the case or McGregor since his trial ended, they have in the past expressed support for his political pronouncements. In February Dwyer reposted McGregor's tweet calling for a no vote in the two constitutional referendums. Meanwhile in November 2023, in response to a Gript Media poll on whether you would vote for McGregor in an election, Blighe posted: "I would absolutely vote for @TheNotoriousMMA and I will endorse him if he chooses to!"

Last Friday McGregor arrived to court with a large entourage of supporters, including Independent Ireland (II) councillor Philip Sutcliffe. McGregor has been a big supporter

of Sutcliffe but by Saturday, after a meeting with a senior II official, Sutcliffe had resigned from the party.

Just hours after Friday's verdict, prominent National Party member Keith Woods (pseudonym of Roscommon native Keith O'Brien) posted a quote from Hand's evidence and asked: "I'm sorry but does anyone believe Conor McGregor actually said this?" Within a day the post had over one million views and more than 10,000 likes.



Conor McGregor

Woods followed up a day later with another tweet that ran to 622 words. Having declared that "my personal opinion is there is very little that makes sense about this case, and I was shocked at the guilty verdict", he tried at length to pick holes in the case presented against McGregor before describing the reaction of the mainstream media as being "the reactions of the regime mouthpieces".

Woods tagged McGregor in his post, who reposted the message.

Again it went viral on X, with over 1.4 million views and 12,000 likes in less than 24 hours.

## DUB-MON BOMBS: STRANGE DELAYS

THERE ARE three ongoing enquiries into the 1974 Dublin-Monaghan (D-M) massacre. First, there's an allegedly 'open' Garda investigation, which began in 1974 but never made a single arrest. Second is Operation Denton, led by Sir Iain Livingstone, and third is Operation Newham, an inquiry by the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland (PONI). Operations Denton and Newham are examining collusion between the RUC and the UVF's Glenanne gang. It was led by Billy Hanna and Robin Jackson, both of whom are believed to have been British agents. They were behind the D-M atrocities.

This month, the High Court in Dublin granted leave for a judicial review brought against Garda Commissioner Drew Harris and justice minister Helen McEntee for the state's

failure to provide files to the PONI inquiry.

A problematic common thread in all of these enquiries is the sharing of files. Dublin has repeatedly asked London to provide the RUC and MI5 files on D-M, only to be rebuffed. When Operation Denton asked Dublin for its files, it did so via an International Letter of Request (ILOR). Section 9 (2) of the Crime (International Co-operation) Act 2003 stipulates that "evidence furnished in response to requests will not, without the consent of the Minister... be used for any purpose other than that specified in the request and evidence will be returned to the Minister when it is no longer required for the purpose requested".

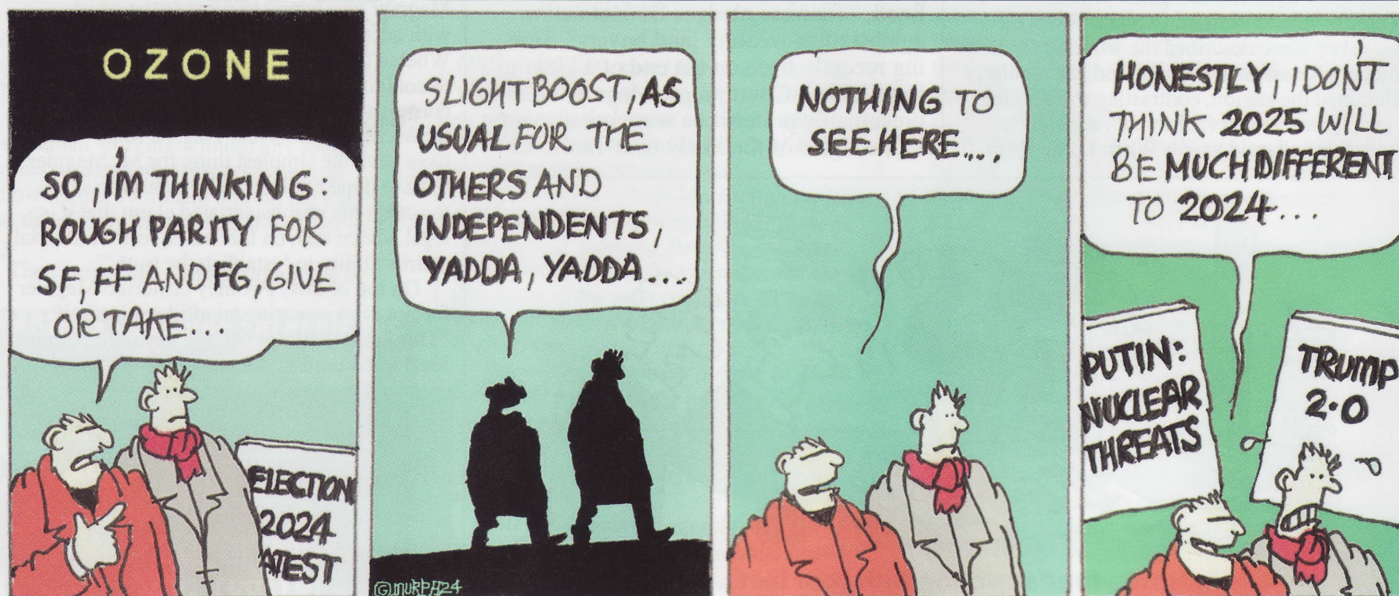
All was well until Operation Denton transformed from a criminal investigation to an 'analytical review'. This was not covered by the ILOR process. McEntee was able to pull all the right levers and remove that blockade.

