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'To Bring Light Unto the Germans': Irish Recognition-seeking, the Weimar Republic and the British Commonwealth, 1930–2

> Our former relations with England have given the impression to the German people that Ireland was to all intents and purposes nothing more than a province of Great Britain. It will take some time before Germany comes to realize that Ireland has really come out of the corner. It is our duty to make our status clear to the German people and not the duty of the German people to go and look for the facts.[1]

The development of Irish–German relations in the first decade of the Saorstát (Free State) paralleled substantial changes in both the British Empire–Commonwealth and the international system. The first official usage of the term 'British Commonwealth of Nations' was in the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921.[2] Unfortunately, as Troy D. Davis relates, after the Anglo-Irish Treaty 'the exact relationship of the Dominions to Britain and the Crown was not so clearly defined'.[3] The precise nature of intra-Commonwealth relations was only eventually clarified after a decade of incremental discussions with the signing of the Treaty of Westminster 1931. Finally the British Commonwealth of Nations came of age. Until then ambiguous relations reigned within the British Empire, as the multifaceted implications of autonomous, co-equal relations between the Commonwealth members in the areas of trade, foreign relations and passports had to be gradually disentangled.[4] This induced confusion in the minds of all concerned about the nature of the organizational metamorphosis during the shift from empire to commonwealth proper.

The first decade of the Saorstát witnessed this unparalleled shift in both the internal and external relations of the Empire.[5] The formation of the Saorstát occurred at this 'transitional

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moment':[6] the Great War had transformed international relations. Though Britain had emerged victorious it was not without financial and political costs. It experienced a 'mismatch between strategy and actual power'. The British Empire was slowly evolving into a free and co-equal association of Dominions and the Saorstát played a central role in this process.[7] The Anglo-Irish Treaty was the 'unprecedented midwife for the birth' of the British Commonwealth,[8] and held wide implications for the 'wider imperial sphere'.[9] Dominion status consigned upon the Saorstát was an 'experiment' to reconcile Irish nationalism with the British Imperial idea.[10] Unfortunately, this new status 'lacked precision' since the Commonwealth was in the 'process of continuing development'.[11] The contradiction between equality in practice and subordination in theory to the British constitution irked nationalists across the Empire. The Saorstát supplemented the 'reforming zeal' of MacKenzie King, the Canadian Prime Minister, and the Afrikaaners in an effort to demonstrate dominion autonomy internationally through total self-government. In intra-Commonwealth affairs these 'revisionist' dominions advocated decentralization, external autonomy of dominions and voluntarism.[12]

By contrast, the metropole sought to maintain Commonwealth unity and solidarity. In line with its pragmatic political culture, Britain resisted codification and regularization of the practice of the emerging intra-Commonwealth relationship, favouring evolutionary, flexible and adaptable responses to change. This echoed Joseph de Maistre's maxim: 'In all political systems there are relationships which it is wiser to leave unidentified.'[13] Nonetheless, under pressure from the 'revisionist' dominions, intra-Commonwealth discussion of constitutional relations occurred in order to reconcile the discrepancy between theory and practice. The piecemeal reforms gained speed after the Imperial Conference of 1926 and climaxed with the Treaty of Westminster to the satisfaction of moderate dominion nationalists.

In sum, between 1921 and 1931 the 'revisionist' dominions (Canada, South Africa, Saorstát) had a dual problem in seeking international enhancement. Firstly, they had to devote substantial resources to intra-Commonwealth negotiations to further their status constitutionally in relation to the metropole. The Saorstát had been granted 'dominion home rule' in Article 2 of the Anglo-Irish Treaty.[14] But what it meant remained to be

defined. The British position was well put by Lionel Curtis, who played an instrumental role in the Anglo-Irish negotiations of 1921. Dominion status, according to Curtis, 'can only be described as it is today without attempting to conjecture what it may become'. Furthermore, Curtis claimed the status of a dominion 'is exactly the same as the status of the United Kingdom' in domestic affairs.[15]

But the position of Irish nationalists was somewhat different from that of other dominions with the possible exception of French-Canadians and Afrikaaners. The Irish nationalist movement had reluctantly accepted dominion status at the cost of domestic political unity. According to John M. Ward, it was 'the only conscript member of the British Commonwealth of Nations'.[16] Furthermore, the Treaty settlement had equated the position of the Saorstát explicitly with that of Canada, the 'senior dominion'. This analogy to Canada occurred at a time when the Canadians were in the process of elaborating and expanding the meaning of dominionhood, thereby adding further ambiguity to the Saorstát's precise status.[17] The Saorstát was an uncomfortable dominion. As Lowry has indicated, the Irish Government 'wished to approximate a European Christian nation rather than a dominion . . . [but] the Commonwealth dimension was inescapable for defence and economic reasons . . .'[18] It was not one of Britain's 'daughter nations'. As Curtis admitted, Ireland was 'one of the most prolific of all mothers'.[19] Such considerations led to the Saorstát's occupation of an anomalous position in the British Commonwealth. It had an old European nation claim, but it was also the 'oldest overseas possession' of the British Crown.[20] Unlike the non-European dominions, geographical propinquity meant that the Saorstát intruded in British policy towards the continent in the inter-war period.

The ambivalences, complexities and evasions of the 'becoming' Commonwealth created a problem for the dominions, in particular the Saorstát. At an extra-Commonwealth level, they had to present their evolving — though still imperfect — incremental gains in the foreign policy sphere to the international community at large, both at a bilateral and a multilateral level (the League of Nations). The Saorstát energetically pursued this proactive form of diplomatic propaganda. In particular, the Cumann na nGaedheal government attempted to demonstrate to a disgruntled anti-Treaty domestic opposition that acceptance of

the Anglo-Irish Treaty as a 'stepping stone' to full independence worked.[21]

This whole problematical process of gaining a greater international and diplomatic profile through painful negotiation within the Commonwealth, and subsequently demonstrating it domestically and internationally, was enormously taxing for the small and inexperienced diplomatic services of the dominions. Therefore, the Anglo-Irish relationship had ripple effects on the 'wider imperial sphere',[22] and on extra-Commonwealth relations. Irish–German relations were part of a larger interactive modality of relationships that required considerable powers of explication at the diplomatic level.

The opening of the Irish legation in Berlin was part of such groundmaking moves by the Irish Department of External Affairs in an initial phase of self-advertising statehood. It aimed at illustrating and entrenching Irish diplomatic autonomy. Irish–German diplomatic reciprocity was one more step in Ireland's evolving self-government after the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty. A full German legation in Dublin symbolized German acceptance of Irish autonomy and co-equality within the British Commonwealth of Nations in accordance with the 1926 Balfour Declaration.[23] Thus Berlin was one of the first test areas for a new assertive international policy designed to demonstrate the Irish ability to operate an independent international profile. It is within this constrained, but evolving and nuanced, Commonwealth situation that the establishment of the Berlin legation and bilateral relations with the Weimar Republic must be placed.

The objective of this analysis, therefore, is to trace the negotiations concerning the opening and subsequent functioning of the Irish legation in Berlin. The Saorstát only gained formal recognition from the Weimar Republic in 1929. Previously, during the Anglo-Irish War and the Irish Civil War, the Irish nationalist movement operated an unofficial mission in Berlin which endeavoured to persuade Weimar to extend official recognition to the Irish secessionists. The mission imploded when the fraternal strife of the Irish Civil War infected the personnel there. It was exacerbated by the instability of the early Weimar regime. But the experience demonstrated that the main difficulty inherent in the Irish position after the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty was explicating Commonwealth membership to the Germans in a way that was advantageous to the Saorstát. When the Saorstát

eventually gained the right to formally develop bilateral relations with Weimar, it remained difficult to explain the new state's Commonwealth role to the Germans and other third parties. The Saorstát's status raised a number of intriguing questions for the Germans: what did Dominion Home Rule mean? What was the Saorstát's exact relationship with the Commonwealth and Britain? Could the Saorstát influence British foreign policy by virtue of its Commonwealth membership?

