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# Ireland and sub-Saharan Africa, 1955-75: A Changing Mission

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D.

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### Summary

This thesis uses the example of sub-Saharan as a framework through which to analyse the evolution of Irish foreign policy between 1955 and 1975. It was a period of considerable change. When Ireland joined the United Nations in 1955 it ended a period of international isolation and allowed the Irish government to re-engage with international affairs and to re-state and re-define the principles that governed its attitude to foreign policy. In the five years that followed its independent approach, particularly visible in its attitude to the decolonisation process, won it a considerable amount of support from across the political spectrum, and led later analysts to define the period as a kind of 'golden age' in Irish foreign policy. What followed through the emergence of a vocal and increasingly radical group of newly-independent Afro-Asian states served to temper Irish enthusiasm. The involvement of Irish troops in the United Nations peacekeeping force in the Congo between 1960 and 1964 brought about a maturity in the state's attitudes to international affairs. The deaths of Irish troops brought home the very real sacrifices to be made in the pursuit of Ireland's principles, and the detrimental effect of the Congo crisis on the United Nations highlighted the limitations to Ireland's commitment to that organisation in the pursuit of international peace and stability.

The Congo crisis signalled a change in the international system that increasingly affected Irish foreign policy in the period under review here. As Ireland's role came to be re-defined and its officials struggled to impose their vision of international affairs on the Afro-Asian group, from within Irish society the social change that followed economic development began to affect Irish attitudes to foreign affairs. Though somewhat limited by comparison with its Western counterparts, the Irish public, inspired by the culture of protest prevalent in the West and increasingly visible after 1968, began to engage more widely with international issues. Sub-Saharan Africa was again to the fore, as the growth of the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement and the swell of public support for Biafra during the Nigerian civil war illustrated. Biafra also highlighted the importance of Christian missionaries to Ireland's relationship with the outside world, not only through their involvement in the crisis itself, but through their influence in emphasising the growing importance of development assistance. Missionaries were crucial in stimulating not only the public's response to the Biafran humanitarian crisis, but the growth of Irish NGOs like Africa Concern (later Concern), Trócaire and Gorta. As those issues came to prominence in the eyes of the Irish public, there was a visible shift in emphasis in the government's foreign policy. From the time of its first application for membership in 1961 and particularly as the accession process accelerated from the early 1970s, the EC grew to re-define the state's international role. Community membership brought a new set of responsibilities and influences and allowed Ireland to adapt its previous attitudes to foreign affairs to a new set of circumstances.

Adopting a mainly narrative and empirical approach, this thesis seeks to analyse how Irish foreign policy evolved from its isolation prior to 1955 to its position as President of the EC twenty years later, and the increased influence afforded to it by its membership of the Community. It analyses the articulation of Irish interests and the formation of an Irish diplomatic identity through its relationship with sub-Saharan Africa and looks at how that role was adapted in the changing international system. By situating Ireland's experience in an international context, primarily in relation to its moderate counterparts in Canada, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden, it examines the nature of Ireland's policies and role in the international system and questions the extent to which that role could be described as a unique experience. In a similar fashion, it analyses the relationship between civil society and foreign policy – through groups like the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement and development NGOs, the encroachment of Western political concepts on Irish public opinion and the adaptation of foreign policy to those changes. The thesis concludes with an examination of Ireland's role as a member of the EC, the opportunities it offered, and the influence it had on foreign policy, particularly in the field of official development assistance through the creation of Ireland's first overseas aid programme in 1974 and its role in the negotiation of the Lomé Convention, a trade agreement between the EC and the developing world, signed under the first Irish Presidency of the Community in 1975.

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# Abbreviations

ACP	African Caribbean and Pacific
ANC	South African National Congress
APSO	Agency for Personal Service Overseas
ATGWU	Amalgamated Transport and General Workers' Union
CTT	Córas Tráchtála (Irish Export Board)
DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the OECD
DEA	Department of External Affairs
DEVCO	Development Co-operation Organisation
DFA	Department of Foreign Affairs
DO	Dominions Office
DT	Department of the Taoiseach
EPC	European Political Co-operation
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FFHC	Freedom from Hunger Campaign
FNLA	National Front for the Liberation of Angola
FO	Foreign Office
HGPA BP	Holy Ghost Provincialite Archives, Biafra Papers
HGPA BP IAAM	Holy Ghost Provincialite Archives, Biafra Papers Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement
IAAM	Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement
IAAM ICJP	Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement Irish Commission for Justice and Peace
IAAM ICJP ICRC	Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement Irish Commission for Justice and Peace International Committee of the Red Cross
IAAM ICJP ICRC ICTU	Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement Irish Commission for Justice and Peace International Committee of the Red Cross Irish Congress of Trade Unions
IAAM ICJP ICRC ICTU IDAF	Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement Irish Commission for Justice and Peace International Committee of the Red Cross Irish Congress of Trade Unions International Defence and Aid Fund
IAAM ICJP ICRC ICTU IDAF IPA	Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement Irish Commission for Justice and Peace International Committee of the Red Cross Irish Congress of Trade Unions International Defence and Aid Fund Institute of Public Administration
IAAM ICJP ICRC ICTU IDAF IPA IRFU	Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement Irish Commission for Justice and Peace International Committee of the Red Cross Irish Congress of Trade Unions International Defence and Aid Fund Institute of Public Administration Irish Rugby Football Union
IAAM ICJP ICRC ICTU IDAF IPA IRFU ITGWU	Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement Irish Commission for Justice and Peace International Committee of the Red Cross Irish Congress of Trade Unions International Defence and Aid Fund Institute of Public Administration Irish Rugby Football Union Irish Transport and General Workers' Union
IAAM ICJP ICRC ICTU IDAF IPA IRFU ITGWU JBFA	Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement Irish Commission for Justice and Peace International Committee of the Red Cross Irish Congress of Trade Unions International Defence and Aid Fund Institute of Public Administration Irish Rugby Football Union Irish Transport and General Workers' Union Joint Biafra Famine Appeal
IAAM ICJP ICRC ICTU IDAF IPA IRFU ITGWU JBFA JCA	Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement Irish Commission for Justice and Peace International Committee of the Red Cross Irish Congress of Trade Unions International Defence and Aid Fund Institute of Public Administration Irish Rugby Football Union Irish Transport and General Workers' Union Joint Biafra Famine Appeal Joint Church Aid

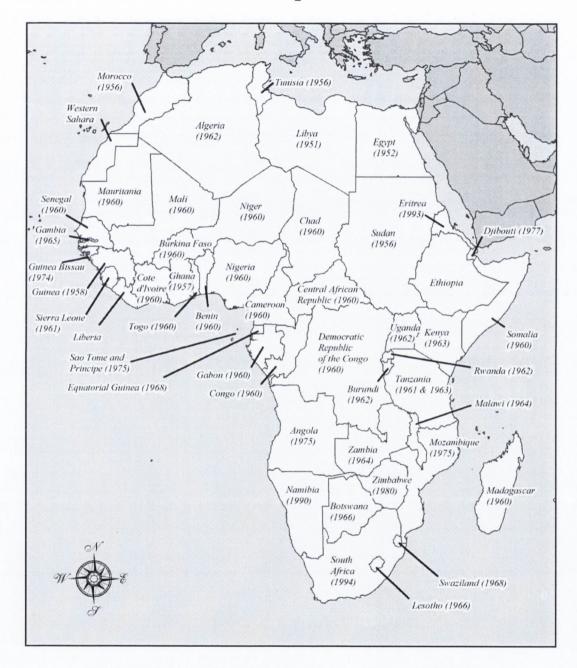
NLI	National Library of Ireland
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
ODA	Official Development Assistance
ONUC	United Nations Operation in the Congo
PAC	Pan-African Congress (South Africa)
PMUN	Permanent Mission to the United Nations
SMA	Society of African Missions
TCD MS	Trinity College Dublin Manuscripts Department
UCDA	University College Dublin Archives
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNETPSA	United Nations Educational and Training Programme for Southern
	Africa
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNORGA	United Nations, Official Records of the General Assembly
UNTFSA	United Nations Trust Fund for South Africa
WFP	World Food Programme

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Map 1: Sub-Saharan Africa, with modern names and dates of independence

### Introduction

In October 1957, almost two years after Ireland's admission to the United Nations, G.D. Anderson of the British Embassy in Dublin reported his view of the state's contribution to the organisation. The Irish delegation, he felt, had

reached the stage where it is prepared to make independent initiatives, in the hope no doubt that they may prove to be constructive contributions to the work of the UN. It would be out of character for the Irish to become, or to give the appearance of becoming, docile camp followers of any bloc, even of a Western bloc, but ... providing the appearances of independent initiative and decision are preserved, Irish delegations can be expected to work not to get too seriously out of step with the policies of the Western countries.<sup>1</sup>

Anderson's assessment proved remarkably accurate, not only in the short-term during what has become known as the 'golden age' of Irish membership to the early 1960s, but in the changing dynamics of a General Assembly increasingly dominated by the independent African and Asian states. Built on a desire to maintain the state's diplomatic independence, to pursue international stability (and, by the same token, its own security) through international co-operation, and a natural sympathy for the policies of the Western Powers, the Irish government retained a commitment to its principles even as the context and shape of its individual policies adapted to a changing international environment. In the twenty years after 1955, the period under review in this study, the emergence of a vocal Afro-Asian group and evolving patterns of Cold War politics lent increasing complexity to the conduct of international relations. The issues of decolonisation and freedom from outside interference that dominated the United Nations in the late 1950s were transformed into a re-assessment of the very structures of the international system. Developing-world states emphasised the necessity to promote economic development and equality and by the mid-1970s they had come to call for the creation of a 'New International Economic Order'.

Though its principles remained fundamentally the same, Irish foreign policy evolved to reflect this changing situation. The manner in which it was articulated and, equally importantly, received, shaped the state's move from post-war isolation on the periphery of Europe to membership of the world's most important regional grouping,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Anderson to Preston, 12 Oct. 1957, National Archives of the United Kingdom (hereafter NAUK) Dominions Office (hereafter DO) 35/10625.

the EC, which it joined in 1973. This evolution from progressive moderate to United Nations policeman and mediator between Europe and the developing world called for a re-articulation of an Irish diplomatic identity constituted by reference to the state's colonial past, missionary heritage (in this case largely referring to Catholic missionaries), republican character and subscription to an advanced definition of human rights. But as influences from outside the state's boundaries helped to shape its role on the international stage, so too did changes from within Ireland affect the official attitude to foreign affairs. The evolution of Irish society in line with the country's economic growth and broader patterns of social change sparked a relative increase in public interest in international issues. The public agenda changed accordingly. Pressure groups like the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement (IAAM) and development NGOs like Gorta, Concern and Trócaire assumed a prominent role in re-defining the state's relationship with the developing world in their advocacy of social justice, equality and economic development. In this new environment those issues came increasingly to define the direction of government policy. As the political context changed at the international level, official development assistance (ODA) emerged to become the primary channel of contact between the Irish government and its counterparts in the developing world. Its emerging importance was closely intertwined with broader changes. In February 1975, under the state's first presidency of the EC, Irish officials oversaw the final negotiation of the Lomé Convention, a trade agreement between the Community and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states. The status Ireland courted as a former colony able to empathise with the concerns of the developing world but unavoidably European in character had by then been re-cast and there were hints of a new role for the state in international politics.

### HISTORIOGRAPHY

Previous commentators on Irish foreign policy have not addressed the complex processes that brought Ireland to this point. Writing in 2005 Michael Kennedy and Deirdre McMahon noted that accounts of Irish activity at the United Nations generally 'began in 1955 and petered out some time in the early 1960s, the simple approach being to talk of the Europeanisation of Irish foreign policy in the years surrounding Ireland's

first application to the EEC in 1961'.<sup>2</sup> The same was true, by extension, in broader commentary on Irish foreign policy. The general histories of Ireland during this period tend to gloss over this transition, preferring to emphasise the social and political changes that affected the country rather than its role on the international stage. F.S.L. Lyons wrote glowingly of Ireland's role at the United Nations and the special understanding that its past engendered in responding to the plight of the developing world, without giving any detailed exploration of the construction of those attitudes.<sup>3</sup> Joseph Lee has referred only briefly to Ireland's role in international affairs, confining his comments to the 'solid work' done by Irish officials in New York.<sup>4</sup> Roy Foster's comments were similarly brief and his assessment of the later period limited to the mistaken assertion that 'the influx of Third World members [to the United Nations] in the 1960s made it easier to take an independent line'.<sup>5</sup> More recently, Diarmaid Ferriter has gone some way to address this imbalance, taking greater cognisance of the importance of international issues in the social history of the state, including brief allusions to the Irish reaction to the Nigerian civil war, the activities of the IAAM, and the extent of Ireland's role in the EC.<sup>6</sup>

The situation, as Aoife Bhreatnach has highlighted in warning against the imposition of 'a false dichotomy between moral and material aspects of foreign policy' or between EC and United Nations policies,<sup>7</sup> was considerably more complicated than these authors allowed. The earliest specific works on foreign policy in this period, by Patrick Keatinge and T. Desmond Williams, lacked the distance necessary to appreciate the depth of those changes, but did in fact provide an excellent assessment of Irish objectives.<sup>8</sup> Aided by the insight of officials within the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) – particularly Williams, who had 'an inside line to Iveagh House [DFA]

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Michael Kennedy and Deirdre McMahon, 'Introduction', in Michael Kennedy and Deirdre McMahon (eds.), *Obligations and responsibilities: Ireland and the United Nations, 1955-2005* (Dublin, 2005), p. 3. <sup>3</sup> F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine* (London, 1971), p. 594.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Joseph Lee, Ireland 1912-1985: politics and society (Cambridge, 1989), p. 371.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Roy Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (London, 1988), p. 570.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Diarmaid Ferriter, The transformation of Ireland 1900-2000 (London, 2004), pp. 577-81, 685.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Aoife Bhreatnach, 'Frank Aiken: European federation and United Nations internationalism', *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, Vol. 13 (2002), p. 238.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> See in particular Patrick Keatinge, *The formulation of Irish foreign policy* (Dublin, 1973); Patrick Keatinge, *A place among the nations: Issues of Irish foreign policy* (Dublin, 1978); and T. Desmond Williams, 'Irish foreign policy, 1949-69', in J.J. Lee (ed.), *Ireland 1945-70* (Dublin, 1979), pp. 136-51.

headquarters]<sup>9</sup> – they offer a wealth of perceptive comments on the nature of the policy-making process and of Ireland's international status. Although neither author accorded a great deal of space to sub-Saharan Africa, both were aware of its importance. Keatinge in particular pre-figured several of the dominant themes in this study in his references to the IAAM, Irish missionaries, the role of development assistance in foreign policy, and his exploration of the principles that informed the state's diplomatic identity.<sup>10</sup> Williams' challenge to the 'somewhat exaggerated' view of Ireland's role at the United Nations<sup>11</sup> hinted at another of the themes addressed here and one that is sorely missing from much of the subsequent historical analysis: the extent to which Ireland's relationship with the developing world made it 'special' in comparison, for example, with its moderate Western counterparts.

Keatinge, Williams and those that followed in their path in the 1980s laid the foundation for a discipline that underwent a visible shift in 1991 with the expansion of the National Archives of Ireland (NAI) in Dublin and the new wealth of official sources that it offered to researchers.<sup>12</sup> In the field of foreign policy it provided opportunity to redress what Joseph Skelly described in 1997 as an overly-simplistic approach adopted by previous historians: 'scholars have worn out the mantra that Ireland's influence was "out of all proportion" to her size ... [while] others have too zealously deflated Ireland's well-deserved reputation'.<sup>13</sup> Skelly's *Irish Diplomacy at the United Nations 1945-1965: National Interests and the International Order* (1997) offered an impressive introduction to the narrative of this important period and successfully addressed many of the misconceptions about Ireland's role in its formative years at the United Nations with a more nuanced assessment of its many motivations and influences. Building on a wealth of previously under-utilised archival material, he shed considerable light on a wide number of issues, including several addressed in this study: decolonisation, apartheid, and United Nations peace-keeping. The potential

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Michael Kennedy and Joseph Morrison Skelly, 'The study of Irish foreign policy from independence to internationalism', in Michael Kennedy and Joseph Morrison Skelly (eds.), *Irish foreign policy 1919-66: from independence to internationalism* (Dublin, 2000), p. 18.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Keatinge refers to these issues across both his major works from the 1970s: Keatinge, *Formulation*; and Keatinge, *Place among the nations*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Williams, 'Irish foreign policy', p. 142.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> For a brief description of the broader historiography of Irish foreign policy in this period, see Kennedy and Skelly, 'The study of Irish foreign policy', pp. 18-21.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Joseph Morrison Skelly, *Irish diplomacy at the United Nations 1945-1965: national interests and the international order* (Dublin, 1997), p. 16.

offered by his work, particularly the possibility of situating Irish policies in a broader comparative context, however, has not been matched by subsequent research. There has been little interest, for example, in exploring his preliminary comments on the impact of peace-keeping on Irish foreign policy or the effect of the rise of the Afro-Asian bloc on Ireland's international status.<sup>14</sup>

The most recent attempt to do so, Greg Spelman's examination of Irish policy at the United Nations in the second half of the 1960s,<sup>15</sup> was sufficiently broad to capture the range of activities engaged in by the Irish government during this period and shed some light on issues such as the proposals for financing peace-keeping and the Irish plan to limit the spread of nuclear weapons. In addition Spelman was the first to examine in any great detail a number of issues relevant to this study: Namibia, apartheid, Portuguese Africa and Southern Rhodesia. His assertions that Ireland's policies on decolonisation were 'conspicuously divergent from Western norms'<sup>16</sup> and that its attitude to apartheid was 'in contrast to the majority of Western countries',<sup>17</sup> however, present a view of Irish policies that requires further examination and are addressed by the conclusions reached in this study.

Other aspects of Irish foreign policy continue to command greater attention. Already the subject of considerable research,<sup>18</sup> the history of Irish participation in the United Nations peace-keeping mission to the Congo (ONUC) between 1960 and 1964 has been added to in recent years by a number of publications detailing Irish troops' involvement in the incident at Jadotville in the autumn of 1961 (see chapter two) and by

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 242.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Ibid., pp. 277-83, 289-91.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Greg Spelman, 'Ireland at the United Nations, 1965-69: evolving policy and changing presence', in Michael Kennedy and Deirdre McMahon (eds.), *Obligations and responsibilities: Ireland and the United Nations, 1955-2005* (Dublin, 2005), pp. 224-52.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 252.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Edward Burke, 'Ireland's contribution to the United Nations Mission in the Congo (ONUC): keeping the peace in Katanga', in Michael Kennedy and Deirdre McMahon (eds.), *Obligations and responsibilities: Ireland and the United Nations, 1955-2005* (Dublin, 2005), pp. 117-53; Nina Heathcote, 'Ireland and the United Nations Operation in the Congo', *International Relations*, Vol. 3, No. 11 (May 1971), pp. 880-902; Norman J. MacQueen, 'Irish neutrality: the United Nations and the peacekeeping experience, 1945-1969' (D.Phil., University of Ulster, 1981); Conor Cruise O'Brien, *To Katanga and back: a UN case history* (Universal Library ed., New York, 1966); and John Terence O'Neill, 'Ireland's participation in United Nations peacekeeping: a military perspective', in Michael Kennedy and Deirdre McMahon (eds.), *Obligations and responsibilities: Ireland and the United Nations, 1955-2005* (Dublin, 2005), pp. 299-317.

the limited efforts to collect soldiers' recollections.<sup>19</sup> Outside Katsumi Ishizuka and John Terence O'Neill's attempts to situate ONUC as part of a broader history of Irish peace-keeping, and the latter's use of the Irish case to deconstruct the role of peacekeepers in an international context,<sup>20</sup> little has been done to relate the Irish experience either to broader patterns in government policy or to the role of peacekeeping in the pursuit of foreign policy in an international context. A similar affliction besets other recent work on Irish foreign policy in this period. Where Keatinge attempted to analyse the interaction between different levels of decision-making – 'the policy-making machinery', the 'domestic environment', and the 'external environment'<sup>21</sup> – and to link it to wider themes of international relations, the wealth of information made available to researchers since 1991 has led to a too narrow focus on the official story, whether told through the documentation in the NAI or the respective national archives in London and Washington.

There have however been a number of positive developments in recent years. The work of retired former DFA Secretary General Noel Dorr offers considerable insight into the foreign policy-making process, not least into the character of Frank Aiken (Minister for External Affairs between 1957 and 1969) and the rationale behind decision-making at the United Nations.<sup>22</sup> Paul Sharp's work on Irish foreign policy in the EC introduced some of the issues relating to Ireland's international role and relationship with the developing world expanded on in this study.<sup>23</sup> Drawing on her

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> For a history of Irish involvement at Jadotville, see Rose Doyle with Leo Quinlan, *Heroes of Jadotville: the soldiers' story* (Dublin, 2006); John Terence O'Neill, 'The Irish company at Jadotville, Congo, 1961: soldiers or symbols?', *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (Winter 2002), pp. 127-44; Declan Power, *Siege at Jadotville: the Irish Army's forgotten battle* (Dunshaughlin, 2005). For the soldiers' recollections, see David O'Donoghue (ed.), *The Irish Army in the Congo 1960-64: the far battalions* (Dublin, 2006); and Archie Raeside, *The Congo 1960: the first Irish United Nations peacekeepers* (Portlaoise, 2004).
<sup>20</sup> Katsumi Ishizuka, *Ireland and international peacekeeping operations 1960-2000* (London, 2004);

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Katsumi Ishizuka, *Ireland and international peacekeeping operations 1960-2000* (London, 2004);
 O'Neill, 'Jadotville'; and O'Neill, 'Ireland's participation in United Nations peacekeeping'.
 <sup>21</sup> Keatinge, *Formulation*, p. 10.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Noel Dorr, 'The development of UN peacekeeping concepts over the past fifty years: an Irish perspective', *The Irish Sword: The Journal of the Military History Society of Ireland*, Vol. 20, No. 79 (Summer 1996), pp. 16-31; Noel Dorr, 'Ireland at the United Nations: 40 years on', *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, Vol. 7 (1996), pp. 41-62; and Noel Dorr, 'Ireland at the United Nations', in Ben Tonra and Eilís Ward (eds.), *Ireland in international affairs: interests, institutions and identities; essays in honour of Professor N. P. Keatinge FTCD, MRIA* (Dublin, 2002), pp. 104-28.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Paul Sharp, Irish foreign policy and the European Community (Aldershot, 1990).

1999 M.Phil thesis,<sup>24</sup> Aoife Bhreatnach has produced two illuminating recent articles detailing a variety of aspects of Aiken's influence. Her work has added some insightful comments on his attitude to the EC application process,<sup>25</sup> and she has set out a number of interesting conclusions about the interaction between Ireland's anti-colonial stance and the realities of small state activity in the international system.<sup>26</sup> The absence, however, of any reference to the policies of comparable examples like the Nordic states or to recent debate on the relationship between foreign policy and Ireland's colonial legacy,<sup>27</sup> limited Bhreatnach's evaluation of those processes and provided an obvious avenue for further research, one which is addressed in this study.

The tendency in recent research into Irish foreign policy to focus on the United Nations, the EC, Anglo-Irish relations, Irish-American relations and Northern Ireland, has overshadowed attempts to diversify into other areas.<sup>28</sup> The most important work in this respect thus far has been Michael Holmes, Nicholas Rees and Bernadette Whelan's *The Poor Relation: Irish Foreign Policy and the Third World* (1993). Based predominantly in the discipline of political science, their study contributes a great deal to the history of Ireland's relationship with the developing world on a number of levels. It adopts an approach similar to Keatinge's in examining numerous avenues through which that relationship evolved, from the corridors of Iveagh House to the work of missionaries and development NGOs and the area of cultural and economic exchange. The text raised major new questions and thereby offered considerable opportunities for research which have thus far not been pursued. Little work has been done in the important field of ODA, for example, a subject that internationally 'has received

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Aoife Bhreatnach, 'Frank Aiken and the formulation of foreign policy: 1951-1954; 1957-1969' (M.Phil., National University of Ireland, Cork, 1999).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Bhreatnach, 'European federation and UN internationalism', passim.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Aoife Bhreatnach, 'A friend of the colonial powers? Frank Aiken, Ireland's United Nations alignment and decolonisation', in Michael Kennedy and Deirdre McMahon (eds.), *Obligations and responsibilities: Ireland and the United Nations, 1955-2005* (Dublin, 2005), pp. 182-200.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> For a discussion of the relationship between Ireland's colonial past and its contemporary politics, see Stephen Howe, *Ireland and empire: colonial legacies in Irish history and culture* (Oxford, 2000); and Liam Kennedy, *Colonialism, religion and nationalism in Ireland* (Antrim, 1996). For an introduction to the issue of Irish identity in a domestic context, see Lee, *Ireland*, pp. 658-87.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> See, for example, Peadar Kirby, *Ireland and Latin America* (Dublin, 1992); Dennis Holmes and Michael Holmes, *Ireland and India: connections, comparisons, contrasts* (Dublin, 1997); Rory Miller, *Ireland and the Palestine question, 1948-2004* (Dublin, 2005); Rory Miller (ed.), *Ireland and the Middle East: trade, society and peace* (Dublin, 2007); and Kate O'Malley, *Ireland, India and Empire: Indo-Irish radical connections, 1919-64* (Manchester, 2008).

comparatively little attention from economic, political or diplomatic historians'.<sup>29</sup> The only overviews of ODA to date have been those by the economist and sometime advisor to the Irish government, Helen O'Neill,<sup>30</sup> and in earlier work by Mary Sutton and Declan O'Brien in the late 1970s and early 1980s.<sup>31</sup>

Like Keatinge, Holmes, Rees and Whelan devoted a significant proportion of their work to analysing the role of non-governmental actors, organised and unorganised, in Irish foreign policy.<sup>32</sup> Until now few other studies have managed to bridge this gap successfully. Enda Staunton's 1999 article on Irish reactions to the Nigerian civil war, for example, offered an interesting introduction to Irish government policies and the public's reaction to the conflict, but neglected to explore the plentiful missionary and NGO sources utilised by this study.<sup>33</sup> Laurie Wiseberg's 1973 Ph.D. thesis on the operation of humanitarian relief during the conflict offered a more satisfying if less detailed analysis of the Irish response.<sup>34</sup> Focussing on the international dimension to the crisis rather than a specifically Irish reaction, her study shed considerable light on the Irish case relative to its counterparts in Canada and the Nordic states. More recently, Tony Farmar's excellent *Believing in Action: Concern, the First Thirty Years, 1968-98* (2002) offers further insight into Irish responses to the Nigerian crisis and stands alone as a study of Irish NGO activity, in the absence of any substantial histories of Gorta or Trócaire.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Heide-Irene Schmidt and Helge Pharo, 'Introduction', *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (2003), pp. 387-394.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Helen O'Neill, 'Ireland's foreign aid in 1998. (Incorporating a retrospective review of 25 years of Irish Aid)', *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, Vol. 10 (1999), pp. 289-306; Helen O'Neill, 'Ireland's official aid programme', in Ben Tonra and Eilís Ward (eds.), *Ireland in international affairs: interests, institutions and identities: essays in honour of Professor Patrick N. P. Keatinge* (Dublin, 2002), pp. 66-92; and Helen O'Neill, 'The foreign aid policy of Ireland', in Paul Hoebink and Olav Stokke (eds.), *Perspectives on European development co-operation: policy and performance of individual donor countries and the EU* (London, 2005), pp. 303-35.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Declan O'Brien, Ireland and the Third World: a study of government aid (Dublin, 1980); Mary Sutton, Irish government aid to the Third World – review and assessment (Dublin, 1977); and Mary Sutton,

<sup>&#</sup>x27;Irish ODA and the UN target – a faltering commitment', *Trócaire Development Review* (1985), pp. 5-21.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Michael Holmes, Nicholas Rees and Bernadette Whelan, *The poor relation: Irish foreign policy and the Third World* (Dublin, 1993), pp. 48-60.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Enda Staunton, 'The case of Biafra: Ireland and the Nigerian civil war', *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 124 (Nov. 1999), pp. 513-35.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Laurie Wiseberg, 'The international politics of relief: a case study of relief operations mounted during the Nigerian civil war (1967-1970)' (Ph.D., University of California, Los Angeles, 1973).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> There has been one limited history of Gorta which falls far short of Farmar's unparalleled access to Concern: Robin Challis, *Sowing the seeds: the history of Gorta* (n.p., 1986).

In keeping with this trend, little has been done to address the impact of what Roy Foster described as the 'overall theme' of the 1960s in Ireland – 'exposure to the wider world<sup>36</sup> – and its relationship with Irish foreign policy. David Scher's 1996 article on the IAAM offered a brief outline of the movement's history but lacked any detailed analysis of its relationship with the Irish government, comparable international groups, or the broader process of social change in Ireland.<sup>37</sup> The study of Irish missionary activity has been similarly limited to good if fairly wide-ranging introductions to the subject,<sup>38</sup> although two recent Ph.D. theses, by John Manton on missionary hospitals in Nigeria, and Fiona Bateman on Irish missionary rhetoric, point the way towards a more profound understanding of its dynamics and of its wider implications for Irish identity.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, little attempt has been made to develop Stephen Howe's illuminating analysis of the construction of Ireland's role on the international stage through explicit and repeated reference to its colonial heritage which formed part of his Ireland and Empire: Colonial Legacies in Irish History and Culture (2000), a subject pursued earlier in Liam Kennedy's Colonialism, religion and nationalism in Ireland (1996).

### **OBJECTIVES**

The question of how foreign policy changed up to 1975, the influences and processes that shaped it, and the state's evolving role in the international community forms the main theme of this study. It uses the case of sub-Saharan Africa as a framework through which to address broader issues of policy change. Building on a mainly narrative and empirical structure, this study not only adds to the history of Ireland's relationship with sub-Saharan Africa, but analyses a number of patterns in the state's

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Foster, *Modern Ireland*, p. 581.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> David M. Scher, "How is it that such a small group of people can pressure governments...?" A history of the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement', *Southern African-Irish Studies*, Vol. 3 (1996), pp. 136-70.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> See, for example, Congregation of the Holy Spirit Anniversaries Commission, Spiritan anniversary lectures: commemorating the Mission of the Irish Province of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit since 1859 (Dublin, 2004); Jack Hodgins, Sister island: a history of the Church Missionary Society in Ireland 1814-1994 (n.p., 1994); Edmund M. Hogan, The Irish missionary movement: a historical survey 1830-1980 (Dublin, 1990); and Thomas Kiggins, Maynooth mission to Africa: the story of St. Patrick's, Kiltegan (Dublin, 1991).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> John Manton, 'The Roman Catholic Mission and leprosy control in colonial Ogoja province, Nigeria, 1936-1960' (D.Phil., Oxford, 2005); and Fiona Bateman, 'The spiritual empire: Irish Catholic missionary discourse in the twentieth century' (Ph.D., National University of Ireland, Galway, 2003).

international relations, including the articulation of Irish interests and the manner in which its principles manifested themselves in a changing international system. Comparing the Irish experience with that in a number of comparable moderate social-democratic countries – the Nordic states (particularly Sweden and Finland), the Netherlands, and Canada – offers a more nuanced understanding of the patterns and processes that influenced decision-making. It sheds light on the construction of an Irish diplomatic identity and analyses the extent to which the Irish case should be regarded as unique. This study addresses the relationship between civil society and foreign policy in a similar manner and asks to what extent social change and the encroachment of Western ideas of social protest affected Irish perceptions of international affairs and the developing world.

