

*Reflections on 1969*  
*Lived Experiences & Living history*

*(Discussion 6)*

**The Irish Diaspora in Britain & America:  
Benign or Malign Forces?**

*compiled by*

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# Introduction

**The Fellowship of Messines Association** was formed in May 2002 by a diverse group of individuals from Loyalist, Republican and other backgrounds, united in their realisation of the need to confront sectarianism in our society as a necessary means of realistic peace-building. The project also engages young people and new citizens on themes of citizenship and cultural and political identity.

Among the different programmes initiated by the Messines Project was a series of discussions entitled *Reflections on 1969: Lived Experiences & Living History*. These discussions were viewed as an opportunity for people to engage positively and constructively with each other in assisting the long overdue and necessary process of separating actual history from some of the myths that have proliferated in communities over the years. It was felt important that current and future generations should hear, and have access to, the testimonies and the reflections of former protagonists while these opportunities still exist. Access to such evidence would hopefully enable younger generations to evaluate for themselves the factuality of events, as opposed to some of the folklore that passes for history in contemporary society.

The sixth discussion was held in the Linen Hall Library, Belfast, on 7 December 2019. The discussion was chaired by **Deirdre Mac Bride**, and two speakers – **Padraig Yeates** and **Jim McDermott** – each gave a presentation before the discussion was opened up to the members of the audience, who themselves represented a wide diversity of political backgrounds and allegiances.

The theme of this sixth workshop was *‘The Irish Diaspora in Britain & America: Benign or Malign Forces?’* The wide-ranging discussion which ensued was edited slightly to fit into the space available in this pamphlet.

**Harry Donaghy** *Co-ordinator*, The Fellowship of Messines Association

## *The Irish Diaspora in Britain & America: Benign or Malign Forces?*

[**Deirdre Mac Bride**] Today we're looking at the Irish Diaspora, and whether it was a malign or a benign influence on our situation here. To start us off, Jimmy McDermott is going to give an historical overview of the impact of the American diaspora, and he will be followed by Padraig Yeates who is going to give a personal account of developments in mainland Britain. Following their presentations, we will then have a general discussion.

[**Jim McDermott**] It was in 1970 when a friend and I went to America. Following the events in Northern Ireland of August '69 there had been an amalgamation of Irish support groups in America. The people we stayed with had strong connections with 'United Brooklyn Irish', who were in the process of joining in with Noraid [Irish Northern Aid Committee] and others. Those who we met were very good to us, very generous, but they were also members of the Republican Party in America and were extremely right wing.

As you all arrived in the Linen Hall Library for this event today you would have passed, at the bottom of the hallway, posters depicting the first people who left these shores for America. And for them it had to be a good thing; for them it was a fresh place to start a new life. This first large-scale immigration to America, from 1715–1775, was actually an Ulster-Scots migration. Roughly 200,000 people went over, and they were mostly Ulster-Scots Presbyterians, disadvantaged by Penal Law, which, among other prohibitions, didn't recognise their marriages. They had been originally brought over to Ulster as part of the Plantation and so were well used looking after themselves in a strange environment, and they were now to have a similar impact on America.

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Their contribution to America is not remembered sufficiently among the community I would have been brought up in. Indeed, their contribution has been lost in many ways. For example, on TV recently there was a repeat of a late sixties series called *Hawkeye*, based very loosely on the fiction of Fenimore Cooper

[author of *Last of the Mohicans*], and it had very stock characters. And when they need an Irishman he says stuff like “Begorra! Top of the morning to you!” He *should* have been saying “Hoots, man!” because he would have probably been Ulster-Scots in that part of the world. Davy Crockett, Jim Bowie, Sam Houston and other leading figures among the pioneers had a strong relationship to Ulster. The Ulster-Scots participated in the War of Independence, and most of the early American presidents were of Ulster stock. It was also Presbyterian ideals which fed very much into the Declaration of Independence. If you look at the trouble President Trump is in at the moment, it is because the framers of the American Constitution, people like John Rutledge, had Ulster-Scots roots and had very strong beliefs about having checks and balances upon unrestricted power.

So, the first point I would make is that this first diaspora was good because the land hunger that was prevalent in Ireland, in England – indeed, across Europe – could be satisfied in America, and those first pioneers were always pushing westwards (although I don’t think the American Indians thought this was good). Their radical ideas also fed back into the beliefs of the United Irishmen, and the French Revolution. When people in Belfast in the 1790s talked about ‘my American cousin’ they meant it literally: very few people wouldn’t have had relations in America.

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The Presbyterian-inspired 1798 United Irish rebellion in Ireland failed, and in terms of deaths it had the highest casualties of any internal conflict in Irish history, with some 30,000 dead. The Act of Union which was passed in 1801 to unite Great Britain with Ireland was intended to counteract any lingering radical instincts among the population. However, what proved to be more important was that it coincided with Belfast making remarkable industrial progress. Belfast developed the biggest linen-making capacity in the world, the biggest shipyards, rope-works, engineering works... and so the Presbyterian community, once the source of subversive ideals, became more than content with the Union.

The next big event, in terms of the diaspora, is the Irish Famine. It affected all of Ireland, but it affected the very poor more than anybody else. In 1840 the population of Ireland was 8 million. After the Famine it dropped to 6.5 million, and, following massive migration, by 1924 it had declined to 3 million. The

Famine affected both Catholic and Protestant, but as there were more Catholics than Protestants in Ireland there was a huge wave of Catholics leaving on immigrant boats, some treated abominably on the ‘coffin ships’. Often only speaking Irish, and often the woman of the household had only the capacity to cook potatoes.

But while this new wave of immigrants were glad to escape to America, on arrival most of them didn’t leave the eastern seaboard. They hadn’t been taught any mechanical skills, they only knew how to work on the land and how to be strong labourers on building sites. All over Boston, Washington, New York, New Jersey, that’s where they stayed. They gathered together in ghettos, and were opposed by nativists, people who had been there before. They felt themselves unwelcome. Now, some people *did* make it; you had political machines like Tammany Hall which assisted Irish immigrants rise in American politics, so some did quite well, and not just the Andrew Carnegies of Scots-Irish descent. But there was a residual sense of betrayal by Britain, already compounded by accusations about the Great Famine, and reinforced by the failure of the Young Irelander Rebellion of 1848 back in Ireland. So much so that along the eastern seaboard of America there was the feeling that ‘one day we’ll get our own back’.

Back in Ireland, America became to be seen as the ‘Greater Ireland across the Sea’, where Irish people fled to, and which was always going to be regarded as Ireland’s great patron, especially when it came to seeking revenge for past wrongs, real or imagined. And when I was over in 1970 I encountered a lot of those ‘revenge’ attitudes. It was a kind of passed-down thing, the belief that the Irish of America would help to liberate the motherland.

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In 1858 James Stephens founded the Irish Republican Brotherhood [IRB] in Ireland, and on the same day John O’Mahony in New York founded the Fenian Brotherhood, ostensibly the IRB’s American wing. The members of both wings are often referred to as ‘Fenians’.