In this light, the entire tenure of the first Irish Minister Plenipotentiary in Berlin, Professor Daniel A. Binchy, merits treatment. This provides insights into how one of the allegedly 'happiest'[24] and most trusted earliest Irish diplomatic appointments explicated and operated the anomalies and ambivalences of this early phase of Irish foreign policy. Attention will be paid to Binchy's relationship with Wilhelmstrasse (German Foreign Office) and the British Embassy. The local foreign ministry is the main point of contact that a minister has with his host country,[25] the welcome and treatment that he receives from it are very important in the diplomat's mind since they reflect the level of respect with which the host nation regards his home country. The Irish Minister's initially delayed welcome in Berlin and the failure of Wilhelmstrasse to extend automatic reciprocity, by upgrading its consulate in Dublin into a legation, proved to be a severe test. In light of the domestic crisis in Weimar, Irish–German relations were of minor importance for the Germans. To German eyes the Saorstát was a small distant country peripheral to German interests, and one which could prove to be a destabilizing factor in the pre-eminent Anglo-German relationship. The British Embassy also appeared uncomfortable with the encroachment of Irish diplomacy in Berlin. These triangular considerations added to Binchy's difficulty in explaining the rich and evolving implications of Irish membership of the Commonwealth to his hosts.

Binchy's presence in Berlin exposed him to the final phase of the Weimar Republic. It was the transitional period of the ill-fated Weimar democracy that saw the crumbling of fragile coalition governments in the aftermath of the Wall Street Crash. Therefore, Binchy had first-hand experience of the Weimar imbroglio and was a key source of information for Dublin.

Unofficial Mission, 1920–2

Though Germany was not a primary Irish diplomatic objective, it nevertheless attracted attention.[26] Several German universities established celtic studies and partook in the Irish cultural revival at the end of the nineteenth century.[27] Since German academics led the field of philology and linguistics, they also pioneered research into the Irish language. The interest of these 'leading German scholars' in the Gaelic language and culture nurtured close contact with Irish nationalism.[28] These cultural exchanges created an intimate community of Irish and German linguists which indirectly fostered political and economic cooperation.

Anglo-German antagonism after the 1890s and the formation of the two rival alliance systems (Germany's Central Powers and the Anglo–French–Russian Triple Entente) led Irish revolutionaries to seek German aid. Irish Republicans now sought aid from the German kaiser rather than from French Republicanism.[29] Cooperation between the Second Reich and Irish nationalist revolutionaries climaxed with Roger Casement's fatal double failure to establish an Irish Brigade in Germany during the First World War and land German armaments for the Easter Rising 1916. In 1919 the Anglo-Irish War began in earnest. With Germany's defeat in the First World War, Irish agents concluded that Germany was sympathetic to the Irish cause. George Gavan Duffy, the roving envoy of the Irish independence movement, considered the German attitude to Britain complemented Ireland's. As he optimistically reported:

> they . . . do not trust Albion one inch . . . There is profound distrust of England and ill-concealed anxiety to punish her in all circles . . . I have come back with the conviction that the Germans, who consider the war was lost through bad leadership only, are counting the days till they can start afresh and make no mistake this time.[30]

In January 1921 Eamon de Valera, President of the Dáil, asserted control over the external relations of the Dáil intending to organize Irish foreign affairs effectively for the first time and improve Ireland's international status.[31] Influenced by Duffy's analysis, in March 1921 he decided to open a propaganda bureau in Berlin, 'camouflaged perhaps under a trade title'.[32] Relying on the foundation built up by the pre-existing German–Irish Society in Berlin, an unofficial Irish delegation was established. By early

1922 a sizeable Irish representation was present but it encountered an adverse operational environment. The Weimar Republic refused to extend diplomatic recognition to the Irish Delegation during the Irish War of Independence. Throughout 1921 the infant Weimar Republic deferred to Britain, following Germany's military defeat in the First World War, in order to defend against the French desire for vengeance.[33] The German people were demoralized by defeat, domestic political turmoil and economic hardship. They were unwilling to provoke 'the late enemy' by such an independent move as recognizing the Irish claims for independence. Such compliance with English sensitivities frustrated Irish Republicanism. John Chartres, head of the political/publicity bureau in Berlin, remarked: 'the Germans have always had that form of snobbery which admires foreign ways . . . There is a sort of feeling that what is English is best.'[34] To maintain Britain's favour, Wilhelmstrasse was unwilling to recognize the Irish mission. Chartres adopted a low profile. He reported:

> [T]o announce oneself openly as the envoy of the Irish Government would lead to private protests from the English . . . it seems anomalous that in the allied capitals the Irish envoys should be able to announce themselves without restraint while in an enemy capital the envoy should be obliged to remain almost incognito.[35]

His situation was epitomized by the grant of only a temporary visa to reside in Berlin.[36] In the event of a British protest, Wilhelmstrasse would simply not renew his visa.[37]

At the outset, the Anglo-Irish Truce done on 11 July 1921, promised an improvement in Irish–German relations. The subsequent Anglo-Irish negotiations were greeted by 'genuine admiration' in Germany.[38] The Berlin mission reported: 'In private conversation one constantly hears it said, "Germany had much to learn from Ireland." '[39] Nonetheless, the Berlin mission remained undercover pending the outcome of the Anglo-Irish negotiations. Chartres summed the situation up thus: 'Their one aim . . . through sheer fear of the consequences of a more independent attitude, is to stand as well with the English as possible.'[40] The British protest eventually materialized in October and November 1921. By this stage Chartres was recalled from Berlin temporarily and appointed as second secretary to the Irish plenipotentiaries sent to London to negotiate with David Lloyd George.[41]

Simultaneously, IRA gunrunning threatened the Berlin mis-

sion and the future of the Anglo-Irish negotiations. A group of IRA covert operatives, namely John T. Ryan, Robert Briscoe, Seán MacBride and Charles McGuinness, were active throughout the entire period of Chartres' posting in Berlin.[42] Robert Briscoe was gunrunning on the orders of Michael Collins, the leader of the IRA. The IRA gunrunning trawler, the *Anita*, and its cargo of arms were discovered and impounded in Hamburg and its crew arrested on 6 October 1921.[43] The news of Irish gunrunning in Berlin coincided with the British discovery of another IRA gunrunning plot in Cardiff. These escapades produced a 'very uncomfortable meeting for the Irish' with Lloyd George during the Anglo-Irish negotiations in October.[44] British pressure on Wilhelmstrasse during the Hamburg crisis threatened the existence of the Berlin press bureau.[45]

Meanwhile, German newspapers demanded an explanation for the Weimar government's contacts with London during the Hamburg gunrunning affair. They reported Lloyd George 'as saying that "he had been warned by the German Government of impending importation of arms into Ireland"'. Weimar initially issued a 'semi-official denial' that it had 'officially communicated the occurrence to the English Government, official circles here have no idea of the manner in which the English Government was notified of the matter'. Press unhappiness with this 'weak denial' eventually led to an official statement in the Reichstag to the effect that the government had sent 'no communication of the kind suggested . . .'[46]

German assistance was forthcoming in the subsequent Hamburg gunrunning trial. Under the Treaty of Versailles the arms had to be destroyed, but 'sympathetic authorities' saw to it that they were not. Instead, they arrived at the back door of Briscoe's warehouse. 'Those Germans did not like the British at all.'[47] Briscoe says of his *aide-de-camp*, Major Hassenhauer, that '[s]o great was his hatred of England, that I felt safe in confiding to him in detail the purpose of my mission. He was more than willing to help.'[48] Therefore, the hostility of demobbed German army officers was invaluable in the IRA's search for arms during the Anglo-Irish War. However, the feeling was 'even bitterer against France' as a result of France's aggressive interpretation of the Versailles Treaty, and this guided Weimar's overriding foreign policy of Anglo-German friendship.[49]

Despite Weimar *realpolitik*, successive German governments

tolerated the activities of the unrecognized Irish representatives on condition that they avoided provoking Britain. Privately many Germans were 'sympathetic' to the Irish cause.[50] The German press expressed 'general friendliness' towards Ireland on the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty (6 December 1921).[51] Weimar welcomed it on the basis of self-interest. Germany surveyed the Treaty and the subsequent Irish Civil War from a continentalist power-political perspective. It considered that the Treaty released Britain from its Irish distractions to combat 'French designs' on Germany more effectively.[52]

