



CONTEST: Leinster House in Dublin

All to play for in important Dáil by-election

THERE was a radical slogan that surfaced in the Second World War, but may have been originally coined during the 1914-18 conflict. The wording of it was: "Turn the guns the other way."

Socialists deployed it in an effort to persuade soldiers on both sides to give their class interests priority over the aims of the national government that had recruited or conscripted them. Indeed the mutiny by soldiers against the Tsarist regime was a turning-point in the Russian Revolution of 1917.

You would have doubts about the slogan in the context of the 1939-45 war, given the sheer unmitigated evil of the Holocaust perpetrated by the Nazis (not that I'm excusing what the Americans did at Hiroshima and Nagasaki or Stalin's massive repression in the Soviet Union either). But you couldn't easily dispute the value of the rallying-cry in terms of the First World War, where neither side had significant moral superiority over the other. It is hard not to be inspired by the story of that soccer match on Christmas Day 1914 played in No Man's Land at Flanders between British and German soldiers. We are told they started off exchanging cigarettes and ended up playing the Beautiful Game. Apparently the Germans won by two goals to one. Just perfect, some readers might say.

Ireland, north and south, is divided between privileged and underprivileged classes but radical politics has not so far made a great deal of progress in either jurisdiction. The northern scene is of course dominated by the endless conflict between unionism and nationalism. In the south, one of the few occasions where the "class struggle" openly rears its head is at an election-count.

Deaglán
DE BRÉADÚN



As the votes are being processed, observers and party activists can be heard making remarks such as: "That's a middle-class area, Fine Gael will do well there." If the ballot-box is from a less-prosperous district, they might comment: "Sinn Féin will win that, with the working-class vote." Fianna Fáil traditionally had a foot in both camps: the party was famous for straddling the class divide but it hasn't been attracting the same level of support in recent years, e.g. in the 1977 general election FF got 50.6 per cent of first-preference votes but secured only 22.2 per cent in the 2020 contest.

The class issue comes to mind when considering the very important by-election due to take place in the Dáil constituency of Dublin Bay South on July 8. When I last wrote about it, the contest was known as 'the Battle of the Barristers' because the Fine Gael,

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Fianna Fáil and Labour candidates are all members of the legal profession. Since then, Senator Lynn Boylan, a former member of the European Parliament but not a barrister, has been nominated as the Sinn Féin contender. The betting figures at two websites, as I write, have Fine Gael's Councillor James Geoghegan at 6/5, Senator Boylan at 6/4 and Labour's Senator Ivana Bacik at 7/2.

As I made my way around the constituency, it was clear Sinn Féin is putting its faith in the proletariat. On Ailesbury Road, possibly the grandest thoroughfare in the city, I saw posters for Green Party Councillor Claire Byrne, as well as the aforementioned FF, FG and Labour contenders, but none for Lynn Boylan. However, her placards were very much in evidence on Thorncastle Street, in proudly working-class Ringsend.

A Red C poll in the *Business Post* last Sunday, on voting intentions throughout the state in the next general election, had Fine Gael at 30 per cent, Sinn Féin at 29 and Fianna Fáil a distant third with 13 points. The *Irish Mail on Sunday* has reported on a call by Fine Gael minister Simon Harris for a vote-transfer partnership in the by-election with coalition allies Fianna Fáil and the Greens because "the alternative is to elect another Sinn Féin TD in the constituency" (Chris Andrews won a seat for SF in last year's general election).

However, taoiseach and FF leader Micheál Martin quickly rejected the suggestion.

Nothing is certain in politics, but the Fine Gael candidate is expected to get the highest vote on the first count. Sinn Féin's best chance is if their candidate comes second, with Labour in third place, since Bacik's transfers might get Boylan over the line. But an Irish Times/ Ipsos-MRBI poll looks better for Bacik.

ON THIS DAY

JUNE 30 1921

Belfast Murder Inquests

DR GRAHAM, City Coroner, and a jury held inquests yesterday in the City Hall touching the death of Special Constable Thomas Sturdy, late of Court Street barracks and others shot during the recent rioting. District Inspectors Deignan, McConnell and Armstrong represented the Crown.

A sergeant gave evidence that he was on duty in Garmoyle Street at about 9 p.m. on 12th June. There had been sniping earlier in the evening. There was also revolver firing by civilians. A number of Special Constabulary arrived in a motor lorry. They entered a house in Garmoyle Street and remained there for some time. About 9.30 p.m. they proceeded in the direction of Dock Lane. Sturdy was a short distance in the rear. On approaching Dock Lane there was a report of a revolver. Deceased staggered and fell. The constable died shortly after admission to the RVH.

The jury returned a verdict of wilful murder against some person unknown during the course of a riot.

The next case taken was that of Hugh McAree (30), an ex-soldier who resided at Sackville Street. A head constable, who was on duty at Conway Street on 14th June said there was a disturbance and some sniping. An excited crowd collected.

A civilian said McAree rushed onto the road to help the little boy Frazer who had been shot. He was shot by some person who was "spotting". The shots came from the back of the houses and from the Falls Road direction. Regarding the death of the 12-old boy, William Frazer of Mayo Street (Shankill Rd) a sergeant said that in Ashmore Street (a Unionist district) some shots were fired.

With regard to the death of Kathleen Collins (19) of Cupar Street, deceased's mother said she had just returned from work for dinner and deceased, who was unemployed, went to the door. Witness heard her say, 'Ma, I am shot.' A girl said she was standing at her own door in Cupar Street when at 1.10 four lorries of Special Constables passed down the Falls Road. Witness heard four or five shots. She saw that the deceased girl and Mrs Rafferty had been wounded. There was no disorderly crowd at the time.

The officer in charge of Special Constables said as the lorries were passing Duvillie Park shots were fired at them. The fire was replied to, altogether about fourteen shots being fired.

THE authors of a recent work on The Dead of the Irish Revolution note that Belfast had the highest incidence of civilian deaths in Ireland during 1920-22 with 450 dead in the city in these two tragic years.

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