Two separate trends emerged, just as in Ireland: one political, the other very much militant. And America was always going to be seen as the place which would fund revolution. 150 million dollars are believed to have been sent from America to Ireland from 1848 to 1900. The American Civil War not only radicalised but also made military men out of many Irish volunteers – on both the

Confederate side, like Mitchell, and Meager and others on the Union side. The American Civil War also revealed a darker side to Irish immigrant prejudices. In the so-called 'Draft riots' during the civil war Irish immigrants burned a black orphanage and lynched about twelve black people, because they refused to be drafted into a Union army whose aim was to free blacks.

You had a continual intermingling of Irish-American and Irish politics. In 1867 the IRB was preparing to launch an armed uprising against British rule but when their plans became known key members of the leadership were arrested. Two who had succeeded in evading the police, Thomas Kelly and Timothy Deasy, travelled from Ireland to Britain to reorganise IRB groups there. Both were Irish Americans who had fought in the American Civil War. However, they too were arrested. When they were being escorted in a police van IRB members ambushed it, and one policeman was killed. Two of the five IRB members later charged with the murder had also fought in the American Civil War. The three IRB men eventually hanged became known in Ireland as the 'Manchester Martyrs'.

Then, in 1866, and again from 1870-71, you had the 'Fenian Raids' carried out from America by the Fenian Brotherhood on British army forts, customs posts and other targets in Canada.

O'Donovan Rossa, a County Cork man who had gone to America to organise a 'skirmishing fund' to finance terrorist operations, later directed the first bombing campaign in mainland Britain, during 1881-5. Following his death in New York his funeral in Dublin provided the O'Donovan Rossa for a notable graveside oration by Patrick Pearse, in which he said "Ireland unfree shall never be at peace".

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Then there were people like John Devoy who owned and edited the *Gaelic American*, a New York weekly newspaper, 1903-1928. He was one of the few people to have played a role in the 1867 rebellion, the 1916 Rising and the Irish War of Independence, 1919-21.

But '69-70 reawakened this whole instinct in America: that we should do something for the Irish people. The people I met were not bad people by any means, but one thing I did notice: they were almost all born in Ireland. People like Michael Flannery, Jack McCarthy and others. When the likes of Dáithí Ó Conaill and Joe Cahill came over in '69 they cornered the market, because they weren't

going to talk about silly ideas, as the Americans would have seen it, like Socialism or Liberalism. Noraid was dominated by Provisional thinking. The *Irish People*, which had been edited at one time by O'Donovan Rossa, and *An Phoblacht/Republican News*, evaded for many years bringing up things which might have been awkward, like praise of Fidel Castro or liberation theory.

The main Irish support groups would also have been critical of 'plastic Paddies' – people who drank green beer on St Patrick's Day, and paraded in silly leprechaun hats. They said that is not Ireland. And they were also very critical of 'lace curtain' republicans, like those in the Irish National Caucus.

As time went on, if you drew a graph of financial donations, it would show that support for the Provisional cause would have risen after 'Bloody Sunday'†, but have gone down again with the likes of La Mon.†† And as time went by it became more and more nuanced. Many people, like Paul O'Dwyer, were more willing to embrace the ideas of Adams and so on, but the irony was that as they began to think more politically, it was the efforts of John Hume, who was opposed to violence, which brings America truly – apart from those who still supported the Provos – back into the picture.

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Because it is the so-called 'Four Horsemen' – Tip O'Neill, Daniel Moynihan, Edward Kennedy and Hugh Carey – who have been condemning IRA violence, who persuade others that they can assist a peace process. For example, by getting people like President Clinton to authorise a visa for Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams to visit America. And it is their influence, and that of people like Niall O'Dowd and others, who really create the circumstances where a political broadening of the battlefield might make possible a ceasefire.

So the diaspora has had many varied aspects. You have gun-running activities – sometimes on a massive scale. You have also that political influence, which says: look, we must find peaceful solutions to all this. And so it is not a simple one-approach-only diaspora, it is very nuanced and American society has two

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† The shooting dead of 13 unarmed civilians in the Bogside area of Derry by the 1st Battalion, Parachute Regiment, following stone-throwing during a protest march against Internment.

†† In what was described as one of the worst atrocities of the Troubles the IRA left a large incendiary bomb, containing a napalm-like substance, outside the window of the La Mon Restaurant. The blast created a fireball which killed 12 people and injured 30 more, many of them severely burnt.

almost Janus-like views. On the one hand it is Irish Americans who help to elect Ronald Regan, yet they also look with absolute disgust on fellow conservative Margaret Thatcher because of the hunger strikes. And they were further incensed that when Regan came to Ireland there were demonstrations against him.

But, at the end of the day, it is the *political* influence of America – those people who want to sustain a peace process – which will ultimately be more important than the various groups who support the use of violence. It is the peace process element of political America, especially within the Democratic Party, which will make the longest-term impact on the future of this island. The diaspora had many features, but the most lasting impact came when Irish America, and America generally, came round to the view that a peace process was the way to go.

**[Deirdre Mac Bride]** Thank you, Jimmy, for that excellent overview. Pádraig will now focus on the Diaspora in Britain.

**[Pádraig Yeates]** This is going to be as much a personal account as a purely historical overview.

During the Second World War some 187,111 people emigrated from the Irish Free State to Britain, of whom over a third may have served in the British armed forces. Between 1946 and 1961 another 528,334 emigrated followed by a further 134,511 in the decade between 1961 to 1971. That's almost 850,000 people and does not, of course, include those who left Northern Ireland, or people already there from previous decades.

Those from the Republic alone constituted between one and two per cent of the overall population of Britain. This was down from the post-Famine decades when the Irish constituted between two and three per cent of the population of Britain. But that figure would have included people from the whole island of Ireland before the advent of Partition. Even in the 1960s and 1970s, the number of Irish in large cities such as Birmingham, where I lived, had concentrations of ten per cent or more.

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Despite the numbers involved and the common sources of historic trauma, support for nationalism, militant or constitutional, was never as widespread or unconditional among emigrants to Britain as it was in North America. Distance and the fact that Irish-Americans were not amenable to British law were other potent reasons for the differences in outlook that distinguished these two émigré communities. And outside

of pockets in places such as Glasgow and Liverpool, where some Irish Catholics and Protestants brought their ethnic baggage with them, politicisation of Irish emigrants to Britain tended to be through the Labour movement.

Anti-Irish feeling still lingered after the end of the Second World War, when the Free State's neutrality was often bitterly resented. It was the advent of a new wave of Commonwealth immigrants from the Caribbean, Africa and the Indian subcontinent that eventually made the Irish less visible and more acceptable than in the past. They were now more 'Us' and less 'Them', and most Irish people integrated with the host population easily. This did not prevent the re-emergence of anti-Irish feeling in the early years of the Troubles, most notably after the Birmingham bombings, but these periods were, thankfully, relatively brief.

Those who wished to retain their Irish identity tended to do so through cultural and sporting associations, such as Comhaltas Ceoilteoirí Éireann, the GAA and the County Associations; the latter being by far the most dominant, and snobbish. Membership tended to be drawn from teachers, nurses and aspiring members of the business community, including 'subbies' in the construction industry.