Unpredictable domestic and international circumstances, complicated by the difficulty of interpreting the Saorstát's new dominion status, led to Weimar's continuance of a circumspect policy towards the Irish mission. As late as June 1922 Charles Bewley, the Irish trade representative, warned that 'the German Government will not and could not afford to take even the slightest step which might risk offending English susceptibilities'.[53] Dr Knecht, the editor of *Germania*, a Centre Party paper, revealed 'he was full of sympathy with the Irish nation and would do all he could to promote its interests', but 'the exigencies of the German situation precluded him from ever printing anything which might look like an attack upon Mr. Lloyd George'. Consequently, even 'friendly' papers would only print 'sympathetic *historical* articles . . . while observing an attitude not precisely cordial . . . on the current questions . . .'[54] In the unlikely case that Weimar 'informally recognized' the Irish mission, Bewley argued that it would first seek 'some sort of *modus vivendi'* with the British Ambassador.[55]

Though the Irish presence in Berlin grew after the Anglo-Irish Treaty, the Irish delegation remained unrecognized and dedicated to basic publicity functions, while the trade representative was simply a travelling salesman. Hence, the Treaty failed to advance Irish–German diplomatic relations and the mission continued to live 'in a sort of semi-transparent incognito'.[56] The attitude of the Weimar regime was symbolized by its reluctance to appoint a German consul to Cork in mid-1922.[57] The German authorities wanted a guarantee that the appointment would not create difficulties in their relationship with England.[58] In sum, Wilhelmstrasse was dedicated to its 'policy of conciliation towards England'.[59]

Disintegration, 1922–4

Opinions polarized in Ireland during the first half of 1922, leading to the Treaty split and the Irish Civil War. This undermined the cohesiveness of the embryonic Irish Foreign Service. The representatives in Berlin were now officers of the provisional government. George Gavan Duffy, Minister for External Affairs, believed the Treaty granted too many concessions to England but he refused to join the emerging anti-Treaty party.[60] Consequently, his subordinate Chartres was left without clear instructions about how to present the emerging Irish divisions to the German public. Ernest Blythe, an avowed pro-Treatyite by comparison, closely supervised Bewley. Bewley also was a decided 'Free Stater': the Treaty made available 'wide powers of self-government' to the Saorstát in his estimation.[61] He presumed that 'it was far better than we could have hoped to obtain at the beginning of the struggle, and there was nothing which we could not alter, once the executive power was in our hands'.[62]

Bewley complained that no steps had been taken to present the provisional government's views to the German public.[63] He alleged that the *Irish Bulletin*s[64] of 8 and 10 July contravened Blythe's instructions whereby the Irish unrest should be presented as a rebellion by a disloyal anti-Treatyite minority against the legitimate pro-Treatyite government.[65] Bewley suggested that the *Irish Bulletin* took a neutral, perhaps hostile, attitude towards the government.[66] Thereupon, Chartres was chastized for extolling 'de Valera and his friends at the moment when they are wrecking the country'.[67] Simultaneously, Dublin ordered the *Bulletin* to halt production in the months of August and September.[68] Both Chartres and his personal assistant, Nancy Power, were recalled to Dublin for an investigation into the alleged anti-Treatyite misdemeanours of their political mission.[69] In late September 1922, Chartres was transferred to the Department of Trade and Commerce.[70] Then in October 1922, Power was formally transferred to the home service.[71]

All commercial agents were brought under the authority of External Affairs.[72] Bewley continued his commercial work. The political arm of the Irish mission was closed. The matter of passports and visas was largely taken over by the British consul in Berlin, and visas were granted in consultation with the British authorities.[73] Bewley became frustrated by what he conceived as

undue Irish deference to Britain,[74] and Josef Marks's visa application to enter Ireland on commercial business highlighted Bewley's growing disenchantment.

Josef Marks, a German civil engineer,[75] met Sir Roger Casement in Berlin at the outbreak of the First World War. He was the personal friend of Lieutenant Spindler, who later organized the gunrunning operation for Casement.[76] While interned in Maidstone for espionage he met Irish Republican internees who had participated in the Easter Rising of 1916. He joined their 'Mutiny' in Maidstone, earning a transfer to Dartmoor[77] to serve his full sentence. After his release in 1920 he continued close correspondence with de Valera and Dr Richard Hayes (who later became Director of the Irish National Library). Finding himself penniless on his return to Berlin he developed a German–Irish import–export business. Through the good offices of Hayes,[78] he made the acquaintance of Bewley.[79] When Marks applied for a visa to enter the Saorstát in 1923 the Department of Home Affairs could not grant the necessary permission 'in view of the established fact that he was employed in the German S.S. [Secret Service] in England'. Bewley fulminated at the decision on the grounds that if Marks acted at all, it had been 'in the interests of our "gallant allies on the continent of Europe" in 1916'. He believed '[t]hat the Government of the Irish Free State feels itself under an obligation, whether from motives of principle or expediency, to consider English susceptibilities in deciding such questions as the admission of a foreigner to Ireland'.[80] External Affairs' response was that Bewley had supplied insufficient information about Marks. They still did not know the exact nature of Marks's business connections in Ireland. Moreover, even with government 'goodwill', Marks could not land in Ireland without a British passport.[81] Bewley was irritated and resigned in February 1923.[82]

Conor Duane succeeded Bewley as trade representative.[83] However, circumstances were inimical to the development of Irish–German trade. The 'disturbed state in Ireland' during the Civil War deterred German businessmen. Only a return to 'peace and quiet' in Ireland would improve trade. Furthermore, an explication of the new status of the Saorstát and Irish identity was necessary. Duane believed more attention should be paid to positive propaganda highlighting the distinctiveness of Irish identity. The Germans perceived the Irish to be a derivation of the English

race.[84] A further obstacle to normal Irish–German trade relations was the commercially unfavourable German political and economic environment. Duane, as a trade representative, had the misfortune to operate in an inflationary unstable German economy.

The impoverished state of the German economy and German restrictions on imports severely limited the opportunity for Irish exporters.[85] Weimar experienced 'catastrophic' hyperinflation during 1922 and 1923 as a result of the Republic's 'cheap money policy'. Weimar governments used the hyperinflation as an argument for the reduction of reparations.[86] Duane felt that '[on] the political side we would have very little to gain at present in Germany as the country is politically sick at heart'.[87] Just as the Saorstát was 'turning the corner', in Duane's parlance, by defeating the anti-Treatyites, Weimar sank to new depths during the Ruhr Crisis of 1923 when France occupied the zone. The German response was a 'general strike' and 'passive resistance', which completely devalued the German mark and led to hyperinflation.[88] Duane's salary was worthless. By November 1923, he faced 'financial embarrassment' and hunger loomed.[89] Weimar was under serious threat from political extremists. In November, Hitler attempted the takeover of Bavaria and launched a 'national revolution' with his ill-fated Beer Hall Putsch. The political instability at the heart of Weimar parliamentary politics showed no sign of abating. After repeated difficulties, the Irish mission was terminated. Duane ended his appointment to Berlin, reporting pessimistically, '[t]he political structure of Germany has been shattered and the economy has been in agony since 1918'.[90]

Resurrection

Formal diplomatic relations with European countries were neglected in the mid-1920s, because under the Treaty the external representation role of the dominions was ascribed to the metropolitan power. The Irish Foreign Service had only a consular role. Redefining its Commonwealth and dominion status became the central preoccupation of the Saorstát, but it also evolved a distinctive, though initially limited, role in international bodies. Thus its inadequate resources and personnel

were dedicated to multilateral relations within the Commonwealth and League of Nations, and the bilateral Anglo-Irish relationship. Cumann na nGaedheal's[91] policy after 1922 was one of a constructive reinterpretation of Commonwealth ties in terms congenial to Irish nationalism and in accordance with Irish interests and aspirations.[92] The 1926 Imperial Conference declared that dominions were autonomous actors within the British Empire. They were 'equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic and external affairs' (the Balfour Declaration).[93] This landmark decision gave the dominions an opportunity to extend and upgrade their representation internationally. With the appointment of Professor T.A. Smiddy to Washington, DC in 1927, the Saorstát was the first dominion to accredit a Minister Plenipotentiary abroad.[94] After October 1927 a capable Irish External Minister, Patrick McGilligan, aided by the ambitious secretary, Joseph Walshe, enacted a challenging diplomatic programme. As an intrinsic element of this, the Irish Executive Council authorized the establishment of a legation at Berlin on 31 July 1928.[95] Weimar consented to the Irish proposal to open diplomatic relations on 22 November 1928.[96] By 1930, less than ten years after Irish independence, the Saorstát had founded a complex web of bilateral and multilateral relations ensuring that that it was represented in the USA, the main European countries and the League of Nations.

