



IRISH MEDIA AND GAZA

A MOST civilised discourse may have been anticipated by *Sindo* readers recently who looked at the headline “Letter from Jerusalem” over an article written by Tsela Rubel, described by the newspaper as “a historian”.

An Israeli liberal, Rubel explained that

“Israeli reaction to the international response ranges from frustration to anger and bafflement” and concluded with a depiction of the brutal behaviour of Hamas on October 7 and since.

Rubel’s description as “a historian” is the truth but not quite the whole truth. Her full title is ‘general secretary of the Historical Society of Israel’.

Alison O’Connor, a columnist for the Irish edition of the *Sunday Times*, has been less liberal than Rubel. When the Government seemed set to abandon the Occupied Territories Bill (OTB) last February, Ali recognised the realpolitik here, saying that Ireland had to think of the Irish economy as it depends hugely on US investment. Showing remarkable insight into the Middle East conflict on every level, she told readers that instead: “Our government is better placed to prioritise the release of remaining hostages, the maintaining of the ceasefire, increasing humanitarian aid and, crucially, the rebuilding of Gaza.” Really?

Unfortunately, Ireland has not asserted



Alison O'Connor

itself since this visionary text was penned. Thus, the hostages have not been released, the ceasefire has not been maintained, aid has been denied to the point of famine and Gaza is still a pile of rubble.

However, O’Connor saved her best line till last, asking how Irish people felt about the fact that 44% of the “almost 960” Palestinians seeking international protection in Ireland last year were, wait for it... “young men”.

In May, as Israeli brutality ratcheted up, O’Connor did a U-turn but wrote as if she had always been on the side of Palestinians. Talking of Government statements, she referred to how “we” had called out Israel’s behaviour (“we”?) and referred to “our early stance” (“our” stance?).

Alison also wondered aloud if powerful people internationally are now concerned how their inaction will be viewed in the future? Again, such insight, despite the irony gap.

This month Ali again pivoted and she worried that the OTB could cause “serious damage to the Irish-US relationship”. She added: “What’s in our hearts clearly matters but we also need to engage our heads to do what is most effective and not self-harming.”

The *Irish Times* rarely resorts to such blunt instruments when trying to get with the flow of an outraged citizenry and its recent hand-wringing rhetoric, under the heading “This war must be brought to an end”, was a classic of the genre. A list of Israeli depravities in the editorial referred also to Germany’s suspension of arms supplies and the need for the international community to take stronger action to end the war. But Ireland’s paper of reference forgot to even mention, much less promote the single, concrete action at home that has been stalled by government for years, the OTB.

RTÉ’s sense of irony was also evident the day after five Al Jazeera journalists were murdered by Israeli forces with an unflattering critique of the station, which was depicted as a creature of Qatar, the Muslim Brotherhood (to whom it allegedly gave “unprecedented airtime”) and Hamas, while conceding that it became a rival to a biased western media in the region. The lengthy article was published the same day as RTÉ journalists joined with other protesters at the murder of journalists in Dublin and Derry.

TERRY PRONE’S ‘MASS GRAVE’

THE IRISH edition of the *Sunday Times* recently focused on the discovery in the past few years of another “mass grave”, which is adjacent to the site where nearly 800 infants were buried in a septic tank at the former Bons Secours mother and baby home in Tuam.

The grave – containing 48 circa bodies, including 17 children and two infants – was unearthed in 2012. Further research by the Eachtra Archeological Projects, however, has since provided much detailed information about the lives and deaths of those buried there who, it turns out, are famine victims.

This would appear to confirm, in part at least, PR guru Terry Prone’s response to documentary maker Saskia Weber when she asked if she

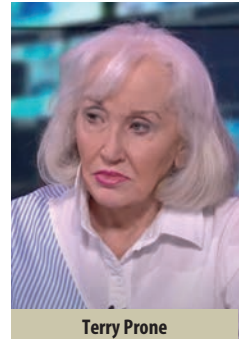
could interview Sr Marie Ryan of the Bons Secours nuns for a programme she was planning to make in 2014 for *France 2*, a flagship programme of France Televisions.

Prone (in) famously advised Weber: “If you come here, you’ll find no mass grave, no evidence that children were ever so buried and a local police force casting their eyes to heaven and saying ‘Yeah, a few bones were found – but this was an area where Famine victims were buried. So?’

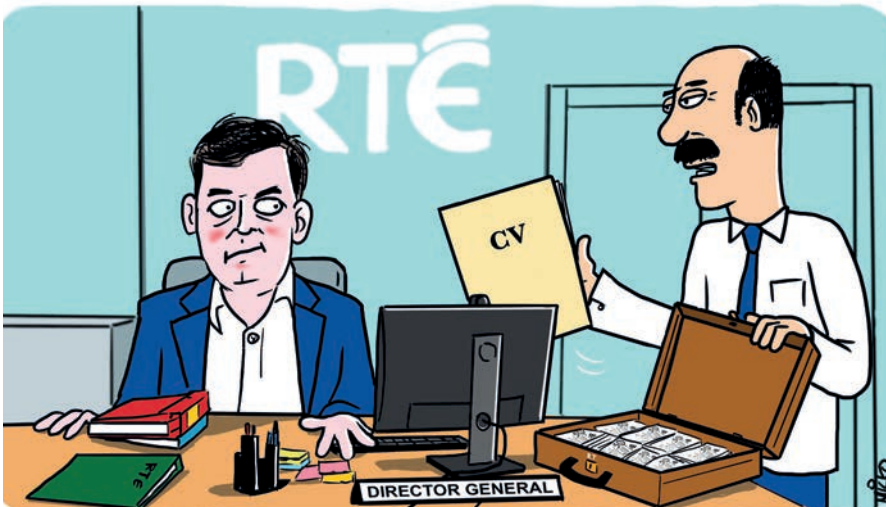
“Several international TV stations have aborted their plans to make documentaries because, essentially, all that can be said is ‘Ireland in the first half of the 20th century was a moralistic, inward-looking, anti-feminist country of exaggerated religiosity’ – which most of us knew already.”

This somewhat flippant and misleading retort provoked an angry response from various quarters but Prone can claim that she had referred to something that existed – even if she had given the wrong impression, ie that it was the Great Hunger, not the mother and baby home regime, that was the root of the problem.

In any case, the following year saw the government institute The Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation. Six years later the commission concluded that 9,000 children – one in seven of those born in the institutions covered by the commission’s terms of reference – had died in the mother and baby homes between 1922 and 1998, double the rate of infant mortality in the general population.



Terry Prone



“Tubridy left this in with the money!”

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Keep Him Informed

A woman with long blonde hair is lying back in a wicker chair, smiling and stretching her arms above her head. She is wearing a white top and blue jeans. The chair has thick, light-colored cushions. The background is a bright, out-of-focus window with white frames. The overall mood is relaxed and sunny.

tune in...
relax

sunshine106.8

dublin's easy place to relax