The PONI inquiry is not a criminal investigation and hence requires the pulling of ministerial levers too. How strange is it then that Dublin has not yet found a way to share its D-M files with the PONI inquiry and the matter has ended up in the Four Courts?

Last June, McEntee told the Dáil that the gardaí had "engaged with PONI over those years in relation to a number of investigations, including Dublin Monaghan, and is continuing its work in providing assistance to PONI". The co-operation was "a matter to be dealt with through the appropriate formal channels and is, of course, an operational matter for An Garda Síochána". She added that the gardaí "remain committed to co-operating to the greatest extent possible with Operation Newham and PONI generally".

The D-M files have not been handed over yet, hence the judicial review. Solicitor Kevin Winters, acting on behalf of families and survivors, has said that this was "very demoralising" and made "a mockery" of promises to "ensure transparency". He added: "We now call on the authorities to do the right thing and make these files available as soon as possible."

The problem has become acute because PONI is in the final stages of preparing its report. Worse again, nothing can be done until the election is over, a new government is formed and a justice minister installed.





## HIGH-END REACTIONARIES

PROMINENT NATIONAL PARTY (NP) member Keith Woods (pseudonym of Roscommon native Keith O'Brien) likes to position himself at the more cerebral end of the new right. His assessment, however, of the NP's poor performance in the general election is a little wide of the mark.

Woods has quite a high profile internationally, having spoken at right-wing events in Poland, Portugal and the US in the last year, and he has over 210,000 followers on X. In the lead-up to the election he promoted NP candidates on his X and Telegram accounts and, in a speech in Warsaw, he said the NP would be the political vehicle to harness the potential of the anti-immigration protests in Ireland.



Keith Woods

In fact the NP's results were underwhelming to say the least, with only two of its nine candidates getting above 2% and both of them were far off a quota.

In an effort to explain this poor performance to his followers, Woods published two articles. He dismissed other right-wing parties and Independents competing for votes with the NP as "schizos... cranks... lower quality people" and "tracksuit-wearing, selfie stick-waving independent who calls himself a patriot". Instead, Woods claims that "typically, successful nationalist movements grow out of a core of well-organised intellectual ideologues".

Woods's political judgement may be just as questionable as those he derided. In the week leading up to the election, he two tweets, viewed over 3.5 million times, he questions the basis of the civil court's guilty verdict against Conor McGregor for assaulting Nikita Hand (see *The Phoenix* 29/11/4).

The second tweet was reported by

McGregor, which may increase Woods's standing with McGregor's followers but hardly improved the NP's election prospects.

Woods's articles also sparked an online spat with Irish white nationalist Mick O'Keeffe, who is regularly reposted by Elon Musk. In a stinging exchange with Woods on X, O'Keeffe rubbished the articles and even described Woods as "a larper and a liar".

Independent councillor Gavin Pepper, who ran in the Dublin North-West constituency, also undermined the image of the NP as a band of intellectual ideologues. On the Monday after the election, he released a video in which he claimed that "most of the harassment we've got is from within our own constituency and it is friends of the National Party that were doing it. They were harassing us regularly, threatening me, screaming in my face, spreading misinformation about me, threatening and roaring at me missus face on numerous occasions and I won't be bullied by them anymore. I've evidence to back that up".

Soon after, the NP candidate for Dublin North-West, Stephen Redmond, replied to Pepper's tweet, imploring him in three separate posts to phone him back. Redmond pleaded: "The fact of the matter is that the lads in Finglas Says No don't like you, nothing to do with me or NP give me a bell 2moro".

## BBC SMEARS MARTIN MCGUINNESS

THE BBC has launched *Stakeknife*, a podcast series that looks at the activities of the late Freddie Scappaticci, MI5's mole in the Provisional IRA. The first episode focused on a 1993 *Cook Report* (CR) documentary, which featured an incognito Scappaticci decrying Martin McGuinness in the car park of the Culloden hotel on the shores of Belfast Lough.