External Affairs and the Cumann na nGaedheal were impelled to undertake this diplomatic expansionism as an illustration of diplomatic independence from Britain for both domestic and international consumption. This projection of Irish sovereignty abroad reinforced Irishness at home. Irish membership of the Commonwealth was both an opportunity and a hindrance. On the one hand, the global dimensions of the British Commonwealth offered continuity and a world stage that other small new European states, particularly in Eastern and Central Europe, lacked. Conversely, this was not a welcome opportunity, in that Commonwealth membership was an anathema in Irish Republicanism, which sought the total severance of the Anglo-Irish link and a republic. As Mansergh has stated:

> She had not, like Canada or Australia, moved gradually from colonial to dominion status; on the contrary she had acquired a dominion status her leaders had never sought as a result, not of evolutionary, constitutional processes, but of revolutionary action.[97]

The rise of a democratic republican party, de Valera's Fianna Fáil, reiterated this point to the government. Moreover, on the international plane, established states such as France and Germany failed to comprehend fully the intricacies of the evolution of the British Empire into a Commonwealth and the implications therein for their relationship with dominions. Lacking a full appreciation of the complexities of the Irish position, they were more inured to British sensitivities owing to the latter's pivotal role in post-Versailles continental diplomacy.

The Irish challenge was to play to and reconcile these competing and contradictory constituencies, the domestic audience, political opposition, the British government, the Commonwealth and international opinion. Cumann na nGaedheal adopted a gradualist, pragmatic approach whereby it expanded foreign policy freedom within the limitations of the Commonwealth envelope, while maintaining valued economic and political connections with other Commonwealth members. Self-interested constructive ambiguity ensured that the Commonwealth link should be accentuated or downplayed on a case-by-case basis. This led to a dual approach. Ireland's influence in the Commonwealth was emphasized as appropriate to purchase additional leverage with continental governments that believed 'the Irish were privy to British policy considerations',[98] but normally independent Irish political and economic interests were promoted, and any use of the 'Commonwealth card' had to be masked from a largely sensitive Irish public. In sum, it was not the ideal context for a small youthful state ambivalent about its Commonwealth links that was seeking to upgrade its diplomatic links, but forced to operate within the realities of power politics.

Initially, the indicators for a fruitful understanding with Germany were positive due to the extensive multilateral, cultural and economic exchanges that had developed between the two countries since the early 1920s. Despite the lack of formal bilateral diplomatic relations in the 1920s, Irish–German contacts flourished. Cultural relations were strengthened after the Civil War and with the achievement of stability in Weimar during the 'Stresemann Era'. German scholarly interest in Gaelic culture acted as a gel between the academic communities of both states. The National University of Ireland (NUI), the Royal Irish Academy and the Saorstát government encouraged and sponsored academic exchanges. In addition, the German presence

infiltrated other areas of Irish life with the employment of many talented Germans in the service of the Saorstát. In 1923, Colonel Wilhelm Fritz Brase, the music instructor to the First Regiment of the German Grenadier Guards and the former head of the Royal School of Music in Prussia, and his assistant Captain Sauerzweig, were recruited to found the Irish Army School of Music.[99] Aloys Fleischmann spearheaded the Music Department in University College, Cork. Walter Bremen became the Director of the National Museum of Ireland. The Austrian Dr Adolf Mahr was appointed as Keeper of the Antiquities Division of the National Museum in September 1927, and later became the Director of the Museum.[100] Thus a small but significant number of Germans emigrated to the Saorstát in the 1920s, many of them marrying into Irish society.

Irish–German relations also progressed in the commercial or consular area. In April 1923 Saorstát renounced the 26 per cent reparations tax on all German imports, conveying Irish sympathy to Germany.[101] The renunciation of the tax gave German exporters an export advantage to the Saorstát in comparison to the rest of the Commonwealth. A German consulate opened in Dublin in 1923 under Dr Georg von Dehn Schmidt, the former German Consul to Liverpool. Dehn was highly regarded in government circles, and increasing Irish–German trade led to the upgrading of the consulate to a consulate general in 1925.[102] German industry benefited from both Dehn's good standing and his strong representation of Weimar. The steady improvement in maritime communication augmented trade contacts. Several German merchant companies began to operate regular services from Hamburg to Cobh and Galway.[103]

The Saorstát's industrialization efforts facilitated German–Irish trade in the mid-1920s. German expertise in electrics, chemicals, steel structures and plant machinery won contracts from government and semi-state bodies such as the Electrical Supply Board.[104] In 1925, Siemens-Schuckert was awarded the contract to build the Shannon hydroelectric plant at Ardnacrusha. Dublin Corporation and the Tramway Company of Dublin also granted German firms large contracts. As a result German imports to the Saorstát grew.[105]

Following the precedent-making Canada–United States Halibut Fisheries Treaty of 1923, the Imperial Conference of 1923 recognized the right of a dominion to negotiate and sign a trade

treaty without the involvement of Britain. This 'opened the way in a vital aspect to separate dominion control over foreign relations'.[106] The Saorstát and Weimar began negotiating a commercial treaty in 1925. The negotiations were one of a series begun with Irish trading partners in 1924 and 1925. Until then, commercial treaties concluded by Britain prior to Irish independence had regulated Irish trade relations. External Affairs advocated the negotiation and conclusion of separate bilateral commercial treaties as a reinforcement of Irish sovereignty and international status. These bilateral trade negotiations, therefore, had a distinct political dimension.[107] In anticipation of the Irish–German commercial negotiations in 1925, the Minister of External Affairs assured Weimar that the Saorstát did not intend to 'to seize the property of German nationals' as was its right under the Versailles Treaty.[108] After prolonged negotiations, the Saorstát signed a Treaty of Commerce and Navigation with Weimar on 12 May 1930.[109] This was a watershed in Irish commercial relations as it was the first such treaty negotiated successfully.[110] It was doubly significant, since Weimar was the Saorstát's second largest trading partner after Britain which remained the Saorstát's predominant trading partner in the 1920s and the 1930s, accounting for over 90 per cent of Irish foreign trade.[111]

At the international level, the Saorstát adhered to the view that, '[i]t was essential that Germany be brought into the international community'.[112] In the winter of late 1924 and early 1925, Stresemann prepared the ground for German membership of the League of Nations. Dehn canvassed the Saorstát as a possible supporter of Weimar's application.[113] Although the Saorstát was a minor state, it was an active League member and a revisionist small power in favour of equality of rights for all nations. The Irish nationalist lens perceived British jurisdiction over the Treaty ports as paralleling the allied occupation of the Rhineland. Though the Saorstát had little influence or input into the ongoing League of Nations' disarmament negotiations, its line in the assembly was broadly similar to that of Weimar. Like Weimar, it saw the Versailles system as territorially unjust and dictated by the victors of the Great War. French security concerns had resulted in the enforced disarmament of Weimar, rendering it defenceless.[114] The Versailles Treaty stated that the disarming of defeated powers was 'to render possible the conclusion of a general limitation of the armaments of all nations'.[115] Un-

fortunately, this proved impossible to implement because France wanted 'security before disarmament'.[116] With the lack of will among the victors to pursue general disarmament, Weimar felt victimized.[117] The Minister for External Affairs promised Dehn that he would lobby for an alleviation of Germany's situation.[118]

Germany applied for membership of the League in February 1926 on condition that it gained a permanent seat on the League Council in recognition of her equality as a Great Power.[119] The Irish external minister was a member of the Extraordinary Assembly's political commission which 'unanimously' recommended Weimar's admission.[120] Like Weimar,[121] the Saorstát demanded the calling of a general disarmament conference and backed the Kellogg–Briand Pact.

The general growth in Irish–German interaction attracted the indignation of Alfred Blanche, the French Consul in Dublin. Blanche felt humiliated that Weimar's upgrading of its consulate to a consulate general in 1925 pre-empted France's corresponding elevation.[122] His persistent contention was that the Germans had disproportionate influence in Irish affairs. He feared the extension of German influence in the Saorstát to the detriment of French economic and strategic interests. During this period, Irish–French trade remained static. In his more lurid outpourings to the Quai d'Orsay in Paris, Blanche held up the spectre of the Saorstát as a protectorate of a resurrected German Reich.[123] As a proponent of the anti-German mindset that afflicted inter-war French foreign policy, he interpreted any evidence of greater Irish–German intimacy as 'confirmation of the Irish government's pro-German sympathies'.[124] Blanche was concerned about the relative failure of France to influence the Saorstát. To an extent this Irish antipathy towards France was explained by the secular and anti-clerical nature of the French state, which was abhorrent to the Catholic conservatism of Cumann na nGaedheal.[125] The fundamental obstacle towards improving Irish–French relations was the application of French continental logic to the Saorstát. After 1918, France's primary foreign policy goal was to prevent the revival of the German threat. It sought Britain as an ally in this policy and 'French foreign policy towards the Saorstát in the 1920s was dominated by a prudent desire to avoid any controversy with Great Britain'.[126] A robust Commonwealth counterbalanced prospective German recovery. The Saorstát's drive as a 'revisionist' dominion to increase intra-

Commonwealth autonomy was a potential threat to the cohesion of the Commonwealth in French eyes.

