

AFFAIRS OF THE NATION



FFG AND ISRAELI ARMS

THE OUTRAGE of Tánaiste and Fine Gael leader Simon Harris as well as the loud shrieks from the party's MEPs at the slaughter inflicted by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) on Palestinian civilians and children in Gaza were most welcome. They were also out of sync with the political positions the party's MEPs had been instructed to adopt until recently.

Especially ironic was the outrage expressed by the same quarters at the firing of shots above the heads of an EU delegation of diplomats visiting the West Bank last week. Harris demanded the "fullest possible explanation" from Israel and registered the Government's "condemnation" of the "utterly reprehensible" behaviour of the IDF.

FG MEP Maria Walsh and the party's three other MEPs – Nina Carberry, Regina Doherty and Seán Kelly – all raised their voices to demand the immediate suspension of the preferential EU trade agreement with Israel. Maria was especially exercised by the IDF firing a volley of shots over the heads of EU diplomats – including two Irish ones – and she broadcast her indignation at this undiplomatic behaviour on the airwaves back in Ireland that evening.

Her righteous anger at the belligerent behaviour of IDF killers is beyond irony. Walsh was one of the FG MEPs that drew the wrath of Sinn Féin MEP Lynn Boylan just the previous month when an amendment to motions on defence and security was moved that demanded an end to the sale of weapons

from EU countries to Israel. Subsequently, just weeks later, such weapons were used to intimidate EU diplomats and MEP Walsh, who voted against such arms being blocked from export to Israel, is outraged?

Walsh and the other FG MEPs voted against the amendment, helping it to fall and enabling the continued sale of billions worth of arms to the IDF and the continuation of its "utterly reprehensible behaviour".

Is the murder of Palestinian children and civilians by the tens of thousands regarded as less reprehensible than firing shots over the heads of western diplomats?

Behind this morass of contradictory moral values and political duplicity lies a tale of power struggles and conflicts within the European People's Party (EPP), in particular between the German and Irish contingents within the EEP grouping in the EU parliament. The German CDU/CSU and other 'centre-right' parties (as right-wing parties like to describe themselves) dominate the EPP and FG MEPs have found themselves

Continued on page 4



Maria Walsh

CONGRATULATIONS to senior counsel Peter Shanley, who was quick off the mark to take advantage of a key provision in the Legal Services Regulation Act, which allows direct access to barristers by the public – ie bypassing those pesky solicitors.

Shanley has hired a PR company to oversee the launch of new venture Barristers Direct (BD), which turns out to be owned by a company called Barristers Direct Ltd, where Shanley holds 100% of the shares. Oddly, this company was actually incorporated way back in 2012 to carry on the business of "legal activities", so clearly Peter was thinking far ahead.

He now has first-mover advantage in what could become a busy sector, given the high level of litigation in Ireland. BD's customers will be able to directly engage a barrister through the company and pay a fixed €325 fee for an initial opinion from one of the legal eagles selected by the company. (BD does say a solicitor will be required if proceedings are issued.)

Given that BD will essentially act as a gate keeper, some Law Library members may wonder how the selection process works. Shanley's PR people would only say: "Barristers are assigned to clients based on the nature of the customer's query and the established expertise of the relevant barrister."

Goldhawk expects there to be plenty of griping from m'learned friends as the gigs get handed out by Shanley et al.

MERRION SQUARE FIRING SQUAD

IT SHOULD be standing room only at the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) meeting this week as the Arts Council, National Gallery of Ireland (NGI) and arts and culture mandarins come before John Brady's firing squad. Among the politicians lining up to take a swipe and some easy-looking targets will be the likes of Catherine Connolly, James Geoghegan and Catherine Ardagh.

It could be a very uncomfortable session for the Arts Council in particular, with the under-fire director, Maureen Kennelly, feeling the heat over that €7m IT project debacle revealed by Goldhawk.

She is joined by chairwoman Maura McGrath, who has the good fortune of not being *in situ* for much of the period that will be scrutinised by the PAC. As chair, however, she will be grilled as to what she knew and when. Goldhawk understands that McGrath had considered that it would be more appropriate if board members who were in place for rather longer – such as acting chairwoman Philomena Poole or senior director Jillian van Turnhout – came along for the ride.