All of which begs a further question: why concentrate on Irish foreign policy on sub-Saharan Africa? There are a number of reasons. Reflecting the geographical spread of Irish interests, the focus is limited to the sub-continent, the area south of the Sahara, which operates in many ways as a distinct regional entity. Its characteristics are noticeably different from North Africa which prefers to look to the Middle East and the Mediterranean in its external relations rather than to its southern neighbours. Of necessity this concentration means leaving aside important issues such as the Irish reaction to Algeria's quest for independence and the growth in Irish trade and other links with Libya and Egypt, but in so doing allows for a more cohesive analysis. In a period in which the Irish government established a role for the state at the United Nations and later as a member of the EC, the emergence of an independent and diplomatically vocal group of sub-Saharan African states made them an important influence (directly and indirectly) on Irish foreign policy. More than the earlier decolonisation of Asia, this process in sub-Saharan Africa caught the attention of the Irish government from the moment it joined the United Nations. The issues that subsequently arose from African independence – the spread of the Cold War, abortive economic development, and ODA - continued to demand its attention and provided a number of significant tests for policy-makers. The assertion of a set of principles in Irish foreign policy, not least the construction of an Irish diplomatic identity by reference to the country's own colonial experience, was clearly visible in the Irish government's policies towards the region.

There were also important direct links between Ireland and the sub-continent. Irish missionaries had a long history of involvement in Africa dating back to at least the mid-nineteenth century. The emphasis in this study is on the dominant Catholic missionary tradition and its discourse, but that cannot mask the importance of Irish Protestant missionaries, from the contributions made by Irish men and women to the British Empire to the visible links between Irish Protestants and groups like the IAAM (through individuals like Rev Dr Terence McCaughey) and Africa Concern (the Methodist Rev Ian Biggs was the organisation's first secretary), in addition to the roles played by Christian Aid and the Church Missionary Society in stimulating action on development aid. The combination of their activities, Catholic and Protestant, informed Irish perceptions of the continent, however vague and unrelated to social and political boundaries (see chapter one). Africa became particularly important in Catholic missionary discourse, and the large numbers of Irish men and women who served in its various regions, combined with the link to South Africa established during the Boer War and that conflict's subsequent connotations for Irish nationalism, made sub-Saharan Africa centrally important in Irish perceptions of the developing world. Nor can one discount the importance of the Irish clergy in the region, many of whom were more than capable of making their voices heard by Irish government officials. They played a particularly important role in stimulating the Irish reaction to the Nigerian civil war, and also in promoting the concept of development assistance with the public and in official policies. It was no coincidence that the Irish government responded to calls to provide aid to the developing world in 1960 with a technical aid scheme entitled 'Assistance for newly-independent African countries', and this emphasis was repeated in its later concentration on sub-Saharan Africa in the bilateral aid programme set up in the mid-1970s.

In order to provide a cohesive examination of the questions raised by this study, it is divided into thematic chapters that follow a broadly chronological pattern. The study begins with an examination of the decolonisation process and its impact on Ireland's international standing and diplomatic identity during the 'golden age' of United Nations membership. In the period that followed Ireland 'came of age' through its involvement in ONUC and the relationship it and other small moderate states forged with an emerging Afro-Asian bloc. In the second half of the 1960s the emphasis shifted to social change and the awakening of the Irish public to international issues which came to particular prominence after 1968 and focussed largely on events in Africa: the humanitarian crisis that resulted from the Nigerian civil war, and the activities of the IAAM, notably its protests against the South African rugby tour of Ireland in January 1970. During this period and the process of Ireland's accession to the EC there was a visible repositioning of the state's international standing and a re-definition of its attitude to foreign affairs. The latter part of this study explores the extent of that change, particularly in Ireland's role as intermediary between the EC and the ACP states that was visible in the negotiation of the Lomé Agreement in 1975; it will also examine the role of development assistance in re-defining the state's relationship with, and obligations towards, the developing world.

In tackling these issues, this study draws on a wide variety of source material, from government papers held in the NAI and in the National Archives of the United Kingdom in London, to personal and private papers, the records of the IAAM, the archives of the Holy Ghost Order, contemporary journals and newspapers, official sources, and personal interviews with former government officials, missionaries, NGO officials and social activists. In so doing it draws inspiration from the model adopted in other Western states for the study of the West's relationship with the developing world. In August 1994, for example, the Nordic Africa Institute, based at the University of Uppsala in Sweden, launched its research project, 'National Liberation in Southern Africa: the Role of the Nordic Countries' and commissioned individual studies of the involvement of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden in the struggle for liberation in southern Africa.<sup>40</sup> The final product, particularly the two excellent volumes on Sweden authored by Tor Sellström, offer an example of the potential to combine the history of civil society's engagement with an international issue (or issues) with the history of official government policy and the broader international dimension. Additional inspiration is drawn from the growing area of historical research into development assistance, described by Heide-Irene Schmidt and Helge Pharo as a 'crucial area of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> Tore Linné Eriksen (ed.), *Norway and national liberation in southern Africa* (Uppsala, 2000); Christopher Munthe Morgenstierne, *Denmark and national liberation in southern Africa: a flexible response* (Uppsala, 2003); Tor Sellström, *Sweden and national liberation in southern Africa: Volume I – formation of a popular opinion (1950-1970)* (Uppsala, 1999); Tor Sellström, *Sweden and national liberation in southern Africa: Volume II – solidarity and assistance (1970-1994)* (Uppsala, 2002); and Iina Soiri and Pekka Peltola, *Finland and national liberation in southern Africa* (Uppsala, 1999).

European and international history',<sup>41</sup> and the emphasis therein on the importance of building an international history of ODA which will draw together patterns of activity at the national level with trends and decisions taken in a broader global context.

In the conduct of its foreign policy, a small state like Ireland can never be free from the demands and pressures placed on it by actors at all levels of the domestic and international environment: as Williams noted, 'states are never wholly free in relation to the policy which they follow'.<sup>42</sup> So too histories of the foreign policies of individual states must be situated in relation to those of their contemporaries and to the proliferation of influences that act upon them, ranging from inter-state communications to social change in the domestic environment and the construction of individual identity. To date these lessons have all-too-infrequently been applied to the history of Irish foreign policy. This study aims to redress that balance.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Schmidt and Pharo, 'Introduction', p. 387.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> Williams, 'Irish foreign policy', p. 137.

## 'Unmistakably European':<sup>\*</sup> Ireland and the Decolonisation of sub-Saharan Africa

On 17 May 1960, during an official state visit to Ireland, Ghanaian Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah addressed a special meeting of the Irish United Nations Association on the subject of 'Africa and the United Nations'. In the course of his speech, he told the packed audience at Dublin's Shelbourne Hotel of his admiration for the Irish people's struggle for freedom and the parallels between its experience and that of the emerging African states. Ever the statesman, Nkrumah was not slow to build on the connections between Ireland and Africa. He paid tribute to 'those Irish leaders of the last century who realised that the struggle of Ireland for independence was not the struggle of one country alone, but part of a world movement for freedom'.<sup>1</sup> The desire of Africa's majorities to win their freedom from minority control, he stated, in essence replicated the Irish struggle. On his arrival at Dublin airport the same morning he had spoken fondly to the press of his early education by Irish missionaries and his days as a teacher at St Augustine's College, Cape Coast, built by the Society of African Missions (SMA).<sup>2</sup> European missionaries, he told reporters in a thinly veiled reference to the work of Irish orders in Africa, 'are welcome and have always been welcome. They have played a very wonderful part in the whole set-up of our State.'<sup>3</sup>

Nkrumah played to a receptive audience. The doctrine he preached was what the *Irish Press* termed one 'familiar in Irish history – "self government with danger is better than servitude in tranquillity".<sup>4</sup> This shared colonial experience or, more importantly, its perceived legacy in Ireland, became central to the state's relationship with Africa. The Department of External Affairs (DEA) note which accompanied Nkrumah's visit drew direct comparison between the success of the latter's Convention

Taoiseach (hereafter DT) 98/6/404.

<sup>\* &#</sup>x27;Address by Mr Seán Lemass, Taoiseach, at Luncheon of National Press Club, Washington, DC, Wednesday, 16<sup>th</sup> October, 1963', National Archives of Ireland (hereafter NAI) Department of the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> 'Africa could be threat to peace: Nkrumah calls for positive action by United Nations', *The Irish Times*, 18 May 1960.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> 'State welcome for Dr Nkrumah', Irish Independent, 18 May 1960.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Quoted in ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> 'Dr Nkrumah', Irish Press, 18 May 1960.

People's Party and that of Sinn Féin in 1918.<sup>5</sup> The Irish government was happy to emphasise the parallels. Ireland's history, it argued, placed it in a unique position to act as a bridge between Europe and Africa, and played a prominent role in defining the state's diplomatic identity. As a member of a loose group of moderate small states dedicated to upholding international law and stability, the Irish government built its policy on several fundamental principles, prominent among which was a strong commitment to the right to self-determination. In the 'age of decolonisation' this self-defined national position became closely intertwined with the assertion of an independent Irish foreign policy.

Such policies were refined in the five years immediately after Ireland joined the United Nations in 1955, a period which has come to be regarded as 'a kind of "golden age" of Irish UN membership',<sup>6</sup> and which forms the focus of this chapter. It looks firstly at the historical context, on the major events in the decolonisation of sub-Saharan Africa, and on the historical links between Ireland and the sub-continent. In so doing, it explores the creation of a particularly Irish identity and its role in shaping the expression of Irish attitudes. The second part of the chapter examines the creation and articulation of policies that reflected those attitudes, the role of decolonisation in broader foreign policy, and the practical application of these principles. The final part focuses on the year 1960 and the period immediately thereafter, when the arrival of a number of new African states forced moderate states like Ireland to re-define their role and raised new questions as to the relationship between them and the developing world.

### THE DECOLONISATION OF SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

The Second World War had brought about a re-definition of empire in Africa. While in many regions its immediate aftermath saw a strengthening of imperial control, the emergence of new political ideas, the surfacing of new (and old) grievances and the beginnings of Asian independence built up pressures for greater political freedom. Cold War politics, and the rapid technological advances it precipitated, served to re-define metropolitan attitudes towards the colonies. The British government, led by

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Note on Nkrumah and Ghana, unsigned, undated [May 1960?], NAI Department of Foreign Affairs (hereafter DFA) 305/325 Pt I B.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Dorr, 'Ireland at the United Nations' (2002), p. 109.

Commonwealth Office officials like Andrew Cohen, was to the forefront. It adapted its attitudes to African participation, self-rule, and finally independence in reaction to international changes in the post-war period. In 1956 Sudan gained its independence, to be followed in March 1957 by Ghana, led by the charismatic Nkrumah.

Nkrumah, an outspoken proponent of decolonisation and pan-Africanism, wrote with confidence of his vision for a successful, united Africa whose future prosperity relied on a 'gigantic self-help programme' designed to remove it from the influence of outside foreign powers.<sup>7</sup> His ambition and early success in building up an independent state in Ghana provided an example for the rest of Africa. It was not solely in the British colonies that its effects were felt. In 1958 Guinea took advantage of the French government's reconstitution of the relationship with its colonies to declare its independence. Pre-occupied with the revolt in Algeria and concerned at the threat posed by independent former British colonies to its sphere of influence, the French government granted further concessions in 1960 which led to the independence of the majority of its colonies on the continent. It was felt that it would be easier to protect France's future influence by establishing close bilateral relations with individual states rather than fostering the federations that then existed. In February of the same year British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan warned a Cape Town audience that a 'wind of change is blowing through this continent, and whether we like it or not this growth of national consciousness is a political fact'.<sup>8</sup> Two decades of official debate on the future of the British Empire with the attendant changes in international politics and technological advances had altered the value of colonies as elements of world-power status. Macmillan's speech came not at the beginning of a process of decolonisation but in the midst of the break-up of Britain's empire in Africa. In October 1960, after years of discussion about its future constitution, Nigeria became independent and it immediately assumed the mantle of one of the region's most important political and economic actors. By 1964 all sub-Saharan African states outside the settler colonies (the Portuguese territories, South West Africa, Southern Rhodesia, and South Africa), Gambia (1965), Equatorial Guinea (1968) and the British Trust Territories of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, Africa must unite (London, 1963), p. 150.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Quoted in Muriel Chamberlain, *Decolonisation: the fall of the European empires*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Oxford, 1999), p. 42.

Basutoland, Bechuanaland, and Swaziland (whose independence followed later in the decade) had gained their independence.

The United Nations played no small part in the process, notably through the work of its Trusteeship Committee in highlighting decolonisation issues, and the character of the organisation was radically changed in the process. Strong co-operation by the new states and co-ordination with their Asian contemporaries provided the new United Nations members with a voting strength that kept decolonisation issues (and disputes arising from that process, most notably in the Congo) to the fore in international debate. The creation of the All-African People's Conference and the Conference of Independent African States in 1958 was linked to this new internationalism: they emphasised 'the primacy of political independence, assistance to liberation movements, a united front at the United Nations and non-alignment'.<sup>9</sup> At Nkrumah's instigation, the former organisation evolved to include all the newlyemerging, albeit ideologically and socially diverse, African states under the banner of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) formed in Addis Ababa in May 1963. The membership asserted its 'right to make choices on the basis of each issue's merits, regardless of the interests of the Cold War alliances'.<sup>10</sup> Although shackled by the vestiges of empire and neo-colonial domination, its scale gave the group real voting weight at international organisations. The increasingly radical tone of its demands, particularly in relation to southern Africa, altered the direction of international debate and this impacted on small states like Ireland whose moderate approach was increasingly called into question.

## DECOLONISATION AND THE IRISH DIPLOMATIC IDENTITY

For the Irish government, the years that immediately preceded this change were marked by adjustment to life as a member of the United Nations. What Patrick Keatinge has described as 'tentative internationalisation'<sup>11</sup> was a departure from the isolation imposed by Ireland's neutrality in the Second World War and by its pre-war

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Edem Kodjo and David Chanaiwa, 'Pan-Africanism and liberation', in Ali A. Mazriu (ed.), UNESCO general history of Africa, Vol. VIII: Africa since 1935 (Paris, 1993), p. 747.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Margaret Legum, 'Africa and nonalignment', in J.W. Burton (ed.), *Nonalignment* (London, 1966), p. 57.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Patrick Keatinge, 'Ireland and the world, 1957-82', in Frank Litton (ed.), *Unequal achievement: the Irish experience 1957-1982* (Dublin, 1982), p. 226.

protectionist economic policies. The state emerged into a world greatly changed over the preceding two decades. Its experience was somewhat similar to that of Finland, which joined the United Nations at the same time and which, Soiri and Peltola noted, 'did not necessarily come into political contact with many international questions before she became a member of the UN'.<sup>12</sup> Both states' isolation was exaggerated in the case of the developing world, and relied largely on the work of Christian missionaries to foster any link with sub-Saharan Africa. It was difficult to over-estimate the importance of the churches' role in the Irish case. By 1965 there were 4,122 Irish Catholic missionaries working on the African continent.<sup>13</sup> Through relatives. neighbours, the 'penny for a black baby' collections, and the distribution of missionary magazines like Africa, African Missionary, and Catholic Missions, most Irish households had some relationship with Ireland's 'religious empire'. Africa assumed a central role. In the missionary texts, Bateman has argued, 'there was little distinction made between the various countries and Africa [was seen as] a largely undifferentiated mass populated by "Africans",14 but what the Irish public may have lacked in understanding the subtleties of that world was made up for in an overwhelmingly positive attitude and pride in Ireland's role. Missionary endeavour was offered as 'living proof that even if Ireland lacked a vast material empire, yet she was great as a mother nation, sending her sons to all points of the globe'.<sup>15</sup>

The possibility of 'cultural imperialism' in such activities was largely ignored.<sup>16</sup> As Africa moved towards independence, the past links between missionary proselytising and the consolidation of empire were exchanged for a belief that missionary success would be 'constantly imperilled wherever the old colonial antagonisms persist'.<sup>17</sup> From an Irish perspective missionaries were accorded an important role in state-building and their activities were strongly associated with Ireland's past. The *Irish Press* suggested in 1960 that the Irish people could 'justly claim to have played a significant role in the development of African independence.

<sup>16</sup> Bateman, 'Spiritual empire', p. 272.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Soiri and Peltola, Finland and southern Africa, p. 9.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Michael C Pelly, 'Statistical analysis of the Irish missionary effort overseas', *Pagan Missions* (Autumn 1965), p. 66.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Bateman, 'Spiritual empire', p. 15.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> President of University College Dublin, Arthur Conway, addressing departing Holy Ghost missionaries in Dublin in 1945; quoted in Manton, 'Roman Catholic Mission', p. 50.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> 'The colonial revolt', Irish Press, 1 July 1959.

Not merely by the example of our own struggle but through the toil of our missionaries, which has given spiritual and material assistance to the nations of Africa.<sup>18</sup> This correlation of Irish historical and Christian heritage had the effect of strengthening an Irish sense of identification with the emerging states. Missionary work in education and development was quietly linked to the task of building up the new African societies as they moved steadily towards political freedom. The arguments became reinforcing and accorded Ireland a greater role in the decolonisation of Africa and, the *Irish Press* argued in 1959, gave it 'the right to speak' on African political issues.<sup>19</sup> The effect of this discourse was twofold: it fostered an interest in and a sense of responsibility towards areas where Irish missionaries were active, and it created a link, however tenuous, between the activities of Irish men and women and African nationalist aspirations.

It was, by its very formulation, an imbalanced view of Ireland's role. It tended to ignore the view from the African side, and the fact that the Irish experience of colonisation had been, as Aoife Bhreatnach noted, 'far removed from the imperial, racist rule endured by many former African colonies'.<sup>20</sup> Respect was shown by African political activists for Irish politicians like Frank Aiken who had fought in the war of independence, but it was debatable how much African political elites knew about Ireland or whether they viewed their relationship in the same light as the Irish government and people. Nkrumah may have told his Irish audiences of his admiration for Parnell and Irish nationalist leaders, but the sincerity of his statement was tempered by the fact that much of the material for his speech was supplied by DEA officials.<sup>21</sup> There were other similar examples that questioned Irish assumptions. The insistence of the Moroccan member of a delegation from the Accra Conference of Independent African States, on a visit to Dublin on 10 September 1958, that Eamon de Valera was 'the principal representative of all peoples striving for full independence'<sup>22</sup> was an obvious attempt to enlist Irish support for the Algerian nationalist cause, and it was

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> 'Dr Nkrumah', Irish Press, 18 May 1960.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> 'The colonial revolt', Irish Press, 1 July 1959.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Bhreatnach, 'Friend of the colonial powers?', p. 182.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> DEA official Noel Dorr did much of the preparatory research for the speech in the National Library of Ireland prior to Nkrumah's visit: interview with Noel Dorr, Dublin, 12 April 2005.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Hand-written note by unknown DT official, 10 Sept. 1958, NAI DT S16490.

repeated in the group's meeting with the DEA on the same day.<sup>23</sup> It was difficult to gauge the sincerity of their statements. In spite of the relatively large number of African officials and politicians who had been educated either by Irish missionaries or in Irish universities (particularly Trinity College Dublin and the Royal College of Surgeons) the relationship lacked the direct links visible between Ireland and earlier nationalists in other parts of the British Empire, notably India.<sup>24</sup>

Whether this mattered in the construction of attitudes within Ireland was another question. Popular perceptions of Ireland's role based on its Christian and colonial heritage had a much stronger influence in shaping its approach to world affairs and the belief that leaders like Nkrumah would find 'sympathy and understanding' among a people who had 'known the rigours, bigotry and stupidity of colonial rule<sup>25</sup> took precedence over the reality of Ireland's impact in Africa. It created a very distinct understanding of the country's place in the world, one which influenced attitudes at both public and official levels. The perception that Ireland, if not a 'Third World' state, was certainly a post-colonial society, Stephen Howe noted, 'entered into the official discourse' during this period,<sup>26</sup> as the Irish government outwardly presented its people as one which knew 'what imperialism is and what resistance to it involves'.<sup>27</sup> Its diplomatic identity was constructed largely after this fashion and the formulation had a visible influence on its foreign policy. The pursuit of one of the core objectives of that policy, what Patrick Keatinge described as 'international distributive justice', for example, was based on two closely related concerns: 'the promotion of political antiimperialism and the preservation of Christian values'.<sup>28</sup> The twin factors of Ireland's Christian and colonial heritage were consistently returned to in the public statements of successive Ministers and public representatives. Liam Cosgrave, Minister for External Affairs in the coalition government between 1954 and 1957, told an audience in 1956 that his government's foreign policy was 'to a large extent determined for us by our

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Note by Nolan, 'Visit of delegation from the Accra Conference: Minutes of a meeting held in Iveagh House on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> September [1958] at 3 p.m.', NAI DFA 305/374.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> For a discussion of the relationship between Ireland and India, see Holmes and Holmes, *Ireland and India*; and O'Malley, *Ireland, India and Empire*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> 'Dr Nkrumah', Irish Press, 18 May 1960.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Howe, Ireland and empire, p. 155.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Frank Aiken, United Nations General Assembly (hereafter UNGA) plenary meeting, 6 Oct. 1960,

United Nations, Official Records of the General Assembly (hereafter UNORGA), A/PV.890.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Keatinge, *Place among the nations*, p. 171.

own national history',<sup>29</sup> while his successor Frank Aiken linked Irish attitudes in the mid-twentieth century directly to the old Irish Parliamentary Party's support for the 'cause of nationality' in Africa and Asia.<sup>30</sup> Irish diplomatic officials extended this depiction in debates at the United Nations and elsewhere and consistently asserted the state's position as 'the only West European country with an anti-colonial background',<sup>31</sup> and emphasised that 'we ourselves struggled for seven centuries to shake off the domination of a neighbouring power'.<sup>32</sup>

Howe has suggested that this rhetoric led analysts 'to discern a supposed Irish exceptionalism where actually its experience is far less remarkable or odd than is supposed', <sup>33</sup> but the purchase of these ideas on the official mind and their impact on policy formulation should not be underestimated. What Howe called the 'perceived colonial legacy<sup>34</sup> articulated by Aiken and others had a significant effect in shaping the principles on which Ireland's foreign policy was based. It was also used to assert Ireland's diplomatic independence by distinguishing its policies from those of its Western contemporaries. More than the Nordic states, Canada, the Netherlands - which of course had a considerable colonial tradition of its own, ending only in the 1960s, but whose attitude to the developing world built on what Arens described as 'the so-called ethical policy of colonial times with its mission of "elevating less developed peoples" economically<sup>35</sup> – or other moderate states who adopted a similar political stance, Ireland was portrayed as having a 'natural' sympathy with the cause of the developing world. Ireland's past, the Taoiseach Seán Lemass told a Washington audience in 1963, made it 'particularly conscious of the needs of countries following our path to freedom'.36

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Quoted in 'Ireland in the United Nations', Éire-Ireland: the Weekly Bulletin of the Department of External Affairs, No. 342 (29 Oct. 1956).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Frank Aiken, UNGA plenary meeting, 6 Oct. 1960, UNORGA, A/PV.890.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Freddie Boland, quoted in 'Mr Boland heads UN committee', Irish Press, 17 Sept. 1958.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Quoted from Freddie Boland's broadcast on United Nations Radio, relayed by Radio Éireann,

<sup>&#</sup>x27;Ireland's part in UN discussed by envoy', The Irish Times, 14 Jan. 1957.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Howe, *Ireland and empire*, p. 153.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 157.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> Esther Helena Arens, 'Multilateral institution-building and national interest: Dutch development policy in the 1960s', *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (2003), p. 459.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> 'Address by Mr Seán Lemass, Taoiseach, at Luncheon of National Press Club, Washington, DC, Wednesday, 16<sup>th</sup> October, 1963', NAI DT 98/6/404.

Not that it was quite that straightforward: in the same speech, mindful of Ireland's desire to join the EEC, Lemass described the state as 'unmistakably European' in its outlook.<sup>37</sup> It could not escape its European influences. Its high 'anticolonial' score at the United Nations put Ireland ahead of most Western states,<sup>38</sup> but behind the Latin Americans, Soviet-influenced Eastern Europeans, and the Afro-Asian group. The degree to which it could be described as having an affinity with the emerging states therefore depended on the definition of the term 'anti-colonial'. The Irish government was certainly anti-colonial relative to its Western contemporaries, but was not as radical as its self-perceived identity suggested. It is more instructive to view its position in the terms defined by the influential Irish Ambassador to the United Nations, Frederick Boland: instead of making extravagant claims about Ireland's role, one should be cognisant of its geographical and political orientation as a Western European state but one that by virtue of its own past, however over-emphasised and exaggerated its similarities to the African experience might have been, was sympathetic to the goals of the emerging states of the developing world.<sup>39</sup>

### CONCEPTUALISING IRISH FOREIGN POLICY

In practice, the self-perception of Ireland's role created by the Irish public and government officials played an important part in shaping its position in the international system, since, as Neil Renwick explained, such identities 'do not exist outside their own making. Rather they are socially created in specific social circumstances.'<sup>40</sup> The identity projected by the Irish government played an important role in shaping external perceptions of its status and the principles that helped to shape its foreign policy were transferred directly to its understanding of the international system. The allusions to Ireland's history and political culture had the potential to have a very definite bearing on the state's foreign policy since, as Jack Donnelly noted, states are 'not only are free to, but in fact often do, include certain moral objectives in their definition of the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> See Leon Hurwitz, 'The EEC and decolonization: the voting behaviour of the Nine in the UN General Assembly', *Political Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (1976), p. 440; and Bo Huldt, *Sweden, the United Nations and decolonisation: a study of Swedish participation in the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly 1946-69* (Lund, 1974), pp. 108-111.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Cathal O'Shannon, 'Talking to F.H. Boland', *The Irish Times*, 24 Dec. 1960.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> Neil Renwick, 'Re-reading Europe's identities', in Jill Krause and Neil Renwick, *Identities in international relations* (London, 1996), p. 155.

national self-interest<sup>41</sup> Membership of the United Nations allowed the Irish government to re-engage with principles that it had embraced as a member of the League of Nations, chief among which was the assertion that Ireland 'by doing good for others ... will do even greater good for ourselves' by helping to preserve world peace.<sup>42</sup> Eamon de Valera, one of the foremost advocates of the League, commented in 1956 when in opposition that the United Nations offered even greater opportunities to enforce the rule of law.<sup>43</sup> Irish officials viewed foreign affairs in a manner similar to that described more recently by Alexander Wendt: 'states identify positively with one another so that the security of each is perceived as the responsibility of all ... national interests are international interests'.<sup>44</sup> The success of the United Nations was, in turn, linked directly to the future success and prosperity of the Irish state itself, and therefore to Ireland's national interests.

This understanding of international relations blurred the distinction between a solely principled and a solely pragmatic approach to foreign policy. Issues like decolonisation could thereby assume a prominent role in the debate surrounding international stability. Irish support for the decolonisation process was portrayed by Cosgrave in 1956 as 'not merely one of sentiment. It is also one of reason and conviction.'<sup>45</sup> That reasoning emphasised the need to secure rapid and peaceful decolonisation and a stable future for an independent Africa and, by inference, the world. Aiken believed that the period of the late 1950s was 'the most critical in the world's history', one which would decide the very future of civilisation,<sup>46</sup> and in that environment it was in the national interest of smaller states like Ireland to do everything they could to promote the ideals which they believed would diminish the risks of international conflict, from which they had potentially most to lose. In an address to the Cambridge University Liberal Club in January 1960, Lemass admitted that it was not easy for a small state 'to adhere to high principles in setting its attitudes', but he argued

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Jack Donnelly, 'Realism', in Scott Burchill, Andrew Linklater, Richard Devetak, Jack Donnelly,

Matthew Paterson, Christian Reus-Smit and Jacqui True, *Theories of international relations* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., London, 2005), p. 52.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> 'Membership card', *The Irish Times*, 16 Dec. 1955.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> 'Obligations of UN must be accepted – Mr de Valera', *The Irish Times*, 22 Nov. 1956.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Alexander Wendt, 'Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics', *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 2. (Spring, 1992), p. 400.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> Liam Cosgrave's address to the Dublin Rotary Club, 'Ireland in the United Nations', *Éire-Ireland: the Weekly Bulletin of the Department of External Affairs*, No. 342, 29 Oct. 1956.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> "Cruel injustice" against Tibet: Aiken refers to critical time ahead', *The Irish Times*, 13 April 1959.

that by 'preserving a fair-minded and responsible independence ... we can contribute even to an extent out of proportion to our size, and our economic and military importance, to the smooth working of the machinery of the major world organisation'.<sup>47</sup> It was an approach shared by Ireland's moderate counterparts. Lemass's attitude was remarkably similar to that of the Swedish government, which was of the belief that 'there are at times opportunities for non-aligned states, even small states such as Sweden, to narrow the gap between divergent standpoints or to gain the understanding of one party for the other party's views'.<sup>48</sup>

The Irish government deliberately positioned its policies in reference to those other moderate states, viewing Ireland's position as one of 'that centre group of smaller countries [that] fostered the modification of extremism and the search for policies with a wide appeal'.<sup>49</sup> Pooling political support in the United Nations was seen as essential to the attempt 'to influence the behaviour of larger nations',<sup>50</sup> and subsequently to the pursuit of the states' own security. Drawing on their experience of the League of Nations and their differing fates in the Second World War, this group of states was distinguished from the Afro-Asian group by virtue of what Annette Baker Fox described as their awareness 'of the demands the United Nations would make upon them as well as the demands they could not make upon it, and they were not obsessed by the idea of national independence which they took for granted.'<sup>51</sup> Their common platform was their support for the role of international law in the promotion of peace and stability, and the group 'clung to the hope that the United Nations would contribute to their security' and welfare by 'stimulating co-operation in fields of interest to them'.<sup>52</sup>

Participation in the United Nations had other benefits. Swedish Foreign Minister Torsten Nilsson stated in 1965 that his government considered that its activities at the United Nations were 'not only a rightful and necessary corollary to our membership in the world organisation but are also calculated to give a small country

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Quoted from Lemass's address to the Cambridge University Liberal Club on the role of small states in the United Nations; 'Small nations have most to gain – Mr Lemass', *Irish Independent*, 1 Feb. 1960.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> Swedish Prime Minister Tage Erlander, quoted in Huldt, *Sweden, the UN and decolonisation*, p. 27.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> 'Small nations have most to gain – Mr Lemass', Irish Independent, 1 Feb. 1960.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> Skelly, Irish diplomacy, p. 21.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> Annette Baker Fox, 'The small states of Western Europe in the United Nations', *International Organization*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Summer, 1965), p. 777.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> Ibid.

status in the minds of other countries and to help to make the world better acquainted with conditions in our own country'.<sup>53</sup> It offered 'an opportunity for practising neutrality or non-alignment, to demonstrate political independence and to bolster "prestige" and "reputation"'.<sup>54</sup> The Irish government was more than aware of its potential in this respect. Formulating its approach in terms of a distinct set of national characteristics, including neutrality, allowed the state to assume what Karsh described as 'a broad and varied range of functions which non-neutral states cannot accomplish'.<sup>55</sup> It identified the Irish approach with a specific set of principles – 'mediation, conciliation, and compromise'<sup>56</sup> – that added to the assertion of its diplomatic independence.