The republican movement had not had a meaningful presence in Britain since Sean Russell's bombing campaign of 1939-1940, when the police smashed what was left of the old networks and quickly rounded up the handful of Volunteers sent over from Ireland, of whom the best known was of course Brendan Behan. Like many other initiatives undertaken by the Republican Movement in the 1960s, Clann na hÉireann grew out of the rethink that followed the Border Campaign. Ironically, it was the release of the last four IRA prisoners by the Unionist government on 16 December 1963 that finally revealed the depth of the political vacuum for Sinn Féin members and supporters in Britain because they had nothing left to campaign on! The Committee set up to call for their release was wound up that same day.

The new organisation was founded on 19 April 1964, with a rally in Trafalgar Square that maybe 100 people attended. The name was deliberately chosen to invoke the memory of Clan na Gael at its height in the United States. Despite the new departure, Clann's aims were still couched in very traditional terms and many Sinn Féin cumainn went into hibernation rather than disband as they were supposed to; some of these would later give the Provisional movement the basis for a political organisation in 1970.

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The change of name did not represent a change in substance. For instance, the Clann Constitution declared, ‘That the allegiance of Irishmen and Irishwomen is due to the Sovereign Irish Republic proclaimed in 1916’, and it further stated, ‘That the organisation shall be governed by basic Christian and Democratic principles’. It sought, ‘To co-ordinate and consolidate the efforts of the Irish exiles in Scotland, England and Wales, into effective support of the Republican Movement in Ireland’. Nowhere is there any reference to socialism; and while Clann was open to anyone over the age of 16 it barred people who were members ‘of any British political party or organisation, or associated with a foreign power, or who approves of either of the Partition Governments by which Ireland is ruled, or is a member of the Connolly Association and Self Determination League’. The leading figure in the Connolly Association was C Desmond Greaves, a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain executive, who aligned the Association with the left of the British and Irish Labour parties, and indeed with the Irish government and Fianna Fail. His hope was that Clann would align itself with the Connolly Association or even merge with it, forming part of a wider pan-nationalist front to end Partition.

Concerns among traditionalists at the top of Clann reflected tensions in the movement in Ireland, where the return of emigrants and former Connolly Association members such as Roy Johnston and Tony Coughlan, and their influence on people such as Cathal Goulding, was causing alarm.

There are usually two views expressed by historians about developments in the Republican Movement in the 1960s. The predominant one is that the growing success of the leftward strategy was derailed by the Northern crisis, a victim of its own success in helping to launch NICRA. The other is that the movement was going nowhere and may even have been rescued from terminal decline by the Northern crisis and the birth of the Provisionals.

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In so far as history is always contingent on events there is validity to both views. I think it is hard to prove the movement was making significant progress in the 26 counties by objective measurements such as election results or that membership was increasing, although the nature of the membership was, in places such as Belfast and Dublin, becoming younger and more radical. The movement was also playing an important role in challenging the conservative consensus on both sides of the border with its political campaigns,

publications and by popularising radical ideas.

But it cannot be denied that the Northern crisis completely transformed the political landscape, and for no single political grouping did it do so as dramatically as it did for republicans. Arguably, all factions within what was always a loose alliance, were overwhelmed by the impact of the civil rights campaign and the violent, and incredibly stupid reaction by the Stormont regime.

These events influenced the diaspora as much as they did people in Ireland. Certainly, the creation of Clann na hÉireann did not lead to any dramatic breakthrough for the republican movement in the Irish émigré community before 1969. In fact, far from embracing the new departure, Birmingham was one of the areas where Clann members retained their local Sinn Féin cumann, and I was sent as a delegate to a special ard fheis called in Dublin in 1965 to discuss a proposal from the IRA Army Council for the party to abandon abstentionism which, of course, we were mandated to vote against.

Besides selling the *United Irishman* and Easter Lilies, our main activities were running fund-raisers for the movement and promoting a ‘Buy Irish’ campaign. It is hard to exaggerate how weak the movement was at that time. When I joined the IRA, I had to travel to London to be sworn in because there wasn’t a single member in Birmingham, a city with over 110,000 Irish people. After taking the Volunteer oath, I discovered the nearest member to me was another isolated individual in Leicester, on the other side of the English Midlands, while the nearest unit was in Manchester, eighty miles to the North-West.

Setting up an IRA section in Birmingham provided a means of recruiting younger people to the movement and holding onto them, most of whom would otherwise have been quickly turned off by the fairly barren debates about abstentionism, organising sales of the *United Irishman* or working out a roster for who would man the door at the weekly Ceili and Old Tyme we ran in The Bear Hotel. It even allowed us to recruit people who were in other political organisations proscribed from membership of Clann. Three things attracted and held recruits. They were:

- [1] Political discussions that developed on the basis of the policy documents emanating from Dublin and interaction with British-based political groupings
- [2] Arms training and parades with the emphasis on the primacy of political work, and

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[3] The prospect of another campaign.

I think, looking back, it was the prospect of a military campaign that was our unique selling point. No one else on the left in Birmingham was offering anything remotely as exciting.

Because the Dublin leadership insisted on it, political activity was not alone a priority but a necessary precondition to Army membership. It proved a very wise decision. Equally important for our political development was involvement in organisations such as trade unions and meeting people in the aforesaid proscribed British political organisations. These ranged from the Liberal Party to the Trotskyist hard left.

The involvement of the movement at home in campaigns to reclaim our rivers and lakes, tackle the housing crisis in Dublin, abolish ground rents and support striking workers encouraged us to launch a new campaign of our own on Irish emigrants' rights. We not only demanded that emigrants be granted a vote in Irish elections, but called on the Irish government to provide advice and support services, including short-term hostel accommodation, for new arrivals in to Britain. I was secretary of this not very successful campaign. One reason for its failure was the refusal of the leadership in Dublin to sanction co-operation with other political parties at home. On occasion I had to decline offers by Irish politicians such as Conor Cruise O'Brien to join our campaign. It was an early indication that calls for broad fronts and unity on the left were often rhetorical flourishes rather than statements of serious intent.

Not that Clann was in good shape nationally. Sean Ó Cionnaith, former Chief Scout of Na Fianna, was appointed as National Organiser but had to return to Dublin after a year or so because we couldn't raise enough money to pay his wages of £10 a week, or the £350 a year rent on the London office. A good picture of the state of the movement before the start of the Troubles is provided in the unpublished part of Mick Ryan's memoir that covers the years after the Border campaign. He refers to a trip to Britain, probably in the winter of 1967/8, not long after Sean Garland, Malachy McGurran and himself went full-time. So unfamiliar was Mick with Clann that he referred to craobhacha as Clubs. Birmingham was his first stop from Holyhead. "Except for my inability to handle some questions on the Marxist perspective of the Movement's policies and strategy – the half-a-dozen or so members who attended were reasonably satisfied with the outline of the movement's future direction and very generously donated about £40", he wrote. In Leeds, "a

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somewhat disparate half dozen... yielded” another £20. The London meeting was larger but even more disparate, comprising “members, loose supporters, and members of the CP”. This yielded £50 and left Mick even more convinced of the necessity for studying Marxism. His final stop was Glasgow, where he was so delighted at receiving £100 that he didn’t bother noting how many people were there, let alone whether Marxism came up in the conversation. I suspect it didn’t.

That itinerary would more or less correspond with my own recollections that London was the largest and most politically aware centre, Glasgow was the strongest centre in terms of organisation and finance, but had little politics, while we were much smaller than either, but were moderately well organised for our numbers, and beginning to develop politically.