McGrath will be accompanied instead by business transformation programme director Poly Anyanwu and Kennelly's deputy, Martin O'Sullivan (who is also finance director).

There will also be plenty of questions for the council's 'parent' department of arts and culture, with secretary general Feargal Ó Coighligh on the guest list, as are assistant secretaries Conor Falvey and Joe Healy, the former of whom is the mandarin probably most central to the department's overseeing of the Arts Council's spending spree.

There will also be some relevant input from Dermot Nolan at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and Mary O'Donoghue, head of information and communications technology (ICT) at the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer, which has "the leadership role for the digital agenda across government... It is required to review and approve ICT related spend by organisations."

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LEAVING CERTIFICATE 2025



Just relax and try to remember what Chat GPT wrote for you

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isolated within the group. The FG MEPs have not always voted with the German-led majority of the EPP, which has led to the consequent discord.

The *Irish Times* reported recently that Harris had determined to resolve what he saw as a damaging rift with the most powerful group in the EU Parliament and he pressured his MEPs to get with the German flow, which is now directed by hardline German chancellor Friedrich Merz. One of the primary issues that Merz is keen to promote is the growth of the EU's defensive capacity and industry.

Thus, the pressure came on FG's EU Parliamentary members who, notwithstanding the horror of their constituents across Ireland at the IDF's blood lust, voted last month to support the continuation of arms sales to Israel. Only when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared and then implemented his intention to increase IDF attacks on Gaza's population – and the consequent revulsion of their constituents – did FG's MEPs re-assert their own attachment to a peaceful resolution of the genocide in Gaza.

Harris has his own early warning political system and he signalled the end of capitulation to the Germans on Gaza – temporarily, at least – when he stated, within hours of Netanyahu's intention to invade and seize Gaza indefinitely, that such a plan was alarming. He added that what was happening to the people of Gaza was “despicable and unconscionable”.

Merz may or may not have noticed this statement from little Ireland's foreign minister but Taoiseach Micheál Martin certainly did. Martin was always less voluble in his criticisms of the pro-Israeli EU president, Germany's Ursula von der Leyen, but the day after Harris's statement he condemned Israel's blockade of Gaza as a war crime.

Hopefully this competitive outrage at home and abroad will last until there is a ceasefire in Gaza. The Government's continuing, confusing positions on the Occupied Territories Bill does not inspire hope here – nor does its opposition to SF's motion to stop the Central Bank from enabling the sale of Israeli war bonds.

THE NEW political editor of the Irish and Sunday Independent, Mary Regan is a most accomplished journalist as her work at RTE, the Irish Examiner and Business Post proves. Her startling failure to even mention the most significant current initiative by far of former taoiseach Leo Varadkar, in her analysis of his current trajectory, probably says more about the political blind spot of the southern fourth estate than anything else.

Varadkar's new line on the national question began before he left office but in the



year since then he has ramped up his support for a united Ireland and the need to prepare for a border poll. He had already reversed the role of Fine Gael leader (partitionist to united Irelander) with that of Fianna Fáil leader Micheál Martin (republican to partitionist). He has also made common cause with former SDLP leader Colum Eastwood, who had firstly been invited to merge with Martin's party and then abandoned by FF, while northern nationalists of all shades now regard Martin with distaste.

The seismic change in the mood and the differing stances that many are now adopting on the national question owes more to Vlad than any other taoiseach this century and he has not finished yet.

Regan's piece in the Sindo talked of his views on the far right, Ireland's place in Europe and the economics of the new German chancellor among other things. But north and south, it is Vlad's line on Irish unity that people are more interested in.

SPOOKY SWISS CLUB DE BERNE

IRELAND MAY not be able to conduct immigration security screening – necessary for the implementation of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum – according to a Government report. This is because we are denied access to a “key European security data base” as we are not a member of the Schengen area of Europe without borders. The EU's IT security system deals with security, policing, judicial and immigration issues. Hopefully, justice minister Jim O'Callaghan can direct his current display of energy and commitment to solving this problem.

This is a remarkable state of affairs given that we belong to the high-level spooky Club de Berne and have done so since shortly after its foundation in around 1970 by the big countries in the EU, ie Germany, Britain, France etc. It expanded quickly throughout the 1970s to encompass all EU states – as well as Norway and Switzerland – whose security and intel chiefs are the players in the group.

