



FIRST WAVE: First Minister Nicola Sturgeon during campaigning for the Scottish Parliamentary election

Waves from Scottish election could wash up on our shores

IT WAS only when I moved to Belfast for a number of years in the late 1990s, reporting on the peace process and other news, that I came to realise the importance of the link between the north and Scotland, especially for unionists.

Down south, despite the Gaelic connection, the home of the highlands isn't often mentioned. In truth, the world map in people's heads is currently dominated by places like Spain and the prospect of getting there again at an early stage.

Nevertheless the Scots could play a key role in the future of our 32-county island. Tomorrow's election to the Scottish Parliament might well generate waves that could wash up on the shores of Antrim and Dublin, Down and Wicklow, Derry/Londonderry and Kerry/The Kingdom.

Voters are due to elect 129 Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) which means Nicola Sturgeon and the Scottish National Party (SNP) need to go from their current 61 seats up to 65 to achieve a single-party majority. If they don't reach that target, they might still be in charge with the aid of the Greens. The recently-founded Alba party, headed by former SNP leader Alex Salmond, might also be needed to make up the numbers, which would involve overcoming the major rift between Sturgeon and her predecessor in recent times.

When the question, "Should Scotland be an independent country?" was posed in a referendum on September 18, 2014, a majority at 55.3 per cent said "No" and 44.7 per cent said "Yes", out of 3.6 million votes cast. That might have put the issue to bed for a long time but, two years later, the Brexit referendum



took place, with Scotland voting to remain in the European Union by 62 to 38 per cent, whereas the UK as a whole opted to leave by 52 to 48 per cent. This helped to fuel demands for a second independence vote: Nicola Sturgeon wants it held by late 2023 but Boris Johnson, who has a say in the matter, declared that referendums "should be only once-in-a-generation".

We've already marked a historic day this week, since Monday was the centenary of partition and the founding of Northern Ireland. However, tomorrow may turn out to be another major date as voting takes place in Scotland's general election. We should know the final result by Saturday afternoon or evening. The latest poll to hand at time of writing, a Panelbase survey for the *Sunday*

Times, indicates that the SNP will win the election but perhaps with a majority of only one seat. Polling on Scottish independence has been a bit of a see-saw lately and the figures in this poll are 48 per cent in favour, 45 per cent against and 6 per cent undecided.

If the cause of Scottish nationalism gets a boost in the election, it will raise further doubts about the future of the United Kingdom as presently constituted. It seems a safe prediction, however, that no matter what happens in political terms in Caledonia, it will not lead to violence in that country. Sadly, we can't have the same confidence about political developments in Northern Ireland.

The coverage of Arlene Foster's recent withdrawal from the political limelight included the badly damaged bus that was subject to a bomb attack when, as a 17-year-old, she was travelling to school in the vehicle on June 28 1988. The driver was a part-time member of the Ulster Defence Regiment and the idea that anyone would attempt to blow up a school-bus or any form of public transport is almost beyond belief – but it happened. More recently we saw terrifying coverage of a bus that was hijacked and burnt out by loyalist youths in the Shankill Road area. Neither side has a monopoly on this kind of behaviour.

I find myself thinking back to that terrible day in August 1976 when three children were killed by a car whose driver, IRA activist Danny Lennon, had been shot dead by the British army. That led to the foundation of the Peace People and I see from their website www.peacepeople.com that they are still campaigning on similar issues, right throughout the world.

A welcome sign that there's hope for us yet.

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ON THIS DAY

MAY 5 1921

Craig in Dublin

LORD FitzAlan of Derwent has made his presence in Ireland formally known. He has officially summoned the two bogus 'Parliaments'. Colonel Sir James Craig left for Dublin yesterday in obedience to a message from the new Lord Lieutenant. At the Viceregal Lodge he met the Earl of Kenmare – an intense Roman Catholic.

Unionist attack on Catholic 'Hymn of Hate'

AT A meeting in support of [Unionist] candidates for West Belfast, Councillor Twaddell, JP again referred to the appointment of a Catholic Viceroy: 'I have said before that it was contrary to the Constitutional Government of this country that a Roman Catholic should have been appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. He is in his innermost soul a Roman Catholic'. He continued: 'Another matter to which I take exception – and grave exception – is that Roman Catholic clergymen should have the management of schools. So far as Protestant clergy are concerned, they have no desire for it – but they are largely responsible for improving the primary education of Ireland... The Roman Catholic priests have been teaching the "Hymn of Hate" in their National Schools, maintained by loyal taxpayers. The managers of Protestant schools do not teach the "Hymn of Hate" nor give the children the blackest pages in Irish history to read.'

Five Years for Donegal Man

A SENTENCE of five years' penal servitude has been passed on Neil Blaney of Rosnakill, County Donegal who was recently tried by courtmartial in Derry on the charge of having documents likely to cause disaffection. The accused, who refused to recognise the court, said he was a soldier of the IRA. (Neil Blaney was the father of later Fianna Fail Minister, Neil Blaney who featured in the 1970 Arms Trial.)

Border Trouble in Silesia

IN THE House of Commons last night Mr C Harmsworth said that the British member of the Plebiscite Commission in Silesia had reported that an insurrection, organised by Polish elements, broke out on May 2nd in Upper Silesia and that Allied troops in occupation had nine engagements with the insurgents. (Craig's dramatic visit to Dublin, where he would secretly meet President de Valera, was highlighted by the Irish News as Northern nationalists hoped against hope that partition might yet be averted. Twaddell's bitter attack on Catholic schools ensured that Cardinal Logue would refuse to nominate a Church representative to the Lynn Committee on the future directly of the North's education policy. Meanwhile, the problems associated with the redrawing of national borders by a Boundary Commission were reported from Silesia, split between Germany and the new Polish state under a plebiscite ordained by the Versailles Treaty.)

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