Whether the movement would have had a future in Britain if the North had not erupted is, I think, doubtful. Younger members such as myself were already beginning to interact with members of a flourishing hard left drawn from a new generation of activists disillusioned with the increasingly stale politics of the Old Left, comprising not just the Labour Party but the Communist Party and, in the case of the Irish community, the Connolly Association. This younger generation identified with the more ideologically driven New Left. Like them, we had no interest in social democracy, whose objectives we took, naively, for granted. With the welfare state secured, the next stop was the revolution.

Nor had we much interest in what passed for Irish culture. We only went to ceilidhs or Irish dancehalls to sell the *United Irishman* or Easter Lilies, and manning the door at our own weekly ceilidh and Old Tyme was not something we relished. I suspect that most of us would have been absorbed into the mainstream of the British left within another year or two if the North had not erupted.

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My earliest recollection of our involvement with the North came when Tomas MacGiolla, Sean Caughey, then Sinn Fein Vice President, Ruairí Ó Brádaigh and Cathal Goulding came to Birmingham to address a meeting sometime in 1964 or 1965. It was held there simply because in the era before cheap flights, Birmingham was a more convenient venue for national gatherings than London. The meeting was poorly attended and was seen as a kite-flying exercise to promote the abandonment of abstentionism. Caughey resigned after delegates to the Special Ard Fheis, myself included, overwhelmingly rejected this policy in 1965. A

subsequent meeting at the same venue, Digbeth Civic Hall, organised by the Counties Association on behalf of the Campaign for Social Justice in Northern Ireland, which was addressed by the new Nationalist MP for East Tyrone, Austin Currie, drew a much larger crowd a few months afterwards.

We did not organise any further meetings on the North, but we did start attending meetings of other organisations and lobbying to raise awareness of the Civil Rights Campaign. I addressed my first public meeting in Wolverhampton, which was organised by the Young Communist League, in late 1967 and members began raising civil rights issues at their union meetings and meetings of other groups on the left, but there was no indication that this campaign would go any further than De Valera's Anti-Partition League before 6 October 1968 in Derry.

It was events in the South that many of us thought would be the catalyst for revolution. The republican movement opposed the Anglo-Irish Free Trade Agreement and later membership of the Common Market on the basis that both would destroy jobs and make us even more of a colony, first of Britain, then of Europe. Some left-wing republicans believed that staying out of both agreements would precipitate the collapse of Irish capitalism and hasten the Socialist Republic – the usual hard left message that the worse things get, the better – a sort of early version of 'Lexit'.

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Ruairí Ó Brádaigh's pamphlet, 'Ireland is being sold Acre by Acre, Factory by Factory, Shop by Shop' was launched at the Birmingham meeting. It was aimed specifically at the Irish in Britain and declared that, "Clann na hÉireann and the Irish Republican Movement ask [for] YOUR support in combating the sale of our Fatherland, in ending the British system and in restoring the Republic of Pearse and Connolly". This appeal encapsulated in many ways the contradictions that were emerging in a rapidly evolving movement between traditionalists such as himself, and a younger more radical generation.

It was not the analysis that people fell out over at this stage, but potential responses. One of the high profile closures resulting from the Anglo-Irish Agreement was that of the John Bull shoe factory in Dundalk, which had a serious impact on employment in the town. I was ordered by Sean MacStiofain to undertake a detailed recce of the parent company plant in Leicester, which I duly did, collecting plans of

the factory as well as gaining access to the facility and discovering just how combustible it was. The arson attack never happened because of disagreements at Army Council level about the likely political fall-out.

As a humble section leader, I was of course unaware of these. While, with the benefit of hindsight I am glad it didn't happen, as a young activist on the ground, I was willing and able to use our section to carry out the attack, and bitterly disappointed that we could not go ahead. I mention it only because it shows how little outlying branches of the movement were aware of the power dynamics at the centre, and because people can become so absorbed in the mechanics of an operation that they lose sight of its purpose. These were problems that existed long before the Split and continued to exist long afterwards, on all sides.

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Meanwhile events in the North gave a new lease of life to Clann na hÉireann and our relatively low-key lobbying beforehand at least left us well briefed to agitate. While we fully supported the NICRA strategy outlined in the *United Irishman*, most of us saw the crisis as an opportunity to recruit and build the movement, with the ultimate aim of completing the Irish revolution. We were generally confident that the leadership's strategy of using the struggle for Civil Rights to prise Protestant workers away from Unionism would allow us to build a broad anti-imperialist front.

Our loyalty to Dublin was also built on the fact that Mick Ryan and Seán Garland were now visiting Clann craobhacha, and IRA units in England, Scotland and Wales regularly. They were our main conduits for information on developments at home. (Seán MacStíofáin, on the other hand, stopped contacting us at some indeterminate time in the lead up to the split, which I attributed at the time to his having other obvious priorities elsewhere rather than having any political significance.) As a result of the regular briefings from Seán and Mick, very few people defected at the time of the split. We lost only one member of Clann in Birmingham. He had only joined shortly beforehand and was never a member of the Army. We also lost Michael Gaughan in Coventry, who was eventually drawn to the Provos after the ceasefire in 1972, as far as I can recollect.

Meanwhile we were able to cash in on events in the North. Immediately after the RUC attack on the NICRA march in Duke Street we held a rally in Birmingham. Only about 150 people turned up, half of them members of the hard left. But, to put that in context, at the annual Easter Commemoration that year there were maybe 30

people. One thing I do remember from [that event] was a young member of the International Socialists asking me who were the religious organisation at the front, and it was the first time I realised that the Celtic Cross on the back of the Clann banner might be taken to have a religious significance.

Initially, the Counties Association was the main support group for NICRA in Birmingham. It managed to draw out well over a thousand people on a march held a month later. Northern members of the Counties Association predominated, most of them with ties to the old Nationalist Party. This proved a problem for them in the long run and, because they were innately conservative, they reacted very slowly to events in the North. We, on the other hand, soon broke away and formed our own Birmingham Ad Hoc Civil Rights Group, the name betraying the fact that Irish students in Birmingham were an important component; and we reacted quickly to events.

For instance, when a promotional Ulster Week was announced in Birmingham by Roy Bradford as Minister for Commerce in early 1969 we contacted his office posing as members of the local Young Conservatives and received box-loads of posters, leaflets, placards, Red Hand badges and other material. All we had to do was slap the word 'Boycott' on everything and use it ourselves.

We also developed links with People's Democracy through Joe Martin, who worked briefly in Birmingham after graduating from Queens, and through him we met Bowes Egan, Michael Farrell, Eamonn McCann, Bernadette Devlin and other young left-wing activists. Younger emigrants from the north and particularly Belfast also joined. By the summer of 1969 we had overtaken our more conservative rivals as the leading Civil rights campaigning organisation in the city.

Besides constant activism, an important factor in our growth was the purchase of a Gestetner. This allowed us to run off thousands of leaflets at short notice. We found that if we leafleted all the Catholic churches for Saturday evening mass, followed by the Irish pubs and dance-halls that night, followed by the churches again on Sunday morning, we could reach large numbers of Irish people in the city, especially those who retained a strong sense of ethnic identity. Of course, this was not only a very Irish, but a very Catholic audience.

