



‘The Wisdom of St. Patrick’: Development Is the Way to Peace

March 17—It is too early to say that Irish-American citizens are turning against President Joe Biden to the degree that Arab-Americans and students are. But protests and “alternative St. Patrick’s parades for Palestine” in greater New York and in Philadelphia show that the intense support for Palestine in Ireland itself, is infecting Irish-Americans.

Despite its government’s very long-standing reliance on American political leaders, Ireland is rivaling South Africa in its demands for immediate ceasefire and its denunciation of the genocidal acts of Israel in Gaza. Demonstrations in Dublin in late February involved more than 100,000 people (1.5-2% of the Irish population). Biden’s White House St. Patrick’s Day celebration was attended only by Leo Varadkar, the Taoiseach or First Minister of the Irish Republic; other leaders in the delegation, including Northern Ireland First Minister Michelle O’Neill and Sinn Fein leader Mary Lou McDonald, stayed away. Irish-Americans for Palestine had called on the delegation to boycott the White House on St. Patrick’s Day.

“It’s amazing how much things can change in a year,” said Aodhán Ó Ríordáin, a member of the Dáil or Irish Republic lower house who welcomed Biden in April 2023 to address both Houses of Parliament, where the U.S. President of Irish descent was lionized. Ó Ríordáin told CBS News March 16. “If that happened today, there would be nobody in the chamber.... What we see is a very well-equipped, well-armed, powerful nation exact revenge on a very beleaguered people.”

Ireland’s Attorney General Rossa Fanning gave one of the strongest denunciations of Israel’s “war crimes” in Gaza, to the public hearing of the International Court of Justice Feb. 22, and called on the European Union not to enter economic agreements with Israel until justice has been established in Palestine.

The history of how the Irish finally ended, and then recovered from, a British genocide, tells us why Ireland supports Palestinians now; but more importantly, why the Schiller Institute’s Oasis Plan economic development outline is so essential to achieving peace in Southwest Asia.

Beginning with the 1845-1850 Irish Famine—the nadir of centuries of British efforts to reduce the Irish to slavery or eliminate them—Ireland’s population dropped continuously for 75 years, and by 1920 had lost more than half its 1840 level of 6-7 million, falling to 3 million! What ended that disaster, beginning the 1920s?

First, the boycott, import substitution, and self-industrialization policy of Sinn Fein, the party founded just 18 years before it wrested a sovereign Republic of Ireland from the British in 1922. Sinn Fein based itself on the works of the American System economist Friedrich List. The Irish Republic replaced boycotts of British goods, with strong tariffs through the 1950s.

Second, the Republic of Ireland’s immediate adoption of a national waterworks and infrastructure development plan, the Shannon River Scheme, which was carried out rapidly and completed by 1929. A worthy predecessor to the American Tennessee Valley Authority, the Shannon River Scheme was perhaps the first integrated national electricity system in the world. Providing about 90 megawatts installed capacity, it electrified the entire country. It was engineered by Siemens, conceptualized by Irish Siemens engineer Dr. Thomas McLaughlin, and funded by one-fifth of the entire Irish Republic budget for seven years 1923-29.

From the 1920s onward the population of Ireland rebounded, slowly at first but reaching back to 6 million by the 21st Century, a population which now accesses a standard of 6,000 kilowatt-hours of

electricity per capita per year.

The economic development given by the Shannon River Scheme and other smaller works was essential to help stabilize the period of a “two-state solution” (the Republic and Ulster) which was very uneasy to put it very mildly. Only with the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 did the two-state solution become formally recognized by both, and laid open

to the possibility of eventual unity.

Economic development is the essential path to peace. Register and organize for the Schiller Institute’s April 13 international online conference, “The Oasis Plan: The LaRouche Solution for Peace Through Development between Israel and Palestine and for All of Southwest Asia.”

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