By 1929, therefore, the Saorstát had developed a 'continentalist' perspective, despite the neglect of this facet in publications relating to its external relations. Franco-German antagonism on the European mainland intruded upon Anglo-Irish 'offshore' relations and the Commonwealth calculus. These were the problems that an Irish legation would have to deal with in Berlin.

Recognition

Professor Daniel A. Binchy was appointed Minister Plenipotentiary and Envoy Extraordinary at Berlin by the Irish Executive Council on 8 January 1929.[127] Binchy had extensive knowledge of Germany. Following his education at Clongowes Wood College and University College, Dublin, he studied law and history at the universities of Munich and Paris in the early 1920s. He later studied at The Hague and Geneva, concentrating on special legal studies. A professor of jurisprudence and international law in University College, Dublin from 1924 to 1928,[128] he had extensive experience of German and continental life.[129] Binchy was initially 'reluctant to go as Minister to Berlin because he did not like the Germans'. This convinced the Executive Council that Weimar was perfect for Binchy who, it was widely believed, could be counted on for 'mannerly discretion', objective reporting and diplomatic behaviour.[130]

The official welcome that Binchy received when he arrived in Berlin was ominous. Binchy thought the Wilhelmstrasse's 'attitude throughout . . . was one of complete unconcern mixed with a great deal of prevarication'.[131] Before 1928 the German consul-general to the Saorstát, Dehn, had repeatedly indicated that Weimar circles were anxious to have an Irish Minister in Berlin. However, Binchy suspected that Dehn had played External Affairs and Wilhelmstrasse off against each other to upgrade Irish–German relations and to gain promotion. When Binchy visited Berlin in July 1929, he discovered that Wilhelmstrasse was unprepared for his arrival and was anxious that he should not present his credentials immediately. He returned to Dublin temporarily, before departing for Berlin again in October 1929. Binchy's presentation of his credentials to President

Hindenburg was arranged 'only with considerable difficulty' for 26 October 1929. A perturbed Binchy noted: 'This delay, which would have been unusual in the case of an ordinary new Minister, was still more remarkable in the case of a completely new Legation, and does not fit in very well with Dehn's description.'[132]

Subsequent German tardiness to extend diplomatic reciprocity compounded Binchy's and Dublin's annoyance. Although Binchy presented his credentials in October 1929, Dehn's corresponding credentials as German minister to the Saorstát were presented nearly a year later on 2 September 1930. Binchy considered the German 'excuses' for this lapse 'incoherent' and 'even contradictory'.[133] Undoubtedly, the political and economic turmoil of Weimar inhibited the smooth upgrading of diplomatic relations. Dr Gustav Stresemann, the German Foreign Minister, died on 3 October 1929 and was hurriedly succeeded by Julius Curtius, who was unfamiliar with the portfolio. Later in October, the Wall Street Crash exacerbated the unstable and unpredictable political and economic environment of temperamental coalition and sectional politics.[134] Binchy concluded that the delays in extending diplomatic reciprocity 'may be one of the consequences of the present panic about financial reform which . . . may even lead to the fall of the present Government'.[135] To expedite the situation, he reminded Wilhelmstrasse that the French would anticipate them and establish a legation at Dublin first.[136] However, Binchy judged that the 'acute political crisis in Germany' meant that there was 'little chance of much attention being paid to the matter'.[137] The financial crisis and the controversy generated by the ratification of the Young Plan was the central German preoccupation.[138]

On 27 March 1930, Chancellor Müller resigned and the Grand Coalition fell before the foreign affairs estimates could be ratified.[139] The succeeding government, Brüning's non-party administration, was a minority one.[140] As an interim measure, Dehn was appointed as chargé d'affaires.[141] By 27 May 1930 a disillusioned Binchy suggested he should 'enter a very sharp protest'. The Saorstát was a low priority on Weimar's agenda, especially during this period of acute domestic crisis. Binchy admitted that he had fallen

> into the error of overestimating German interest in us . . . Apparently the Foreign Office thinks that it has salved its conscience by appointing a Chargé d'Affaires ad interim and that the question of a full Legation can be conveniently shelved until more important matters have been dealt with.[142]

Eventually, the repeated failure of elections to generate workable government coalitions led President Hindenburg to dissolve the Reichstag, allowing Brüning to govern with the support of presidential decrees.[143] In July 1930, a Presidential decree sanctioned the long awaited upgrade of the Dublin consulate-general.[144] Thus, the German legation in Dublin had the dubious honour of being established by one of the first acts of Weimar 'presidential government'. It was part of the general process undermining democracy in Germany and easing the path to dictatorship.

Gaining accreditation and reciprocity were not the only impediments to the establishment of formal relations: the choice of a German minister created difficulties. External Affairs, satisfied with Dehn's performance both as consul-general (1924–30) and chargé d'affaires (1930), assumed he would be automatically promoted to Minister Plenipotentiary.[145] This was not the ideal of the Catholic Centre Party (*Zentrum*), which 'energetically pushed' Baron von Ow-Wachendorf, the Wilhelmstrasse official responsible for Irish–German matters.[146] The baron was appointed to the post without consulting the Irish authorities and even received a briefing from the chancellor.[147] Unaware of this, Binchy made 'strong representations' on Dehn's behalf.[148] Binchy preferred Ow-Wachendorf to Dehn on a personal level,[149] but the Baron had anglophile inclinations.[150] Binchy suggested: 'To him the Dublin Legation might only seem the sure stepping stone to the London Embassy.'[151] Moreover, Ow-Wachendorf was closely associated with the *Zentrum*,[152] while Dehn was a proven and balanced career diplomat well acquainted with the Irish situation. On instructions from Dublin, Binchy intervened and secured Dehn's appointment. But this had negative repercussions. First, it damaged Binchy's relations with what should have been the most cooperative German political party from the Irish viewpoint, the *Zentrum*. Second, a disgruntled Baron Ow-Wachendorf remained Binchy's main contact in the Wilhelmstrasse. Attempting to repair this vital working relationship, Binchy invited Ow-Wachendorf to dinner at the legation to discuss the matter, and indicated that he would not have intervened if the baron's appointment to the post had been publicized. Binchy's approach soon led to improved relations with Ow-Wachendorf.[153] However, Binchy remained troubled about 'the general attitude' of the Wilhelmstrasse officials towards Ireland.[154]

Explaining the Commonwealth

Although the legation's relations with the Wilhelmstrasse officials were 'of the happiest', Binchy was agitated by their attempts to 'ignore' Irish membership of the Commonwealth and by their treatment of the Saorstát as 'a small completely isolated state':

> [T]he Foreign Office is not really interested in us any more than it is in any small unimportant state situated a considerable distance from its frontiers. It thinks of us in precisely the same terms as it thinks, say, of Bulgaria or a small Central American Republic. It is concerned to maintain the most friendly relations possible with us, but it apparently has no appreciation whatever of our importance as a member of the British Commonwealth.

Ironically, 'the whole policy of the Foreign Office seems to be to treat us as if we were a republic in name as well as in fact'.[155] Overall, this suited Irish foreign policy. It reaffirmed Irish sovereignty and meshed with Binchy's wider efforts to publicize Irish independence within the Commonwealth. On the other hand, Binchy considered that it underplayed the Saorstát's larger significance as a player in the British Commonwealth.