That independent character to Ireland's foreign policy, which drew praise from The Economist in 1959 for setting out 'not to gain some narrow sectional interest but to stir up the general conscience of the [United Nations General] assembly on broad issues',<sup>57</sup> owed more to the attitudes of Fianna Fáil after the change of government in the summer of 1957 than its coalition predecessor. The governments' respective approaches to the decolonisation issue, though grounded in the same principles, indicated this difference. Cosgrave based his foreign policy on three principles: fealty to the United Nations Charter, the pursuit of an independent foreign policy, and a commitment to uphold Christian civilisation against the spread of Communist influence.<sup>58</sup> His emphasis, however, lay on the first and third of those principles. In expressing his support for decolonisation in Africa, for example, he warned that the Irish government could not support 'any movement which seemed to us determined to ride rough-shod over the rights of minorities or to ignore the justifiable claims of established interests'.<sup>59</sup> He told the Dáil in July 1956 that his government wished to reconcile its strongly anti-colonial traditions with its support for 'the just and reasonable interests of European powers which have a major role to play in the defence

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> Quoted in Huldt, Sweden, the UN and decolonisation, p. 29.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> Efraim Karsh, Neutrality and small states (London, 1988), p. 116.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> Ibid, p. 120

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> 'Afro-Irish Assembly', *The Economist*, 19 Dec. 1959.

<sup>58</sup> Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 159, Cols. 142-4 (3 July 1956).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> 'Ireland in the United Nations', *Éire-Ireland: the Weekly Bulletin of the Department of External Affairs*, No. 342, 29 Oct. 1956.

of the free world'.<sup>60</sup> What little interest the Irish public exhibited was largely in favour of Cosgrave's comments. A 5 July editorial in *The Irish Times* concerned itself largely with the question of partition at the United Nations but commented that 'the attitude of [Cosgrave's] Government, which is also the attitude of the country, is on the side of the democratic West'.<sup>61</sup>

Aiken shared Cosgrave's commitment to the United Nations Charter and, in a different fashion, his commitment to upholding Western civilisation, but to them he added a diplomatic pragmatism – that the problems presented to the United Nations were 'just like other human problems, neither black nor white. They are grey and mixed.'<sup>62</sup> It was under his tutelage that Ireland fully realised the autonomy in foreign policy for which it was so widely praised by *The Economist* and others. He believed that international law and organisations like the United Nations offered 'the best guarantee of our freedom and independence',<sup>63</sup> and adapted Ireland's policies accordingly. In his emphasis on the second of Cosgrave's principles Aiken developed the former's definition of Ireland's diplomatic identity, indentifying it as 'part of a fraternity of anti-colonial nations',<sup>64</sup> and emphasising his government's commitment to 'democratic, civil and religious freedom for all peoples'.<sup>65</sup>

The resulting policies owed an additional debt to the exchanges between the various actors in the Irish government and the DEA. At cabinet level de Valera's independent attitude encouraged Aiken to take a constructive approach to international affairs, one balanced by the more Western-conscious Lemass. Within the DEA, the independently-minded Aiken and Conor Cruise O'Brien (a DEA official until his departure for the United Nations in 1961) were balanced by the more pro-Western Boland (Irish Ambassador to the United Nations from 1955 to 1964) and Con Cremin (Secretary of the DEA from 1958 until 1964, and Irish Ambassador to the United Nations from 1964 until 1974). Their individual and collective efforts did not go unnoticed by the international community. Behind *The Economist*'s exaggerated superlatives – 'the [General] assembly needs a few more Irelands of this kind ... As

<sup>60</sup> Liam Cosgrave, Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 159, Col. 145 (3 July 1956).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup> 'Ireland and the UN', *The Irish Times*, 5 July 1956.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup> Frank Aiken, Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 159, Col. 146 (3 July 1956).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup> Frank Aiken, UNGA plenary meeting, 6 Oct. 1960, UNORGA, A/PV.890.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> Bhreatnach, 'Friend of the colonial powers?', p. 182.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>65</sup> "Cruel injustice" against Tibet: Aiken refers to critical time ahead', *The Irish Times*, 13 April 1959.

well as Scandinavians to coax, it needs more honorary Irish to goad<sup>66</sup> – there existed a healthy respect for the Irish approach to international affairs. At Ireland's first General Assembly, Cosgrave 'made a deep impression by the sincerity and constructiveness of his speeches' and his officials were singled out for further praise by their British counterparts: 'Mr Boland, the leader of the Delegation, is an old League of Nations hand and a brilliant draftsman. Mr [Eamon] Kennedy, Miss [Sheila] Murphy, Mr [Paul] Keating and Dr O'Brien all contributed a strong and novel flavour which the Assembly found pleasant.<sup>67</sup> By 1962 the Irish delegation had 'established a good reputation for itself as a clear-thinking, energetic and efficient team',<sup>68</sup> and came to be viewed by British officials as particularly important in encouraging the new Afro-Asian members to act responsibly: '[n]ot only do they themselves set a notable example of restraint and common sense, but they regularly use their influence with the newer members to induce in them a similar approach.<sup>69</sup>

The accolades accorded to individual Irish officials, such as O'Brien's role in the Congo (see chapter two) and Eamon Kennedy's term as rapporteur for the South West Africa Committee (see chapter three) helped to reinforce Irish support for the United Nations and, the Irish public believed, were a reflection of the state's international standing. The *Irish Independent* felt that Boland's election as President of the General Assembly in 1960 reflected a positive view of Ireland's contributions to international affairs: 'To be acceptable a man must be of proved impartiality, be a skilled diplomat and come from a country which is able to conduct its affairs with responsibility.'<sup>70</sup> Boland was a 'man of many friends' at the United Nations, and his election in 1960 confirmed the esteem in which he and the Irish delegation were held.<sup>71</sup>

Aiken too won considerable respect for his support of the United Nations and his attempt to pursue an independent attitude to the conduct of international affairs. British officials, who in 1957 regretted Cosgrave's departure and worried that Aiken

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>66</sup> 'Afro-Irish Assembly', The Economist, 19 Dec. 1959.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup> 'Extract from Report on the Commonwealth Delegations at the 11<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly, May, 1957', NAUK DO 35/10625.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>68</sup> 'Confidential. Irish Republic at the United Nations: Brief for Visit of P.U.S. [Private Under-Secretary] to Dublin, June, 1962', NAUK DO 181/9.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>69</sup> Confidential briefing titled 'Visit of Irish Ministers', prepared for visit of Lemass and Aiken to the Foreign Office, 19 March 1963, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup> 'Honour for Ireland', Irish Independent, 21 Sept. 1960.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>71</sup> Hilling to Boland, 20 Sept. 1960, Trinity College Dublin Manuscripts Department (hereafter TCD MS) Frederick Boland Papers (hereafter Boland Papers) 10469/1.

would be overly emotional about the partition issue,<sup>72</sup> grew in respect for the latter's approach to and interest in the United Nations and commented in 1966 that he took 'an objective, indeed a friendly interest, in our relations in all departments except where Partition is concerned'.<sup>73</sup> Aiken won many friends in New York among a wide variety of delegations, ranging from the newly-independent Afro-Asian states who respected his background in the war of independence, to Ireland's moderate partners, and officials from Britain and the United States. He developed friendships with a number of prominent United Nations officials, including Andrew Cordier, its chief negotiator in the Congo, and Ralph Bunche, the Secretary General's representative in Leopoldville at the outbreak of that crisis. His support for the United Nations, exemplified by the considerable amount of time and effort he expended in New York, was widely appreciated, and roundly missed after his term as Minister ended. In October 1969 Bunche, then Under Secretary-General, wrote to Aiken from New York that 'to an oldtimer like myself it seems strange that you are not here. I simply felt impelled to write this note to let you know how much I personally miss your towering (literally and figuratively) presence here.<sup>74</sup>

### IRELAND, DECOLONISATION AND THE UNITED NATIONS

The policies pursued by the Irish government were a product of the interplay between these various actors. Of the officials in the DEA Boland was certainly the most influential. His anxiety about 'the excitable and excessive demonstrations of the "wilder" anti-colonials<sup>75</sup> tempered foreign policy with a realism and pragmatism that lent it its specific character. His influence was visible in Irish attitudes to decolonisation to the same extent as elsewhere in its foreign policy. He told an audience in Cleveland, Ohio, in December 1959 that

Not merely for reasons of world security but also as freemen and Christians, we must accept the duty of convincing the men and women of the new nations of Asia, Africa and the Middle East that only in a democratic system which guarantees every citizen his

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup> Kimber to James, 3 Sept. 1957, NAUK DO 35/10625.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>73</sup> Note, 'Mr Frank Aiken, Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister) and Minister for External Affairs', prepared for the British Foreign Secretary's visit to North America in 1966, NAUK DO 182/149.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup> Bunche to Aiken, 1 Oct. 1969, University College Dublin Archives (hereafter UCDA) Frank Aiken Papers (hereafter Aiken Papers) P104/6990.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>75</sup> Bhreatnach, 'Friend of the colonial powers?', p. 200.

essential liberties and an equal respect for his rights can the dignity due to them as human beings be achieved and safeguarded; and that Communism and other forms of totalitarianism will most assuredly rob them of it.<sup>76</sup>

Firmly based in the rhetoric of Ireland's colonial and Christian heritage, Boland's speech reflected a policy that was independent but at the same time broadly sympathetic to Western concerns.

In the international climate of the late 1950s there was an unavoidably close relationship between Ireland's broader foreign policy objectives and its attitude to the decolonisation process. In arriving at the latter the Irish government based its approach on two not always compatible principles: 'self-determination and proven readiness for self-rule'.<sup>77</sup> Policy was based on a desire to minimise grievances among both coloniser and colonised, to contribute to the creation of successful and stable independent states, and to help reduce the spread of Cold War tensions, with its attendant consequences for international security.

It was in the meetings of the United Nations and particularly the Fourth or Trusteeship Committee, originally constituted to deal with issues relating to the United Nations Trust Territories, but which later expanded to become the central forum for the discussion of all colonial issues, that these policies found full voice. In the late 1950s, the committee's attention was focussed on deciding the future of the Trust Territories, giving opportunity for the practical application of Irish-supported principles. The policies the Irish delegation pursued were a mix of pragmatism and idealism and reflected the complex diplomatic identity they created. In January 1957, the Irish delegation supported the French government against attacks by the then small Afro-Asian bloc of its policies in French Togoland, one of the Trust Territories. Responding to French entreaties, it voted in support of French concerns and 'reversed its standard practice of not attending Fourth Committee meetings to do so'.<sup>78</sup> By the end of the year, that position had altered to some extent, though it remained couched in a desire to accommodate the colonising power. After the United Nations commission established to deal with the question suggested a further plebiscite to determine the Togolese

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>76</sup> Frederick H. Boland, 'Freedom and toleration in a democratic society: an address given before the First Friday Club of Cleveland', 31 Dec. 1959, UCDA Aiken Papers P104/6316.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>77</sup> Skelly, Irish diplomacy, p. 134.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>78</sup> Ibid., pp. 77-8.

population's desire for independence, Ireland, along with Canada, Colombia, Denmark, and Liberia, sponsored a resolution calling for significant powers to be transferred to the territory by 1958, and the creation of a legislative assembly which would decide its status. Introducing the resolution, Eamon Kennedy betrayed the Irish government's dual concerns. He commented on his delegation's 'profound conviction of the importance of good self-government' and its awareness 'of the real dangers surrounding the premature grant of unilateral independence, in conditions of economic instability and want', and paid tribute to the work of France as administering authority, while simultaneously emphasising that 'no Delegation rejoices more than mine does in "the cause of freedom and independence"<sup>79</sup> Successful decolonisation was presented as integral to international stability since Africa's future no longer lay 'in the obedient subordination of dependent peoples, but rather in the voluntary cooperation of the Administering powers with the peoples under their care, so that these peoples may choose their own path, wisely and well-equipped, with the full collaboration of the State that nurtured them and in the fullness of time'.<sup>80</sup>

In this approach, Ireland was not unlike Sweden, whose policies on the Trust Territories during this period, Huldt noted, 'were largely the result of compromises reached within a fixed framework outlined by the respective administrating states'.<sup>81</sup> The Irish government was committed to what Huldt further termed a process of 'consensus formation', which emphasised the need for dialogue and constructive engagement with the administering powers.<sup>82</sup> In the case of Togoland, the process was made easier by the fact that the majority of the anti-colonial states believed in the desire of the French government to end its administration. The resolution introduced in 1958 bore the mark of the Irish delegation's newly-established role as a member of the moderate group since, equally importantly, it enjoyed the support of the French delegation. Only Ghana, which coveted the Togoland territory, voted against when it reached the General Assembly, while the Soviet and Arab members, who could be numbered among Ghana's supporters, abstained. In a further testament to the state's

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>79</sup> 'Statement by delegate of Ireland, Mr E.L. Kennedy, on the question of French Togoland', 19 Nov. 1957, NAI DFA Permanent Mission to the United Nations (hereafter PMUN) 50 X/3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>81</sup> Huldt, Sweden, the UN and decolonisation, p. 136.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 137.

new-found standing, Boland was twice asked by Canada and Denmark to lead the United Nations Commission to monitor the Togolese elections in 1958, though he declined on both occasions.

Togo policy was repeated in the Irish delegation's approach to the fate of the other United Nations Trust Territories. In December 1958 it co-sponsored a resolution at the Fourth Committee aimed at resolving a frontier dispute over Somaliland between Italy and Ethiopia by calling for the appointment of an independent third member of an arbitration tribunal to settle the issue. Kennedy's contribution to the Fourth Committee debate on the date of the Trust Territory's independence eleven months later reiterated the duality of Ireland's approach. The Irish delegation desired that Somaliland should 'accede to independence and nationhood as soon as possible', but warned 'that all the final steps such as the completion of the plan for the transfer of powers and the approval of the constitution should be completed beforehand by the Italian and Somali Governments'.<sup>83</sup> Earlier that year he had given an even clearer indication of his government's policies in a March debate on the future of the British and French Trust Territories in the Cameroons. Having outlined Ireland's status 'among those who understood the power of nationalism and knew the sacrifices men could make for freedom and independence'. Kennedy emphasised his delegation's concern for the future stability of the continent.<sup>84</sup> He rejected suggestions that elections for the state's assembly should take place before independence and under United Nations supervision; the people of the Cameroons had already chosen independence via plebiscite, so to require that elections should be held as a pre-requisite to that independence would 'interfere unjustifiably' with the internal affairs of the new state.<sup>85</sup> Exhibiting an obvious concern at the potential spread of the Cold War, Kennedy warned that all members of the committee 'should beware of doing anything that might imply that the new State would not be capable of shaping its own destiny without external aid and of governing itself with due respect for the rights and liberties of the individual'.<sup>86</sup>

The role that Ireland played on these occasions showed an awareness of the broader difficulties involved in the decolonisation process, a desire to ensure that self-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>83</sup> Eamon Kennedy, UNGA Fourth Committee, 20 Nov. 1959, UNORGA, A/C.4/SR.962.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>84</sup> Eamon Kennedy, UNGA Fourth Committee, 6 March 1959, UNORGA, A/C.4/SR.866.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

determination was achieved under the best possible conditions and a commitment to the creation of successful post-independence polities. In general, policy was aimed at leaving both the colonisers and the colonised with the minimum level of grievance and reducing the potential for weakened states in which outside influence might gain a foothold. It appeared to place Ireland at the forefront of the decolonisation debate yet, as Huldt remarked in the case of Sweden whose policies followed a similar pattern, the significance of Irish policies in securing greater United Nations activity 'should not be exaggerated as this involvement was acceptable to and even invited by the administering powers'.<sup>87</sup> At the same time however it had a very visible effect on defining Ireland's diplomatic identity at the United Nations. After its contribution to the debate on solving the dispute between Italy and Ethiopia in 1958 the Irish delegation was 'thanked profusely by both the Ethiopians and Italians and [was] given credit for the result by delegations generally'.<sup>88</sup> The state earned the friendship of both African and Western states, sought a constructive and inclusive solution to the problems of the United Nations, and used issues like decolonisation, on which it could take a principled stance, to signal its diplomatic independence.

### DIPLOMACY OUTSIDE THE UNITED NATIONS CONTEXT

At its centre, this approach emphasised the protection of Ireland's national interests through its support for international law and the promotion of peaceful solutions to international conflict. The United Nations was the primary venue for its pursuit of these norms, but it also attempted to use its influence outside that context to cultivate a respect for the same principles among the emerging African states. In a speech to mark Nigerian independence in Dublin in October 1960, the Minister for Industry and Commerce, Jack Lynch, expressed his hope that Nigeria's leaders would 'subscribe to the principles of international conduct on which the rule of law must rest' and reiterated his government's belief in the United Nations as 'the world forum ... which represents in these troubled times the best hope for ensuring the safety and progress of mankind'.<sup>89</sup> New states like Nigeria were called on to live up to what Hedley Bull later

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>87</sup> Huldt, Sweden, the UN and decolonisation, p. 137.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>88</sup> Boland to Cremin, 18 Dec. 1958, NAI DFA PMUN 92 X/45.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>89</sup> 'Nigeria can play great role to-day – Minister', Irish Independent, 2 Oct. 1960.

called the 'duties and rights attaching to states as members of international society'.<sup>90</sup> The established moderate states viewed it as important that once they became members of the international community the new states should view their responsibilities in the same manner. To the Irish government this meant encouraging them to act in a fashion conducive to the creation of the kind of system they promoted through the United Nations, with the emphasis on finding peaceful and constructive solutions in the pursuit of international stability, or, as Aiken counselled the emerging states, 'to be patient until [independence] arrives ... and to act forgivingly and generously thereafter'.<sup>91</sup>

The potential influence the Irish government wielded was realised only gradually and partially. In January 1957 the DEA recommended that Ireland had little need to be represented at the Ghanaian independence ceremonies, commenting that it had 'no immediate political interest in the Gold Coast itself,' though it recognised the 'desirability of working towards some degree of intimacy with the Afro-Asian nations and the bloc that they constitute in the United Nations'.<sup>92</sup> It was not until the spring of 1960 that the question was seriously raised of appointing an Irish diplomatic representative to Africa, and West Africa in particular. By then other pressing issues of national interest had come to the fore. The presence of a large number of Irish missionaries on the continent led to increased pressure from among the Irish Catholic hierarchy to appoint an Irish representative to the region. As early as 1957, the Taoiseach John A. Costello had expressed his concern that Ireland 'had nobody to look after our Missionaries in Africa and Asia'.<sup>93</sup> Nigeria, the home of the largest concentration of missionaries, became the strongest candidate. After Dr Thomas McGetterick, Bishop of Ogoja in the Eastern Region of that country, raised the possibility of Irish representation in a May 1959 conversation with Cremin, citing his fear of possible religious tension after the state's independence,<sup>94</sup> other clerics followed suit in the hope that Ireland might build on the strong reputation it enjoyed in the region.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>90</sup> Hedley Bull, 'Society and anarchy in international relations', in James Der Derian (ed.), *International theory: critical investigations* (London, 1995), p. 79.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>91</sup> Quoted in Skelly, Irish diplomacy, p. 125.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>92</sup> McDonagh to MacEntee, Jan. 1957, NAI DFA 305/325 Pt I A.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>94</sup> Note by Cremin, 25 May 1959, NAI DFA 305/338 Pt I.

Their arguments had a definite influence on the final decision to site an Irish representative in Nigeria, but political considerations were clearly in evidence in Aiken's thinking. In March 1960 the DEA advised the government that the future of Irish diplomatic relations with sub-Saharan Africa necessitated the appointment of 'a career consul of First Secretary rank, resident in either Ghana or Nigeria, whose area of jurisdiction would cover both countries'.95 Its recommendation was founded in 'the importance from the political, social and economic aspects of having Ireland permanently represented in these two African countries'.<sup>96</sup> Aiken clearly had visions of cultivating his government's influence with both states. He wished to capitalise on the goodwill shown to Ireland, 'particularly in Nigeria', where its reputation was 'extremely high'.<sup>97</sup> Following his visit to Ghana to attend the celebrations marking that state's reconstitution as a republic in July 1960, Aiken wrote to his Ghanaian counterpart, Ako Adeji, to express his belief in 'the sympathy and friendship which bind our two peoples and which, it is my fervent hope, the years ahead will strengthen and develop'.<sup>98</sup> The Irish government's moderate stance and the independent role it had cultivated at the United Nations made it seem all the more important that the state avail of any opportunity to guide the African continent along a similar path. Aiken's general reluctance to expand Irish diplomatic representation, which he felt could be more than adequately covered at the United Nations, gives further significance to the decision made in June 1960 to establish a resident mission in Nigeria. Only five months later, in November 1960, the post was elevated to Embassy status in order to gain 'full value' from Irish representation; '[a] Consul would not enjoy the same standing in the eyes of the Nigerian Administration and community, and consequently would not have the same influence, as an Ambassador'.99

The decision had the additional goal of pursuing Irish trade possibilities in West Africa at a time when the Irish economy was expanding and looking outwards for new markets. In addition to the political attitudes that they shared, trade promotion was an important element in the foreign policy of small states: Swedish goals were based on

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>95</sup> Molloy to sec., Dept. of Finance, 22 March 1960, NAI DFA 317/88 Pt I.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>98</sup> Aiken to Adeji, 5 Aug. 1960, NAI DFA 305/325 Pt I B.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>99</sup> DEA memorandum for the government, 'Establishment of Embassy at Lagos, Nigeria', 14 Nov. 1960, NAI DFA 317/88 Pt I.

what Huldt denoted the preservation of its independence and military security, but also the 'promotion of Swedish economic (and trade) interests', <sup>100</sup> albeit on a much larger scale than Ireland. On his return from Nigeria's independence celebrations in October 1960 – his presence in itself a marker of the state's importance to Ireland – Lemass initiated a detailed investigation by Córas Tráchtála (CTT), the Irish Export Board, into the viability of Irish trade with the newly-independent state. Lemass was prompted by conversations with various Irish expatriates and missionaries, but the potential had been appreciated by the Irish government several years beforehand. In 1958 CTT had acted on a request by six Irish firms to commission a report on markets in Ghana and Nigeria, which commented on possibilities for Irish firms in the market for 'capital goods such as building materials',<sup>101</sup> and Aedan O'Beirne's later appointment as the first Irish consul to Nigeria was made on the basis that he was 'an officer with considerable experience in trade promotion'.<sup>102</sup> The efforts met with little success however and those following Lemass's visit fared little better. In spite of the creation of a direct shipping link between Ireland and West Africa in April 1961, and the opening of a Guinness plant in Nigeria in March 1963, trade was limited. Irish companies declined to capitalise on the opportunities highlighted by CTT and the Guinness plant operated through the company's British base rather than St James's Gate. It was not until the mid-1970s, when CTT ran another trade mission and appointed its own representative in Lagos, that Irish exporters gained any significant share of the Nigerian market, and even then their success was limited by the onset of recession in the Nigerian economy in the latter part of the decade.

# 1960: 'THE YEAR OF AFRICA'

The attention that the Irish government afforded to the new states showed an awareness of their potential impact on international affairs. Its assessment was not unfounded. By the end of the 1960s their presence at the United Nations led to the existence of what Lemass later described as two groups of uncommitted countries, the first of which included the Afro-Asian states and the second of which, 'a group of independent

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>100</sup> Huldt, Sweden, the UN and decolonisation, p. 28.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>101</sup> 'Foreign Trade Committee, Minutes of meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 1960', NAI DFA 348/186/7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>102</sup> DEA memorandum for the government, 'Appointment of Mr A.P.J. O'Beirne as Consul of Ireland at Lagos, Nigeria', 16 July 1960, NAI DFA 317/88 Pt I.

countries which were trying to judge all issues on their merits and cast their votes accordingly',<sup>103</sup> included Ireland. The increasing divergence between the two groups served to test the Irish government's commitment to the decolonisation process, at least as defined by the radical Afro-Asians.

From the beginning of the decade their impact was made readily apparent. 1960, 'the year of Africa', became a turning point in the history of United Nations' involvement in colonial issues with General Assembly resolution 1514, the 'Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples', its centre point. It helped to re-define the world organisation's approach to colonialism and colonial structures 'primarily in terms of ending such regimes'.<sup>104</sup> With an increasing number of independent African states swelling the ranks of the Afro-Asian group and increasing its voting power, the resolution also marked a high point in the Irish contribution to the decolonisation debate. As one of the only Western states to support the resolution, it served as a distillation of the Irish government's policies of the previous five years and a re-iteration of its diplomatic independence, one which Noel Dorr later commented formed 'the conceptual basis for our anti-colonial policy'.<sup>105</sup> The manner in which the Irish approach was framed reasserted its commitment to the decolonisation process and reinforced its diplomatic identity. Aiken addressed the General Assembly on 5 December 1960 as representative of what he termed 'a nation that fought for centuries to uphold the principles of freedom for men and nations'.<sup>106</sup> He did so with the aim of securing 'the passage of a resolution ... that will best serve the long-term interests of all nations', namely peace and the reduction of poverty, illiteracy and disease throughout the world.<sup>107</sup> An earlier draft of Aiken's speech revealed the core concepts of his approach to decolonisation. In it he praised the 'guiding hand' of the United Nations that 'directed and controlled' the course of freedom. He combined the Irish government's support for the principle of selfdetermination with its belief in constructive, patient reform:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>103</sup> Seán Lemass, 'Small states in international organisations', in August Schou and Arne Olav

Brundtland (eds.), Small states in international relations: Nobel symposium 17 (Uppsala, 1971), p. 117. <sup>104</sup> Edward T. Rowe, 'The Emerging Anti-Colonial Consensus in the United Nations', The Journal of Conflict Resolution, Vol. 8, No. 3. (September, 1964), p. 227.

Interview with Dorr (12 April 2005).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>106</sup> Frank Aiken, UNGA plenary meeting, 5 Dec. 1960, UNORGA, A/PV.935.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>107</sup> Ibid.

We welcome [the resolution] because we believe in what it says. But we shall not vote for it in the belief that any such resolution passed here could automatically bring freedom to the world's remaining dependent people. Indeed I could think of nothing more callous, nothing more calculated to breed disillusion and distrust ... Surely independence is something much more important and much less easy. Self-determination and independence are aims for which we must work, not decisions which we can impose on dependent peoples.<sup>108</sup>

At the onset of a new era for the United Nations Aiken framed Irish policy in terms both of its past history and its fears and aspirations for the future. At its heart lay a recognition that that future had the potential to bring not a vindication of the values held by Ireland and the other moderate states, but a radicalisation of Afro-Asian demands and an increasing divergence in the attitude of the two groups. It was a process already visible in the debates of the Fourth Committee in 1960. With neighbouring Congo in the grip of civil war, the United Nations' involvement in moulding the future of the Belgian Trust Territories Ruanda-Urundi took on an additional gravity. The case provided a test for policies that the Irish government had developed in its first few years at the United Nations. The Belgian authorities' desire for rapid decolonisation, coupled with very real fears of serious inter-ethnic violence, made it extremely difficult to map out an orderly future for the territories. In a letter to Cremin in December 1960, Kennedy warned of fears that the rivalries between the Hutu and Tutsi tribes in the region 'may not be healed and that independence may bring the same kind of disintegration as the Congo has seen unless great care is taken'.<sup>109</sup> Four months later he told representatives of the same tribes addressing the Fourth Committee that while the 'sole wish of the Irish delegation was to see the people of Ruanda attain independence in conditions of happiness and prosperity', he would have 'great difficulty in voting for early independence for the Territory if he felt that independence might touch off serious civil disturbances similar to the tragic collapse in another part of Africa'.110

The complexity of the question highlighted the limitations of the United Nations machinery in which Ireland had invested so much. As the Irish delegation admitted,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>108</sup> First draft of speech on 'The granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples', undated [Dec. 1960?], UCDA Aiken Papers P104/6320.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>109</sup> Kennedy to Cremin, 22 Dec. 1960, NAI DFA PMUN 131 X/84.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>110</sup> Eamon Kennedy, UNGA Fourth Committee, 3 April 1961, UNORGA, A/C.4/SR.1127.

'United Nations machinery, no matter how well intentioned it was, could not succeed if the peoples themselves did not wish for harmony'.<sup>111</sup> The moderate stance for which Ireland had been praised in the latter half of the 1950s was being increasingly eclipsed by the Afro-Asian group. Kennedy commented that although Belgium had not adequately prepared the territory for independence, 'the pressures of the radical members of the Afro-Asian group ... have only made the situation even more explosive'.<sup>112</sup> Conversely, that situation made the role of the moderate states more important. In February 1962, with the date of independence fast approaching, the Irish delegation co-sponsored a motion with Sweden calling for the progressive replacement of Belgian troops with a United Nations-trained indigenous force. Tadhg O'Sullivan warned that the world organisation 'would have the blood of innocent people on its hands if it drew Belgian troops out of Ruanda Urundi before native troops could assure order and security in the trust territory'.<sup>113</sup> The Irish delegation's actions confirmed its role at the United Nations and the continued respect shown to it (and Sweden) as members of the moderate centre. The draft resolution won praise from Paul-Henri Spaak, the Belgian representative, but tellingly also enjoyed the support of the Afro-Asian bloc for its commitment to the essential goal of self-determination.