We often found the politics of the *United Irishman* disappointingly conservative but accepted this was a necessary part of the strategy to build a broadly-based national liberation front. The example of Vietnam was very influential at the time and we struck

***By the summer of 1969 we had overtaken our more conservative rivals as the leading Civil rights campaigning organisation in the city.***

a more militant note in our bulletins than the *UI* and some of us became involved in other activities such as raiding TA stores for military equipment and participating in events such as the CS Gas attack in the House of Commons in 1970, for which we never sought sanction because we knew it might be refused.

By the summer of 1969 Clann was finally beginning to take off nationally, again due to events in the North. In July, Gerry Doherty, who was the leading figure in Glasgow, was appointed National Organiser and began touring craobhacha to outline his strategy. A few days after he visited Birmingham, Belfast erupted. Gerry phoned me from a call box somewhere in the city to ask us to organise a rally in Birmingham as soon as possible and to send over anything we had. By now, we had a small but fairly well-oiled machine and we called a one-day strike. Our call was denounced by the Counties Association, Labour Party, Connolly Association and Communist Party, but over 3,000 workers marched through the city centre on August 20<sup>th</sup> and we closed down most of the local building sites.

Of course, we used these activities to build Clann as the leading solidarity organisation in the city and as part of the longer-term strategy to ensure that the republican movement, and more especially those on its left, would be in poll position to lead the struggle in Britain for the final assault on British imperialism in Ireland. It may sound hopelessly grandiose now but we certainly believed it to be a possibility at the time.

As regards practical help, any money we collected we used locally or sent to the movement in Dublin rather than to local defence funds in the North. While we didn't have a lot of weapons, we sent half of what we did have to Dublin, holding onto the rest on the basis they would be needed where we were at some stage. We felt confirmed in our decision when we saw a couple of our weapons make a guest appearance at a press conference organised by the British Army after the Falls Curfew in 1970.

The other thing I should mention is the Free Wales Army. I had the job of liaising with them because they were based in Central and North Wales, and I was well placed to meet them as there were good train and bus services from Birmingham. Despite the rumours to the contrary, to the best of my knowledge they were never offered, asked for, or received any weapons. They did ask for explosives, but, declined them when offered.

Throughout this period, we facilitated the movement of personnel, funds and

***Some of us became involved in ... the CS Gas attack in the House of Commons in 1970, for which we never sought sanction because we knew it might be refused.***

equipment as best we could. When Seán Garland, for instance, had to go on the run in late 1969, he stayed in Birmingham before settling in Glasgow. Many people have justifiable criticisms of Seán from a later period but I think his loss to the movement as the split approached was unfortunate because his personal standing was high with all factions and he was strongly opposed to the split taking place when, and how, it did.

The other unfortunate event that autumn was the arrest of Gerry Doherty and Eamon Smullen on gun-running charges after being snared by a Leeds gun dealer, Reginald Gee. Eamon received eight years and Gerry four. Their imprisonment seriously disrupted Clann. It was another two years before we were in a position to put an organiser on the road again.

On the plus side, a significant amount of reorganisation did take place. New branches were established and old ones revived. The Constitution was amended at a national conference held in Birmingham in 1971 to make our objective, “To secure a 32-County Irish Socialist Republic which will cherish all of its children equally, including those living in exile.” We dropped the prohibition on membership of British political parties and expanded the organisation’s remit from only organising Irish exiles in Britain to winning “the support of the British working class to our cause in the fight against the common enemy – British Imperialism”.

By then Clann had the beginnings of a national network of branches, and widespread acceptance across much of the British left. We hosted the founding conference of the Irish Solidarity Campaign in Birmingham, a broad left front established in the aftermath of the Falls Curfew. Des O’Hagan was the main speaker and Malachy McGurran addressed several meetings we organised in 1971. The ISC was replaced by the Anti-Internment League later that year which, in turn, was a further response to the escalating crisis in the North.

All of these developments were driven by the pace of events in Ireland. The growing Ulster crisis was our calling card. Clann na hÉireann was never a major player, even within the republican movement but it provided a vehicle for the Official movement to promote what evolved into its ‘Peace and Progress’ policy within the British labour movement. It also provided a convenient cover under which the Official IRA could recruit and operate.

If Clann declined in significance in the 1970s it was for the same reason that it arose, the changing situation in Ireland, and particularly the North.

***If Clann declined in significance in the 1970s it was for the same reason that it arose, the changing situation in Ireland, and particularly the North.***

[**Deirdre Mac Bride**] Padraig, thank you for that. Any comments now? Any questions?

[**Peter Bunting**] I have a comment with regard to the American diaspora. Now obviously there is this big Irish republican lobby doing its thing in America, but as you pointed out, Jimmy, there is a whole lost history there of the Ulster-Scots, or the Ulster Presbyterians, and the huge role they played right across America. It doesn't seem that there has been any concerted action from unionists or loyalists to appeal to that constituency in America. They never seemed to have harnessed that, to give some degree of support for the loyalist/unionist cause in Northern Ireland.

*It doesn't seem that there has been any concerted action from unionists or loyalists to appeal to [the Ulster-Scots] constituency in America... to give some degree of support for the loyalist/unionist cause.*

[**Deirdre Mac Bride**] I think it was John Hume who said it was important to start hearing that voice. And that voice would be found in the Southern states, Utah would have been one, and the Carolinas down, and then the western push across towards California. But that voice somehow went silent.

[**Erskine Holmes**] There are other aspects worth looking at, with regard to the American connection. I just looked through some documents and one was 'The Communication on Civil Rights' from Brig Rodgers, John Donaghy and Con McCloskey, February 1970, in which they are concerned about who is representing who in America in the Irish Diaspora. This particular memorandum refers to the first annual international conference of the Association for Irish Justice. There was a claim that the Association for Irish Justice was representing the Civil Rights Movement in Northern Ireland and among the speakers at this conference were Bernadette Devlin, Frank Gogarty, Eamonn McCann, Kevin Boyle and Michael Farrell. And the main substance behind the complaint of Rodgers, Donaghy and McCloskey was that they had never authorised any of this, they knew nothing about it, and that this particular organisation did not speak for the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association in America. They were also implying that this body had become an international socialist revolutionary movement, not a Civil Rights movement. Also, one of the headings of the meeting was 'Freedom is in the wind for the Irish People'.

And of course the Protestants in Northern Ireland were saying: that's what the Civil Rights movement is all about, it is all about pan-nationalism. And I suspect there is a bit of that pan-nationalism still floating around in Northern Ireland today. Anyway, as a result of this tour by Bernadette the Unionists did send representatives out, Stratton Mills was one of them.