Diplomats of 'small and more distant powers' led an 'exotic existence' of unceasing entertainment. The concomitant danger, according to Binchy, was that 'the smaller and more unimportant the country which a particular Minister represents the more conscious he is of his great dignity and the more sensitive about its acknowledgement'.[156] To avoid this danger of diplomatic pomposity, he sought not to allow Irish powerlessness relative to the Great Powers to stifle his initiative.[157] He built up a useful network of contacts in the highest political and diplomatic circles in Berlin.[158] Although he was successful in this wider sphere, Binchy's primary objective was 'to bring light unto the Germans'.[159] He was in frequent contact with the successive *Staatssekretars* of the Foreign Office (von Schubert and von Bülow) and the chief of the section dealing with the British Commonwealth (Herr de Haas).[160] He also had close contact with the Chancellor, Heinrich von Brüning, his vice-chancellor,[161] and the former Socialist Chancellor Hermann Müller.[162] Binchy's academic credentials were catalysts in achieving widespread 'clubability' in the six months following his accreditation. He communicated easily with fellow intellectuals such as Brüning.[163]

Binchy realized that the German upper classes indulged in 'a cult of English ways and English fashions which amounts almost

to a religion', and that this made his job of representing Ireland in élite circles difficult. Englishmen set the standards of 'good breeding and smartness'. Berlin's socialites believed that Ireland was the 'next best thing' to Britain, mainly for its imitative qualities.[164] However, Berlin society was not a typical cross-section of the German people. Public opinion was crucial. The general German attitude towards Ireland was, according to Binchy, one of 'uninformed sympathy' and '[t]he average German, while sharing to a certain extent the respect of his "betters" for England, is exceedingly friendly to Ireland, though he knows little or nothing about us'.[165]

Binchy therefore opted for 'a steady campaign of publicity'.[166] He maximized the exposure that his appointment received and used the occasion to emphasize the status of the dominions, ensuring all interviews were published and 'widely circulated'.[167] Once initial mass media interest waned, he wrote articles for German newspapers, magazines and journals, as well as delivering numerous lectures to important societies and clubs. These included the American Chamber of Commerce, the League of Nations Society of the University of Berlin, the Society for the Study of Foreign Affairs (*Aussenpolitisches Kommittee*), the *Deutsche Herrenclub* and the *Juristische Gesellschaft*.[168] He concentrated on Irish political affairs, especially the state's 'constitutional and international status'.[169] For example, at the League of Nations Society of the University of Berlin he spoke about the 'Dominions in the League of Nations', focusing on dominion status. He demonstrated the degree of independence that Ireland possessed as a dominion within the British Commonwealth of Nations, attempting to destroy any false notions held by Germany that Ireland was a British colony or a British province.[170] This work was appreciated by his superiors.[171]

In the *Berliner Tageblatt* of 9 February 1930, Binchy emphasized that each dominion had a separate diplomatic service, and that it was free and co-equal to Britain. The dominions legislated and governed themselves. A theoretical question of 'subordination' did not even arise.[172] The *Berliner Tageblatt*, 'perhaps the most widely read newspaper' in Berlin,[173] drew the conclusions that the Crown was the 'only legal bond' between the dominions and Britain, and that its power was severely curtailed. Its value was symbolic as,

> the king has in each Dominion a separate Government, and in all questions concerning a Dominion, he has to be advised by the Government of the Dominion concerned and act upon its advice, both in domestic and external politics.[174]

He hoped that such publicity about dominion status emphasized Irish autonomy, and hence the legitimacy of a separate diplomatic service.[175]

The minister for external affairs was 'exceedingly gratified' with the success of Binchy's publicity campaign.[176] Patrick McGilligan congratulated Binchy on the execution of the primary part of his task: 'that of securing the goodwill and esteem of the German people for the Saorstát'. The cabinet was in 'the fullest agreement with the line of policy you have followed concerning our position in the Commonwealth'. The general attitude of the German press since Binchy's arrival was 'most hopeful'.[177]

It was valuable that the German public was fully aware of Ireland's independent position. But Irish membership of the Commonwealth should have meant that Wilhelmstrasse would pay more attention to Ireland than to other isolated, small and distant nation states. Brüning's intense questioning of Binchy regarding the position of the dominions within the Commonwealth in February 1931 corroborated Binchy's belief that Ireland could rate far higher in German foreign policy priorities. The chancellor 'was chiefly anxious to know whether we were in a position to influence the policy of the British Commonwealth as a whole and of Great Britain in particular towards Germany'.[178] If Ireland was to influence Weimar, Binchy surmised that it must convince Wilhelmstrasse that it exercised an influential role in the Commonwealth.[179] The British Embassy was the one major obstacle to utilizing the Saorstát's membership of the Commonwealth to greater effect in Berlin.

The British Embassy

Binchy's interpretation of the role of the British Embassy in Berlin offered an interesting commentary on Irish suspicions about the actions and role of the former imperial power, and the difficulties that a small emerging state encountered in projecting an autonomous foreign policy as part of the loose multinational Commonwealth association. In the Irish minister's view,

Wilhelmstrasse and the British Embassy treated the legation similarly. Undoubtedly, considering the position of power that the Embassy maintained in German politics, and the Anglophile character of Wilhelmstrasse, Britain had the means to influence Weimar's attitude towards the Saorstát. According to Binchy, British practice contravened the spirit of the 1926 Agreement and the subsequent Westminster Agreement (1931). Contrary to the Commonwealth decision that consultation should occur on 'matters of common concern' between local British embassies and dominion legations, the British Embassy in Berlin interpreted the terms of reference 'in the most restrictive sense possible'.[180] No consultation ever occurred, and Binchy conjectured:

> Now that an Irish Legation has come to stay in Berlin, the only thing to be done from the 'Imperial' point of view is to circumscribe and localize its activities as much as possible, and to secure that, while dealing with all questions exclusively connected with Germany and Ireland, it should be carefully kept out of discussions of all important general matters which, as hitherto, should be settled between the Foreign Office and H.M. Embassy.[181]

He continued:

> The idea of this policy of isolation is, of course, to convey the impression that the Irish Legation is only competent to deal with exclusively Irish matters, and that matters involving the Commonwealth as a whole are still the inviolable preserve of the British Embassy.[182]

The Embassy's members were 'personally agreeable and easy to work with'.[183] For example, the press secretary, Tim Breen, assisted Binchy in his search for 'suitable Legation premises' in 1929. Nonetheless, the Embassy maintained almost 'complete political detachment' from the legation.[184] According to Binchy, '[t]he rule seems to be that all political matters are tabu in conversation unless I introduce them, and then they are to be treated with polite reserve'.[185] Nevertheless, he persevered in cultivating 'good relations' with the Embassy. He attended many functions there, and invited its members to legation functions.[186] Binchy informed the Embassy in advance of all the public lectures that he delivered on the subject of the Commonwealth. The Embassy sometimes failed to reciprocate when they delivered their own lectures on the Commonwealth, even though the Irish minister found these to be largely inoffensive in content.[187]

In May 1930 Leopold Amery, Dominions Secretary, addressed the Pan-European conference on the topic of Pan-Europe and

the British Empire. Binchy attended and was 'very favourably impressed' by Amery's thesis that a Pan-European organization should model itself on the Commonwealth, not on the US federation. Binchy stated: 'there was practically nothing in his description which I could not have said myself in a lecture here'.[188] Nevertheless, when Binchy rang the Embassy prior to Amery's lecture, he was informed that the Embassy did not know whether the dominion secretary had arrived. Yet, Ambassador Sir Horace Rumbold later told Binchy that Amery had lunched at the Embassy earlier.[189] In February 1931, Binchy was not invited to a widely attended lecture entitled 'An Apology for the British Empire' by Duff Cooper, a young conservative. Binchy felt that the 'omission was deliberate'. Leo T. MacCauley, the Irish legation secretary, was in constant contact with the Embassy about other matters, and he had not been informed.[190] The Embassy might have been afraid of Irish sensitivities. Although inoffensive on the whole, Amery's lecture failed to mention Ireland and assumed that all dominions were distant from, and uninterested in, European affairs.

Though Binchy found most of the Embassy staff 'personally agreeable and easy to work with', the ambassador initially proved problematical. Rumbold ignored Binchy at social functions, behaviour which Binchy was unable to explain. Perhaps it was personal, or 'a certain sense of awkwardness in regard to me, as a strange and uncomfortable phenomenon for the treatment of which no diplomatic precedents existed'.[191] Binchy was concerned that Rumbold's rather cool relationship with him could have deleterious consequences if 'other members of the Diplomatic Corps might notice it'. As he wrote: 'Rumbold's personal feelings towards me, as long as they did not effect good relations with the Embassy in general, were of course a matter of complete indifference to me.'[192] He invited the ambassador and his staff to a dinner party at the legation on 11 March 1930, to return the hospitality they had extended to the legation, in particular Tim Breen. After Rumbold dined at the legation his attitude changed and Binchy welcomed this 'for the sake of appearance'.[193] Irish and British diplomats were slowly adapting to the evolving Commonwealth intricacies.