In framing it Boland 'spent a good deal of time' conversing with Afro-Asian delegates and was 'glad to say that they are not in the least resentful of, or antagonised by it. I emphasised in speaking to them that there was no difference between our respective views as to the objective to be achieved. Where we differed was as to the best means of achieving it.'<sup>114</sup> As a signifier of the growing difference of perspective between the two sides, however, his comments were telling. The Irish government supported decolonisation, but not at any cost when it had seen the risks first-hand in the Congo (see chapter two). It continued to court the support of the Afro-Asian group, with which it saw itself as a peaceful moderator, but with which its influence was growing increasingly limited. In July 1962, in spite of Ireland's misgivings, the territories were accepted as members of the United Nations and as the independent

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>111</sup> Note, 'The question of the future of Ruanda-Urundi', unsigned [Eamon Kennedy?], undated [1961?], NAI DFA PMUN 131 X/84.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>112</sup> Note by Kennedy, 'The Question of the future of Ruanda-Urundi: Historical Background', undated [1961?], ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>113</sup> 'Warning to UN by Irish delegate', *The Irish Times*, 21 Feb. 1962.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>114</sup> Boland to Cremin, 20 Feb. 1962, NAI DFA 305/420.

states of Burundi and Rwanda. Ireland's role in the proceedings, however, continued to earn it the respect of the Afro-Asian states, and the Ghanaian delegation requested that it co-sponsor the resolution proposing the two countries as members, which the Irish delegation gladly accepted.

The growing influence of the Afro-Asian group manifested itself in other ways. The designation of the 1960s as the first United Nations Development Decade and the adoption of a target contribution for developed countries to transfer 1% of GNP as aid for the developing world linked Afro-Asian attempts to consolidate their political independence through economic development with their challenge to Western states to live up to their rhetorical commitment to a successful future for Africa by providing it with the means to achieve it. Ireland had some prior history of involvement in overseas assistance. The Irish Red Cross was involved in the deployment of aid in post-war France, and later in India, and stimulated a limited amount of public interest and involvement in its activities. But it was the work of Irish missionaries, so important in informing public attitudes towards the developing world, that had the greatest influence on public perceptions of aid. Though it was not until after Pope Paul VI's 1967 encyclical on development, Populorum Progressio, that missionaries became widely involved in such activities (to the extent that by 1980 60% of missionary work could be classified as 'development assistance'),<sup>115</sup> their actions had helped to foster a sense of obligation towards the developing world. The 'penny for a black baby' campaign called on Irish citizens to support societies building schools, hospitals, and churches in their parishes abroad. Missionary magazines and family and local relationships with those serving in the developing world provided evidence of where and how their assistance was having effect on the missions. A growing number of university graduates and tradesmen and women also worked in the developing world; Catholic Missions, for example, in July 1962 praised the emergence of a 'new class of mission lay helpers ... A grand exodus of Arts and Science graduates, both men and women, has begun.<sup>116</sup> Their work reached all levels of Irish society. Aiken's son, Frank Jr, an engineer, was one of many who went from Ireland to work as a lay helper on the missions, in his case

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>115</sup> Richard F. Quinn with Robert Carroll, The missionary factor in Irish aid overseas (Dublin, 1980), p.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>116</sup> 'The place of the lay helper on the missions', *Catholic Missions*, Vol. 126, No. 3 (July 1962).

to Nigeria, and returned with a 'rewarding experience which I would not have missed for worlds'.<sup>117</sup> At around the same time, Aiken's daughter, Aedamar, also worked in Africa as a teacher in Zambia. This group of Irish citizens – missionary and lay – formed what Lemass described in 1963 as Ireland's 'own brand of "peace corps"<sup>118</sup>. Their experience had the effect of creating a strong relationship between Ireland and Africa and fostered a sense of obligation among the Irish public based on the missionary experience and on the sense, as Fine Gael TD Anthony Barry told the Dáil in February 1964, that Ireland's 'struggle for freedom has fitted us in a unique way for this great task'.<sup>119</sup> Just as the Irish independence struggle was held up as an example to Africa, so too might Ireland's post-independence development and the achievement of a strong, well-functioning state offer some encouragement and lessons.

The Irish government's response followed in the vein of its attitudes to decolonisation. It recognised the extent to which the state's colonial past and missionary experience fostered certain obligations and felt further that 'outside help, given in a disinterested manner, could be of great benefit to those [African] countries in the early years of their existence as independent States'.<sup>120</sup> The DEA emphasised the 'moral responsibility' and 'interest' that all European states had in ensuring that African states would be allowed to 'conduct their affairs in a manner calculated to serve at one and the same time both their own interests and the interests of peace'.<sup>121</sup> In October 1960 Aiken told the United Nations General Assembly that states like Ireland had 'to discipline ourselves as loyal and practical supporters of this Organisation', not only for peace, but because 'for many it also offers the best hope of disinterested help in the economic and technical development of which they stand in such urgent need'.<sup>122</sup> Sustained economic development and the reduction of inequality between developed and developing worlds were closely intertwined with the pursuit of international stability central to the Irish foreign policy. It paralleled the approach of the moderate states that shared Ireland's attitude to international affairs. In July 1950 the Dutch

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>117</sup> Frank Aiken Jr, 'My kind of Africa', *Missionary Annals*, Vol. 49, No. 10 (Oct. 1966), p. 18.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>118</sup> 'Address by Mr Sean Lemass, Taoiseach, at Luncheon of National Press Club, Washington, DC, Wednesday, 16<sup>th</sup> October, 1963', NAI DT 98/6/404.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>119</sup> Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 207, Col. 1737 (27 Feb. 1964).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>120</sup> Draft DEA memorandum for the government, 'Assistance for newly-independent African countries', May 1960, NAI DFA PMUN 363 C/2/17.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>122</sup> Frank Aiken, UNGA plenary meeting, 6 Oct. 1960, UNORGA, A/PV.890.

Minister for Foreign Affairs D.U. Stikker emphasised that his government's contributions to the United Nations' development funds were 'supposed to lessen the differences in living standards and purchasing power, thus easing international tensions – an idealistic combination of the welfare and anti-communist arguments in favour of aid'.<sup>123</sup> The same was true of the Norwegian government's attitude to ODA. Pharo noted that while Norway's aid programme to India in 1952 was undertaken to join 'the containment efforts of the West by means of a constructive proposal to promote economic development, at the same time Norway intended the initiative to strengthen the United Nations'.<sup>124</sup>

Based on the assumption that an Irish contribution to international aid programmes, 'on a scale which would make our contribution appear significant absolutely is neither to be expected nor within the country's resources',<sup>125</sup> the government's response was the creation in June 1960 of a technical assistance programme that offered training for officials for newly-independent African states. It was envisaged that Ireland would either loan civil service officers to those states or train African civil servants in Ireland. Its central premise was to provide Africans with the experience of a system that was, as Aiken reiterated in 1968, 'nearer to what they would meet at home than the conditions in the United States, in Germany, Britain or other very big countries'.<sup>126</sup> In announcing the scheme to the International Social Studies Congress in Dublin on 26 June 1960, Lemass told the audience that the government had 'decided that we can make up for deficiencies in the financial contributions which we can afford to this world problem by making available Irish experts, whether public officials or professional men, for varying periods to the new countries'.<sup>127</sup> Its performance left a lot to be desired. It had no structured plan, and it was clear that Aiken envisaged an informal system for its implementation, with the intention of regulating the recipients of official Irish aid. He retained a personal control, with the provision written into the scheme that he 'be authorised, at his discretion, to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>123</sup> Arens, 'Dutch development policy', p. 459.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>124</sup> Helge Pharo, 'Altruism, security and the impact of oil: Norway's foreign economic assistance policy, 1958-1971', *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (2003), p. 530.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>125</sup> DEA memorandum for the government, 'Assistance for Newly-Independent African Countries', 23 June 1960, NAI DFA PMUN 363 C/2/17.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>126</sup> Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 234, Col. 1707 (22 May 1968).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>127</sup> 'Speech by the Taoiseach at International Social Studies Congress, Dublin, Sunday, 26<sup>th</sup> June, 1960', NAI DT S16878 A.

make known these arrangements informally to African Governments'.<sup>128</sup> In spite of Aiken's claim in February 1964 that Ireland had since 1950 'received either through international organisations or by bilateral arrangements close on 300 nationals of developing countries... for training in various spheres such as public health, public administration, local government, statue law reform, human rights and the educational system',<sup>129</sup> its practical application was limited to basic schemes introduced by the Department of Health and Department of Education to allow medical staff and teachers to work abroad, and to the training of a limited number of African officials in Ireland.

What it said about the Irish relationship with the developing world was more important. The scheme was described by the Irish Press as 'a secular extension of Ireland's age-old missionary vocation to meet the needs of the twentieth century', 130 and was framed in terms not only of the country's contribution in the missionary field, but of broader international political concerns. Aiken's belief in the essential worth of development assistance echoed an increased interest in the subject in the West in response to the Soviet Union's economic activity in the developing world in the mid-1950s. Schmidt and Pharo noted that for the states engaged in the Cold War struggle it became important 'to persuade the new and newly independent states in south and south-east Asia and in Africa that the economic system of the Western world was indeed superior to the communist system as had been demonstrated by the impressive recovery of Europe and Japan'.<sup>131</sup> Irish support for development assistance was a logical extension of its desire to avoid the kind of ideological battle that this precipitated, and to use it more in the manner of the Nordic states. In Norway development aid was already 'an established feature of Norwegian foreign policy' by the late 1950s.<sup>132</sup> Denmark had also embarked on a considerable multilateral aid programme, although it was not until 1962 that this was added to through the introduction of a bilateral assistance programme. Their attitudes were based, as in the Dutch case, on 'the implicit humanitarian agreement that a country in need should be supported by other countries, just as a person in need is supported by his or her fellow

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>128</sup> DEA memorandum for the government, 'Assistance for Newly-Independent African Countries', 23 June 1960, NAI DFA PMUN 363 C/2/17.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>129</sup> Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 207, Col. 1726 (27 Feb. 1964).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>130</sup> 'Helping others', Irish Press, 28 June 1960.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>131</sup> Schmidt and Pharo, 'Introduction', p. 388.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>132</sup> Pharo, 'Norway's foreign economic assistance', p. 528.

human beings'.<sup>133</sup> In this manner development assistance became another tool in promoting the norms and values that these states pursued in their foreign policies.

## CONCLUSION

The Irish attitude to development assistance served to reveal another facet of its postcolonial mentality. In spite of the inclusion of a provision in the Second Programme for Economic Expansion in 1963 that the state should envisage increasing its ODA 'and making it more systematic according as our own economic capacity grows', <sup>134</sup> Irish attitudes were rooted in the view that the country was some way from being a full member of the developed world. Fine Gael's Declan Costello told the Dáil in July 1961 that Ireland was 'in the difficult position of being a comparatively poor country ourselves and the amount of wealth we have available to distribute [through development assistance] is certainly of little significance'.<sup>135</sup> Conversely this mentality helped to strengthen the perceived Irish affinity with the developing world. It allowed the Irish public, however misguidedly, to identify closely with the goals of their counterparts in the latter states. Leon Hurwitz, indeed, went so far as to suggest that Irish support for decolonisation at the United Nations resulted at least in part from the fact that it was 'relatively as far behind the Federal Republic of Germany as are various Third World countries behind the Irish Republic. Ireland may very well be supporting decolonization and self-determination from a sense of identification with the "havenot" countries." 136

It did not necessarily follow that shared experience was the only factor in promoting sympathy for the developing world. In the Netherlands, whose colonial interests only ended in the early 1960s, Arens explained that the view 'that the country had to play a special role in the world remained a steady undercurrent of development policy'.<sup>137</sup> Ireland's experience might therefore be better analysed in the same fashion as Bo Huldt has done for Sweden, arguing that changes in Swedish policy on decolonisation should be viewed in terms of similar policy changes among the Western

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>133</sup> Arens, 'Dutch development policy', p. 458.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>134</sup> Ireland. Department of Finance, *Second programme for economic expansion Part I* (Dublin, n.d. [1963?]), p. 16.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>135</sup> Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 191, Col. 564 (11 July 1961).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>136</sup> Hurwitz, 'The EEC and decolonisation', p. 441.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>137</sup> Arens, 'Dutch development policy', p. 459.

states.<sup>138</sup> Adapting Stephen Howe's proposal that Ireland's post-independence development be compared not with independent Africa or Asia, but with other European contemporaries like Czechoslovakia, Finland, Poland and the Baltic Republics,<sup>139</sup> it is more constructive to view Ireland's relationship with the developing world in terms of its particularly European identity rather than as a postcolonial state as portrayed by Aiken et al. In so doing one can view the Irish government's support for decolonisation as a manifestation not only of its historical commitment to self-determination, but as part of a broader commitment to international justice and the promotion of norms of international behaviour and stability visible among other moderate European states. The translation of these principles into policy at the United Nations and outside thus becomes an extension of the Irish government's principles and a method of distinguishing its neutrality and diplomatic independence. In practice, it led the Irish government to take a moderate position, which emphasised its commitment not only to the decolonisation process but to a *successful* future for the independent states it created.

The Irish government developed this image of the country as unique in its colonial experience in Western Europe and thereby able to pursue policies unavailable to its contemporaries in a manner that allowed it assume a particular identity in its international relations. What this achieved, in combination with the emphasis on Ireland's missionary heritage, was to foster a sense of collective obligation towards the developing world and a popular belief in the legitimacy of the role that Ireland sought to play on the international stage. There were of course those who questioned its applicability. In April 1962, Fine Gael leader James Dillon launched an attack on Aiken's foreign policy in the Dáil: 'so far as the African states are concerned, they are not much interested in our Minister's activities. In so far as they have been able to take advantage of some of his *démarches*, they may have done so, but in so far as his influence is concerned to direct their activities, it is virtually non-existent.'<sup>140</sup> Fuelled by political motives these comments may have been, but they were echoed by officials

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>138</sup> Huldt, Sweden, the UN and decolonisation, passim.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>139</sup> Howe, Ireland and empire, p. 153.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>140</sup> Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 194, Col. 1387 (5 April 1962).

within the DEA. Tadhg O'Sullivan, Irish Ambassador to Nigeria, wrote in March 1973 – after Aiken had retired – that he was

not myself a believer in the thesis that Ireland, having itself once been a dependency, has an understanding of the third world which other European countries do not find it easy to have, and that we therefore have a role to play in Europe in interpreting the third world to Europe and vice versa. I think this is just an idea we have of ourselves, which we have never tested in practice and perhaps have not wanted to test in practice.<sup>141</sup>

It was a remarkably frank appraisal.

O'Sullivan's comments had much to do with the changing configuration of forces in international politics. The arrival of the African states on to the world stage in 1960 had altered the circumstances in which the Irish government had sought to pursue its policies. The configuration of forces that allowed the Irish delegation to assume such a prominent role at the United Nations in the 1950s began to break down.<sup>142</sup> Cremin admitted in 1970 that Ireland had, 'more or less by accident, had an unusually good initial start at the UN ... circumstances lent themselves well to positions which tended to give our delegation a certain prominence e.g. the problem of Algeria, and the movement towards decolonisation in Africa which up to 1960 was in an incipient stage'.<sup>143</sup> The attempt to influence the African states to adopt the norms supported by the Irish government, and the new questions posed by the desire for development assistance, required that rhetorical commitments were translated into practice. Once involved with the complex realities of post-independence Africa, whether in the peace-keeping mission to the Congo or in Biafra, this commitment would be seen to carry a price.

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>141</sup> 'Conference of Heads of Mission, 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> April 1973: Views of the Ambassador in Lagos on the future development of Irish foreign policy', dated 31 March 1973, NAI DFA 2005/145/2348.
 <sup>142</sup> Skelly, *Irish diplomacy*, p. 289.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>143</sup> Cremin to Ronan, 10 Sept. 1970, NAI DFA 417/220.

# Ireland Comes of Age: The Congo, Peace-keeping and Irish Foreign Policy

The end of the Second World War had presented moderate states with what former Swedish Ambassador to the United Nations Gunnar Jarring described as 'two great and important international tasks'.<sup>1</sup> Both carried significant implications for a stable and peaceful international environment. The first, technical aid, was based on the belief, espoused by Boland, that economic under-development posed 'a serious danger to the cause of freedom' since the Afro-Asian states might 'lose faith in the freedom they have won and passively surrender their personal liberties to some form of totalitarian rule'.<sup>2</sup> The second centred more directly on the United Nations, and separated that organisation from its League of Nations predecessor. Peace-keeping offered moderate states the opportunity to put into practical effect their support for the world organisation and the principles they adhered to in their approach to international relations. The responsibilities were great. Aiken told the United Nations General Assembly on 6 October 1960 that the small and 'recently emerged nations' - among whom he numbered Ireland – had 'such a tremendous collective responsibility that if we should err seriously, the consequences might well be as disastrous as those of any error committed by a Great Power. Either subservience or recklessness on our part ... could destroy this Organisation and with it our independence."<sup>3</sup> Living up to those responsibilities entailed putting into practical action their commitment to the maintenance of international stability. In July 1960 the United Nations Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld's request for Irish troops as part of the organisation's peace-keeping force in the Congo (ONUC) offered just such an opportunity, giving Ireland the chance to demonstrate what Eunan O'Halpin described as its 'good citizenship and its willingness as a small state to contribute to the management and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Gunnar Jarring, 'Swedish participation in UN peacekeeping operations', *International Review of Military History*, No. 57 (1984), p. 59.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> 'Address delivered by Ambassador F.H. Boland, Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations, President of the XVth Session of the UN Assembly, at the Dallas-Fort Worth Diocesan Council of Catholic Men on Sunday, April 9, 1961', TCD MS Boland Papers 10469/3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Frank Aiken, UNGA plenary meeting, 6 Oct. 1960, UNORGA, A/PV.890.

resolution of armed conflict under UN auspices'.<sup>4</sup> Its positive response formed an integral part of its commitment to the principle of international law and allowed it to remain, in Skelly's judgement, 'true to vital principles of the nation's UN policy since 1955 and, indeed, its foreign policy since 1922'.<sup>5</sup>

The Congo operation had a profound impact on all the states involved. In the same way that Sellström commented that participation in ONUC 'brought the complexities of the decolonisation process in Africa into Swedish homes',<sup>6</sup> MacQueen noted that the experience 'led to a distinct maturation of Irish perceptions of world politics'.<sup>7</sup> The complexity of the crisis and its detrimental effect on the United Nations highlighted the difficulties of living up to the moderate states' strong rhetorical commitments to the maintenance of international order. In the Irish case, there were further influences to consider, not least the state's identity within the Western sphere and the impact of the government's 1961 application to join the EEC. This interplay between Irish interests, identities and the realities of ONUC forms the basis of this chapter, which examines its influence on Irish foreign policy, popular reaction to the operation, and its broader effects on Ireland's role in international affairs.

### CONGO IN CONTEXT

In 1960, a year full of promise for a newly-emerging independent Africa, Congo occupied a pivotal position. Writing on 14 June 1960, less than two weeks before its independence, Eamon Kennedy commented that a strong and unified independent Congolese state would have great influence on the remaining British, Portuguese and Spanish possessions in Africa. 'But should the immense Congo disintegrate in confusion under native rule, it will be held up in Rhodesia, Kenya, South Africa, Angola and Mozambique as the fearful result of independence without the slow and adequate preparation of the indigenous inhabitants ... It has become a vital test case in the great African independence movement.'<sup>8</sup> The Belgian government's January 1960 announcement of its intention to withdraw from the territory laid bare the detrimental

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Eunan O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland: the Irish state and its enemies since 1922* (Oxford, 1999), p. 270.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Skelly, Irish diplomacy, p. 266.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Sellström, Sweden and southern Africa: Vol. I, p. 52.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> MacQueen, 'Irish neutrality', p. 265.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Note by Kennedy, 'The Belgian Congo', 14 June 1960, NAI DFA 305/384/18.

impact its policies had had on the vast state. The constraints placed on African education left it severely lacking in political and bureaucratic experience and the administration – civil and military – was dominated by European officials, with what Paul Nugent described as 'insufficient commonality of experience to render nationhood much more than an abstraction'.<sup>9</sup> Politics divided along predominantly ethnic lines; only the left-wing Patrice Lumumba's Mouvement National Congolais (MNC) succeeded in winning votes across the country. The two other major political parties, Joseph Kasavubu's Alliance des Bakongo (ABAKO) and Moisé Tshombe's Confederation des Associations Tribales du Katanga (CONAKAT) were based, as their names suggested, along regional and ethnic lines.

The difficulties were not insurmountable, but served to magnify the country's existing problems. On his return from a two-month tour of Africa in January 1960, Hammarskjöld commented that the Congo was 'the biggest problem in Africa today ... There was hardly an African in the Congo with any administrative or political experience whatever.'10 His concerns led him to send a representative, the American Ralph Bunche, to Congo's capital, Leopoldville, for its independence celebrations on 30 June 1960, and to request that Bunche remain as the United Nations' representative after the hand-over of power was complete. A very definite statement of intent from Hammarskjöld, it established a United Nations presence 'in order to steady the situation and to enable him, and through him the UN, to act quickly in case of crisis'.<sup>11</sup> That crisis was not long in arriving. On 5 July 1960 an army mutiny sparked a series of reprisals against Belgian nationals across the Congo. In the mineral-rich region of Katanga, where Belgian settler and international business interests were concentrated, the Belgian-owned mining company Union Minière de Haut-Katanga had already struck up a close relationship with Tshombe's CONAKAT. Viewed by European settlers as a distinct entity within the Congo, and only loosely controlled by the central government, Katanga posed a very real threat to the unity of the new state. Within six days the Katangese authorities, with Belgian military support, declared their unilateral

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Paul Nugent, Africa since independence: a comparative history (Basingstoke, 2004), p. 54.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Boland to sec. DEA, 24 Feb. 1960, NAI DFA 305/384.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Georges Abi-Saab, The United Nations operation in the Congo 1960-1964 (Oxford, 1978), p. 6.

secession from the Congolese state, to be followed almost a month later by the region of South Kasai.

The situation grew increasingly serious as Belgian officials helped to arm and organise a Katangan gendarmerie. On 12 July 1960 the Congolese President, Kasavubu, and Prime Minister, Lumumba, made a direct call to the United Nations to provide military assistance to help restore order. Hammarskjöld responded immediately. On his recommendation the Security Council adopted a resolution on 14 July in which it called upon the Belgians to withdraw their troops and authorised the United Nations 'to provide the Government with such military assistance as may be necessary until ... the national security forces [of the Congo] may be able, in the opinion of the Government, to meet fully their tasks'.<sup>12</sup> The force, named ONUC after its French acronym, became 'the most important coercive instrument' in a country that continued to disintegrate around it.<sup>13</sup> In September 1960 Kasavubu's attempt to dismiss Lumumba was met by Lumumba's counter-dismissal of Kasavubu, plunging the country into a constitutional crisis. US and Soviet covert involvement deepened, ideological divisions appeared within ONUC, several African and Asian contingents (as well as Yugoslavia) withdrew, and the United Nations struggled to keep the peace.

The operation became as much a test of the United Nations' future as Congo or Africa's. Lumumba's arrest by the Leopoldville authorities on 1 December 1960 and his murder in Katanga the following January highlighted the lawless situation pervading the state. As political negotiations continued throughout 1961 and 1962, the United Nations concentrated on forcing the thousands of mercenaries serving in Katanga out of the region, embroiling the ONUC force in further controversy. In September 1961 Hammarskjöld, on his way across Northern Rhodesia, was killed when his plane crashed, apparently struck by a rocket. The search for his successor put the very future of the United Nations under strain as the Soviet Union and its allies pushed for the creation of a troika governing committee to replace the position of Secretary General. The man who eventually assumed the role, U Thant, met with an increasingly difficult situation in the Congo, where his under-funded United Nations troops

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Quoted in ibid., p. 14.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Crawford Young, 'Zaire, Rwanda and Burundi', in Michael Crowder (ed.), *The Cambridge history of Africa: Volume 8 from c. 1940 to c. 1975* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 722.

continued in conflict with the Katangese gendarmes. At the end of June 1964, the ONUC force was withdrawn, leaving the United Nations with serious repercussions, not only in the conduct of peace-keeping (or enforcement), but in the financing of future peace-keeping missions.

## THE DECISION TO COMMIT IRISH TROOPS

Speaking in February 1968, Aiken argued that had the United Nations been able to continue funding 'even a couple of thousand men in the Congo for a few years a lot of the trouble that has occurred since in that great and vast country would not have occurred'.<sup>14</sup> His air of resignation spoke of an opportunity lost to secure stability on the African continent and to expand the role of the United Nations. At the beginning of July 1960, just weeks prior to the organisation's intervention and fresh from his trip to the Congo (for its independence celebrations) and Ghana (for its reconstitution as a republic), Aiken had been much more optimistic. His experience of Africa had convinced him of the need for African solutions to African problems and of their potential to bring lasting peace and stability. Eschewing the notion of outside interference, he suggested the creation of 'some kind of non-aggression agreement between the states of Africa and some system of tribunals to deal with problems of minorities arising between them'.<sup>15</sup> By helping each other in the solution of these disputes, the African states could limit the extent of outside influence on their continent and thereby minimise the risk of it becoming the ground for further Cold War conflict.

The difficulty lay in persuading the new African states to think likewise. Boland acknowledged that Aiken's trip had given him 'an up-to-date insight into the present trends of opinion among the African countries', but he commented that in his experience African states were 'extremely sensitive about any suggestion with regard to the future of Africa which does not come from the African countries themselves ... there is a strong current of "Sinn Féin" feeling among them which tends to resent outside suggestions as to how they should run their affairs'.<sup>16</sup> The Irish government, he warned, should 'be very chary about taking any initiative with regard to the future

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> 'Transcript from the tape recording of Tánaiste's [Aiken] speech at United Nations Association, 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb. 1968', NAI DFA 2000/14/259.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Boland to O'Brien, 7 July 1960, NAI DFA PMUN 81 X/34.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Ibid..

relations of the countries of Africa between themselves which is not solidly assured beforehand of their agreement and support'.<sup>17</sup>

That delicate balance between perceived Western 'interference' and the attempt to allow African states to find their own lasting solutions to the problems on the continent was also uppermost in the mind of the Secretary General. In building the ONUC force, Hammarskjöld decided that 'Africans would form the hard core', with the addition of contingents from Europe, Asia and the Transatlantic states.<sup>18</sup> By its very actions, the force was intended to 'imply the exclusion of any other kind of external intervention in the Congo', <sup>19</sup> with moderate states like Ireland and Sweden put forward as a counter-balance to prospective African members, who broadly 'took the pro-Lumumba line'.<sup>20</sup> There were other, more pragmatic reasons for the inclusion of moderate Western states. In the Cold War environment, their involvement suited the interests of the Western Powers as well as those of the United Nations. The moderate states' diplomatic independence was portrayed as all-important and the British government believed that organisations like the United Nations 'needed a nucleus of members in that position if they were to work properly'.<sup>21</sup> It was of greater advantage to the West that these states be used to moderate Soviet Union and other radical influences in the Congo and with Ethiopian, Ghanaian, Moroccan, and Tunisian contingents in place, it was of little surprise that the Secretary General turned next to Ireland, Sweden and Yugoslavia to provide the European element.

When Hammarskjöld's request – originally for 'a battalion armed with light arms and equipped with normal supporting services'<sup>22</sup> – reached the Irish Department of Defence on 16 July 1960, the reaction was immediate: Army Chief of Staff Seán McKeown remembered that '[i]t was all urgently, urgently, urgently; this was the keynote'.<sup>23</sup> Supported by McKeown, the cabinet overcame some internal opposition on

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Telegram, UK Mission to the United Nations to Foreign Office, 13 July 1960, NAUK Foreign Office (hereafter FO) 371/146769.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Ishizuka, *Peacekeeping*, p. 33.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> I.T.M. Pink of the FO, paraphrased in Boland to Murphy, 25 May 1956, TCD MS Boland Papers 10470/45.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Hammarskjöld to Government of Ireland, 16 July 1960, NAI DFA 305/384/2 Pt I.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Seán McKeown, 'The Congo (ONUC): the military perspective', *The Irish Sword: The Journal of the Military History Society of Ireland*, Vol. 20, No. 79 (Summer 1996), p. 43.