**[Jim McDermott]** I think there is the need for a broad corrective. I think there is a danger of people being marginalised, somehow not valued. Because if you come from the Protestant community – when up against the complete lionisation in New York of the republican cause – means that you are often accorded no importance. We have to guard against that. But I also think a couple of things happened. For one thing, in the southern states of America, the whole Bob Jones University thing, with Ian Paisley getting his doctorate there, tended to create a negative image of the Protestant side of things among Irish nationalists. Even to the extent where they avoid anything emanating from that community. For example, there are various Ulster-Scots associations online, talking about the way they lived in pioneer days, and providing biographies of people like President Grant, Davy Crockett, Jefferson and others, all with origins in Ulster. But Irish nationalists just wouldn't want to look at them. We go into binary choices very quickly, and there is a great danger that we exclude the other side's story. But, you're right, we do have to look at all sides. And even look more closely at what you perceive to be your *own* heritage. Even the Irish in America, if you had been looking at who would have been their champion around 1854, it wouldn't have been a republican, it would have been Vere Foster, an Englishman who gave his fortune away, and printed pamphlets to help immigrants get work and so on. Survival would have been more important than any romantic images of Ireland.

*We go into binary choices very quickly, and there is a great danger that we exclude the other side's story. But, you're right, we do have to look at all sides.*

**[Andy Hart]** Do you not also think that Americans have allowed the distinction to become so eroded that the two traditions now largely consider themselves as one? For example, I was in the States on one occasion and had a collection tin rattled under my nose – for the republican cause – and I got chatting to the tin owner and he said his surname was Stewart. And so I gave him a bit of a history lesson, and said to him: if you were back in the north of Ireland where your family

sprung from you would not be shaking that tin you would be putting on your UDR uniform. He was mortified; he thought that if this got out he would be put out of the local Hibernian Club! But also if you look at the St Patrick's Day parade, the marching band that is in front of any police force will be flying tricolours but it will also be wearing full Scottish regalia. And so are these not signs that America doesn't see quite as clearly as we do the distinction between those two traditions?

**[Jim McDermott]** Two points. Firstly, Noraid would celebrate "from Saratoga to Saigon". The Bunker Hill march in Boston is the biggest Irish-American celebration, and how they fought at Concord. In actual fact that would have been very much a Presbyterian affair, because that was in 1775, and large-scale Irish Catholic migration didn't really commence until the 1820s.

Secondly, British spokespersons in America would have been putting out the image that in Northern Ireland Protestants are slaughtering Catholics and Catholics are slaughtering Protestants and the British Army are simply in the middle. That was the narrative given out, and there was a steady diet of that. And it was in reaction to that that Noraid achieved some sort of nuance, that it was a more complex situation. The problem was that there was no countervailing narrative from the loyalist side, in which people said: look, I was born into a culture which sees itself under threat, or was getting continually eroded. It wasn't as sexy as the Irish republican message, but that lack of a countervailing narrative meant that only one story came out in the end. After the peace process the story did become more measured, but up until then this was looked upon as almost a colonial problem.

***There was no countervailing narrative from the loyalist side, in which people said: look, I was born into a culture which sees itself under threat.***

**[Eamonn Lynch]** I think Unionists are their own worse enemy. Jimmy was talking about the likes of Dáithí Ó Conaill and others going to America and looking for support. The first person I can recall from the Unionist community going to America was Ken Maginnis. He was on the Larry King show with Adams. American audiences had been used to people like Adams giving the same party line and here was the first time they had heard a guy, with the same kind of accent, who was diametrically opposed to them, giving a totally different narrative. And he wouldn't shake hands with Adams, I remember that. But that would not have been until the early nineties.

[**Padraig Yeates**] The only newspaper which gave Irish news in Britain was the *Irish Press* and *Sunday Press*, which was sold in newsagents in Irish areas. But at least it gave you some information; the problem was that the *Irish Press* at that time was pursuing an agenda which was promoting the Provos as a countervailing force to the Official movement. So you were getting ‘the Provos were doing this... doing that’. It turned eventually when they realised that it had served a purpose.

[**Deirdre Mac Bride**] In London where I was in the early eighties, there was the Prevention of Terrorism Act and at that point marches opposing Internment just disappeared, the Irish community in Britain just went silent, until after the hunger strikes. And the first organisation of any significance, after the hunger strikes, was the Irish in Britain Representation Group.

[**Sean O’Hare**] When I was in London Irish nationalism was rarely mentioned before 1969, it was all labour and radical left-wing British politics. On the American thing, you have to remember that after the American Civil War you had the dynamite school, that’s why when the Fenians came back to England they used dynamite, it hadn’t been used before as a weapon. The Fenian invasion of Canada, that was the first time the term ‘IRA’ was ever used – the uniforms had brass buttons with ‘IRA’ on them. People think it was a silly little expedition, but at the time there was a very strong element within America that thought Canada *should* be invaded and brought into the United States. Down through the years then everything came from America. All the funding for the IRA after 1922 came from America. My father told me that in the late thirties he took in a shipment of Thompsons and it said ‘New York Police Department’ on every one of them. Then getting right up to the present time, in ’69 a whole bunch of ex-internees from Belfast were living in New York, and they were the nucleus of the whole Provisional support thing within America. There was also the longshoremen in San Francisco who organised collections. After ’69 the shipments of weapons from America were continuous. I spoke to relations of mine who should have known better – they said they were socialists – but they liked the simplistic thing: right and wrong, we’re fighting against the Brits. Nobody wanted any division in it, they liked the romantic simplistic view of things, and I think that goes with most groups in America.

***Down through the years then everything came from America. All the funding for the IRA after 1922 came from America.***

[**Deirdre MacBride**] And then the Irish government finally got its ambassadors to really try to change Irish-American opinion. I remember the Irish government appointing a PR company to try and start telling a different story.

[**Eamonn Lynch**] Regarding the Irish in England. From a sporting point of view, migration, especially in the fifties... a lot of the Gaelic Football teams couldn't get a team out and had to fold. Right down the west coast of Ireland a lot of teams had to fold, because of emigration.

[**Padraig Yeates**] More people emigrated from the South of Ireland than from anywhere else in Europe in the twentieth century, because there wasn't a livelihood to be got.

[**Deirdre Mac Bride**] And apparently there were more women than men in that, because there were no opportunities for them, other than getting married. Anyway, this has been an interesting discussion, but it has felt like an unbalanced discussion, because it has felt like an old boys' conversation among people who were politically active, particularly at that time, and who were on one particular side. And I am really struck by that because what we should also be talking about is what in God's name they thought they were getting up to in the States or in Britain at the time. People have talked about the work that needs to be done in terms of hearing other voices. But it seems to me that there is also work to be done in terms of people here actually saying: what we here are going through is difficult enough without you people in the diaspora butting in from your 'Ireland across the water', especially when those in the diaspora seem to hold to a very simplistic solution to this place, which is to fund violence.

*[P]eople here actually saying: what we here are going through is difficult enough without you people in the diaspora butting in from your 'Ireland across the water'.*

[**Padraig Yeates**] I think there has to be one important point to be made between the Irish and the American diasporas, and that is that most people in Britain never engaged in anything. The main reason is that people in the Irish diaspora in Britain weren't really that 'diasporised', if you like, they still mostly had links with family back home. I worked in England and I also worked in Ireland, and many people often went to and fro. But most important of all, people in Britain were amenable to British law, people in America were not amenable to British

law. And there was a legacy there in America, they held to a vision of Ireland that was projecting back to the previous century, whereas there was always a certain immediacy between the Irish in Britain and the Irish here. So, the republican movement in Britain was living in a bit of a bubble because we had become so small, we had shrunk, and it was trying to rediscover itself, and obviously not in very intelligent ways. I think it is a mistake to look at the two diasporas as having anything much in common. One final point: these recollections might indeed seem like old boys' reflections, but that's what these discussions set out to do: to hear personal stories from those who were there at the time, they are not meant to set out a clinical historical narrative.