In June 1930, Binchy believed he had found a public means to assert Irish membership and co-equality within the Commonwealth. He sought, and received, permission to flag the legation

for the king's birthday (3 June 1930), hoping to emphasize Ireland's Commonwealth significance with both the Embassy and his poorly-informed German hosts in an ostentatious display of tactical royalism.[194] As he wrote:

> I am inclined to think that it would be a useful purpose, in opening people's eyes to the real nature of the Commonwealth and the separate personality of the crown in each State. I should say that the only people likely to be shocked here by our flagging would be the members of the British Embassy, who, as I describe in my detailed reports are most anxious to keep the King entirely and exclusively for themselves.[195]

Though flagging the Irish legation was designed to prove a diplomatic point to the Germans and the British Embassy, Binchy overlooked the potential embarrassment that it could cause to the Cumann na nGaedheal government, which had to face down the Fianna Fáil opposition. The legation gained acceptance from the Embassy, but amicable tensions were clearly in existence between the two. One final instance of this occurred during Binchy's attendance at an embassy dinner for Prime Minister MacDonald and Henderson on 28 July 1931. He again noted the Embassy's 'lack of appreciation of the nature of the British Commonwealth'. Binchy sarcastically reported MacDonald's belittling humour:

> The Prime Minister was pleased to be humorous: he asked me if I was returning home for the Horse Show and on my replying that I had no leave to spare, suggested laughingly that I should ask leave from him and thereby precipitate a constitutional crisis![196]

Conclusion

The establishment of the Saorstát's separate diplomatic identity was inseparable from changes in the Empire–Commonwealth. As Donal Lowry has indicated, a simplistic linear perspective in much of the recent historiography lionizes an 'intrepid', talented Irish administration and diplomatic corps which is held to have single-handedly established Irish sovereignty on the international plane.[197] While the commitment of the Irish personnel in the first decade of the state is largely indisputable, an interpretive error arises in not viewing the Irish foreign posture holistically. The narrow linear approach tends to disregard the commonality of

interests that existed with other 'revisionist', but moderate, dominions. It also largely disregards the significance of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in the transformation of Commonwealth. Just as Ireland affected, and was affected by, the British Empire prior to independence,[198] it continued to do so subsequently, particularly in the 1920s. Therefore, Irish non-Commonwealth relations cannot be detached from the Commonwealth consideration.

In the post-independence decade the situation in which the Saorstát found itself, as a member of a changing Empire–Commonwealth, deprived its status of both certainty and clarity and complicated its international profile. The tendency in the existing literature is to focus on one aspect of Irish foreign relations, either a bilateral relationship or the Irish position in the League of Nations. This article argues that these were not discrete spheres of action. Ireland made its first breakthrough in the League because of backing from the Commonwealth. Ireland was prepared to utilize its Commonwealth membership, if necessary, in bilateral relationships to increase its influence on its bilateral partners. As Binchy discovered, its bilateral non-Commonwealth partners viewed the Irish as significant by virtue only of their relationship to the British or of their membership of the British Empire–Commonwealth.[199] Any increase in Irish influence which emphasized its Commonwealth membership implied a moderation of British influence in foreign capitals, which the British senior diplomatic corps were understandably loathe to relinquish. The Irish position in European capitals such as Berlin was further undermined by the weak or absent presence of its sister dominions in these cities, owing to their largely extra-European interests. Ireland was thus a lone dominion overshadowed by the power, prestige and reputation of its former ruler. Commonwealth membership did not translate into significant influence in European capitals because of the reality of Ireland's small power status and the traditional primary role of Britain in the European 'balance of power'.

In actuality, the Irish position on the Commonwealth was not clear cut — it had to work within the constraints of the evolving Commonwealth, appease domestic opposition, and deal with third-party perceptions of its unique and opaque Commonwealth status. The early Irish diplomatic service had the problem of explicating its membership of a new *sui generis* multinational experiment, that of the Commonwealth. There were no com-

parable precedents for the Irish position. Together with the other dominions it was actively creating a new model of international behaviour within the constraints of the Commonwealth. The '[c]entral role of protocol and legalism in understanding the progress of the dominions to international sovereignty',[200] complicated international perceptions of the dominions' foreign policy roles.

In a sense, the Cumann na nGaedheal Government acted like other dominions at the time and displayed a Commonwealth focus. They were determined to justify their stance during the Irish Civil War, namely that the Anglo-Irish Treaty was workable and that the embryonic Commonwealth could be adapted to suit Irish nationalist aspirations. Thus they were implicitly in favour of the Commonwealth in theory and practice and operated within the rules and conventions of that evolving entity's configuration. Their overriding objective was to transform the British Empire into a Commonwealth of Nations amenable to full Irish national independence. The career of the first Irish minister to Germany demonstrates how difficult the new diplomatic service found it to represent this delicate process of redefining Ireland's international profile. The gradual expansion of the Irish diplomatic service in Berlin, following the initial stillbirth of its consular mission in 1924, is indicative of the enhancement of the state's international role through constructive renegotiation of the Empire–Commonwealth calculus.

Following the signing of the Statute of Westminster, Patrick McGilligan, the Irish Minister for External Affairs, was thus prompted to proclaim euphorically that the British Empire was 'finally demolished'.[201] Though there was some justice in this assertion, even after a decade of discussions the newly redefined intra-Commonwealth relationship remained complex and practically unintelligible to outsiders and laypeople. This was, indeed, its greatest weakness. Cumann na nGaedheal believed that it had succeeded in its overriding objective and the British government hoped that the Irish 'bugbear' was now largely appeased. However, the Commonwealth 'experiment' was not explained satisfactorily (if at all) to the Irish electorate, substantial sections of which saw it as a humiliation. The resurgent nationalism of Eamon de Valera's Fianna Fáil governments after 1932 upset the equation. Ultimately, the faction that had lost the Irish Civil War won the peace and left their indelible imprint on the Irish state for

the succeeding two generations. A Commonwealth compromise could no longer salve the collective Irish nationalist psyche. Cumann na nGaedheal retained its Commonwealth sympathies into the Second World War, but was powerless. The first Irish minister to Berlin, Binchy, shared a similar mindset.

Binchy resigned on 23 March 1932.[202] Though he was well regarded in Berlin's diplomatic and social circles, he decided to return to his academic interests. Explanations for Binchy's resignation vary considerably. According to Dermot Keogh's exposition he was frustrated by his evident powerlessness as an envoy and was concerned that his reports on Weimar were not treated with due seriousness in Dublin.[203] Undoubtedly, Binchy's reputed Germano-scepticism, which has been recorded by John Duggan,[204] may have played a role. As for Elsasser's implicit suggestion that Binchy was a disorganized academic don unsuited to the diplomatic world, this is speculative.[205]

Instead, a hint at the most plausible primary cause for Binchy's resignation can be drawn from the timing of his resignation. He resigned just after the announcement that de Valera's Fianna Fáil party gained the most seats in the Irish general election of 16 February 1932, and was negotiating a coalition with the Labour Party to form a government on 8 March 1932.[206] Binchy left the service later that month. This is hardly coincidental, since Binchy, like many of the past pupils of the middle-class Clongowes Wood School, in County Wicklow, who were strongly identified with the Cumann na nGaedheal government and the Department of External Affairs at the time,[207] felt an antipathy towards those whom they believed had tried during the Civil War to 'wreck' the nascent Saorstát.[208] Therefore, the timing of Binchy's decision to leave the Foreign Service is instructive and was politically motivated rather than a matter of job satisfaction. The anti-Commonwealth ethos of Fianna Fáil and the consequent threatened 'revolution' in Irish foreign policy were an intrinsic part of Binchy's calculations.

Notes

1. National Archives of Ireland (hereafter NAI), Department of Foreign Affairs (hereafter DFA), DE, box 34, file 240, Duane to DFA, 19 October 1923.

2. David Harkness, 'Ireland', in Robin W. Winks, ed., *Historiography*, Vol. V, *The Oxford History of the British Empire* (Oxford 1999), 125.