19 July 1960 – notably from Minister for Health Seán MacEntee<sup>24</sup> – to agree on the provision of a contingent of Irish troops. The following day, the Defence (Amendment) Bill, introduced to provide the legal basis for them to serve with United Nations peace-keeping forces, was overwhelmingly agreed to in the Dáil. As preparations for the first contingent continued apace, Hammarskjöld's second request for Irish troops, issued on 30 July, met with an equally positive response. With McKeown's support, the cabinet agreed to the request on 4 August, though it noted that 'it would not be possible for Ireland to allow two battalions to remain in the Congo for a longer period than six months and that, irrespective of the situation in the Congo at the end of six months, any Irish contingent remaining there after that period will not exceed one battalion'.<sup>25</sup>

The rapid response to Hammarkskjöld's requests had its roots in broader foreign policy. The Irish government showed itself willing to embrace the practical implications of its pursuit of peace and international stability through the United Nations and had in fact been involved in preparing the ground for such an eventuality from much earlier in its membership.<sup>26</sup> In 1958 The Irish Times had presented the involvement of Irish Army officers in the United Nations observation group in the Lebanon as 'a new and welcome stage in the national evolution ... Our sense of international responsibility has been put to the test – albeit in a relatively minor way – and has not been found wanting.<sup>27</sup> The opportunity to supply troops to the Congo mission was viewed in similar terms. The DEA reminded the government of its obligations under Article 25 of the United Nations Charter – to accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council - and felt it was 'incumbent on Ireland to take such steps as it can to comply with the Secretary General's request'.<sup>28</sup> Aiken believed Ireland's 'words in debates in the Assembly ought to be matched, when the need arose, by action'.<sup>29</sup> He had a very definite vision of how his goal of international stability might be achieved, as he told the 32<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, the first to leave for the Congo: 'This battalion, I trust, is part of an advance guard of the armed force of the world we want -

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Brian Farrell, Chairman or chief? The role of the Taoiseach in Irish government (Dublin, 1971), p. 72.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Moynihan to private sec., DEA, 4 Aug. 1960, NAI DFA 305/384/2 Pt I.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> See Ishizuka, *Peacekeeping*, pp. 21-23.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> 'The end of the affair', *The Irish Times*, 21 Nov. 1958.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> DEA memorandum for the government, 'Request for Irish assistance for UN military force in the Congo', 18 July 1960, NAI DFA 305/384.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Dorr, 'Ireland at the United Nations' (2002), p. 113.

a world in which national armies will be gradually reduced and international United Nations forces gradually increased to uphold a regime of peace based on law.<sup>30</sup>

What Skelly described as a 'concrete expression of faith in the UN, a principle that Ireland had upheld since it entered the Organisation',<sup>31</sup> became part of the broader diplomatic identity projected by the Irish government. The colonial and Christian influences so evident in its policy on decolonisation were again to the fore. The DEA believed that Ireland had been chosen for ONUC 'for reasons of the history of colonialism',<sup>32</sup> and the state's traditions and historical experience conditioned its response. When Aiken spoke to the 32<sup>nd</sup> Battalion he commented that '[f]or many centuries the Irish people have longed for the rule of law in the world, based on justice'.<sup>33</sup> It did not matter that, by their own admission, the troops knew 'very little' about the Congo<sup>34</sup> since, the Minister for Defence Kevin Boland told them, they 'would be helped by the relations which our people had with the people of Africa of which they should be proud', specifically the work of Irish missionaries and of Roger Casement in the Congo.<sup>35</sup> That Christian heritage was used to distinguish Ireland from its European contemporaries. The Irish Army's Head Chaplain, Fr C.P. Crean, told the troops of their obligation to offer a good example while on duty in the Congo 'as many other Europeans had disproved what the missionaries were teaching to the natives'.<sup>36</sup> That connection was not limited to the clergy. In language oddly reminiscent of the Crusades, Robert Brennan told the readers of the Irish Press that Irish troops 'were going, not as agents of any Empire keen on conquest and pillage. They were going in the holy cause of helping a sorely tried country, newly emancipated, to find its feet.<sup>37</sup>

By constructing its involvement in ONUC in this fashion however - 'well in keeping with the national tradition<sup>38</sup> – the Irish government tended to sideline its strongly European identity, one that was accentuated when compared with its moderate contemporaries. The Swedish government and people approached their responsibilities

<sup>31</sup> Skelly, Irish diplomacy, p. 268.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Quoted in "Operation Sarsfield" begins at 3 pm today', *The Irish Times*, 27 July 1960.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> DEA memorandum for the government, 'Request for Irish assistance for UN military force in the Congo', 18 July 1960, NAI DFA 305/384.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Quoted in "Operation Sarsfield" begins at 3 pm today', *The Irish Times*, 27 July 1960.
<sup>34</sup> Private statement to the author by officer from the 32<sup>nd</sup> Battalion.
<sup>35</sup> 'An advance guard of world army', *Irish Press*, 27 July 1960.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> 'Troops fly out to-morrow', Irish Independent, 26 July 1960.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Robert Brennan, 'Viva La! The new brigade', Irish Press, 28 July 1960.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> 'For the Congo', Irish Press, 5 Aug. 1960.

to ONUC in a similar fashion, citing the significant numbers of Lutheran missionaries in the Congo and the belief that their country had been selected for ONUC because of its 'special position' in Europe. There was an additional racial difficulty to be overcome. In spite of Aiken's claim that '[a]ll the parties involved in the troubles of the Congo are our brothers',<sup>39</sup> it turned out that the Congolese knew very little of Irish history or geography, save the colour of the troops' skins. An exchange between an Irish soldier and Congolese at Goma, when a Swedish interpreter helped him to explain 'that he was not a member of the same tribe as the white tribe across the border in Uganda',<sup>40</sup> offered just one instance of the very real differences that existed on the ground.

Whether constructed through past historical experience or a simple set of shared political values, the Irish and Swedish governments accorded similar weight to the importance of a successful operation in the Congo. Like Sweden, Ireland joined ONUC out of a commitment to the United Nations and framed its responsibilities in terms of the broader pursuit of international stability through that organisation. Aiken believed it 'most desirable in the interests of the development along peaceful lines of the emerging states of Africa and the preservation of good relations between Europe and that continent that European countries should be associated with this effort to maintain peace and stability in the Congo'.<sup>41</sup> Moderate states like Ireland and Sweden had a particularly important role to play in such an effort. They were not bound to East or West, much as their policies may have indicated a natural sympathy towards the latter, but instead could be counted on to act as Swedish Foreign Minister Östen Unden outlined in July 1960: 'as an international gendarmerie, assist in keeping order and exert a psychological quietening effect'.<sup>42</sup> Their exclusion, Aiken asserted, would result in increasing racial tensions, the danger of Africa 'falling more and more into the Communist sphere of influence', and allow the possibility of undue African nationalism

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Quoted in 'Aiken says Congo marks turning-point in history: Farewell to 33<sup>rd</sup> Battalion at Curragh', *The Irish Times*, 17 Aug. 1960.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> Cathal O'Shannon, 'Africans satisfied to have Irish troops', *The Irish Times*, 9 Aug. 1960.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> DEA memorandum for the government, 'Request for Irish assistance for UN military force in the Congo', 18 July 1960, NAI DFA 305/384.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> Paraphrased in a confidential report from the Irish Amb. to Sweden to Cremin, 21 July 1960, NAI DFA 305/384/2 Pt I.

within the ONUC force.<sup>43</sup> It was the duty of the United Nations, he told the General Assembly, 'to prevent the repetition in central Africa of the unfortunate history of the Balkans and, indeed, the history of Europe – the history of near-perpetual warfare in which resources of men and material were wasted in mutual destruction'.<sup>44</sup>

### NIEMBA

Events in the early part of the ONUC mission brought home to both governments the difficulty in translating these principles to action, and the limits to their 'special' positions. Both states were immediately open to accusations of a pro-Western bias and Lumumba strongly and openly criticised the use of white United Nations troops in Katanga. The implications of his criticisms for Ireland's carefully shaped diplomatic identity caused considerable discomfort for Irish officials. Aiken decided not to comment on the issue 'unless pressed by [the] press'<sup>45</sup> and in introducing a United Nations resolution which endorsed Hammarskjöld's actions on 19 September 1960, he rejected the notion that Irish troops 'would be likely to take part in an enterprise directed ... against the independence and territorial integrity of a State newly emerged from colonial rule'.<sup>46</sup> He instead directed Irish efforts into finding a solution to the worsening situation, drawing on the lessons of his journey to Africa and his belief that on Congo's future 'depended the fate of not only existing states but the prospects of independence for other African Colonial territories'.<sup>47</sup> The most effective way of achieving lasting peace, he argued, was to press the newly-independent African governments to work within his preferred model of international relations. In response to reports that Ghanaian troops intended to take unilateral action in the Congo, for example, he instructed Boland on 8 August 1960 to warn its representative at the United Nations of the implications for the organisation of such a decision. He hoped that instead Ghana would 'continue to work within the framework of the United Nations and that her troops will continue to function as part of the UN forces'.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> DEA memorandum for the government, 'Request for Irish assistance for UN military force in the Congo', 18 July 1960, NAI DFA 305/384.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Frank Aiken, UNGA plenary meeting, 6 Oct. 1960, UNORGA, A/PV.890.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> Telex, DEA to PMUN, 17 Aug. 1960, NAI DFA 305/384/2 Pt I.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> Ireland. Department of External Affairs, Ireland at the United Nations 1960 (Dublin, 1961), p. 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> 'Mr Aiken warns Congo leader', Irish Independent, 29 Aug. 1960.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> Telex, DEA to PMUN, 8 Aug. 1960, NAI DFA 305/384.

Along with its Swedish and Canadian counterparts, Irish officials carried this attitude into the debates on Congo's future at the United Nations. Before the first meeting in August 1960 of the United Nations Advisory Committee on the Congo - set up to co-ordinate dialogue between member states involved in ONUC and the United Nations Secretariat - the three states agreed that 'the more we lay back and left the initiative in the Committee's discussions to the Afro-Asian, and particularly the African members, the better it would probably be'.<sup>49</sup> That did not mean however that they were prepared to allow free rein to the latter's more extreme policies. The Canadian delegation, for its part, was adamant that with any comment of overtly radical intent at the committee, 'an expression of [Canadian] views would be in order'.<sup>50</sup> The Irish delegation shared those sentiments, as Paul Keating reiterated in the aftermath of a later meeting in August 1961 when he recommended that the Irish government should not be 'too passive ... especially when there is a good Afro-Asian lead for us to follow'.<sup>51</sup> But while intended to encourage the pursuit of an African solution to the problem, his comments carried an implicit recognition of the difficulties for mediators like Canada, Ireland and Sweden in a changing United Nations and echoed their experience in the General Assembly, where they found it increasingly difficult to win the Afro-Asian group to their interpretation of international affairs.

On the ground United Nations troops encountered a different but equally frustrating set of difficulties. The Irish troops' poor and outdated equipment and lack of suitable intelligence, together with the intrinsically difficult conditions, made adaptation to the Congo extremely problematic. They were not helped by the situation in Katanga where, Burke noted, they 'were resented by both the Baluba and European settlers for not wholeheartedly siding with either'.<sup>52</sup> Those realities contrasted sharply with the rose-tinted view held by an Irish public revelling in the role its troops played in upholding the goals of the United Nations, with little heed paid to the very real dangers that faced the ONUC force. The adventure and exotic nature of the Congo operation were emphasised instead, young men travelling from across Ireland to volunteer for the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> Boland to Cremin, 27 Aug. 1960, NAI DFA 305/384/14.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> Copy of telegram, Canadian Mission to the UN to Canadian Foreign Ministry, 2 Sept. 1960, NAUK FO 371/146779.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> Hand-written note, Keating to Ronan, dated 21 Aug. 1961, appended to letter, Tadhg O'Sullivan to Cremin, 15 Aug. 1961, NAI DFA 305/384/14 Pt II B.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> Burke, 'Ireland's contribution to ONUC', p. 135.

force and newspapers providing a constant stream of positive reports on the troops' activities.

Events at a bridge over the River Luwuyeye on the Manono road near Niemba in Katanga on 8 November 1960, where nine Irish troops were killed in an ambush by Baluba guerrillas, brought home the realities of Ireland's obligations and offered a stark reminder of the price to be paid in the pursuit of peace.<sup>53</sup> The response of the Irish public and its government however was telling. If it was needed, Niemba served to highlight the depth of the state's commitment to the goals it defined for itself in support of the United Nations. In a statement to the Dáil on 9 November, Lemass commented that the troops had made their sacrifice 'in a most noble cause - the maintenance of peace'.<sup>54</sup> There was near-unanimous support among the Irish public for the men who, the Irish Press asserted, gave their lives 'not as men of wrath, not as conquerors, not even in defence of their homeland. They died in the service of peace, in helping to give the people of the Congo the promise of freedom and just government."55 Niemba highlighted just how deeply felt was the Irish conviction at the role its officials had forged for the state in the previous five years at the United Nations. The men had died 'to help in preserving the Irish people in peace'.<sup>56</sup> All, it was argued, 'must be prepared to accept the sacrifice' necessary in living up to Irish principles.<sup>57</sup> The construction of Ireland's contemporary role through reference to its past remained of central importance. The Irish Press's commentary on the large funeral in Dublin on 22 November accorded the troops a position 'on the proud roll of Ireland's honoured dead'; they could claim, 'in Thomas MacDonagh's spirited words, to represent the immortal soul of Ireland'.<sup>58</sup> In that tradition, Ireland's responsibilities now manifested themselves in a new fashion. The Irish Times commented that the deaths brought home to the Irish people 'the harsh understanding that commitments in the name of even the most sacred principle are no light thing'.<sup>59</sup> The men became 'a symbol of the very real

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> For a description of the events at Niemba, see ibid., pp. 140-53.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 184, Cols. 734-5 (9 Nov. 1960).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> 'Men of peace', Irish Press, 16 Nov. 1960.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> 'Not in vain', Irish Independent, 22 Nov. 1960.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> 'The shadow of tragedy', *Irish Press*, 10 Nov. 1960.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> 'Nine brave men', Irish Press, 22 Nov. 1960.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> 'Death in Africa', *The Irish Times*, 10 Nov. 1960.

help that we – in our almost unique position as a white nation which knows the meaning of oppression – can hope to offer to the new nations of the world'.<sup>60</sup>

## SEATING KASAVUBU AND AIKEN'S PLAN FOR PEACE

The extent to which Irish involvement in ONUC had been, as Dorr noted, 'sobered and tempered by reality' after Niemba,<sup>61</sup> could not deflect from the public and government's unswerving commitment to Ireland's responsibilities. A DEA memorandum written on the day of the troops' funeral had no hesitation in recommending that Ireland send a further battalion to the Congo. The original considerations in favour of sending Irish troops, it stated, had 'in no way been changed by subsequent events. Apart from the requirements of the Charter, it is still highly desirable that European troops continue to participate in the force.'<sup>62</sup> In fact, the memorandum continued, the 'very confused internal political situation in the Congo', which had put the troops in that position, rendered it urgently necessary to continue to support the United Nations operation.<sup>63</sup>

It was the extent to which government support for ONUC and the United Nations translated into open support for Western interests that caused greater debate within the cabinet. MacEntee's original concern at Irish involvement in the force had been based primarily on his fears over the use of United Nations troops to defend 'Communist' ideals,<sup>64</sup> and as the crisis escalated further differences arose in interpreting its politics. In November 1960, two months after the constitutional clash between Lumumba and Kasavubu, Aiken and Lemass disagreed on the question of whether the United Nations should recognise Kasavubu as the representative of the Congolese government. To Aiken and many others in New York, the Kasavubu coalition's weak grip on power made it dangerous to accord him political recognition and a seat at the United Nations. To do so, Aiken argued, 'would hinder [the] evolution of [a] stable government and would give his opponents opportunity to accuse him of being [a] stooge of foreign powers. [I see] great disadvantage in seating any

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup> 'The dead', *The Irish Times*, 22 Nov. 1960.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup> Dorr, 'UN peacekeeping concepts', p. 20.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup> DEA memorandum for the government, 'Request from UN for Irish battalion for Congo Force to replace present contingent when withdrawn', 22 Nov. 1960, NAI DFA 305/384/2 Pt II.
<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Farrell, Chairman or chief?, p. 72.

representative of Congo unless he represents [a] Government having effective control.<sup>65</sup> His approach echoed that of the moderate Afro-Asian states and of some United Nations officials, who believed that 'it would in fact be better for the United Nations not to reach a decision at this point'.<sup>66</sup> Lemass disagreed. Not quite what Norman MacQueen has described as 'straight-forwardly pro-Western',<sup>67</sup> his attitude certainly betrayed a preference for American and British policies. On the grounds that the United Nations had recognised the Congolese state, he felt it would be 'unwise' to oppose seating Kasavubu; the latter was head of that state and thus a symbol of sovereign independent Congo.<sup>68</sup> To Lemass the opposition appeared to come 'mainly from Communist sources' and failure to accept him implied reneging on the United Nations' recognition of the fledgling state.<sup>69</sup>

The United States' support for Kasavubu however disturbed Aiken. To place it, Britain, France and Belgium in opposition to Soviet and some African support for Lumumba, he argued, 'would obviously create [a] situation in which [the] United Nations' effort would collapse in dire confusion'.<sup>70</sup> Aiken continued to believe that 'the United Nations should persevere in the policy agreed upon at the outset of the Congo operation that any solution of the Congolese difficulties must be a Congolese solution', a move that was of paramount importance to 'prevent the great nations, which today are disunited, from transferring their rivalries to African soil'.<sup>71</sup> The only alternative, he impressed on the Americans via the Irish Ambassador in Washington, was to postpone the issue until the Conciliation Commission appointed by the United Nations reached the Congo.<sup>72</sup> At that point the world body, he felt, might be in a better position to judge the situation and the break might also have afforded an opportunity for what he proposed as an alternative in the General Assembly: 'the emergence of a movement among the Congolese people themselves'.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>65</sup> Telex, PMUN to DEA, 11 Nov. 1960, NAI DFA 305/384 Pt II.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>66</sup> Catherine Hoskyns, The Congo since independence: January 1960 – December 1961 (Oxford, 1965), p. 261.

MacQueen, 'Irish neutrality', p. 232.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>68</sup> Telex, DEA to PMUN, 11 Nov. 1960, NAI DFA 305/384 Pt II.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup> Telex, PMUN to DEA, 14 Nov. 1960, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>71</sup> Frank Aiken, UNGA plenary meeting, 21 Nov. 1960, UNORGA, A/PV.922.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup> Irish Ambassador to the United States to Cremin, 14 Nov. 1960, NAI DFA 305/384 Pt II.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>73</sup> Frank Aiken, UNGA plenary meeting, 21 Nov. 1960, UNORGA, A/PV.922.

Ireland's voting pattern at the United Nations was a reflection both of Aiken's attitudes and gathering Western pressures. On 9 November the Irish delegation, along with Sweden, voted of favour of a motion in the General Assembly to adjourn discussion on Kasavubu's representation. It did not last. With heavy American and British lobbying, the Credentials Committee voted for seating Kasavubu and on 22 November succeeded in passing a resolution in the General Assembly supporting his claims. Finding itself in Sweden's company once again, the Irish delegation abstained from the vote. Lemass however continued to be anxious that Ireland should not appear to be in any way anti-American. He told the Dáil on 23 November that there could be 'no suggestion that we are acting in this manner in any way different from the line adopted by practically all the other countries who are committed in this operation to the same extent as we are'.<sup>74</sup> Only Senegal of the states providing troops to ONUC voted in favour. But if Lemass exhibited some concern at the Irish vote, what all members of his government shared - at what Hoskyns described as 'a point of maximum crisis' for the United Nations<sup>75</sup> – was a strong determination to stand closely by the Secretary General and to support his authority. Even then it was not immune to criticism. John Terence O'Neill notes that Hammarskjöld's perceived pro-Western bias placed Ireland 'at odds with many new African states with whom it believed it had a long-standing relationship',<sup>76</sup> and its attitude also left the government open to criticism at home, where National Progressive Democrat TD Noel Browne derided it for siding with 'the Americans, the Belgians and the British Colonialists ... in the smearing of Mr Lumumba'.77

The criticism from both sides had a gradual effect on the government, particularly Lemass, causing it to become more conscious of the political implications of its decisions, though it did not lessen its support for ONUC. In February 1961 the government balked temporarily at providing additional troops only because of 'the state of tension along the Border' caused by the shooting of an RUC constable on 27 January

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup> Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 185, Col. 175 (23 Nov. 1960).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>75</sup> Hoskyns, *Congo since independence*, p. 300.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>76</sup> O'Neill, 'Ireland's participation in United Nations peacekeeping', p. 303.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>77</sup> Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 186, Col. 375 (15 Feb. 1961).

by the IRA.<sup>78</sup> In the background, Aiken continued his efforts to find a lasting solution in the Congo. On 2 February 1961 he sent a set of proposals outlining his programme for ending the conflict to Boland, which was distributed to all Irish Embassies eleven days later. It relied on the same interpretation of Africa's problems that Aiken had formulated on his trip to the continent eight months previously, visible also in his attitude to decolonisation as expressed at the United Nations. The need to limit outside interference was uppermost in his thoughts. The document envisaged the creation of a central provisional government (CPG) 'by a round-table conference of Congolese leaders including at least Kasavubu, Lumumba, Tshombe and Bomboko [Minister for Foreign Affairs]'.<sup>79</sup> Once that government was in place, Aiken proposed a significant overhaul of the country's political system:

- 1) The re-division of the Congo into Provincial States more in keeping with the ethnical and tribal divisions of the Congolese peoples.
- 2) The establishment of a nominated CPG for five years, vacancies in the Government to be filled by nomination by remainder of the CPG.
- 3) The nomination of provisional State Governments by the CPG for five years.
- 4) The definition of the powers of the State Governments.
- 5) That the United Nations should be empowered by the CPG to recruit Congolese units into the United Nations force.
- 6) That the United Nations force should be empowered by the CPG to disarm all peoples, military or civilian, found within any area indicated by the CPG.<sup>80</sup>

In arguably its most radical aspect, the plan proposed that, with the Congolese leaders' agreement, 'the United Nations should offer to organise and finance a United Nations Company for the purpose of buying and transferring to Congolese all foreign-owned industrial business and agricultural undertaking and private houses in the Congo'.<sup>81</sup> The plans were testament to the confidence of the Irish delegation and the depth of Aiken's commitment to his interpretation of international affairs. With a view

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>78</sup> Cremin to Boland, 2 Feb. 1961, NAI DFA 305/384/2 Pt III. The RUC Constable, C.J. Anderson, was shot by the IRA near the border post of Roslea on the Fermanagh-Monaghan border on 27 January 1961 after leaving his girlfriend, a Monaghan resident, and crossing the border to drive home. The murder provoked widespread indignation and tension across Ireland.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>79</sup> Keating to all missions, 13 Feb. 1961, NAI DFA 305/384 Pt III.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>81</sup> Ibid.

to developing his ideas in consultation with moderate African states like Nigeria, Aiken attempted in the interim to secure support for his plan with the United States, sending a copy to Chester Bowles, Under-Secretary for Political Affairs in the US State Department,<sup>82</sup> and instructing Boland to forward copies to Hammarskjöld and Adlai Stevenson, the US Ambassador to the United Nations.

The announcement on 13 February 1961 by the Tshombe administration that Lumumba had been killed after escaping custody served only to strengthen Aiken's resolve. He urged that the Security Council should 'issue a unanimous appeal for restraint and calm and for the early formation of a Government representative of all parties in the Congo'.<sup>83</sup> The reality of the situation however brought his plan, and the limits of Irish influence, into sharp relief. Hammarskjöld felt that 'the proposals, while very interesting, do not bear closely on the immediate problems ... The real problem now is whether civil war will break out.'<sup>84</sup> Boland commented that the 'particular and fundamental difficulty is that of getting all parties in the Congo to work together'.<sup>85</sup> He thought that 'it might be wiser not to take further action in the United Nations in relation to the memorandum before the Minister gets to New York and sees for himself how things are viewed there'.<sup>86</sup> Aiken, Boland implied (not for the first time), did not know enough about the situation to effect a real and lasting solution. The issue was 'primarily a crisis affecting the United Nations', and had developed far beyond the borders of the Congo itself.<sup>87</sup>

His plan apparently stalled, Aiken turned his attention in the General Assembly debate on 28 March 1961 to advocating the parts of the Conciliation Commission's report which most closely resembled his own. He favoured its recommendation of 'a fully representative round-table conference of all the Congolese leaders to be held in a neutral place' and commented that 'many of us think that the federal solution would be the wisest for the Congo'.<sup>88</sup> His belief in the primacy of finding an African solution to the problem remained: 'it is for the Congolese leaders themselves, however, and not for

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>82</sup> Aiken to Bowles, 3 Feb. 1961, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>83</sup> Telex, DEA to PMUN, 14 Feb. 1961, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>84</sup> Note by Cremin, 17 Feb. 1961, ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>88</sup> Frank Aiken, UNGA plenary meeting, 28 March 1961, UNORGA, A/PV.969.

us, to make that decision. It is for us to respect whatever decision they make.<sup>89</sup> In keeping with his views on the conduct of international affairs, Aiken used the debate as a further opportunity to remind the small states of the United Nations of their special duty to support the world body and argued that 'had it not been for the presence of the United Nations', the crisis would have degenerated into 'civil war backed by foreign intervention'.<sup>90</sup> In spite of the accusations of pro-Western bias, he remained true to his commitments. On 14 April 1961, Irish official Conor Cruise O'Brien voted in favour of a General Assembly resolution calling for Belgian withdrawal from the Congo. The resolution put the Irish government at odds with its Western colleagues, though O'Brien was careful to emphasise that Irish sentiments were 'not anti-Belgian; we are friends of the Belgian people, and we are glad to have the opportunity of stating that here at this moment'.<sup>91</sup> It served as a reassertion of the independent character of Irish foreign policy, aware of its position as a European state but simultaneously supportive of the primacy of the United Nations' role in securing its interests.

## CONOR CRUISE O'BRIEN AND THE KATANGAN OFFENSIVE

By that stage, the Irish government had already turned down a March 1961 request from Hammarskjöld that O'Brien join the United Nations Secretariat, a move that O'Brien himself later speculated was because it was 'apprehensive about the explosive possibilities of the Katanga situation ... and feeling in any case sufficiently involved in Congo responsibilities', particularly given General McKeown's appointment as Commander of ONUC the previous December.<sup>92</sup> Its opposition did not last for long. In May Hammarskjöld renewed his request and on this occasion met with a more positive response. O'Brien was seconded to the United Nations Secretariat and appointed its civilian representative in Katanga. The reasoning behind his selection was explained in familiar terms. O'Brien himself felt that Hammarskjöld, recognising the country's contribution to the United Nations and its independent attitude to foreign affairs, 'needed an Irishman' for the task ahead.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>91</sup> Conor Cruise O'Brien, UNGA plenary meeting, 14 April 1961, UNORGA, A/PV.983.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>92</sup> O'Brien, Katanga, p. 41.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

The decisions he took in his new position were to have serious implications, not only for the United Nations, but for the Irish government and its troops. The controversy had its origins in Security Council resolution 161A, passed on 21 February 1961, whose basic purpose, according to Hammarskjöld, was to take all appropriate measures to prevent civil war in the Congo and to ensure the immediate withdrawal of foreign mercenaries, 'resort being made to force only if other efforts such as negotiation, persuasion or conciliation were to fail'.<sup>94</sup> The problem lay in the interpretation of the resolution, particularly the definition of what were deemed 'appropriate measures'. On 28 August 1961 O'Brien and Mahmoud Khiari (United Nations Chief of Civilian Operations) launched Operation Rumpunch, aimed at arresting 'foreign' personnel in Katanga. In Dublin his decision appeared at odds with the Irish government's view of the operation. The same day, after a meeting with Lemass, Aiken sought reassurance from Boland that rumours about Irish troops' involvement in a United Nations plan to disarm Katangan troops were false.95 Though Boland provided him with a positive response, persistent press reports to the contrary over the following days led Aiken to contact him once again on 4 September to convey his concern that the Taoiseach's statements to the Dáil the previous July and December 'that UN units in [the] Congo cannot be used to enforce any specific political solution' might be compromised.<sup>96</sup> Boland again attempted to put his Minister at ease. He assured him that the objective of the Katanga operation was 'to undermine Tshombe's military strength and by so doing to bring him into line ultimately with [Congolese Premier] Adoula and [Vice-Premier] Gizenga'.<sup>97</sup> The action, he told Aiken, was thus taken to avoid civil war and prevent drawing ONUC troops into action under the 21 February resolution.

It was Boland's final comment, to the effect that the '[o]bligation not to use UN Forces to interfere in party politics is regarded as subject to [a] general obligation to preserve [the] unity and territorial integrity of [the] Congo',<sup>98</sup> that really worried Aiken. He felt that 'if the restoration of unity requires the use of force against Congolese it is

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>94</sup> O'Neill, 'Jadotville', p. 129.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>95</sup> Telex, DEA to PMUN, 28 Aug. 1961, NAI DFA 305/384/31.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>96</sup> Telex, DEA to PMUN, 4 Sept. 1961, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>97</sup> 'Decode of machine code cable sent from UNEIREANN on 5.9.61 and received in Department on 6.9.61', ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

Congolese who should use it<sup>99</sup> After further assurances from Boland that UN troops would not be involved in action against Congolese factions,<sup>100</sup> Aiken expressed his belief that in the event of a civil war, ONUC troops 'should withdraw to their military posts and airports, keep out foreign intervention and hold on while factions fight to [the] finish<sup>101</sup>. He worried that United Nations direct involvement would compromise its integrity in the eyes of the Congolese and encourage intervention from the Soviet Union, the United Arab Republic, and possibly Ghana.<sup>102</sup>

At the same time that Aiken was receiving assurances from Boland and the United Nations Secretariat about Ireland's role in ONUC, Irish troops were indeed becoming more involved in action in Katanga. On 29 August a body of Irish troops was sent to a town called Jadotville near Elisabethville where by 5 September they had been surrounded by Katangese gendarmes. The confusion that surrounded their fate, their surrender on 17 September and their internment by the Katangans until 25 October, caused great concern at home in Ireland. The press carried wildly conflicting reports of serious Irish casualties and general confusion in Katanga and The Irish Times reported visible 'signs of a crack in the solidarity with which our Government has backed the UN throughout'.<sup>103</sup> Lemass's statement to the press on 15 September betrayed his government's grave concern over the proper use of Irish troops: it had 'acceded to the request of the UN to keep a contingent with the UN Force in the Congo on the understanding that the function of the force would be to preserve peace while the Congolese people were working out a solution of their political problems and would not be used to impose any particular solution on the Congo', 104 but now sought a full explanation on the nature of the situation. In private Lemass continued to be sympathetic to Western concerns. He gladly accepted British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's offer of information from British sources in Katanga,<sup>105</sup> and the British Ambassador to Ireland, Ian Maclennan, was confident that Lemass's outlook was very

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>99</sup> Telex, DEA to PMUN, 6 Sept. 1961, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>100</sup> Telex, PMUN to DEA, 7 Sept. 1961, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>101</sup> Telex, DEA to PMUN, 9 Sept. 1961, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>103</sup> 'Hue and Cry', The Irish Times, 23 Sept. 1961.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>104</sup> Quoted in 'Aiken to leave for Congo to-day', The Irish Times, 16 Sept. 1961.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>105</sup> Macmillan to Lemass, 18 Sept. 1961, NAI DT S16137 J/61.

similar to that of the British government.<sup>106</sup> What was more surprising to British officials was how little the Irish government knew about the situation. Aiken's departure on a fact-finding mission to the Congo on 16 September did little to dispel Maclennan's belief that the government was 'as much in the dark as anyone, both about what is going on and about how the existing situation in Katanga was brought about'.<sup>107</sup> In his judgement it had committed itself to the United Nations ideal to an extent that bordered on naivety, and mistakenly viewed O'Brien and McKeown 'as UN representatives who happened only incidentally to be from the Irish Republic'.<sup>108</sup>

Aiken's nine-day Congolese tour brought home the reality of the situation. In Leopoldville he met with Adoula, Gizenga, Bomboko and Kasavubu, who 'expressed deep appreciation for what Ireland had already done for the Congo, and were high in praise of the Irish troops'.<sup>109</sup> In Katanga, he toured Irish positions and met with Irish soldiers. staying in O'Brien's villa. The experience 'chastened' him.<sup>110</sup> Hammarskjöld's death in a plane crash occurred while Aiken was in the Congo and offered a reminder of the fragility of the situation, not least since Aiken's own plane from Elisabethville to Leopoldville on 24 September arrived safely only 'after limping across hundreds of miles of forest land' when the pilot was forced to feather the engines as the plane started to lose oil.<sup>111</sup> Earlier that week his plane had crash-landed at Kamina when on its way to Katanga. What he saw in Katanga worried Aiken even more. His profession that the 'United Nations have done and are doing a wonderful job here and can be proud of their record,<sup>112</sup> was matched by private unease at the instructions given to the troops. He continued to believe, as he had told Boland earlier in September, that the force 'should avoid being bogged down in hostilities against any group of Congolese secessionists'.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>106</sup> Maclennan to Chadwick, 20 Sept. 1961, NAUK DO 195/150.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>108</sup> Maclennan to Chadwick, 19 Sept. 1961, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>109</sup> Raymond Smith, 'All Irish safe and well', Irish Independent, 19 Sept. 1961.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>110</sup> Skelly, Irish diplomacy, p. 275.

