



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"



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Forests
for climate



Forests *for*
nature



Forests *for*
wood

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