3. Troy D. Davis, 'Diplomacy as Propaganda: The Appointment of T.A. Smiddy as Saorstát Minister to the United State', *Éire-Ireland*, Vol. XXXI, Nos. 3–4 (1996), 117.

4. See David Harkness, *The Restless Dominion: The Saorstát and the British Commonwealth of Nations, 1921–31* (London 1931); Nicholas Mansergh, *The Commonwealth Experience* (London 1969), 187–246; Joseph O'Grady, 'The Saorstát Passport and the Question of Citizenship, 1921–4', *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. XXVI, No. 104 (1989), 396–405.

5. Antony Clayton, ' "Deceptive Might": Imperial Defence and Security, 1900–1968', in Judith M. Brown and William Roger Louis, eds, *The Twentieth Century*, Vol. IV, *The Oxford History of the British Empire* (Oxford 1999), 281.

6. Donal Lowry, 'New Ireland, Old Empire and the Outside World, 1922–49: The Strange Evolution of a "Dictionary Republic"', in Mike Cronin and John M. Regan, eds, *Ireland: The Politics of Independence, 1922–49* (Houndmills 2000), 165.

7. Clayton, '"Deceptive Might"', 281.

8. Harkness, 'Ireland', 126.

9. Deirdre McMahon, 'Ireland and the Empire–Commonwealth, 1900–1948', in Judith M. Brown and William Roger Louis, eds, *The Twentieth Century*, Vol. IV, *The Oxford History of the British Empire* (Oxford 1999), 154.

10. Nicholas Mansergh, *Nationalism and Independence* (Cork 1997), 96.

11. Ibid., 97.

12. Nicholas Mansergh, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs: Problem of Wartime Co-operation and Post-War Change 1939–52* (London 1968), 6–9.

13. Lowry, 'New Ireland, Old Empire', 165.

14. Davis, 'Diplomacy as Propaganda', 123.

15. Quoted in McMahon, 'Ireland and the Empire–Commonwealth, 1900–1948', 152.

16. Quoted in Harkness, 'Ireland', 128.

17. Mansergh, *Nationalism and Independence*, 97; Lowry, 'New Ireland, Old Empire', 167; Davis, 'Diplomacy as Propaganda', 123.

18. Lowry, 'New Ireland, Old Empire', 181.

19. Ibid., 170.

20. Ibid., 168.

21. Davis, 'Diplomacy as Propaganda', *passim*.

22. McMahon, 'Ireland and the Empire–Commonwealth', 154.

23. Francis S.L. Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine* (London 1971), 508.

24. Dermot Keogh, *Ireland and Europe 1919–1989: A Diplomatic and Political History* (Cork/Dublin 1989), 29.

25. See Eric Clark, *Corps Diplomatiques* (London 1973).

26. See Michael Kennedy, 'Our Men in Berlin: Some Thoughts on Irish Diplomats in Germany 1929–39', *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, Vol. 10 (1999), 54.

27. For a survey of Irish–German links see Martin Elsasser, *Germany and Ireland: 1000 Years of Shared History* (Dublin 1997), especially 26–9.

28. Priscilla O'Connor, 'France and the Saorstát: Franco-Irish Diplomacy 1922–1931', (unpublished MA thesis, St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, 1991), 98–9.

29. Ibid., 40.

30. NAI, DFA, ES, box 33, file 232, George Gavan Duffy to Robert Brennan, 11 March 1921.
31. *Documents on Irish Foreign Policy*, Vol. 1 (hereafter DIFP I), 1919–1922 (Royal Irish Academy, Dublin 1999), doc. 59, 109.
32. DIFP I, doc. 64, 116.
33. NAI, DFA, ES, box 33, file 232, E.S. memo, 5 September 1921.
34. Ibid., 1.
35. NAI, DFA, ES, box 33, file 232, E.S. memo, 5 September 1921, 3.
36. Ibid.
37. NAI, DFA, ES, box 33, file 032, E.S. memo, 4 July 1921; NAI, DFA, ES, box 14, file 96, Robert Brennan to de Valera, No. 121, 25 July 1921.
38. NAI, DFA, ES, box 33, file 232, Chartres to Brennan, 5 September 1921, 2.
39. NAI, DFA, ES, box 14, file 96(11), USFA to President, 28 September 1921.
40. Ibid.
41. Brian Murphy, *John Chartres: Mystery Man of the Treaty* (Dublin 1995), 51.
42. Ibid., pp. 48–9. NAI, DFA, ES, box 23, file 140, memorandum, 6 March 1922 throws some light on the shady underworld of arms trading and the setting up of entrapment operations by the British Embassy in Berlin.
43. Robert Briscoe (with Alden Hatch), *For the Life of Me* (Boston and Toronto, 1958), 99.
44. Tim P. Coogan, *De Valera: Long Fellow, Long Shadow* (London 1993), 258.
45. NAI, DFA, ES, box 33, file 233, Power to De Valera, 5 November 1921.
46. DFA, ES, box 33, file 233, Chartres to USFA, 26 November 1921.
47. Briscoe, *For the Life of Me*, 100–1.
48. Ibid., 92.
49. NAI, DFA, ES, box 233, S.E.O. to DFA, 10 February 1921.
50. NAI, DFA, ES, box 34, file 239(3), C.S. minute, 5 September 1921; NAI, DFA, ES, box 34, file 239(2), Bewley to Aireacht Trachtála, 1 June 1922.
51. NAI, DFA, ES, box 34, file 239(3), J.C. minute, 4 February 1922.
52. NAI, DT, S 2305, Bewley to Trade, 8 August 1922,
53. NAI, DFA, D/PG/Saorstát Berlin 1922–24 (Berlin 1922), Bewley to Trade, 1 June 1922.
54. NAI, DFA, ES, box 34, file 239, Chartres to Duffy, 7 March 1922.
55. NAI, DFA, ES, box 36, file 255, Bewley to Trade, 21 September 1922.
56. NAI, DFA, ES, box 34, file 239(3), John Chartres report, 4 February 1922.
57. NAI, DFA, D/PG/Saorstát Berlin 1922–24 (untitled folder), DFA to Messrs. Dowdall & Co., 6 June 1922.
58. NAI, DFA, D/PG/Saorstát Berlin 1922–24 (Berlin 1922), Bewley to Trade, 1 June 1922.
59. NAI, DFA, ES, box 34, file 239(6), Bewley to Blythe, 29 March 1922.
60. Keogh, *Ireland and Europe*, 14–15.
61. Charles Bewley, *Memoirs of a Wild Goose* (Dublin 1989), 76.
62. Keogh, *Ireland and Europe*, 14–15.
63. NAI, DFA, ES, box 31, file 234(2), Bewley to Blythe, 11 July 1922.
64. The *Irish Bulletins* were publicity publications produced by the publicity section of the Berlin mission, namely, Chartres and Power.
65. NAI, DT, S 2305, Bewley to Blythe, 17 July 1922.

66. NAI, DFA, ES, box 33, file 234(2), Bewley to Blythe, 11 July 1920.
67. NAI, DFA, ES, box 33, file 234(1), file Duffy to Chartres, 21 July 1922.
68. NAI, DFA, D/PG/IFS Berlin 1921, 1922, 1923 'Berlin Office', Walshe to Chartres, 8 August 1922.
69. Power to Walshe, 8 August 1922, op. cit.
70. NAI, DFA, ES, box 33, file 234(2), Chartres to President, 28 October 1922.
71. NAI, DFA, ES, box 34, file 239(5), Walshe to Power, 2 October 1922.
72. NAI, DFA, ES, box 33, file 238(1), Walshe to Bewley, 30 September 1922.
73. NAI, DFA, ES, box 33, file 238(1), Gearóid Ó Lochlainn's report on Brussels and Berlin (November-December 1922), and Bewley, *Memoirs*, 88.
74. Ibid.
75. NAI, DFA, GR289, report by the German Consul, 16 February 1925.
76. NAI, DFA, GR289, Marks to O'Higgins, 9 March 1926.
77. NAI, DFA, GR289, Marks to FitzGerald, 6 July 1925.
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79. NAI, DFA, GR289, Marks to O'Higgins, 9 March 1926.
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82. NAI, DFA, ES, box 34, file 241(4), Bewley to DFA, 10 February 1923.
83. NAI, DFA, ES, box 34, file 240(4), O'Duffy's memorandum, undated.
84. NAI, DFA, DE, box 34, file 240, Duane to DFA, 19 October 1923.
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