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>111</sup> 'Aiken: second air mishap – safe landing after ordeal over forests', *Irish Press*, 25 Sept. 1961.
 <sup>112</sup> Quoted in Raymond Smith, 'The UN can be proud of their record – Mr Aiken', *Irish Independent*, 26 Sept. 1961.

Telex, DEA to PMUN, 9 Sept. 1961, UCDA Aiken Papers P104/6409.

#### MAINTAINING THE IRISH PRESENCE

In spite of his misgivings, Aiken continued to offer his full support to the operation though news agency reports from Leopoldville suggested that O'Brien and United Nations officials had had to persuade him from withdrawing Irish troops.<sup>114</sup> The experience made the Irish government more wary of its own position, but it retained a strong commitment to the United Nations. Part of the difficulty was of the Irish government's own making and stemmed from its close association of Ireland's fate with that of the world organisation. Lemass remarked to Cremin on 20 September 1961 that the 'experience with Dr O'Brien's mission in the Congo indicates that it is virtually impossible to avoid the impression in the public mind that the involvement in UN affairs of an Irish official of the United Nations in some way involves this country'.<sup>115</sup> He rejected outright any suggestion that Boland might assume an interim role during the search for Hammarskjöld's successor, doubting 'whether the public would welcome further involvement on our part in United Nations affairs at the present time'.<sup>116</sup> Lemass had a further eye on the potential domestic difficulties that might arise not simply from the misuse of Irish troops, but from the potential for further casualties and from the accusation that they were being used to enforce a 'communist' agenda.

In the aftermath of the Irish government's application to join the EEC in July 1961, Lemass had also begun to think of placing it on a footing more consistent with its potential fellow member-states. In the long-term the application marked what Keatinge described as a 'distinctive re-orientation of Irish foreign policy, in which all issue-areas [were] affected in some way'.<sup>117</sup> The most visible consequence came in the loose division of foreign policy in two, with Lemass taking charge of European affairs and Aiken those at the United Nations. The emphasis on Europe was not entirely to Aiken's liking and he had to be persuaded by Cremin not to publicly advance his belief that 'closer European co-operation would undermine independent UN action',<sup>118</sup> but it is more difficult to ascribe a distinct change in Ireland's role at the United Nations to the application process. The greatest short-term effect – in Noel Dorr's judgement – was to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>114</sup> 'Aiken: second air mishap – safe landing after ordeal over forests', Irish Press, 25 Sept. 1961.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>115</sup> Note by Cremin re meeting with Taoiseach, 20 Sept. 1961, UCDA Aiken Papers P104/6340.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>117</sup> Keatinge, *Place among the nations*, p. 198.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>118</sup> Bhreatnach, 'European federation and UN internationalism', p. 246.

ensure that the balance of foreign policy 'tipped a little more towards prudence on certain matters',<sup>119</sup> and Lemass in particular became more conscious of the broader impact of his government's policies.

This diplomatic division of labour did not, however, bring the Irish government to 'the point of abandoning most of Aiken's UN programme', as Nina Heathcote wrongly asserted.<sup>120</sup> Such a claim not only exaggerates the impact of the EEC but also over-estimates the changes in Lemass's approach and influence. From the beginning of ONUC Lemass showed himself to be committed to tying Irish interests to the United Nations while retaining his pro-Western sympathies. He held his position on seating Kasavubu in tandem with a belief that it was in Ireland's own interest 'to promote the interests of the UN as a whole'.<sup>121</sup> In September 1961 he remained convinced of the essential worth of ONUC. His broadcast to Irish troops via the Department of Defence's new short-wave radio service that month reiterated the central tenets of Irish policy: 'when our contribution to this difficult task is no longer needed, Ireland will be able, because of your labours and sacrifices, to lift her head high, in the knowledge that she will have fulfilled her obligation with honour'.<sup>122</sup> In October 1961 the government agreed to send further troops, on the grounds that 'refusal to replace the Irish contingent would be misrepresented and that, because of the particularly critical situation that exists in Katanga, it would not only undermine the UN position but would tend to destroy the order and calm that have been successfully established in the rest of the Congo'.<sup>123</sup> The DEA warned that ONUC's failure would lead 'to the dangerous weakening of the organisation itself, would open the way to civil war and foreign intervention in the Congo and might well bring about strife and insecurity in other parts of Africa and might indeed endanger world peace'.<sup>124</sup>

The emphasis it placed on the pursuit of international stability through these channels made it impossible to withdraw, but the contentious issue surrounding the use

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>119</sup> Dorr, 'Ireland at the United Nations' (2002), p. 115.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>120</sup> Heathcote, 'Ireland and ONUC', p. 898.

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>121</sup> Quoted from Lemass's address to the Cambridge University Liberal Club on the role of small states in the United Nations; 'Small nations have most to gain – Mr Lemass', *Irish Independent*, 1 Feb. 1960.
 <sup>122</sup> Quoted in 'Lemass talks to soldiers in Congo', *The Irish Times*, 26 Sept. 1961.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>123</sup> DEA memorandum for the government, 'Request from the United Nations for an Irish Battalion for Congo Force to replace present contingent when withdrawn and also for anti-aircraft and support weapons', 9 Oct. 1961, NAI DFA 305/384/2 Pt V.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

of Irish soldiers served to drive a wedge between Ireland and the Afro-Asian bloc. Along with Sweden and Canada, the Irish delegation to the United Nations opposed the terms of a resolution put forward by Ceylon, the United Arab Republic and Liberia to the Security Council in November 1961 which called for 'vigorous' measures, including force, to be used to detain Belgian and foreign mercenaries, and military personnel. In a letter to U Thant, Aiken openly questioned the approach: 'It has always been my view that the UN should be prepared to exercise infinite patience and to spend many years if necessary to achieve its aims by methods of peaceful persuasion. In my opinion, any idea of achieving a speedy ending of the Congo operation by military means is entirely illusory.'<sup>125</sup>

On the ground, the actual contribution of Irish officials did not receive an entirely positive account. British officials noted that McKeown was 'regarded as useless by the Indian soldiers',<sup>126</sup> and O'Brien, who had by then left Katanga and returned to New York, was looked on with disdain in many quarters. His rumoured return to the Congo, British officials felt, 'could do nothing but harm'.<sup>127</sup> O'Brien's public position had become increasingly controversial and in many ways 'untenable' to the United Nations Secretariat.<sup>128</sup> He wrote to Aiken on 29 November 1961 to inform him of his resignation and indicated that '[s]hould you request me to resume service in the Irish Department of External Affairs, I should be happy to do so'.<sup>129</sup> O'Brien had already made up his mind however that his recall would be followed immediately by his resignation from the DEA.<sup>130</sup> On 2 December, the day after Aiken had secured his return, he wrote again to tender his resignation from the Irish Civil Service. This muddled affair was exacerbated by O'Brien's statement to the media on the same day in which he strongly criticised outside Western interference in ONUC. His statements met with hostility in the DEA, though Aiken in private professed himself 'deeply grateful' for O'Brien's 'unflagging assistance to me as Minister. I shall always look

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>125</sup> Aiken to Thant, 27 Nov. 1961, UCDA Aiken Papers P104/6426.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>126</sup> 'Secretary of State's meeting with the Irish Ambassador on December 1 [1961]: Irish interests in the Congo', 30 Nov. 1961, NAUK FO 371/155009.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>128</sup> O'Brien, Katanga, p. 328.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>129</sup> O'Brien to Aiken, 29 Nov. 1961, UCDA Aiken Papers P104/7045.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>130</sup> O'Brien, Katanga, pp. 328-9.

back with pleasure to the years we worked closely and happily and I think fruitfully together at home and in the United Nations.<sup>131</sup>

Lemass again showed himself to be more concerned. He moved quickly to distance the government from O'Brien's actions, stating that he had 'acted as an official of the United Nations' rather than of the Irish government,<sup>132</sup> and used the annual meeting of the Dublin Fianna Fáil central discussion group on 7 December 1961 to restate the Irish government's position on ONUC. It remained strongly in favour of the operation. If Ireland were to withdraw, he told the group, it would be 'regarded as a default on our obligations as a responsible member of the United Nations and a betrayal of the principles which we have supported there ... It would be deeply deplored and misunderstood by other independent African and Asian States who have urged us to stav with the task.'133 His government remained wedded to the principles that had shaped its initial acceptance of Hammarskjöld's request and in April 1962 returned to its argument that to withdraw Irish troops would 'jeopardise the continuance of the present comparative peace and calm that exist in the Congo'.<sup>134</sup> For Aiken there should be no obstacle to the successful completion of the United Nations' efforts. The operation was a test of its commitment to peace and stability and to the transformation of its role. It offered an opportunity for it to surmount the political divisions of the Cold War and provide an alternative future based along the lines desired by small states like Ireland and Sweden. Time and finances should not become an obstacle to the successful pursuit of these goals. In August 1962, Boland told Charles Yost of the United States Permanent Mission that the United Nations should make it clear to Tshombe that it was 'prepared to continue the operation in the Congo as long as might be necessary'.<sup>135</sup> Boland told Yost that the United States' opposition to extending funding for ONUC

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>131</sup> Aiken to O'Brien, 4 Dec. 1961, UCDA Aiken Papers P104/7045.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>132</sup> Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 192, Col. 1246 (6 Dec. 1961).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>133</sup> 'Text of a statement to be made by the Taoiseach, Mr Sean Lemass, TD, at the Annual Meeting of Comh-Comhairle Átha Cliath on Thursday, December 7<sup>th</sup>, at Groome's Hotel, Dublin', NAI DFA 305/384/31 Pt III.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>134</sup> DEA memorandum for the government, 'Request from the United Nations for an Irish Battalion to replace the 36<sup>th</sup> Battalion now serving in the Congo when withdrawn', 4 April 1962, NAI DFA 305/384/2 Pt VI.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>135</sup> Boland to Cremin, 7 Aug. 1962, NAI DFA 305/384/31 Pt V.

'ran directly counter to our views of what needed to be done if the UN operation in the Congo was not to end in irretrievable failure'.<sup>136</sup>

The difficulty lay in reconciling this approach with the strain ONUC placed on the Irish government's limited resources. In reply to a request for further Irish troops on 5 October 1962, Lemass asked that reference be made 'to the hope expressed by the Acting Secretary-General during his visit to Dublin in July last that it would be possible, by the end of this year, to start reducing the military commitment of the United Nations in the Congo ... [and] to the strain imposed on our limited resources by this commitment'.<sup>137</sup> He requested that the Secretary-General be informed that after the replacement battalion had finished its tour of duty, 'we would wish to reduce our contribution to the Force – or, if circumstances permit, to terminate it'.<sup>138</sup> The impact of O'Brien and Jadotville, as well as the loss of troops at Elisabethville in December 1961, was obvious. It made Lemass considerably more wary of the consequences of Irish actions, though his comments regarding the troops reflected a genuine concern at the ability of the weak Irish public finances to cope with lengthy involvement in the operation. The question of how Irish troops were used also continued to be of concern, and distanced Ireland from the Afro-Asian group's exhortations that the United Nations use more pro-active methods in restoring order to the Congo. At a meeting of the Irish delegation in New York on 15 October 1962 to discuss policy on the Congo those present, including Aiken and Boland, agreed 'that we should warn against the adoption of any kind of military stance unless the United Nations Forces on the ground were capable of supporting it and that only such areas should be garrisoned as the United Nations could effectively defend'.<sup>139</sup>

In keeping with his commitment to constructive decolonisation, Aiken continued to search for a solution that would provide the Congo with a long-term viable future. In January 1963, he impressed on Joseph Sweeney of the US Embassy in Ireland the 'necessity to avoid outright military victory' and the need for a negotiated settlement.<sup>140</sup> It was important, Boland told U Thant the same month, to avoid 'any

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>137</sup> Nolan (DT) to Cremin, 5 Oct. 1962, NAI DFA 305/384/2 Pt VII.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>139</sup> 'Notes of meeting on Congo situation 15 October 1962', NAI DFA PMUN 386 M/13/6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>140</sup> Telex, DEA to PMUN, 4 Jan. 1963, NAI DFA 305/384/31 Pt VI.

attempt to make the process of reintegrating Katanga into the Congo too abrupt', and to avoid any sense of unease that might be caused by introducing too many Central Government military or civilian personnel into Katanga too quickly.<sup>141</sup> Patient constructive reform, which guaranteed a stable future state, steered by the United Nations but created by the Congolese themselves, continued to be Aiken's primary concern in the final two years of ONUC. For him, there could no question of ending the operation before the Congo's difficulties had been fully sorted, no matter what the financial implications. When Boland met the Secretary General again in August 1963, he told him that 'the suggestion that ONUC should be completely withdrawn from the Congo by the 1<sup>st</sup> January next caused the Irish Government the gravest concern ... there was a serious risk of all the good that had been accomplished in the Congo being undone if ONUC were withdrawn before the Congolese Government were in a position to ensure law and order'.<sup>142</sup> As late as March 1964, with the Irish government committed to an additional contingent of Irish troops for the period to June of that year, Aiken told the Dáil that the planned withdrawal then might leave the Congolese government in a difficult position.<sup>143</sup>

He continued to search for a comprehensive solution to the conflict that would allow for Congo's reconstruction as a stable independent state. The Irish government's two \$25,000 contributions to the United Nations Congo Fund, created to help in the country's economic reconstruction, made explicit the link between political and economic solutions. Boland viewed the Fund as complementary to ONUC since it diminished 'the need for the employment of military personnel to maintain law and order and to prevent civil war'.<sup>144</sup> In the last two years of the operation, the focus 'turned from the maintenance of order to the provision of an extensive programme of economic and technical assistance'.<sup>145</sup> Aiken in particular emphasised the importance of economic reconstruction, particularly in reinforcing Congo's resistance to outside interference. His attitude was in keeping with the Irish government's policies on the

<sup>142</sup> Boland to sec. DEA, 28 Aug. 1963, NAI DFA 305/384 Pt VIII.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>141</sup> Boland to sec. DEA, 23 Jan. 1963, NAI DFA PMUN 431 M/13/6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>143</sup> Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 208, Col. 860 (12 March 1964).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>144</sup> Boland to sec. DEA, 4 March 1963, NAI DFA 305/384/12.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>145</sup> Aiken, Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 201, Col. 942 (3 April 1963).

emerging states and particularly what Joseph Skelly termed its 'commitment to *successful* decolonisation'.<sup>146</sup>

## COMING OF AGE: ONUC'S IMPACT ON IRELAND

The political disintegration of the Congo and the difficulties in restoring social and economic order to the state emphasised the essential validity of the Irish government's arguments advanced during the decolonisation debates of the late 1950s. It offered a prime example of the effects of ill-preparation prior to independence, with little or no collaboration between the colonial authority and the colonised society in the creation of a viable political system, no structured timetable for withdrawal, and high levels of outside political and economic interference. But it was the attempts to rectify those problems - framed in terms of the United Nations' primacy in solving international conflict, the importance of negotiated settlement, and the necessity of avoiding outside interference – that carried the most important lessons for Irish policy-makers. The experience of ONUC, particularly the loss of troops at Niemba and later at Elisabethville, became a reminder of the very real sacrifices to be made in the pursuit of international peace. At the United Nations, the situation described by The Irish Times in September 1961 – 'the big Powers support the UN when it suits them, and evade their responsibilities, or even work against UN policy, when their own interests seem to be touched<sup>,147</sup> – frustrated efforts to find a constructive and lasting solution and hindered the success of ONUC forces on the ground. The political realities and high stakes of ONUC had made all too apparent the difficulties of constructing a world organisation in keeping with the vision to which Aiken and his counterparts in other moderate states remained committed – a United Nations which would operate above Cold War politics to facilitate and encourage the achievement of a stable international environment.

It was not solely the shortcomings of the United Nations however that awoke Irish officials to the realities of the state's international standing. The broadly-held assertion that the Irish government and its people had a special role to play in linking the West with the developing world was, Holmes, Rees and Whelan argued, 'sorely

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>146</sup> Skelly, Irish diplomacy, p. 266.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>147</sup> 'Hue and Cry', The Irish Times, 23 Sept. 1961.

dented if not completely destroyed' by the Congo experience.<sup>148</sup> The view that Irish troops would be viewed apart from their Western colleagues was openly tested by the attitudes adopted by the Congolese, not least Lumumba's August 1960 comments on the use of white troops in Katanga. So too was the attitude that Ireland was naturally positioned to act as a bridge between the West and the developing world. Though Boland frequently consulted with his African and Asian colleagues on the issue, the attitude he and his Western counterparts adopted to the United Nations Advisory Committee on the Congo, the close contact he enjoyed with officials from like-minded moderate states, and his frequent warnings to Aiken not to overstep the mark in attempting to exert Irish influence, acted as a reminder that with the emergence of this new group of independent and vocal African states came a re-structuring of the international order in which moderate states like Ireland were gradually losing the kind of influence they had enjoyed in preceding years.

Paradoxically, among the Irish public, these realities had remarkably little impact. Niemba was broadly constructed as a reminder of the necessary sacrifices in the pursuit of the type of world defined by Irish officials since they had joined the United Nations in 1955. The belief that Ireland had 'more influence in Africa than a lot of other countries', as Labour Party leader Brendan Corish told the Dáil in April 1962, prevailed.<sup>149</sup> Ireland's colonial past, its Christian heritage and its pursuit of an independent role in international affairs continued to shape its attitudes. ONUC transcended political divides to become a national issue. Corish and Fine Gael leader James Dillon were continually kept informed of events in the Congo and both parties subscribed to the same definition of Ireland's world role. In April 1962, Fine Gael TD Liam Cosgrave told the Dáil that the success of the Irish troops in ONUC was 'due to the fact that we are a country that has won the respect of the emergent nations, regarded as a country with no ulterior motives, a country which, in common with many other small countries, has a vital interest in the preservation of peace and the establishment of order'.<sup>150</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>148</sup> Holmes, Rees and Whelan, *Poor relation*, p. 157.

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>149</sup> Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 194, Col. 1395 (5 April 1962).
 <sup>150</sup> Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 194, Col. 1361 (5 April 1962).

As a piece of rhetoric, Cosgrave's speech captured the essence of the Irish selfperception of the state's role. The reality was somewhat more complicated and related directly to its European character. The Swedish approach to ONUC showed that Ireland was not unique in its pursuit of a particular set of policy goals or in its definition of a 'special position' for the state in the Western sphere. From outside, Ireland was viewed as 'a small country with an impeccable anti-colonial tradition, and yet a Western power'.<sup>151</sup> Within that sphere however it defined a specific role for itself. Aiken's suspicion of American motives and policies, and his commitment to the United Nations, as well as Lemass's continued and vocal support for the organisation, provided evidence of the government's independence of judgement, even when the decisions it arrived at were often in line with Western attitudes. The application for EEC membership did not radically overhaul this independence, and evaluations of Irish voting patterns at the United Nations bear witness to its continuing diplomatic autonomy.<sup>152</sup>

The Congo experience did however succeed in introducing a more pragmatic air among Irish decision-makers towards the state's role the United Nations and in relation to the emerging independent African states in particular. That change was a gradual one. There was no epiphany among DEA officials, brought about by some sudden realisation that Ireland's role had altered overnight and that it no longer held the kind of political influence it had claimed to wield among the Afro-Asian group; that realisation was already visible in Boland's assessment of Aiken's plan for African reconciliation in July 1960. Neither does there appear to have been any widespread discussion among Irish policy-makers about the manner in which the Congo experience had accelerated any change in attitude. Instead the progression was a more natural one, a reaction to the realities of international relations made visible by the politics of the conflict. Individual experience was crucial: Aiken's trip to the Congo in 1961, Boland's relationship with his colleagues at the United Nations – his Western and African counterparts and United

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>151</sup> 'Confidential. Irish Republic at the United Nations: Brief for Visit of P.U.S. [Permanent Under-Secretary] to Dublin, June, 1962', NAUK DO 181/9.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>152</sup> For an analysis of Irish voting patterns at the United Nations in comparison with its later EEC contemporaries, see Hurwitz, 'The EEC and decolonisation'. See also Rosemary Foot, 'The European Community's voting behaviour at the United Nations General Assembly', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (June 1979), pp. 350-60; and Beate Lindemann, 'Europe and the Third World: the Nine at the United Nations', *The World Today*, Vol. 32, No. 7 (July 1976), pp. 260-9.

Nations officials – and the experiences of several Irish officials in debates at the General Assembly all added to a growing awareness of Ireland's position and, equally importantly, the limits to its influence. Pressures for change also came from outside the DEA, notably Seán Lemass's concern at offending Western sensibilities in the debate on the seating of Kasavubu and his increasing concern with the EC application. They formed part of a gradual and growing awareness of the practical implications of Irish decision-making, visible to some extent in the debates on decolonisation and apartheid in preceding years (see chapters one and three), but which now distilled in a more pragmatic assessment of the country's role.

It is important, however, not to exaggerate the extent of this change. ONUC did invest an element of caution in Irish foreign policy but did not lead it to abandon the commitment to the United Nations that Swedish Foreign Minister Östen Unden described as 'outstanding, not to say astonishing'.<sup>153</sup> The Irish delegation retained its 'high reputation'<sup>154</sup> and the government's continued commitments in the field of peacekeeping ensured that its fortunes remained closely tied to those of the world organisation. On the departure of Irish troops from the Congo in June 1964, the Irish government had already extended its peace-keeping responsibilities to the United Nations operation in Cyprus. Its response to the March 1964 request for troops for the island said much about the lessons it had learned from ONUC. Cyprus offered even greater potential political difficulties, not least the partition of the island into Greek and Turkish areas, of particular sensitivity to Irish opinion. The Irish government was not alone in taking its time (almost two weeks) before committing to the force - Sweden, Canada, Brazil and Finland took similar care in making their decisions - and the positive result of those deliberations said a lot about the Irish mindset at official and public levels. In spite of the potential that the operation would bring 'even graver dangers of political confusion, and even chaos, than the Congo situation, and graver danger of loss of lives',<sup>155</sup> ONUC showed that Ireland could make a positive and constructive contribution in the area of peace-keeping and the Irish Army, as Eunan

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>153</sup> From a conversation between Unden and the Irish Ambassador to Sweden, quoted in the Ambassador's confidential report of 23 June 1961, NAI DFA 305/384/2 Pt IV.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>154</sup> Confidential briefing titled 'Visit of Irish Ministers' prepared for visit of the Taoiseach and Minister for External Affairs to the Foreign Office, 19 March 1963, NAUK DO 181/9.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>155</sup> 'Two weeks before decision on troops', *The Irish Times*, 9 March 1964.

O'Halpin noted, had become 'an important arm of foreign policy in a manner which no one had expected'.<sup>156</sup> With the United Nations changed significantly by increasing Afro-Asian influence, peace-keeping became the most visible practical expression of the Irish government's pursuit of an international system based on peace and stability. It was, the Irish Independent asserted, Ireland's 'morally unavoidable contribution to the peace of the world. On the grounds of our past policy statements about the UN, it is indeed hard to see how we can adopt any other attitude.<sup>157</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>156</sup> O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, p. 273.
<sup>157</sup> 'Troops for Cyprus', *Irish Independent*, 6 March 1964.

# 'On the side of the angels':\* Ireland, Southern Africa, and the Birth of the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement

Congo's descent into chaos was watched closely by its neighbours in southern Africa. Unwilling to countenance any reduction in their power, the controlling minorities in South Africa (and by extension South-West Africa) and Southern Rhodesia, and the colonial authorities in Portuguese Africa (Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, and Mozambique) viewed African political independence as an unhealthy and threatening development. To them, the Congo unrest exemplified the potential threat to their prosperous existence. They feared that the abuse of power by African leaders and the damage it did to Western business interests would be repeated if greater political freedoms were allowed within their own societies. For the rest of the world, with the debate on decolonisation drawing to a close, the 'hard core' of Africa's political problems was exposed: the persistence of minority rule in southern Africa.<sup>1</sup> The regimes were seen as an affront to the freedom of the newly-independent African states, their rejection of African rights a reminder of the continued colonial influence on their continent. In the developed world, the relationship took on a different dynamic. Emigration, trade, geopolitical concerns and shared cultural links bound the West to South Africa and Southern Rhodesia in a manner not visible on the rest of the continent. In the early 1960s, that relationship began to be challenged from within. Encouraged by the example of American civil rights protesters and the calls of the South African National Congress (ANC), and enraged by events in South Africa, Western activists grew increasingly vocal in the struggle against minority rule, and several moderate Western governments, including Sweden, Denmark, Ireland, and others, responded in kind at the United Nations with increasingly condemnatory diplomatic postures.

After 1960, the opportunities for moderate intervention of this sort decreased as the influence of the Afro-Asian group grew stronger and the complexities of Ireland's

<sup>\*</sup> Tadhg O'Sullivan, UNGA Fourth Committee, 7 Dec. 1961, UNORGA, A/C.4/SR.1240.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Tadhg O'Sullivan, UNGA Fourth Committee, 29 Oct. 1962, UNORGA, A/C.4/SR.1364.

anti-colonial stance in the early years at the United Nations were made more obvious as debate became more radicalised. The effect of these changes on Ireland's international role forms the core of this chapter. The first part is concerned with the evolution of Irish government policy prior to 1960, its approach to the question of apartheid and South West Africa at the United Nations, and the factors shaping those policies. The second part concentrates on the period after 1960 and the role defined for Ireland by the changing international environment. In order to situate Irish policies in a broader context, this analysis draws on the experience of the Nordic states whose interests closely corresponded with those of the Irish government. The same countries provide a measure for Irish attitudes to southern Africa in another, broader sense: the levels of public participation in international controversies, and the implications of that participation for foreign policy. The European-wide response to events in southern Africa, most visible in the boycott movements in Britain and the Nordic states and in the birth of the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement (IAAM) in 1964, forms the third and final part of this chapter.

### SOUTHERN AFRICA IN CONTEXT

The international debate on apartheid and racial discrimination had its origins in changing attitudes to colonialism and human rights in the post-war period, and developments to the contrary within South Africa. After its 1948 election victory, D.F.Malan's National Party introduced the institutionalised structures of segregation and apartheid that came to be the mark of South African society. They formed the basis for a programme of deepening racial segregation pursued by that government's successors. The 'South African Commonwealth' system introduced by the government of Hendrick Verwoerd gave limited self-government to Africans in areas known as Bantustans and continued the drive 'for the elimination of African political influence in white areas'.<sup>2</sup> Society grew increasingly polarised. An attempt to set up an interracial Congress of the People in 1955 was met with intransigence on both sides: from the government who condemned its interracial nature; and from Africans who denounced it

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> T.R.H. Davenport, *South Africa: a modern history* (4<sup>th</sup> ed., London, 1991), p. 353.

as a 'betrayal of African nationalism'.<sup>3</sup> The tension that resulted was fuelled by the South African government's fears of events elsewhere in Africa and the growth of the ANC and its radical offshoot, the Pan-African Congress (PAC). It quickly took the form of open confrontation, with disastrous consequences. On 21 March 1960, 69 civilians were killed by South African police during a demonstration at Sharpeville. The response served to radicalise the situation within the state as the ban on both the ANC and PAC drove their leaderships into exile and their ordinary members into increasingly militant action.

Outside South Africa, the question gained increasing international attention. The severity of the security forces' reaction at Sharpeville brought condemnation of the South African government from all quarters. In Britain, the incident led to the creation of the Anti-Apartheid Movement. In Scandinavia it helped to ignite public interest and action. At the United Nations, the General Assembly adopted a resolution strongly condemning South Africa's policies which 'opened a new chapter in the organisation's treatment of domestic disputes'.<sup>4</sup> Its re-interpretation of article 2.7 of the United Nations Charter, which forbade interference in the internal politics of a member state, marked the beginning of a more active Western involvement on the apartheid issue. At inter-governmental organisations like the International Labour Organisation, South Africa came under increasing harassment as Afro-Asian delegations lobbied for its exclusion. The pressure became increasingly difficult to bear and on 31 May 1961, faced with similar pressures from within the Commonwealth, the South African government withdrew from that organisation and became a republic.

The attacks on South Africa at the United Nations extended to its administration of the Trust Territory of South West Africa. The United Nations Trusteeship Committee and South West African Committee became central to the debate on the territory's future and led calls for South Africa's withdrawal. The South African government treated the territory as an extension of its state, exploiting its natural resources and introducing the same segregationist policies visible within its own boundaries. The latter had an all-too-familiar effect. On 10 December 1959, 11

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Leo Kuper, 'African nationalism in South Africa, 1910-1964', in Monica Wilson and Leonard

Thompson (eds.), The Oxford history of South Africa II: 1870-1966 (Oxford, 1971), p. 464.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Evan Luard, *A history of the United Nations, Volume 2: the age of decolonisation, 1955-1965* (London, 1989), p. 115.

Africans were killed and 44 injured by police fire in Windhoek after residents had stoned police in an effort to resist removal to another township. As it did in South Africa, the severity of the security forces' response radicalised African nationalists. In 1960, the Ovamboland People's Organisation was reconstituted as the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO), and in 1961 'resolved to prepare for armed struggle' against the South African authorities.<sup>5</sup>

Familiar fears haunted the authorities in Southern Rhodesia. Nominally selfgoverning since 1923, Southern Rhodesia was the dominant state in the British Central African Federation. Its controlling white minority grew increasingly concerned at the pace of African political development elsewhere and the riots in Nyasaland, another constituent of the Federation, in 1959 only strengthened their resolve. In 1962, the right-wing Rhodesian Front assumed power on a pro-segregation mandate and its policies accelerated the division of Southern Rhodesian society. At the United Nations it drew increasing scrutiny at the Fourth Committee in spite of British protests at the legality of discussing its future. The final turning point came in 1964 when Britain granted independence to the Federation's two other constituents, Nyasaland (Malawi) and Northern Rhodesia (Zambia). Fearful of British attempts to repeat the process in its territory, the Rhodesian Front rejected attempts to negotiate greater African political freedoms in Southern Rhodesia, and in November 1965 unilaterally declared the state independent.

At the same time in Portuguese Africa the reconstruction of the post-war economic system led to a gradual increase in tensions within the colonial societies. African opposition grew slowly. In August 1959, a strike by dock workers in Bissau, organised by the Guinean nationalist movement the PAIGC, left at least fifty dead when police shot on the demonstrators. It was followed in 1960 by similar police reactions to demonstrations in Mozambique and Angola. In 1961, the situation was brought to the attention of the world by Portugal's brutal suppression of a revolt in Angola. It was followed by an increase in violent opposition in Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau, so that by 1964 all three colonies were engaged in guerrilla warfare with the colonial state, though it remained 'something of a phoney war', except in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Allan D. Cooper, *The occupation of Namibia: Afrikanerdom's attack on the British Empire* (Lanham, 1991), p. 97.