***The republican movement in Britain was living in a bit of a bubble because we had become so small, we had shrunk, and it was trying to rediscover itself, and obviously not in very intelligent ways.***

[**Peter Bunting**] Yes, I think that is very important, because in one sense we are all living historians. But what I would like Harry to take away from this meeting is that he, or someone, would take up the loyalist/unionist side of the diaspora, because I think that is also important for us to hear about, and learn about, as well. I agree with you, I want more balance, and it is important to encompass everyone's story. And I would include security forces and their families, or ex-police officers and their families: we need them to tell us *their* history as well and how they saw things. For example, I would like to hear from an RUC constable who was in the 'Battle of the Bogside'. How did they feel? It must have been traumatic. Those young constables weren't prepared, weren't trained for that type of huge entanglement. How did they feel; were they asking themselves – what am I doing here? With no great protection. So we need to hear those viewpoints and experiences too, because at the end of the day it is about trying to build confidence in each other, learning from each other, even at this age, and recording and spreading these discussions to a wider audience through pamphlets – as Mike is going – to encourage further analysis, both by others who were involved and also by people who were not involved.

[**Padraig Yeates**] Andy, how do we go about getting people from the security forces involved more?

[**Andy Hart**] I think you might find one or two individuals perhaps willing

to engage, but there wouldn't be many in the regimental association who would even know of the existence of the Fellowship [of Messines]. The vast majority of the UDR veteran community still feel themselves very much at risk, under threat, and wouldn't be particularly open to exposing their experiences. A lot of them now are just trying to get on with life and put their experiences in the proverbial suitcase in the roof-space.

[**Padraig Yeates**] I met a group of prisoner officers, four of them, who had been in the Maze when the escape took place, and you could see that they were still shaken from their experience, and you could see them still reacting to it, even when they were talking about it in a very safe environment down in the South, in Glencree. So, if they couldn't feel safe there, they might not feel safe in places up here. But there has to be some way to get to hear their experiences. What about the association of retired RUC officers?

[**Andy Hart**] I cannot speak for them, but they tend to be a community that sticks to itself, and of course the difficulty with those of us in this room who *have* engaged in discussion is that there is a danger of being ostracised – simply by being here in this room – by that community. However, I am more than happy to put out feelers and see what I can find.

[**Teena Patrick**] If I could just say, it does very much feel like an old boys' club who haven't had the opportunity to say what they want to say about their personal journey, because I have also found that with former members of the RUC, prison officers or veterans. If you are in a room with them it is very much the same conversation. Because *their* story hasn't been told and *their* voice hasn't been heard. If I could just say, on behalf of the Ulster Defence Regiment – and I am here as a member of the Ulster Defence Regiment, fifteen years, and so is Jacqueline – that it is hard to break through that barrier, but I feel that once you do it it gets easier.

***I have also found that with former members of the RUC, prison officers or veterans... their story hasn't been told and their voice hasn't been heard.***

[**Gerry McAlinden**] About seven years ago I was at a conference at Carlingford Heritage Centre, and Willie Fraser was one of the speakers. And over lunch himself and another chap were sitting together. And I went over to pass the time of day with them, and Willie enquired what I was doing there. And I said I was

part of the heritage committee and he said, “But what do you know about the Troubles?” So I said that my brother was in the Official IRA and was killed in May 1974. And we talked about it, and the UDR man talked about how he had buried friends of his and family of his. Somebody then called us back into the conference. And at the end of the conference the former UDR man came up to me and gave me a little medal; he said, “this is a UDR Widow’s Mite [emblem] that is given to widows or widowers of people who died during the Troubles.” And I have got that, and I keep it as very precious.

[**Peter Bunting**] The nationalist community write loads of plays and things, and they’re on Féile an Phobail and so on – and it is wonderful to see – but it is the other side of the coin that we’re not really getting sufficiently. Whether those stories are told through discussions like this, or drama, or whatever other way, it is terribly important that we all listen to those voices, especially if we are to come together and live together in some form of harmonious way, and try to build a better future.

***It is terribly important that we all listen to those voices, especially if we are to come together and live together in some form of harmonious way, and try to build a better future.***

[**Harry Donaghy**] We intend to carry these discussions on into 2020. We have always endeavoured to maintain contact with our unionist and loyalist colleagues, and we hope to continue our engagement with them.

Just on a historical point now: I have just scribbled down two dates: 1647 and 1776. Both dates saw important documents. One of them is very well known: The American Declaration of Independence. But there was a document printed in Putney, London, when the Leveller army was meeting in political discussion in 1647 and they came up with a document called ‘An Agreement of the Free People of England.’ Now, it’s scary, when you compare the two documents, the language that is used, and what those guys were talking about *140 years before* what appeared in America’s Declaration of Independence. And it is no accident of history that descendants of those same people brought those ideas from England over to America. Indeed, looking the wording of the two documents you would almost think that these guys must have known one another!

Again, as Pádraig said, our aim is not to be overly academic when we are

looking at events in history; what we are seeking is to have a civilised discourse between one another, and from those discussions we will take recommendations from people, so as to craft *further* programmes that will engage even more people. In 2020 we are also going to look at the impact of Partition and the Irish Civil War. And some of the people we have engaged with throughout our different series of discussions and workshops have never been spoken to by anyone about their experiences, some for fifty years, and yet those experiences contain a wealth of vital knowledge and information. Which is more than you get sometimes from certain historians who just perpetuate myths about the Troubles. So we need to hear those eyewitness accounts, because in hearing them we have far more chance of learning valuable lessons for the future.

[**Sean O’Hare**] Just a follow-on from what Peter suggested. I would suggest that if we do contact people from the ex-service community, that initially the meetings are kept small; that there are just a few members of Messines sitting down with an equal number of ex-service individuals. When Mike done this up in Farset a few years ago – getting Republicans to sit down with Loyalists – I felt they were the most open meetings that I was ever at, because they were small in number and you felt free to talk more openly and more personally. Of course, afterwards it can be widened out, but I think initially, for people starting off on such an important venture, we should keep it small at first.

[**Deirdre Mac Bride**] I think we would all agree on that. And, on that note, can I bring this meeting to a close. Thanks to Jimmy and Padraig, and to all of you for attending today.

***What we are seeking is to have a civilised discourse between one another, and from those discussions we will take recommendations from people, so as to craft further programmes that will engage even more people.***

## ***Appendix 1 Paul O'Dwyer's rethink***

*That leading Irish-Americans were willing to rethink old assumptions and engage with the Loyalist/Unionist community is evidenced by comments made in a letter to me by Paul O'Dwyer, dated 7 October 1987.*

Dear Michael

... Now what about the Protestant community. My visits to Belfast, Derry and Dungannon have taught me a great deal and I wish that we had the opportunity to engage in more communications. I know I have a lot to learn. I try to make up for the lack of more intimate contacts by reading and find it is helpful but no substitute. I have tried to fill in with literature such as your writings and the interesting history of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and in the U.S. It gives me a better understanding of the thinking, the hopes and the fears of so many of the Protestant community. As a result I can understand the sometimes less than rational outcries, but I do understand the genuine and understandable anger of insecure Protestants who feel so threatened.... I am not alarmed by the cries in the street which when stripped of their much quoted verbiage is no more than a plea to have their fears of the destruction of their tradition recognized and ancient hard-won rights to freedom of conscience honored and protected.