The CR was a current affairs programme produced for ITV by Central Television and presented by Roger Cook from 1987 to 1999. It broadcast two programmes on McGuinness. In the first, Sir John Hermon, chief constable of the RUC (1980-1989), said Sinn Féin and the IRA were "inseparable" and McGuinness was "very central to what is going on".

When asked in a separate programme by the BBC if he had ever been a member of the

IRA, McGuinness replied: "I'm not stating any opinion at all about what I was in the past. What I'm saying is, I'm not a member of the IRA; I'm not chief-of-staff of the IRA and I'm not Britain's number one terrorist."

Ten million people watched the first episode.

The new BBC podcast reveals that Scappaticci approached the CR production company in Birmingham after this programme was broadcast without revealing his identity but he was sufficiently convincing to arrange a *rendezvous* with the CR in the hotel car park in Belfast shortly before the reporters left the north. He provided them with material for an update.

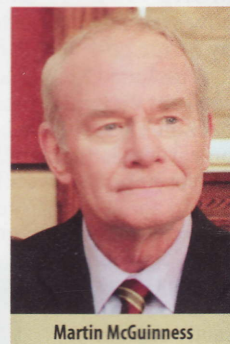
The CR team was accompanied by an RUC "liaison officer". No one else but the RUC's special branch would have been assigned to squire the CR around the north during an investigation into McGuinness.

On the day of the interview, Scappaticci approached the CR's Frank Thorpe, who was seated in his vehicle. The reporter had a mini tape recorder concealed in his sleeve. Scappaticci also permitted Clive Entwistle, another CR team member, to join them in the car. The RUC man in the hotel was able to tell the investigators that 'Jack' was Scappaticci, a high-profile member of the IRA.

Scappaticci, of course, went on to give the CR a catalogue of claims about McGuinness and his ruthless, terrorist activities.

The fact that Scappaticci spoke to the CR is not new. What emerges from the BBC podcast, however, is that he took no precautions to disguise his identity and that the RUC special branch – who worked hand in glove with MI5 – was pulling several strings in the background. Why would they do this if McGuinness was one of their agents?

At the end of the day, there is no evidence to indicate that McGuinness was ever a British asset. On the contrary, it shows that he was the target of a psyop as late as 1993, with Scappaticci playing a central role.

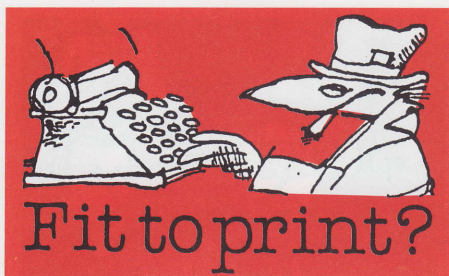


Martin McGuinness





## AFFAIRS OF THE NATION



## WHATEVER YOU SAY...

THE RECENTLY released Disney+ film, *Say Nothing*, has resurrected the usual controversy about Gerry Adams's alleged involvement in the killing and disappearance of widowed mother of 10 Jean McConville. One of the main promoters of this story is former Irish-based journalist Ed Moloney, a principal in the Boston College tapes exercise that produced tales about Adams from ex-IRA interviewees, who were mostly hostile to the Sinn Féin leader because of his leading role in the peace process.



Ed Moloney

However, Moloney's book, *A Secret History of the IRA*, has an interesting take on McConville's murder – it points the finger of blame not only at the IRA but also the British Army.

Moloney, in fact, accepts the IRA rationale for the killing of McConville as, he wrote in his book, she was a "not very important cog in the British Army's intelligence gathering machine".

More damning for the unfortunate woman was that she was caught by the IRA not once but twice and did not survive the second time.

The British Army, according to Moloney's sources, needed spotters in the intensely republican Divis Flats complex. McConville became one of them and was supplied with a transmitter to contact her army handlers.

The IRA became suspicious of her over-curious chatter and raided her flat, where they found the transmitter. She was warned that this behaviour was unacceptable and there

would be no warning if there was a next time.

But there was a next time as the British military gave her another transmitter and she was of course detected by the IRA. This second time there was little debate in the IRA about her fate but much argument about how to dispose of her body, eventually leading to her disappearance across the border.

Despite Patrick Raden Keefe – the film's script writer and author of *Say Nothing*, the book on which the film is based – deriving much of his material from Moloney's collaboration with him, the latter appears not to be a fan of Keefe. In his blog, *Broken Elbow*, Ed has some very uncomplimentary, even abusive, things to say about Patrick. Responding to offers of support against Keefe from an Irish admirer, John, the response from *Broken Elbow* says: "Thanks John: I think the best way to deal with Keefe is to ignore him and then strike hard when he's not watching – he is one dirty fucker." Dear me!