Guinea-Bissau, until the early 1970s.<sup>6</sup> The case did not escape the attention of the United Nations or the world's press, where Portuguese policies were strongly criticised, and the Portuguese government was subjected to repeated criticism and attempts to exclude it from international debate.

## IRELAND, APARTHEID AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

What marked southern Africa as distinct in Irish policies were the extensive economic and cultural links with the region not visible in any other part of sub-Saharan Africa. Where Ireland's relationship with the emerging states built on relatively recent missionary endeavour, Irish men and women had travelled to southern Africa as entrepreneurs, missionaries, settlers, and officials of the British Empire from at least the early nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup> Those migratory links survived well into the twentieth century. The 1951 South African census recorded that 8,254 South African residents had been born 'in the twenty-six county area', with an additional 1,366 born 'in the six county area'.<sup>8</sup> The relationship with Rhodesia was built along similar lines. In the early 1960s an estimated 5,000 to 15,000 (7% of the white population) identified themselves as 'Irish-Rhodesians'.<sup>9</sup> The place names of rural Rhodesia – Athlone, Donnybrook, Avondale, and the gold mines of Colleen Bawn and Connemara in the south east resonated with the strength of Irish influence in the colony's formative years.<sup>10</sup> The large numbers of Irishmen who fought on both sides of the Boer War added a romantic association of the Boer cause with Irish nationalism, fostered by the friendships between the respective leaders. In 1948, after Ireland's isolation during the Second World War, that political relationship was restored to its 'pre-war intimacy' following

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Malyn Newitt, Portugal in Africa: the last hundred years (London, 1981), p. 230.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Donal P. McCracken, 'Odd man out: the South African experience', in Andy Bielenberg (ed.), *The Irish diaspora* (Harlow, 2000), p. 253.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Scott-Hayward to sec., DEA, 26 June 1964, NAI DFA 305/94/4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> The figure of 5,000 is quoted in Lionel Fleming, 'More Rhodesian than Irish', *The Irish Times*, 8 Nov. 1965, while Cyril A. Rogers and C. Frantz estimate the Irish presence at 15,000 in their study, *Racial themes in Southern Rhodesia: the attitudes and behaviour of the white population* (New York, 1962), p. 60. Rogers and Frantz's numbers are problematic as indicators as they are based not on official census records but on a test sample of 500 Rhodesians, whom they tested not for country of birth but for self-defined 'national or ethnic origin'.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Neal J. O'Donnell, Salisbury, to editor, *Irish Independent*, 28 Dec. 1965. See also Donal Lowry, 'The Irish in Rhodesia: wild land - tame, sacred and profane', *Southern African-Irish Studies*, Vol. 2 (1992), pp. 242-60.

the victory of the National Party in South Africa's elections.<sup>11</sup> Four years later, the Attorney General, Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh, attended the tercentenary celebrations of the first white settlement in South Africa on behalf of the Irish people, and in so doing strengthened the image of what Bébhinn Ryan described as 'two countries closely linked to each other through migration and hence through religious, political and military affairs'.<sup>12</sup>

Those ties may have, as Skelly suggested, 'sometimes muted' Irish indignation at apartheid,<sup>13</sup> but they could not disguise the underlying distaste for the system's denial of African rights. At the eleventh session of the General Assembly in 1956, Cosgrave instructed the Irish delegation to vote in favour of a (mild) resolution reprimanding South Africa for its apartheid system and another which called on South Africa to report on its treatment of its population of Indian origin. Cosgrave's successor, Aiken, adopted an even more forward approach. He grounded his policies in two familiar themes: the right to self-determination and the search for what his Norwegian counterparts termed 'constructive solutions' in southern Africa.<sup>14</sup> The weight of Irish history in its various manifestations informed Irish attitudes. At the Special Political Committee on 29 October 1957, O'Brien stated that Irish policy was 'not actuated by unfriendly feelings to the European community in South Africa', but was in the latter's interest.<sup>15</sup> In remarking on a resolution introduced to the committee three days later, which Ireland co-sponsored, O'Brien returned to this assertion. He told the assembled that the resolution was aimed not at the South African government, but at the 'liberal people, and also prudent people, who would be encouraged if they knew that the United Nations still refused to countenance the policies of apartheid and if they saw reflected in the vote a growing volume of opposition to such policies'.<sup>16</sup>

However it was framed, the resolution's condemnation of apartheid was a bold step. In co-sponsoring, Ireland was one of only two 'Western' European states, along with Greece, to condemn apartheid. Most significantly, in raising the issue, the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Lowry, 'The Irish in Rhodesia', p. 120.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Bébhinn Ryan, 'Ireland's response to the emergence of the apartheid system in South Africa: 1948-1966' (MA, National University of Ireland, Galway, 1999), p. 16.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Skelly, Irish diplomacy, p. 187.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Tore Linné Eriksen, 'The origins of a special relationship: Norway and southern Africa 1960-1975', in Tore Linné Eriksen (ed.), *Norway and national liberation in southern Africa* (Uppsala, 2000), p. 12.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Conor Cruise O'Brien, UNGA Special Political Committee, 29 Oct. 1957, UNORGA, A/SPC/SR.54.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Conor Cruise O'Brien, UNGA Special Political Committee, 1 Nov. 1957, UNORGA, A/SPC/SR.57.

resolution rejected the charge that the discussion of apartheid was beyond the competence of the General Assembly. O'Brien told the committee that the essence of Article 2.7 of the United Nations Charter – non-interference in the domestic affairs of member-states – was negated by what apartheid engendered; 'fear and hatred – the seeds of war. The problem therefore was in the broadest and clearest sense an international, not a domestic, affair.'<sup>17</sup>

The vote met with indignation in South Africa. R.I.C. Scott-Hayward, a veteran supporter of Irish nationalism who later served as Irish Honorary Consul in Johannesburg (1960-66), wrote to de Valera to express the 'indignation and annoyance' it caused, and asserted that the Irish delegation based its arguments on a false assumption of the apartheid system; '[t]o describe apartheid as racial discrimination instead of what it is, namely, separate development for the European population, and the primitive, semi-barbaric natives, suggests our Government's ill-treatment of the natives, which is just the opposite of what it is'.<sup>18</sup> Scott-Hayward's anger matched an evident disbelief that the country to which he had travelled in 1922 to oppose the Treaty could abandon its friendship with South Africa for the sake of mistaken judgement. South African officials criticised the Irish delegation's earlier support for placing apartheid on the United Nations agenda in similar terms: 'Ireland had been looked upon as a friend by the South Africans and they expected a better understanding of their position from us'.<sup>19</sup>

A shared sense of nationalism and a shared anti-British tradition was set aside as the Irish government constructed its diplomatic identity through a new and more allembracing vision of the state's past through its relationship with the Afro-Asian group. The apartheid system, which institutionalised discrimination on the basis of race, was particularly abhorrent to a generation of officials and politicians versed in the excesses of British rule in Ireland. In private, Boland commented in 1958 that the South African government was 'giving the coloured peoples ... the kind of treatment Cromwell gave the Irish – and with the same kind of fanatical Calvinist fervour'.<sup>20</sup> The Irish delegation's public statements at the United Nations reveal a similar attitude. In 1958 it

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Conor Cruise O'Brien, UNGA Special Political Committee, 29 Oct. 1957, UNORGA, A/SPC/SR.54.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Scott-Hayward to de Valera, 4 Nov. 1957, NAI DT S11115 A.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> J.D. Brennan to sec. DEA, 11 Oct. 1957, NAI DFA 305/94 II.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Boland to Cremin, 23 July 1958, ibid.

again co-sponsored the inscription of apartheid on the United Nations agenda for the forthcoming session and continued its condemnation of the system in the debates that followed. On 14 October 1958 Kennedy told the Special Political Committee that the 'painful experience of the Irish people in the past had imbued Ireland with an abiding respect for the liberty and dignity of human individuals, and a hatred of political oppression'.<sup>21</sup> Whatever its friendship with the South African people, it could not condone a system which institutionalised the repression of those human rights on a wide scale.

The DEA believed that the Irish approach to apartheid should be based on 'the general principles on which we ourselves behave'.<sup>22</sup> The dedication to human rights and self-determination imbued by the lessons of Ireland's past was matched by a strong sense of the state's Christian obligations. To counter the assertion that South African society upheld Christian values against the communist advance in Africa, the Irish government offered a more compelling moral argument. Apartheid was 'not only contrary to human dignity and a denial of basic human rights but also breeds innumerable offences against Christian charity and Christian justice'.<sup>23</sup> The Irish delegation's support for inscription carried an additional responsibility in this regard. Boland felt that not to support it would imply that 'the voice of Catholic Ireland was silent and it was left to the Afro-Asian bloc to carry the ball as if the section of Western religious opinion for which Ireland stands had no strong view on the issue at all!'24 Conscious of the criticism it drew from sections of the Catholic Church for its support for a debate on the seating of a Communist Chinese delegation,<sup>25</sup> the apartheid question offered an opportunity for the Irish delegation to assume a leading role in upholding Christian values. The condemnation of racial segregation from prominent members of the Catholic Church, not least the Irish-born Carmelite Bishop Donal Lamont of Umtali in Southern Rhodesia, and the praise the Irish position drew from that and other quarters, offered a positive reiteration of the state's obligations in that regard.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Eamon Kennedy, UNGA Special Political Committee, 14 Oct. 1958, UNORGA, A/SPC/SR.88.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Unsigned note [Cremin?], 1 Aug. 1958, NAI DFA 305/94 II.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Draft reply to Scott-Hayward, undated [Dec. 1957?], NAI DT S11115 A.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Boland to Cremin, 23 July 1958, NAI DFA 305/94 II.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> For a discussion of the China debate, see Cathal Dowling, 'Irish policy on the representation of China at the United Nations, 1957-9', *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, Vol. 7 (1996), pp. 81-95.

To those Christian obligations were added Ireland's responsibilities as a member of the United Nations. The actions of O'Brien in Katanga drew headlines, but it was in Boland's terms as chairman of the Fourth Committee (1958) and as President of the General Assembly (1960), and the other posts Irish officials assumed in New York that the Irish government's commitment to active citizenship on the world stage was most visible. The election of its officials for these posts had the additional benefit of reinforcing the state's independent reputation. Irish officials viewed the choice of the Irish delegation to serve on the Committee on South West Africa in December 1958 as the direct result of the Assembly's desire to have a Western state 'of sufficient independence' to replace the outgoing delegate from the United States.<sup>26</sup>

Its experience of the committee, particularly Kennedy's 'exceedingly onerous and harassing' period as rapporteur in 1959,<sup>27</sup> brought home the difficult realities of its United Nations obligations. It impressed on Irish officials the disadvantages of assuming a leading role, in particular the dangers of misconception that were to be demonstrated later in the Congo operation. On 22 December 1959, The Irish Times described a committee resolution Kennedy tabled as rapporteur, criticising the South African use of force at Windhoek on 11 December, as an 'Irish' resolution.<sup>28</sup> The Irish delegation was adamant that it was 'untrue' that the initiative had been taken by Kennedy.<sup>29</sup> Though it supported its contents – the 'minimum action' the United Nations could take<sup>30</sup> - it worried at being too closely identified with the decisions of the committee. O'Brien, in recommending that Kennedy not seek re-election as rapporteur, commented that to do so might 'give the impression to misinformed sections of opinion here that we are "crusading" against South Africa to an unnecessary degree'.<sup>31</sup> There were additional, more mundane, reasons for Irish concerns. The delegation's limited staff put a severe strain on its ability to cover all of its obligations. In the case of the South West African Committee, the Irish delegation felt, 'not merely because of the principle that such offices should rotate, but also because, being ourselves a candidate this year [1960] for the Presidency of the Assembly, we should

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Telex, PMUN to DEA, 10 Dec. 1958, NAI DFA PMUN 321 W/2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Hand-written note, O'Brien to Horan, 30 Dec. 1959, NAI DFA 417/135 I.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> 'UN adopts Irish draft resolution', *The Irish Times*, 22 Dec. 1959.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Telex, PMUN to DEA, 23 Dec. 1959, NAI DFA 417/135 I.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Hand-written note, O'Brien to Horan, 30 Dec. 1959, ibid.

not seek other offices, possession of which would in any event put a strain on our resources'.<sup>32</sup>

The experience was not wholly negative. Kennedy's work as rapporteur drew considerable praise, including that of Ghanaian Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah,<sup>33</sup> and the experience gave the delegation an additional understanding of the changing nature of debate at the United Nations. Its voting at the Special Political Committee and the Fourth Committee placed it to the forefront of progressive Western opinion on southern Africa. In 1959 the Irish delegation accepted an invitation from India to cosponsor the inscription of apartheid on the agenda of the General Assembly for its autumn session, alongside Ceylon, Cuba, Ghana, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Iran, Malaya, the United Arab Republic, Uruguay, and Venezuela, with the other Western moderate states still noticeable by their absence.

## IRELAND'S CHANGING ROLE AT THE UNITED NATIONS

The more assertive display of anti-colonialism that the Irish delegation exhibited in its voting at the Fourth Committee<sup>34</sup> could not disguise the close affinity between Irish policies and those of its moderate counterparts. In the corridors of the United Nations in New York or on the ground in the Congo, the Irish government looked continually to the Nordic governments for inspiration. A co-ordinated approach to international affairs emerged and endured. On joining the United Nations, Boland told British officials – to their surprise – that the Irish government 'tended to agree more with the Scandinavians than with, for example, Spain and Portugal'.<sup>35</sup> The former offered a similar approach to international affairs, a commitment to the principles of international stability and a conception of the United Nations as 'the world's conscience'.<sup>36</sup> Outside that organisation, policies coincided in a number of additional ways. The states had similarly strong responses to the massacre at Sharpeville on 21 March 1960. Aiken declared the Irish people 'deeply shocked' by the tragedy, not merely for its effect on

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Horan to Boland, 4 Jan. 1960, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> 'Africa could be threat to peace: Nkrumah calls for positive action by United Nations', *The Irish Times*, 18 May 1960.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> See the table of 'anti-colonial scores' at the Fourth Committee in 1960 in Huldt, *Sweden, the UN and decolonisation*, p. 189.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> Pink to Dixon, 25 May 1956, NAUK DO 35/6947.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Freddie Boland, UNGA Special Political Committee, 4 Nov. 1959, UNORGA, A/SPC/SR.143.

South African society; the artificial divisions imposed on racial lines had effects that were 'far-reaching and incalculable in the present world situation'.<sup>37</sup> The Irish government reacted by excluding South Africa from its invitation to Dublin sent to all leaders attending the May 1960 Commonwealth conference in London, a move which was echoed by the Nordic governments' stance. A meeting of their Foreign Ministers on 25 April 1960 instructed the states' diplomats not to attend the official celebrations marking the fortieth anniversary of the Union of South Africa the following month.<sup>38</sup>

But there were limits to the extent of this support for the indigenous populations of southern Africa. None of the governments could see their way to extending this diplomatic protest to a boycott of South African goods as called for by the ANC in 1959 and repeated by the Afro-Asian group at the United Nations. The Irish government felt that 'the most useful action' open to the international community was to continue to press for change through the United Nations, rather than to take up a position 'which the South African Government would inevitably consider markedly hostile'.<sup>39</sup> It could not see how 'anyone would be losers but ourselves'.<sup>40</sup> The condemnation of South Africa's policies was matched by a desire to continue to engage it in the search for constructive dialogue. At the same time, Aiken was unwilling to jeopardise the influence the Irish delegation had built with the Afro-Asian bloc by coming out fully against the boycott. O'Brien recommended that Ireland not vote against any resolution that might arise, but rather 'not support' one, since 'it is unnecessary and undesirable for us to run directly counter to the sense of African and Asian opinion on this matter'.<sup>41</sup>

The Irish government was not alone in its approach. In meetings between Norwegian officials and their South African counterparts, the former were at pains to make the distinction between the private boycott spreading within Norwegian society and official policy for 'fear of retaliatory actions directed against Norwegian exports'.<sup>42</sup> There was a difference, however, between the protection of existing trade and active

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> DEA press release, 24 March 1960, NAI DFA 305/94 III.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> Eriksen, 'Origins of a special relationship', p. 16.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Unsent draft letter, Aiken to E.I. Laavadien, secretary of the Boycott Movement, Jan. 1960, NAI DFA 305/94 III.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> DEA memorandum in response to parliamentary question tabled by Noel Browne, 11 Nov. 1959, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Note, O'Brien to sec. DEA, 30 Aug. 1960, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> Eriksen, 'Origins of a special relationship', p. 24.

trade promotion that the Irish government engaged in. The Norwegians had something to lose, including a large trade in canned fish with South Africa. By contrast, the Irish government attempted to expand its trade at a time when African nationalists called on the international community to boycott the South African economy. In October 1957 Irish officials engaged in trade consultations with South Africa at the same time that the delegation supported the inscription of apartheid on the United Nations agenda. The message was clear: that although the Irish government might not approve of the policies of the South African government, political approval or disapproval was not going to be allowed to interfere with the promotion of Irish trade or its economic interests.

In January 1961 Aiken agreed that Ireland 'should be prepared to accept' a mission from the South African High Commission in London, aimed at increasing trade between the two states.<sup>43</sup> The talks that took place the following June were of less interest than the preparations that surrounded them. The DEA provided each Irish official with a briefing memorandum outlining its attitude to apartheid, the content of which highlighted the uneasy relationship between rhetoric and practical action at a time when the leading role of the moderate states was being altered drastically at the United Nations. The document struck a careful balance between the government's abhorrence of the system and its desire to pursue its policy of constructive engagement. A 'fundamentally and intrinsically evil' system, apartheid was portrayed as 'abhorrent to the overwhelming majority of nations'.<sup>44</sup> The Irish delegation at the UN had 'not attacked Apartheid solely on the ground that it is contrary to the Charter of the United Nations but as a violation of human rights that are anterior and superior to all human law including the Charter'.<sup>45</sup>

Irish officials carried these convictions to the negotiations. At a lunch to mark the delegation's visit Cremin told one of the South African officials of the improbability that 'anyone in Ireland would be prepared to accept apartheid in the form in which it was presented'.<sup>46</sup> He believed it 'one thing to practice given policies but quite another to erect these policies into dogma or a doctrine, which seemed to me a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> Cremin to Whitaker, McCarthy, and Nagle, 28 Jan. 1961, NAI DT S14851 B/61.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> DEA memorandum on apartheid, 1 June 1961, NAI DFA 305/94 IV.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> Note by Cremin, 16 June 1961, ibid.

serious mistake on the part of the South African Government'.<sup>47</sup> Cremin's comments and the emphasis on dialogue were indicative of the Irish government's constructive approach. The briefing document told Irish officials of its desire 'to maintain friendly relations with South Africa with which it has many ties, and to which many Irish nationals, including in particular missionaries, have emigrated'.<sup>48</sup> The Irish government looked for 'some sign on the part of the Government of South Africa that it is prepared to revise its racial policies and concede elementary justice to its coloured citizens'.<sup>49</sup> It worked to encourage reform from within and to engage the South Africans in dialogue, in the hope of finding a constructive solution that would match its desire to lessen racial disharmony on the continent. In the interim, it was reluctant to do anything that would adversely affect the drive to find new and expanding markets for Irish exports. Even the recognition that black South Africans worked in 'servile and ill-rewarded jobs' did not appear to be reason enough to discourage an increase in trade between the two states.<sup>50</sup>

At the United Nations, it balanced its opinion of apartheid as 'unnatural and anachronistic' with a belief that a peaceful solution 'would be only as a result of a relatively prolonged evolutionary process'.<sup>51</sup> In a changing international environment, this preference for constructive, deliberated reform put it at odds with the more radical intentions of the Afro-Asian group. During the debate on South West Africa at the Fourth Committee in December 1960, Kennedy warned against an Afro-Asian demand that the Committee on South West Africa travel to the territory to report on the situation there. Such action, he argued, went against the terms of reference of the committee and, in any case, was likely to be met with the outright refusal of the South African government to issue travel documents to the area.<sup>52</sup> The Irish government preferred to await the outcome of the case brought against South Africa by the governments of Ethiopia and Liberia in the International Court of Justice earlier that year. Any attempt to declare an end to South Africa's mandate before the court reached its ruling would only interfere with that process and went against the principle of international law.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> DEA memorandum on apartheid, 1 June 1961, ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> Joseph Shields, UNGA Special Political Committee, 30 March 1961, UNORGA, A/SPC/SR.237.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> Kennedy to sec. DEA, 20 Dec. 1960, NAI DFA 417/135 I.

The views Kennedy expressed were attacked by the Afro-Asian states and others who, to him, 'seemed to be less interested in the appropriateness or not of the resolution than in finding some further method of attacking the Union Government, whether or not the Organisation should suffer in the process'.<sup>53</sup> The Venezuelan delegate accused Kennedy of bringing 'a breath of the Cold War' to the debate; this was surprising, he added, since 'Ireland had been one of the true champions fighting to keep the Cold War out of the debates of the Fourth Committee'.<sup>54</sup> The tensions between the Irish view of that organisation and those of the Afro-Asian group were readily apparent in Kennedy's reply. He rejected the Venezuelan delegate's charge and emphasised instead that his delegation's 'sole aim was to promote the welfare of the indigenous inhabitants and to further the interests of the United Nations'.<sup>55</sup> The certain South African rejection of the committee's right to visit South West Africa, he had earlier stated, would inevitably lead to disturbances 'as bloody as those at Windhoek on 10 December 1959'.<sup>56</sup> In the summer of 1961, the Irish delegation refused to travel with the committee to South West Africa, citing its 'well known' staffing difficulties to excuse it from participation.<sup>57</sup> Though its reasoning was valid in some respects – Kennedy's appointment as Irish Ambassador to Nigeria left the delegation with no representative on the Fourth Committee for a period – it was made with the political implications in mind. Kennedy viewed the trip as 'a political ploy with no relation to conditions in South West [Africa] and in flagrant violation of [the] wishes of petitioners here who feel that exclusion of [the] committee from [the] territory will strengthen [the] hand of [the] Union<sup>58</sup>

Kennedy was not alone in his attitude. In voting with Ireland, the delegates of Austria, Canada, Finland and the Netherlands viewed the visit in similarly pragmatic terms, though Denmark, Norway and Sweden all found reason to support the visit. The visible difference from Ireland's early years at the United Nations lay in the methods adopted by the Afro-Asian group to achieve what were, in essence, the same goals. The

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> Venezuelan delegate, Mr Zuloaga, UNGA Fourth Committee, 5 Dec. 1960, UNORGA,

A/C.4/SR.1074.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> Eamon Kennedy, UNGA Fourth Committee, 5 Dec. 1960, UNORGA, A/C.4/SR.1074.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> Eamon Kennedy, UNGA Fourth Committee, 5 Dec. 1960, UNORGA, A/C.4/SR.1073.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> Nolan to sec. DEA, 2 June 1961, NAI DFA PMUN 322 W/3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> Telex, PMUN to DEA (from Kennedy), 18 May 1961, ibid.

Irish delegation's policies changed little. Tadhg O'Sullivan's address to the committee on 4 December 1961 re-stated its 'energetic' opposition to South African policies for their infringement of basic principles 'which his country held dear: the legitimate aspirations of all subject peoples to freedom, racial equality, religious tolerance and the fundamental rights of man'.<sup>59</sup> Ireland's history made it particularly conscious of the goals of African nationalism. It was a 'source of deep regret' that the South African government had adopted the apartheid policies, but, he continued, he hoped that 'the movement would continue peacefully to its inevitable conclusion, namely the end of the colonial system and the emergence of Africa as the ruler of its own destinies'.<sup>60</sup> The Afro-Asian group's continued promotion of resolutions that were judged to ignore the realities of the situation in the region continued to exasperate the Irish delegation. O'Sullivan reiterated his belief that it was 'a mistake to ask the United Nations or any of its organs to perform an obviously impossible task or a task which could be carried out only through the use of force'.<sup>61</sup>

With its references to Ireland's colonial and Christian heritage, the primacy of the United Nations and international law, and its advocacy of constructive engagement and progressive reform, O'Sullivan's speech captured the basic thrust of Irish foreign policy. Its undercurrent of frustration was borne out in its limited success in winning African support to its cause. On 7 December 1961, with the debate still ongoing, O'Sullivan told the Fourth Committee that while his delegation 'would support any measure calculated to bring tangible progress ... It would not support a recommendation merely in order to show that it was on the side of the angels.'<sup>62</sup> Boland commented that the question was 'charged with emotion. Constructive suggestions are viewed amiss by the extremists so no matter how fruitfully the new committee works, its recommendations are unlikely to meet with general approbation.'<sup>63</sup> With Aiken's agreement that Ireland had done its share on the Committee on South West Africa and should 'disengage ourselves quietly from this

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> Tadhg O'Sullivan, UNGA Fourth Committee, 4 Dec. 1961, UNORGA, A/C.4/SR.1236.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup> Ibid. <sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup> Tadhg O'Sullivan, UNGA Fourth Committee, 7 Dec. 1961, UNORGA, A/C.4/SR.1240.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup> Telex, PMUN to DEA (Boland to Cremin), 23 Feb. 1962, NAI DFA 2000/14/262.

group',<sup>64</sup> the following February the Irish delegation refused a request to renew its term on the committee.

### Southern Rhodesia at the United Nations

The attitudes of the Afro-Asian group continued to tax Irish patience. In February 1962 the Irish delegation supported a 'comparatively mild but firm' resolution on Angola at the General Assembly,<sup>65</sup> which re-affirmed the right of the Angolan people to self-determination, having rejected an earlier Afro-Asian resolution as 'much too strong for us to support'.<sup>66</sup> The same month, it was faced with a new question to test its commitment when the Afro-Asian group placed a draft resolution before the Fourth Committee to ask the new Committee of Seventeen (constituted to deal with colonial questions) whether Southern Rhodesia had attained a full measure of self-government. The resulting policies illustrated the essential fluidity of the Irish government's approach in reconciling what Bhreatnach described as 'two apparently disparate objectives: moderate independence [of action] on colonial issues in the United Nations and easy bilateral relations with a waning imperial power'.<sup>67</sup>

The British government was adamant that Southern Rhodesia was already a self-governing territory, having attained that status in 1923. On 6 February 1962, George Crombie of the British Embassy called to see Seán Ronan at Iveagh House to state his government's belief that the United Nations had no authority to ask for such information. Ronan agreed that the Afro-Asian group's attitude was 'a bit thick' and promised to obtain the opinion of the Irish delegation on the question.<sup>68</sup> The latter's response was consistent with its status within the changing United Nations. Tadhg O'Sullivan supported the British perspective, 'as all Western and middle-of-the-road delegations appear to be doing'.<sup>69</sup> He felt that the inquiry would 'have no useful effect', and might rather lead to the adoption of a more extremist position by the Southern Rhodesian government.<sup>70</sup> Cremin agreed: while Southern Rhodesia was 'not being run

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> Dorr, minutes of UN delegation meeting, 25 Nov. 1961, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>65</sup> Nolan to sec. DEA, 2 Feb. 1962, NAI DFA 305/218/13 Pt I.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>66</sup> Hand-written note, Keating to Ronan, 22 Jan. 1962, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup> Bhreatnach, 'Friend of the colonial powers?', p. 199.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>68</sup> Crombie to Kimber, 7 Feb. 1962, NAUK DO 181/14.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>69</sup> Tadhg O'Sullivan to sec. DEA, 9 Feb. 1962, NAI DFA 305/357/1 Pt I.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

as it should be', the British government should be given time to reform the Central African Federation to give a greater voice to the African majority.<sup>71</sup> Aiken, by contrast, was 'somewhat doubtful' about the wisdom of opposing the resolution.<sup>72</sup> He was concerned that the Irish vote should not be 'associated with opposition to the United Nations,' by blocking its role in furthering the cause of self-determination.<sup>73</sup> A discussion with Boland altered his opinion somewhat. Aiken accepted that there was 'no good legal case' in favour of the resolution, as the British argued, but recommended that Ireland explain its vote, pointing out its belief that the United Nations, to retain its efficacy, should 'not waste time and energy in enquiring into matters which are perfectly obvious'.<sup>74</sup>

In taking this position, the Irish delegation showed itself willing to assist its imperial neighbours. Its self-evident pragmatism, however, could not obscure the independence of judgement that remained. The Irish delegation was alone among Western states in not voting against the resolution, though as Crombie noted, 'they did at least abstain'.<sup>75</sup> Aoife Bhreatnach has accorded Boland a crucial role in this process.<sup>76</sup> Boland was certainly central in persuading Aiken of the legality of Britain's claim and strongly advocated voting against the resolution, but with the British resigned to losing the vote, and the votes of Norway and others waning, he changed his approach.<sup>77</sup> Abstention offered proof to the Afro-Asian group of the Irish delegation's 'freedom of action and our willingness to take an independent line'.<sup>78</sup> It was the responsibility of moderate states like Ireland to use their influence to win over the group to support the United Nations; 'unless the activities of the powerful Afro-Asian bloc can somehow or other be kept within the bounds of reason, serious harm to the United Nations may result'.<sup>79</sup>

Bhreatnach's convincing deconstruction of the diplomatic background to the Irish position ignored one minor but significant factor shaping Irish attitudes. Southern

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>71</sup> Cremin to Ennis, 19 Feb. 1962, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup> Telex, DEA to PMUN (Cremin to Boland), 22 Feb. 1962, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>73</sup> Bhreatnach, 'Friend of the colonial powers?', p. 189.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup> Telex, DEA to PMUN (Cremin to Boland), 22 Feb. 1962, NAI DFA 305/357/1 Pt I.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>75</sup> Crombie to Kimber, 13 March 1962, NAUK DO 181/15.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>76</sup> Bhreatnach, 'Friend of the colonial powers?', pp. 187-200.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 190.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>78</sup> Boland to Cremin, 26 Feb. 1962, NAI DFA 305/357/1 Pt I.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

Rhodesia was home to almost two hundred Irish missionaries, and the outspoken Irishborn Bishop Donal Lamont of Umtali diocese in the east of the country captured the Irish government's attention. Lamont's pastorals and sermons openly expressed his dissatisfaction that '[e]ven in the life of the Church the African seemed to be regarded patronisingly and as a second-class member'.<sup>80</sup> On 16 February 1962, while Irish officials debated their position on the Rhodesia resolution, Lamont was guest of honour at a dinner in Dublin's Russell Hotel, hosted by Aiken. In conversation with Cremin, Lamont remarked on 'the anomalies in the position of the Rhodesian Federation which is, perhaps, more than half-way towards being an independent member of the Commonwealth'.<sup>81</sup> His comments can only have persuaded the DEA further of the merits of the British legal case. Lamont was certainly viewed in high regard by Irish officials. When Boland and Tadhg O'Sullivan met him in New York in May 1962, the former found Lamont 'most enlightening'.<sup>82</sup> An Irish clergyman with first-hand experience of Southern Rhodesian society, Lamont could not have failed to influence the Irish position.