At a time when I was President of the New York City Council... I was challenged by a Northern Ireland reporter about my right to speak about Civil Rights in Northern Ireland without speaking to representative Protestants. I concluded it was a just criticism. I had come through our own civil rights war and we won major battles and at last changed national policy towards our minorities, but having been brought up during the Black & Tan War I considered only the right of Ireland to get rid of the invader without giving proper thought to the rights of Irish Protestants.

On my next visit with the help of Canon Arlow, whom I had met in New York, Ulick O'Connor and Senator Trevor West, I met Martin Smyth and others but wanted to meet [Andy] Tyrie and related that fact to the threesome. Soon I found myself winding my way where no Fenian should be heading: [over to] UDA headquarters. I believe the result was, to say the least, enlightening. I am not naive enough to overlook Tyrie's or Adams' role or their respective positions, but I know where they stand and if peace comes I'm sure it will come with justice if

these people are at the table. It is for all these diverse reasons I have recommended to American journalists that they interview Andy whom I regard as a mature politician, and I mean that in the best sense, and now with your permission I will also send them your way and Ian's [Adamson].

Fraternally, Paul O'Dwyer

## ***Appendix 2 A Loyalist encounter with Irish America***

*The following anecdote was relayed to me by Gusty Spence, after a loyalist delegation had visited the USA:*

We were addressing this gathering of people with Irish 'connections' and when I told them I was proud to be British but also proud to be Irish, one man remarked, in an irritated tone, "Why is it that you loyalists can't make up your minds what you are!" I asked him: "I take it you are American, sir?" "How perceptive," was the gruff response. "I take it you are also proud of your Irish roots?" "I am indeed," was the more cautious reply. "Then if you can be proud of *your* 'Irish-American' heritage, are we not entitled to be proud of *our* dual heritage?" The man nodded and sat down.

## ***Appendix 3 The Scotch-Irish† legacy***

Severe economic pressures, increased rent demands by absentee English landlords, and government discrimination against Presbyterians as well as Catholics, led, from 1717, to a great migration from Ulster to America. By the time America declared for Independence, a quarter of a million Ulster people had emigrated there, and were estimated to have composed 15% of the population. Because of their 'dual' ancestry, these Ulsterfolk were to become known as the 'Scotch-Irish'. They had a profound impact on their new homeland:

Immigrants first settled the over-mountain country: Germans, English, Highlanders, Irish, Welsh, Scotch-Irish. New England stock seasoned the mixture. Dominant were the Scotch-Irish, defiant and aggressive, who seldom neglected an opportunity to better themselves. They had undying

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† Although today's preferred label is 'Scots-Irish' – partly because of the association of 'Scotch' with the whisky – historically, and in academic literature, the term used was 'Scotch-Irish'.

confidence in their manhood, were as bold as the Romans, and as Indian fighters won even the Shawnee's admiration. They were Presbyterians, though in the wilderness many turned Baptist or Methodist. They believed in freedom and equality, resented class distinction and the leisurely life. They "preferred the useful to the beautiful and even required the beautiful to be useful." They contributed mightily to the democratization of the United States.

[‘The Surge of Freedom’ in *America’s Historylands: Landmarks of Liberty*, National Geographic Society, USA, 1967, page 269.]

It can be said that the Scotch-Irish made three contributions to colonial America: they settled the frontier, they founded the kirk, and they built the school. They, more than any other group, created the first western frontier. To the Ulster Scots must largely go the credit of being the first pioneers west of the Appalachians and of opening the Mississippi Valley.

[E Wright, contribution to *The Ulster-American Connection*, The New University of Ulster, 1981.]

Not only were they predominant among the pioneers – the mother of the first white child born west of the Rockies was Catherine O’Hare from Rathfriland – but they carried with them an important part of their cultural heritage, their music:

Whatever their influence in terms of cabin and barn styles, field layout, town planning, and so on, it seems likely that the greatest and most lasting contribution of the Scotch-Irish was music. And however one may define their particular religious and ethnic identity, musically they should be considered Ulstermen, for they brought with them the mixture of Scottish and Irish tunes which is still characteristic of large parts of Northern Ireland.

[W H A Williams, ‘Irish Traditional Music in the United States’, *America and Ireland: 1776–1976*, Greenwood Press, USA, 1980.]

Their independent streak and their hatred of aristocratic landlordism made them foremost in the Revolutionary War against Britain. The first armed clash in fact occurred in 1771 when Scotch-Irish settlers fought British forces on the Alamance River in North Carolina. In 1775 Ulster settlers at Mecklenburg passed Resolutions of Independence, becoming the first people to advocate publicly this course of action. They played a prominent part in the Revolutionary War which followed. The Official Declaration of Independence was: written in the handwriting of Charles Thompson

from Maghera; printed by John Dunlap from Strabane; given its first public reading by the son of an Ulsterman; and eight of the signatories, including John Hancock (President of the Congress) were either born in Ulster or born to Ulster parents. Ten U.S. Presidents have been of direct Ulster descent.

#### ***Appendix 4 Vere Foster***

Vere Henry Foster was born in 1819. In 1847, while visiting a family estate in Ireland at the time of the Great Famine he became involved in famine relief. The following year, when his father died, Vere Foster underwent a crisis in his life and he came to concentrate on philanthropy in Ireland. Foster made three voyages to the United States as a steerage passenger in a ship of emigrants, finding the accommodation bad, and the treatment of emigrants exploitative. Through his cousin, Lord Hobart, he was able to influence parliament, and the Passengers Act 1851. He also took practical steps to promote Irish emigration to the USA.

Later, Foster took up the improvement of education in Ireland. This was a time of Catholic suspicion of the national education system introduced by Richard Whately. Foster contributed to the provision of better school accommodation and apparatus, and gave grants in aid of building several hundred new school-houses.

In 1879, with the Land War in Ireland, Foster concentrated on promoting female emigration to the United States and the British colonies. Young women were assisted, numbering some 18,000 in 1880–3. He was supported in his projects by both Catholic and Protestant clergy. Foster died, unmarried, at Belfast in December 1900. He was buried in Belfast Cemetery. [*Source: Wikipedia*].

#### ***Appendix 5 The Levellers***

“Not the least significant aspect of the English civil wars was the part which popular discussion played in them. The volume of controversial writing produced was gigantic. This pamphlet-debate was the first great experiment in popular political education using the printing press as the organ of discussion.

“For the rank and file of the soldiers, well knowing that neither the king nor parliament could be trusted, became fearful that Cromwell also would barter away the reforms which they hoped from the Revolution.... Quite spontaneously regimental committees, remarkably like the soviets that appeared in the Russian army in 1917, sprang into existence and demanded a share in formulating the politics to be pursued.”

[*A History of Political Theory*, G H Sabine, Harrap, 1968, pages 477-480].