It also has a sub-group, the Counter Terrorist Group (CTG), which could be described as its own semi-military wing and which, since its creation in 2001, has greatly enhanced the role and influence of the club.

The club receives very little attention from the ‘free press’ but fears have been expressed that its unregulated and unmonitored activities – each state controls its own intel agencies but neither the EU nor anyone else has any control over the club or the CTG – are now totally independent.

The club and the CTG are outside the EU but communicate with it via the EU Intelligence Analysis Centre, an arm of the EU external service.

It should be noted that in 2018 the CTG co-operated in exercises with Europol's Centre for Migrant Smuggling, an initiative indicating that EU intel entities could easily facilitate Ireland in the immigrant pact now being prepared.

Ireland's early membership and involvement in the club is not surprising given modern Irish history and the northern Troubles. From 1969, the northern conflict and the club/CTG grew up together and Irish special branch personnel would have had much knowledge about the IRA and INLA to impart to club members.

This was down to republican groups' links with Palestinian groups, the South African ANC's armed wing, ETA and other such groups around the world. In this area, at least, Ireland could be said to have punched well above its weight.

However, from being a contributor at these clandestine meetings, Ireland has become what is described as a “net recipient of intel”. This is due to the IRA shutting down its operations since the late 1990s and the consequent drying up of the supply of high-grade intel from interrogations, sleuthing, informers and surveillance as a result of the Good Friday Agreement.

Irish intel chiefs are unhappy at the downgrading of their stature in the Club de Berne and discussions about improving the rate of intel are ongoing. What should really concern these gents, however, is that from the beginning of the club's existence the FBI, CIA and, most concerning of all, Mossad have been members and/or observers. And the Israelis were responsible for one of the club's most important innovations, Kilowatt, an encrypted telex system for intelligence sharing on Middle East activists, ie Palestinians.



Jim O'Callaghan



AFFAIRS OF THE NATION

PADDY POWER'S TARGET

NEW YORK-listed Flutter Entertainment plc – owners of gambling giant Paddy Power – has launched High Court proceedings in Dublin against an Irish property company called Waymill Ltd. The name of the principal here should ring a few bells, given that he found himself in the middle of the high-profile ‘Lying Eyes’ murder plot a few years back.

The directors of Ennis-registered Waymill are listed as PJ Howard and his sons, Robert and Niall, and the company was set up by PJ back in 1986. He is still on the board but transferred ownership of the company to his sons in 2018.

In recent years, Waymill ran into a spot of bother and receiver Ken Fennelly of Deloitte & Touche was appointed to the company’s 56 commercial and residential properties on foot of sums owed to AIB that had been transferred to Everyday Finance. The Howards, however, bought out the bank’s interest “using an alternative lending facility” (First Citizen Finance).

As a result, Fennelly was discharged in 2021, although recovery has been relatively slow, with the accounts signed off last November showing that Waymill was sitting on accumulated losses of €160,000 at the end of 2023, while the three directors were owed a combined €1.6m in loans to the company.

The nature of the action lodged earlier this month by Flutter is unclear at this stage and Waymill has yet to nominate a legal firm to represent the business.

What is clear though is that a court case between these two parties will prove far less engrossing than the remarkable 2008 Lying Eyes trial relating to the hiring by PJ Howard’s partner, Sharon Collins, of Las Vegas blackjack dealer Essam Eid to kill PJ, Robert and Niall Howard.

Collins had been looking to ensure she could inherit PJ’s multi-million-euro estate and contacted Eid in 2006 via the ‘hitman-for-hire’ website, choosing the *nom de plume* lyingeyes98. She proposed that the Egyptian

would arrange for the two sons to have a fatal accident, after which he would kill PJ Howard himself but make it look like a suicide. Little wonder the story ended up being turned into a movie.

Having paid a deposit of €15,000, the plot came apart when Eid tried to blackmail the Howard family by demanding payment of €150,000 in exchange for cancelling the assassination contract. This led to the involvement of the boys in blue, the exposure of Collins’s involvement and, eventually, a seven-week trial that gripped the nation and resulted in Eid being jailed.