That was last week. Back in 2019, when Keefe's book was published, Moloney claimed that his former collaborator used to work for the Pentagon as a special policy advisor to defence secretary and former CIA chief Robert Gates. How did a shrewd operator like Ed end up being gulled into working with a spook like that?

## DUBLIN'S KRISTALLNACHT

DUBLIN HAS become afflicted by "rising antisemitism", according to a recent headline and article in the *Irish Times*. The article focused on a reported attack by three men on a Jewish man in a Dublin nightclub at 2 am.

The man was wearing a small Star of David necklace and was asked if he was Jewish. After confirming that he was, he was punched several times. The article quoted the victim, who gave full details of how he stumbled, his knee giving way, and how he hit the ground. He also told the *IT* that, as he spoke to gardaí who had been called and were interviewing others in the club, a "person interrupted and said: 'the Jews in Amsterdam – they got what they deserved'". (This refers to Maccabi football supporters, who attacked people and property in Amsterdam recently before local residents responded with their own violence).

This report of a single attack in a nightclub in Dublin saw the *IT* interviewing not only the victim – whose medical and Garda records of

the incident the newspaper has reviewed – but also the chair of the Jewish Representative Council of Ireland, Maurice Cohen, and Israeli ambassador to Ireland Dana Erlich. The *IT* would have contacted the latter in Tel Aviv as she was withdrawn from Ireland last May in protest over Ireland's recognition of Palestine as a state.

Both Cohen and Erlich made statements that prompted the *IT*'s headline about "rising antisemitism" in Ireland. In line with the headline, the article cited the 12% rise in hate crimes and incidents last year but conceded that the statistics do not specify how many related to antisemitism.

That did not prevent Cohen from noting "an increase in Jewish people being subjected to increased threats and abuse in Ireland over the last year".

He also said that the "attack occurred on the 86th anniversary of *Kristallnacht*, the Nazi pogrom against German Jews in 1938" and that the government and gardaí must "address the disturbing trend of antisemitism that endangers our community and violates Ireland's core values".

Ambassador Erlich said she was "concerned for the future of the Jewish and Israeli communities in Ireland" and she also had much to say about Palestinian protests in Ireland.

Neither Erlich nor Cohen appear to have been asked if they thought the slaughter of 45,000 people, largely civilians, has had anything to do with Irish anger at Israel in the last year or so.

That a single reported attack on a Jewish man in Dublin should provoke an article spread over half a broadsheet page and involving adversarial quotes from predictable quarters indicates an energetic quest to find an antisemitic angle.

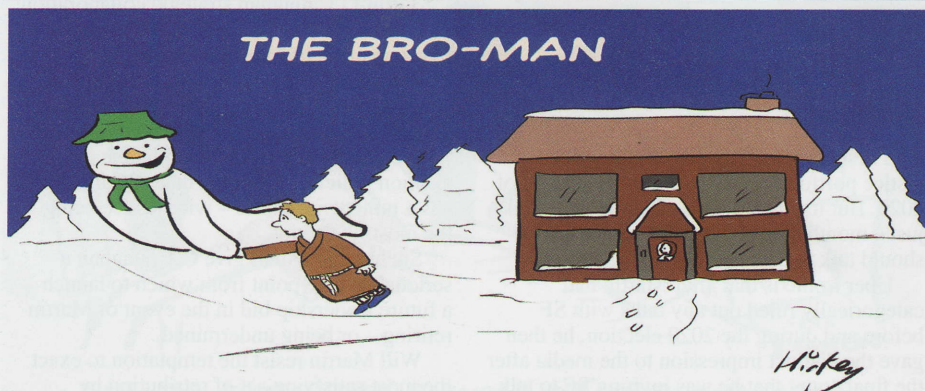
Evidence of the newspaper's priorities came with another article, which was below the 'antisemitic' splash. This report was one-tenth in length of the '*Kristallnacht*' story and concerned a fire that caused "extensive damage" to a premises in Williamstown, Co Galway.

The building had become the focus of protests against its possible use to house asylum seekers. There was no *IT* commentary or quotes from immigrants or diplomats about the rise of hate crimes that this may have indicated.

The *IT* has published several articles and letters about the alleged rise of antisemitism in Ireland in the last year in an effort fuelled by Israeli supporters and diplomats to smear those many Irish people protesting against genocide in Gaza as antisemitic.



Dana Erlich



"Hey kid, do you ever listen to Joe Rogan or Andrew Tate?"

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