Collins, who denied having ordered the triple murder, was also sent to prison.

Goldhawk is unsure what odds Paddy Power would have given on that outcome.



Sharon Collins

AS THE fans of Donegal crooner Daniel O'Donnell come to terms with the fact that he is to take an extended break from touring, the good news for the man himself is that there is plenty of moolah in the coffers to tide him over for quite some time.

A month after Wee Daniel took to Facebook to warn the public to beware of fake pictures of him looking sick in hospital and suggesting he needed help, he has announced that there will be no concerts from the end of this year (and indeed not too many over the next few months) as he takes time out to deal with chest issues “that wouldn’t have bothered me if I wasn’t singing”.

In the age of Spotify, eschewing the option of touring will have a direct impact on the bottom line for any act, as indeed was the case in the years around the pandemic. In the 12 months to the end of October 2022, for example, DOD Promotions Ltd lost a hefty €½m.

Happily, DOD bounced back in 2023, while the accounts filed this month reveal a profit of just on €200,000 in the year to the end of October last, leaving accumulated profits standing at a popstastic €4m.

By the way, although Daniel’s missus, Majella, is a listed director, it turns out that all of the shares are registered in his name.

JIMMY FENNELLY'S FINALE

TENACIOUS ACCOUNTANT Jimmy Fennelly will feel he balanced the books somewhat at last week’s AGM

of the Chartered Accountants of Ireland (CAI), with whom he has been having a long-running battle (see *The Phoenix* 13/12/24).

While the world of number crunchers is a boring one at the best of times, Fennelly’s stand-off with the profession’s representative body featured a few highlights, with Jimmy going so far as to create his own website where he outlined his various concerns. He also commissioned consultancy firm Governance Ireland (GI) to carry out a review of the handling of the protracted disciplinary process he had found himself embroiled in. GI’s report identified “clear deficiencies” (although the CAI did not engage with the consultancy firm’s review).

A 2014 complaint to the CAI by a client of Fennelly’s had initially been dismissed by the conduct committee in 2016, before a review was kick-started on foot of a request by the client. That review, by Esmond Reilly, was considered to have been flawed and resulted in the whole affair being prolonged, until Fennelly ultimately settled with the accountants’ body in 2019 after a flurry of legal missives, with the CAI paying €200,000 towards his legal costs “in full and final settlement”.

Nevertheless, after the CAI got a kicking from the Auditing & Accounting Supervisory Authority for its botched handling of the process, Fennelly raised questions about the decision to facilitate a review of the dismissed complaint against him. In turn, this led to an ‘independent’ review in CAI, which found in 2020 that all had been more or less in order.

Fennelly was less than impressed given that the independent review was not carried out by an external expert but rather by deputy CAI president Paul Henry, with GI claiming the position of the accountants’ body that the review was independent was “not credible”.

This claim has been rejected at AGMs by successive CAI presidents but the dogged Fennelly refused to go away.

He finally got a result at last week’s AGM when the outgoing CAI president, Barry Doyle, read out a statement regarding Fennelly’s concerns about Henry’s independence: “The institute wants to acknowledge that Mr Fennelly had grounds to question whether Paul Henry was independent and that this should have been acknowledged at earlier annual general meetings.”

Apparently, “this matter can now be considered closed”.

Well, it only took six years.



Barry Doyle



KINCORA SECRETS STILL TUMBLING OUT

SIR ANTHONY HART'S derided 2017 report into the Kincora abuse scandal was meant to quash interest in the story but served only to fuel a spate of reports in *The Phoenix* and *Village*, *The Lost Boys* documentary and a book on Lord Louis Mountbatten's complicity by Andrew Lownie. The latest rebuttal is a book by Chris Moore, formerly of BBC NI, entitled *Kincora, Britain's Shame*, which puts MI5 and the RUC squarely in the frame for running the home as a 'honeytrap' for paedophiles and contains new information about Mountbatten.



Margaret Thatcher

The Phoenix has doggedly pursued the scandal, with a two-page special in our inaugural issue. We predicted (see edition 18/2/83) that the first "independent" investigation, by Sir George Terry of Sussex Police, was "aimed at giving the scandal a coat of whitewash". In the event, Terry gave MI5 and the RUC a clean bill of health.

Goldhawk then exposed (see edition 4/7/85) that members of Terry's team led the botched investigation into a killing in Sussex that landed Capt Colin Wallace, a Kincora whistleblower, in prison for manslaughter. His conviction was later overturned.

The February 1983 edition also predicted that "perhaps some details of the private life of Sir Maurice Oldfield, the Ulster Security Coordinator and former MI6 chief, seems likely to emerge". There was a reference to Oldfield's "love of young boys" in the July '85 issue. In 1987, Margaret Thatcher revealed in the Commons that Oldfield had been stood down from his NI role because of his sexual appetite for young men.

On April 1, 1983, Goldhawk alluded to the complicity of Peter England, a senior NIO

security official. England's name was later raised in the Commons by Ken Livingstone as a Kincora abuser.

A three-page special (see edition 16/9/83) linked *Sunday Times* journalist and MI6 asset David Holden to the affair. A former Kincora boy has since confirmed he was abused by Holden at the Europa Hotel in Belfast.

After the failure of Terry to alleviate public concern, a fresh inquiry, led by Judge Hughes, was launched. On March 16, 1984, Goldhawk revealed: "Shrewd barristers all over the south of England would manoeuvre any cases concerning 'cottageing' (importuning in public toilets, as the law puts it) into [Hughes'] court in the belief that [he] showed a great deal of compassion for those so accused."

Hughes did not ask MI5 or RUC about the scandal because his terms of reference were changed, in secret. To his discredit, Hughes failed to report he had been gagged.

The Phoenix reported (see edition 8/11/85): "Last week... the Press Association's lobby correspondents received an off-the-record briefing from [Thatcher's] press office that she had ordered the Ministry of Defence to open a new enquiry into what has become known as the Kincora Affair... even the most stupid of Unionist leaders could not have missed the message: play ball or we will ruin you."

This was a manoeuvre to dampen unionist opposition to the Hillsborough Agreement.

Then, on February 14, 1986, Goldhawk wrote: "Among those involved were: the late Knox Cunningham, South Antrim MP and mentor of James Molyneaux, who as a bachelor provided Knox with unstinting service as his constituency agent."

Molyneaux's former lover, Chris Luke, has since revealed that he began a relationship with Molyneaux, then 64, when he was 17.

Back on November 11, 1983, we reported how Stephen Waring, a Kincora boy, ran away to Liverpool, where "he was picked up by the police. The RUC were told to meet him and he was put on the overnight ferry to Belfast... The body was seen falling from the ship but it has never been traced." Decades later, it emerged Waring was one of Mountbatten's victims.

In April 1990, Mountbatten's role was first exposed by Frank Doherty, the security correspondent of *The Phoenix*, and 'John Byrne' (a pseudonym for David Burke) in a five-page special report in *NOW* magazine.

RIGHT-WING ULTRAS

THAT SIX members of the National Party's (NP) anti-Barrett faction travelled to Milan, Italy, for the recent Remigration Summit indicates how far the party's brand of hardline ethnonationalism is from the right-wing populism espoused by most of Ireland's anti-immigration movement.

The conference was organised principally by Austria's Martin Sellner and Dries Van Langenhove from Belgium, who have become the public face of the international Identitarian movement. Identitarianism started in France with the launch of Génération Identitaire, which advocated for a defence of an imagined ancient European heritage. This heritage being defended by the Identitarians is not just cultural but also biological and they advocate for segregation of races.



Martin Sellner

A clearly panicked Sellner – who is banned from entering Switzerland, the US and Britain – released a video on the eve of the Milan conference. He outlined how some activists had been arrested trying to leave Germany to attend the conference, while others had been expelled from Italy on arrival.

He also detailed how the original conference venue had cancelled the booking once they realised who they would be hosting.

When the conference eventually convened on May 17, the hundred or so activists gathered at the Teatro Condominio Vittorio Gassman had to endure a series of rather dull speeches.

While the first half of NP representative John McLoughlin's speech sounded like a statistics lecture, he seemed to get quite animated when he spoke of the NP contingent leading the chants of "get them out" at the recent anti-immigration march in Dublin. He emphasised that he did not want to just get these immigrants out of Ireland but out of Europe too.





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