At the United Nations, the Irish delegation continued to clash with the Afro-Asian group over the latter's disregard for the structures of that organisation. In early June 1962, it voted against the inclusion of the Southern Rhodesian issue on the agenda for the resumed General Assembly (re-convened to deal with the situation in Ruanda-Urundi) on the grounds that it served 'to denigrate the importance of the regular session of the Assembly'.<sup>83</sup> In his explanation of the Irish vote, Boland made it clear that Ireland recognised the 'great importance' of the issue but could not regard that 'as constituting a good reason for taking up the question now', instead of at the following autumn's session.<sup>84</sup> It had little effect. The Afro-Asian group carried the vote and included a draft resolution on the proceedings of the General Assembly which called on Britain to convene a constitutional conference in Southern Rhodesia. The issue became a 'primarily political' one, as to whether the Irish government would accede to a strong

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>80</sup> Donal Lamont, Speech from the dock (Essex, 1977), p. 38.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>81</sup> Cremin to Ennis, 19 Feb. 1962, NAI DFA 305/357/1 Pt I.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>82</sup> Boland to Cremin, 3 May 1962, NAI DFA PMUN 319 J/53.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>83</sup> Telex, DEA to PMUN, 7 June 1962, NAI DFA 305/357/1 Pt I.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>84</sup> Freddie Boland, UNGA plenary meeting, 12 June 1962, UNORGA, A/PV.1109.

request from the British government for support.<sup>85</sup> Aiken was inclined to believe it should. When Crombie met Ronan on 21 June 1962, the latter informed him that the Irish delegation's 'immediate inclination would be to vote against' an Afro-Asian resolution.<sup>86</sup> The DEA felt that the position had changed enough since February to justify the Irish delegation taking a stand alongside its Western counterparts, without 'any serious repercussions' among the Afro-Asian group.<sup>87</sup> Its final vote of abstention was a further reflection of British influence, based as it was on Crombie's advice that Britain's friends 'could help us better by abstaining'.<sup>88</sup>

In the Dáil Noel Browne condemned the vote as 'monstrous. We are now on the side of the white colonists.'<sup>89</sup> The pragmatism of the DEA's assessment, however, could not obscure Aiken's strong belief that 'the new [Southern Rhodesian] Constitution is not as liberal as enlightened thinking today would require', or his fear that to implement it would result in entrenching power in the hands of the white minority there.<sup>90</sup> Nor did British activities allay his fears that the situation would deteriorate unless efforts were made by Britain to alter the situation while it was still in a position of influence.<sup>91</sup> In his meeting with British Ambassador Ian Maclennan on 30 August 1962, Aiken suggested that the British government postpone the operation of the new constitution and call a conference to draw up a document which would give more representation to Africans.<sup>92</sup> Maclennan felt that Aiken's experience of Africa in the previous ten years had convinced him of the need for gradual reform; 'he knows enough about the situation in Southern Rhodesia to realise that "one man one vote" and African predominance next year is not practical politics'.<sup>93</sup> His proposal appeared quite similar to that of the Afro-Asian resolution on which the Irish delegation had abstained in June. It aimed at encouraging the British to adopt reforms in Southern Rhodesia that would placate the Afro-Asians or at least provide some evidence that Britain was moving in the direction of an acceptable settlement.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>85</sup> Note by Cremin, 13 June 1962, NAI DFA 305/357/1 Pt I.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>86</sup> Crombie to Kimber, 21 June 1962, NAUK DO 181/17.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>87</sup> Note by Cremin, 13 June 1962, NAI DFA 305/357/1 Pt I.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>88</sup> Crombie to Kimber, 21 June 1962, NAUK DO 181/17.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>89</sup> Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 196, Col. 1460 (4 July 1962).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>90</sup> Telex, DEA to PMUN (Cremin to Boland), 20 June 1962, NAI DFA 305/357/1 Pt I.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>91</sup> Bhreatnach, 'Friend of the colonial powers?', p. 193.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 194.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>93</sup> Maclennan to Chadwick, 1 Sept. 1962, NAUK DO 181/18.

Aiken remained concerned that the Afro-Asian group would not be convinced of the merits of working within the structures of the United Nations. In a meeting with Joseph Sweeney of the American Embassy, Aiken expressed his fear that without evidence of British reform, there was increased risk of a resolution at the following General Assembly being introduced in 'harsh and intemperate terms'.<sup>94</sup> Failing that, the situation had potentially serious consequences, he later told British officials at the United Nations, including the possibility that Southern Rhodesia might turn into another Algeria.<sup>95</sup> True to the role he defined for Ireland in previous years, Aiken was determined that his delegation should use its powers to find a solution. He felt it 'essential that some action should be taken if there was to be any progress towards constitutional development on equitable lines,' and that Ireland should be prepared to intervene in both Plenary and the Fourth Committee debates.<sup>96</sup> The results were a good indication of Ireland's standing in the United Nations in October 1962. In spite of the British attitude towards the Irish policy being 'completely negative',<sup>97</sup> the moderate states still exerted an influence, 'however limited', at the United Nations.<sup>98</sup> In the corridors of the organisation in New York, Irish officials worked with other moderates - Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, and Sweden - to find a draft resolution which would deprive the British of the abstentions it usually relied upon and isolate them.99

The hope was that in doing so it might moderate the demands of the Afro-Asian group and offer an alternative for them to follow. In an effort to find some solution that would avoid Ireland being placed in a position 'where our attitude would be indistinguishable from support of British policy',<sup>100</sup> Aiken recommended that Ireland support some moderate resolution introduced at the United Nations, broadly based on the opinion they had canvassed. He wanted to 'demonstrate that we support the rights of the African population, even if we do not agree with a resolution on dogmatic pan-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>94</sup> Note by Cremin on meeting between Aiken and Joe Sweeney of the US Embassy, Dublin, 31 Aug. 1962, NAI DFA 305/357/1 Pt II.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>95</sup> Note by Boland regarding meeting on 11 October between Mr Godber and Sir Patrick Dean of the British Permanent Mission to the United Nations, and Boland and Aiken, note dated 16 Oct. 1962, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>96</sup> Tadhg O'Sullivan to sec. DEA, 11 Oct. 1962, ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>98</sup> Bhreatnach, 'Friend of the colonial powers?', p. 197.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>99</sup> Tadhg O'Sullivan to sec. DEA, 11 Oct. 1962, NAI DFA 305/357/1 Pt II.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

African lines'.<sup>101</sup> Lemass was more reticent. His response defined clear boundaries to the pursuit of Irish independence at the United Nations. By co-sponsoring a resolution on Southern Rhodesia, Lemass argued, the Irish delegation would inevitably give offence to Britain, a consequence he wished to avoid. Lemass felt that the question was not one of sufficient note to justify 'a frontal attack on the British position'.<sup>102</sup> He criticised the approach of the Canadian and United States delegations who, he felt, used moderates like Ireland 'to shoulder a responsibility those Governments are not prepared to assume'.<sup>103</sup>

In the end, the attempt to introduce a moderate resolution failed 'largely because [the Irish] delegation was not prepared to lead such an initiative'.<sup>104</sup> The final position it took was a compromise between Lemass's desire to maintain good relations with Britain and Aiken's desire to uphold Irish principles. Abandoning its leading role in framing an alternative resolution, the Irish delegation voted in favour of the Afro-Asian resolution, with a statement making clear its reservations. This allowed it to express its disappointment at British attitudes, its support for African self-determination, and its fears of the immediate consequences, while also emphasising its commitment to constructive reform. The approach won favour from the British, who 'promised to consider the suggestions made in it',<sup>105</sup> and the Afro-Asian group, who 'attached considerable value' to Ireland's approach.<sup>106</sup>

#### AFRO-ASIAN RADICALISM AND IRISH FOREIGN POLICY

At the same time, the Irish delegation openly recognised the limits to its actions. Tadhg O'Sullivan commented in November 1962 that '[a]t the present stage of the anticolonial movement in the United Nations, the opportunities for any kind of mediation by middle-of-the-road delegations are extremely limited'.<sup>107</sup> The delegation declined then to participate in the debate on South West Africa since its previous experience led

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>102</sup> Bhreatnach, 'Friend of the colonial powers?', p. 196.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>103</sup> Telex, DEA to PMUN (Cremin to Boland), 15 Oct. 1962, NAI DFA 305/357/1 Pt II.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>104</sup> Tadhg O'Sullivan to sec. DEA, 7 Nov. 1962, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

it to believe that it could not 'exert any useful influence' in the matter.<sup>108</sup> Earlier that autumn, for the first time since it co-sponsored the 1957 resolution, the Irish delegation had not been invited by the Afro-Asian group to co-sponsor the inscription of apartheid on the agenda for the coming session of the General Assembly. To Boland it was 'a further indication that the Afro-Asian bloc are confident of being able to carry their own proposals in the United Nations without the help of independent states belonging to other groups'.<sup>109</sup> The reality can only have disappointed Aiken. The decolonisation process had reached its 'hard core' in southern Africa, causing a visible difference in approach between the moderate powers and the Afro-Asian group. In removing the relatively straightforward questions of decolonisation, it exposed the Irish government's multi-layered approach. It was committed to the principle of self-determination, the United Nations, and to successful decolonisation, but at the same time recognised the necessity to account for its own role and relationship with the Western states.

Its commitment to constructive reform did most to distance Ireland from the Afro-Asian group. The latter's perception of Ireland challenged the Irish government's carefully constructed image of its role in the developing world. The Afro-Asian states were more inclined, Tadhg O'Sullivan observed with typical forthrightness in November 1962, to regard the Irish government 'as being in the sphere of Western influence where colonial matters are concerned'.<sup>110</sup> The Nordic states faced similar difficulties. In September 1963 a meeting of Nordic Foreign Ministers in Stockholm adopted what became known as the 'Nordic initiative' on South Africa, an attempt at finding a constructive solution to the problem of apartheid through negotiation. Its central tenets bore a striking resemblance to what Tadhg O'Sullivan described as the Irish government's attempt 'to examine international problems in an objective spirit and to appraise them honestly, and its sympathy with the just aspirations of the peoples of Africa did not prevent it from looking at both sides of the question and taking into account all the factors known to it'.<sup>111</sup> Introducing the plan to the United Nations later that month, Danish Foreign Minister Per Hækkerup told the Member States that they

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>108</sup> Tadhg O'Sullivan to sec. DEA, 23 Nov. 1962, NAI DFA 2000/14/262.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>109</sup> Boland to sec. DEA, 20 Aug. 1962, NAI DFA 305/94 V Pt I.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>110</sup> Tadhg O'Sullivan to sec. DEA, 7 Nov. 1962, NAI DFA 305/357/1 Pt II.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>111</sup> Tadhg O'Sullivan, UNGA Fourth Committee, 29 Oct. 1962, UNORGA, A/C.4/SR.1364.

must face the fact that the great majority of the European population in South Africa wrongly assume that abandonment of white domination means abandonment of their own existence. It is our duty to prove to them that this is not so ... [I]t is high time for the [General] Assembly to give thought to the positive policy to be pursued in South Africa and to the role which the United Nations should play in coming developments.<sup>112</sup>

The speech was widely misinterpreted and it led to a loss of prestige with the Afro-Asians but only reiterated the close correlation between Irish policies and those of the Nordic states. They shared a belief articulated more recently by Christian Reus-Smith that state actors 'are inherently social, that their identities and interests are socially constructed, the products of inter-subjective social structures'.<sup>113</sup> The United Nations and other international bodies offered an opportunity to impress on South Africa and Portugal the values of that system. That approach was in marked contrast to the attitude of the Afro-Asian group. The latter argued that the ejection of Portugal and South Africa from the United Nations would serve as 'effective exclusion from the world community at large'.<sup>114</sup> In South Africa's case in particular, such action would have the effect of isolating it from the place in the world community it craved, and force it to moderate its policies to gain acceptance and re-entry to the international system. The Irish held the opposite to be true: to expel South Africa 'would serve no purpose whatsoever ... If it were ostracised, it would pay little attention, but continue to work in deluded self-righteousness. It would be far better to allow the links with the outside world to be maintained, so that public opinion in South Africa can at least be made aware of what is thought elsewhere.'115 The Irish government argued that expulsion would remove any opportunity for moral persuasion; instead, it would serve to drive the state further into the arms of apartheid. It was a 'final step. Once we have taken that step, we have, so to speak, shot our bolt.<sup>116</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>112</sup> Quoted in Sellström, Sweden and southern Africa: Vol. I, p. 198.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>113</sup> Christian Reus-Smit, 'Constructivism', in Scott Burchill, Andrew Linklater, Richard Devetak, Jack Donnelly, Matthew Paterson, Christian Reus-Smit and Jacqui True, *Theories of international relations* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., London, 2005), p. 193.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>114</sup> Ali A. Mazrui, 'The United Nations and some African political attitudes', *International Organization*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (Summer 1964), p. 507.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>115</sup> 'Using the boycott', The Irish Times, 31 July 1963.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>116</sup> 'Text of intervention by Mr T.J. Horan, Representative of Ireland, in the Debate in the Special Political Committee on 31<sup>st</sup> October 1962, on Afro-Asian resolution on apartheid', NAI DFA 305/94 V Pt I.

The lessons of the League of Nations and the inability of the international community to control those outside that organisation undoubtedly informed Irish thinking. That experience was even more in evidence in the moderates' attitude to economic sanctions. The Irish government felt that the application of sanctions on Portugal and South Africa would have the effect of uniting all internal forces and strengthening intransigence. It did not oppose economic sanctions in principle, but felt that the decision should 'give full weight to all circumstances of a particular problem in so far as we know them,' including the effect of sanctions on the populations they were supposed to assist.<sup>117</sup> The Irish government opposed any arrangements which were not in accordance with the terms of the UN Charter and the structure of that organisation. The adoption of sanctions by the General Assembly was 'not legally binding' and had 'merely the force of recommendations'.<sup>118</sup> As a result, the Irish government excused itself from complying with any General Assembly recommendation 'to which it had expressly objected before it had been adopted'.<sup>119</sup> It followed that when the Security Council acted, as it did on 31 July 1963, to order all member states to avoid giving any assistance to the Portuguese administration which would aid it in continuing its repressive actions in Africa, including the sale of arms intended for that purpose, the Irish government readily and easily accepted the decision.

The Irish policy on sanctions was again of one mind with the Nordic states: the latter believed that sanctions were meaningless without the co-operation of South Africa's major trading partners, Great Britain, the United States, and France.<sup>120</sup> Swedish Foreign Minister Torsten Nilsson told the Swedish parliament in December 1963 that his government did not want 'to have a re-echo of what happened in the thirties, when the League of Nations made a half-hearted attempt to intervene in the crisis in Ethiopia and achieved as its only result a falling-off in its own prestige ... we do not want the world organisation to lose its ability to bring a positive influence to bear on events'.<sup>121</sup> Nilsson's statement reiterated his government's support for the United Nations' primary role in the solution of conflict. In spite of the financial and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>117</sup> Tadhg O'Sullivan to Ronan, 21 Jan. 1963, NAI DFA 2001/43/115.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>118</sup> Boland to Cremin, 19 Nov. 1962, NAI DFA 305/94 V Pt I.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>120</sup> Morgenstierne, Denmark and southern Africa, pp. 22-3; Eriksen, 'Origins of a special relationship', pp. 26-7; Sellström, Sweden and southern Africa: Vol. I, p. 197.

Quoted in Sellström, Sweden and southern Africa: Vol. I, p. 197.

political assistance it later offered to liberation movements in southern Africa, the Swedish government continued to reject unilateral sanctions. It was not until 1979 that it introduced an investment ban on South Africa and 1987 when it introduced unilateral sanctions on the apartheid regime.

### THE BIRTH OF THE IRISH ANTI-APARTHEID MOVEMENT

The fundamental difference between Ireland and the Nordic states lay in the public interaction with the policy-making process. Apart from the short-lived interest in the Congo that centred mainly on the Irish troops' activities - without any detailed exploration of the politics of the crisis - the Irish public displayed little interest in foreign affairs. It advanced little from what British Ambassador Alexander Clutterbuck described in April 1956 as 'the tendency of the Southern Irish to let the world go by except for an occasional glance'.<sup>122</sup> In the spring of 1959, *Studies* published an article by Michael MacDonagh, damning in its appraisal of Irish attitudes to foreign affairs. The Irish people, MacDonagh argued, had 'hardly begun yet to think constructively about our external relations ... our outlook now is essentially isolationist'.<sup>123</sup> His criticisms were echoed in June 1959 by Patrick Lynch, who warned the inaugural meeting of the Irish United Nations Association that there had been 'too little' discussion of foreign affairs in Ireland.<sup>124</sup> The attempt to stimulate public interest in a boycott South Africa campaign in 1960 provided a good indication of Irish attitudes. Organised primarily by South African and Irish students, the campaign was set up in January 1960 as a response to the ANC's call to boycott South African goods, but its success was limited to a handful of parliamentary questions tabled by Noel Browne, a resolution by the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) and a small march through Dublin on 10 February 1960. The call to 'reject South African goods and help eject apartheid' fell mainly on deaf ears.<sup>125</sup>

Even the 'impetus' given to the campaign by the Sharpeville massacres in March 1960 was severely limited.<sup>126</sup> The extensive media coverage and general

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>122</sup> Clutterbuck to Home, 13 April 1956, NAUK DO 35/10625.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>123</sup> Michael MacDonagh, 'Ireland's attitude to foreign affairs', *Studies*, Vol. 48 (1959), p. 78.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>124</sup> Quoted in 'Role of the smaller nations in UN', *The Irish Times*, 1 July 1959.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>125</sup> 'Protest march against apartheid', *The Irish Times*, 11 Feb. 1960.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>126</sup> Scher, 'A history of the IAAM', p. 137.

indignation was not enough to transform public interest into organised protest, in marked contrast to its effect elsewhere in Europe. In Denmark the event was 'the turning point for public awareness of the political situation in Southern Africa,' causing a widespread consumer reaction and leading some major supermarket chains to boycott South African goods.<sup>127</sup> In Sweden, the events instituted a reassessment of the state's engagement with the outside world, causing its political parties to embrace international issues in a way they had only done to a limited extent before.<sup>128</sup> In Norway, several buildings, including the headquarters of the Norwegian Missionary Society, flew their flags at half-mast in honour of the dead.<sup>129</sup> In Britain the massacre inspired the members of the boycott movement to transform their group into the Anti-Apartheid Movement.<sup>130</sup>

In each case the activists capitalised on the groundswell of public support to turn it to political advantage. Political parties in the Nordic states became involved with southern African issues and helped to shape the future structure of policy. The Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions called for consumers to support a four-month (May to August 1960) boycott of South African fruit, vegetables, wine and brandy, which led to a 95% reduction in imports from the same period in 1959.<sup>131</sup> The consumer solidarity movement in Sweden forced the government to introduce education scholarships to refugee students from southern Africa from 1964.<sup>132</sup> In Denmark, youth and student organisations became central to organising popular protest against apartheid and criticism of government policies.

Finland's response to the situation in southern Africa offered a more instructive comparison to Ireland's. Finland joined the United Nations at the same time as Ireland and relied predominantly on missionary activity (Lutheran in its case – based mainly in South West Africa) for its links with the region. There was little discussion of foreign policy until the 1960s, and what little existed was limited to 'small leftist or ultra-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>127</sup> Morgenstierne, Denmark and southern Africa, p. 19.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>128</sup> Sellström, Sweden and southern Africa: Vol. I, pp. 58-62.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>129</sup> Eriksen, 'Origins of a special relationship', p. 16.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>130</sup> Christabel Gurney, "A great cause": the origins of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, June 1959 – March 1960', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (March 2000), pp. 123-144.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>131</sup> Vesla Vetlesen, 'Trade Union support to the struggle against apartheid: the role of the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions', in Tore Linné Eriksen (ed.), *Norway and national liberation in southern Africa* (Uppsala, 2000), p. 326.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>132</sup> Sellström, Sweden and southern Africa: Vol. I, pp. 70-2.

rightist periodicals'.<sup>133</sup> Little support or solidarity existed with the developing world, even in the early 1960s. It was not until a new generation of Finnish youth began to embrace a growing radicalism, influenced by activities abroad, that Finnish society took note of events in southern Africa. The Committee of 100, a student peace movement set up in August 1963, and the South African Committee, a short-lived group created in the spring of 1965, offered focus and leadership. Their slow success echoed the situation in Ireland. There were those like Noel Browne and the Labour and trade union officials who were involved in the boycott campaign to awaken public opinion to the effects of apartheid, but it was 'not then the household word that it later became'.<sup>134</sup> Foreign policy more generally, particularly under Aiken, relied on the input of a small number of officials, with limited interaction with the executive and legislative levels of government, not to mind organised public influence. Donald Leon's 1963 analysis of advisory committees in Irish government described an extremely low level of interaction on external affairs, limited to the relatively minor matters of cultural relations and scholarship exchange.<sup>135</sup> It was left to the British AAM to exert pressure on the Irish government on issues relating to southern Africa.<sup>136</sup>

It took a combination of forces – the impetus provided by enthusiastic individuals, and the coverage afforded to one event – to transform the situation. The individuals were Kader Asmal, a South African of Indian descent, and his British wife Louise, who arrived from Britain in 1963 when Kader accepted a post as lecturer in law at Trinity College, Dublin. They came with a strong background in protest. Kader was one of the founding members of the boycott movement and the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) in Britain, and a member of the ANC. Louise, too, had been involved in the organisation of the British AAM. In November 1963, during Kader's first term at TCD, he helped to organise 'an *ad hoc* meeting' addressed by Arthur Goldreich, who had escaped from a South African prison just over a month previously.<sup>137</sup> The Graduates Memorial Building, TCD, 'failed to hold' the numbers

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>133</sup> Soiri and Peltola, Finland and southern Africa, p. 14.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>134</sup> Scher, 'A history of the IAAM', p. 137.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>135</sup> Donald E. Leon, Advisory bodies in Irish government (Dublin, 1963), p. 151.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>136</sup> There are various examples of letters sent by the British AAM in NAI DFA 305/94 V Pt II, and NAI DFA 305/94 VI.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>137</sup> Interview with Kader Asmal, Cape Town, 19 April 2006 (interview conducted by Thomas Alberts using a set of questions supplied by author).

who wished to attend.<sup>138</sup> Students handed out leaflets and collected money for the World Campaign for the Release of South African Prisoners. Its proceedings provided a platform for an Irish movement against apartheid. Barry Desmond of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) offered trade union solidarity with the oppressed workers of South Africa. Fianna Fáil TD George Colley offered something equally as important: the historical link so openly in evidence in the government's foreign policy. The Irish people, he told the assembled, had 'an historical memory which gives us a sense of brotherhood with new nations ... The Irish people abhor apartheid not only because of the human suffering it entails but because it is a breach of the natural law implanted in every man's heart by God.<sup>139</sup>

Worldwide media interest in the Rivonia trial of Nelson Mandela and nine other ANC members charged of planning sabotage and guerrilla warfare and eliciting communist support for their actions, provided the focal point for the next move. Those involved in the November meeting capitalised on public interest in the trial and on 20 April 1964 the IAAM was launched at a press conference in Dublin. Its aim, according to one of its members, was to educate the Irish people about the reality of South Africa, 'the fact that it is a living hell.'<sup>140</sup> Two days later, on 22 April, the IAAM held its first public meeting in the Mansion House, 'in support of United Nations Resolutions and action on South Africa and Christian Action Defence and Aid Fund for the relief of victims of apartheid'.<sup>141</sup> Amidst 'sporadic bursts of heckling',<sup>142</sup> the broad range of speakers – including Michael Harmel (a South African Communist Party member of Irish descent), Ruth First (a South African journalist recently released from solitary confinement), Senator D.F. Murphy (Vice-President of ICTU), Barry Desmond, and the writer Gabriel Fallon – offered a successful launching pad for the movement, not least the £121 collected from the audience of over 400 for the anti-apartheid cause. By early

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>138</sup> 'Apartheid policy condemned: Dublin meeting addressed by escaped African', *The Irish Times*, 2 Nov. 1963.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>139</sup> Quoted in 'South African artist slates Dr Verwoerd', Irish Press, 2 Nov. 1963.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>140</sup> 'Anti-Apartheid body launched: notable Irish sponsors', *The Irish Times*, 21 April 1964.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>141</sup> Leaflet, 'Anti-Apartheid Movement Public Meeting: South Africa – Act Now!', undated [April 1964], UCDA Barry Desmond Papers (hereafter Desmond Papers) P221. Note that these papers are as yet unsorted. My thanks to Barry Desmond and Séamus Helferty of the UCDA for permission to consult them.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>142</sup> 'Dublin appeal to boycott S. African goods', *The Irish Times*, 23 April 1964.

June 1964 the movement had some 65 paid-up members,<sup>143</sup> and had begun to lay the basis for the kind of broad-based movement that would capture the support of a large swathe of Irish society.

#### CONCLUSION

Seven years later, in an article written to celebrate a meeting of the United Nations Committee on Apartheid in Dublin, Kader Asmal commented that the IAAM from its inception built 'on the foundation of [Ireland's] traditional sympathy with peoples fighting for their own freedom'.<sup>144</sup> Ireland had 'always manifested an instinctive solidarity with the struggle for freedom in South Africa; the Irish people have themselves undergone the experience of imperial rule and in this century have had recourse to force to free their land and themselves from foreign domination'.<sup>145</sup> In his attempt to build a vision of broad-based support for the IAAM's objectives Asmal's emphasis on Ireland's past and the influence of its shared colonial experience contained little that had not already been articulated by Irish policy-makers and the Irish media in framing the state's international role in the late 1950s. It was more important in illustrating the adaptation of that shared colonial experience and its application to Irish assessments of the systems of minority rule in southern Africa. The British Ambassador to Ireland Alexander Clutterbuck commented in April 1956 that Ireland's position as, 'in Soviet parlance, "anti-racist" ... certainly modifies their sympathy for the Nationalists in South Africa'.<sup>146</sup> Prior to 1957, and in lingering references thereafter, the nationalist links between Ireland and South Africa were built on the shared experience of the Boer war and a rejection of British colonial oppression. In the creation of an independent role for the state in the 1950s, the DEA changed the emphasis in that relationship. The old sympathies for the Boer cause were replaced by a concern for human rights, self-determination, and freedom for oppressed African populations.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>143</sup> Notes from IAAM Working Group meeting, 1 June 1964, National Library of Ireland (hereafter NLI) Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement Papers (hereafter IAAM Papers) Roll 1, Part 2.1.1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>144</sup> Kader Asmal, 'Irish opposition to Apartheid', United Nations Unit on Apartheid, Department of Political and Security Council Affairs, Doc. No. 3/71, February 1971, p.2, NLI Terence McCaughey Papers Ms 39,908/4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>145</sup> Ibid., p.1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>146</sup> Clutterbuck to Home, 13 April 1956, NAUK DO 35/10625.

In the decolonisation debates of the 1950s, Irish support for those objectives tended to gloss over the underlying complexities. The emergence of a vocal group of independent African states and its adoption of more radical and challenging methods to achieve goals with which the Irish government was essentially in agreement brought the latter's alignment into sharp focus. The debate on Southern Rhodesia underlined the limitations to the moderates' influence. The opportunities to adopt the type of proactive position the Irish delegation had done in its early years at the United Nations were limited and the new international environment found Ireland and other moderate states on the defensive, protecting a vision of the United Nations as 'as an "instrument of the international rule of law".<sup>147</sup> The relationship with the Afro-Asian states was further complicated by the Irish government's continued pursuit of its bilateral interests, visible in its dealings with Britain on the Southern Rhodesian question, and in its trade negotiations with the South African government. Built on a pragmatic interpretation of Ireland's foreign relations – the necessity to pursue Irish economic and immediate political interests within a broader international framework - the dialogue nonetheless reflected the Irish government's commitment to the pursuit of constructive, negotiated solutions.

The Irish government's policies in 1964 were not fundamentally different from those it had adopted at the United Nations in its 'golden age'. They were based on the same references to Ireland's historical and Christian heritage and the commitment to self-determination remained, coupled to the pursuit of constructive solutions and the necessity that decisions be based on colonies' proven-readiness for self-rule. Like its Nordic counterparts, the Irish government based its attitude on a reading of international politics that emphasised the realities of that system. The difference from the early period lay in the sense of caution learnt in the Congo. Ian Maclennan, the British Ambassador to Ireland, believed the experience of the decolonisation debates and of Congo's crisis gave Aiken a more nuanced view of the international environment: 'Ten years ago I suspect that he would have been as doctrinaire as anyone about freedom for Africans and the methods by which it should be attained. But he has seen enough of the Congo not to want the chaos there to be reproduced elsewhere in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>147</sup> Baker Fox, 'Small states', p. 777.

Africa.<sup>148</sup> Unlike its Nordic counterparts, however, foreign policy in Ireland was conducted outside the sphere of public debate. Involvement in ONUC met with widespread support, if very little critical discussion. The birth of the IAAM in 1964 introduced a new element to foreign policy that gradually developed a place of prominence over the following years: an open and critical assessment of Irish foreign policy. In 1961 the Irish government undertook trade negotiations with South Africa with little or no public commentary; by the end of the decade, in the aftermath of one of the largest expressions of solidarity with an international issue seen in the state, the IAAM succeeded in persuading the Irish government to cancel plans to further promote trade with South Africa.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>148</sup> Maclennan to Chadwick, 1 Sept. 1962, NAUK DO 181/18.

# 'Ná bac leis na 'Boks':\* Southern Africa, Popular Protest and Irish Foreign Policy

On 5 May 1964, acting on a resolution passed at the movement's first meeting in the Mansion House almost two weeks earlier, the secretary of the IAAM, Barry Desmond, wrote to Frank Aiken to request that pressure be brought on the South African government to release African political prisoners. The movement, he stated, appreciated the Irish government's stance against apartheid, but felt that 'it might be possible ... to take some step to remind South Africa of her attitude'.<sup>1</sup> He asked that Aiken might see fit to receive a delegation from the movement, 'entirely in private' if preferred, to discuss the matter. Aiken's response, issued through his private secretary, Róisín Ennis, dismissed the notion immediately: 'the Minister considers that there is no need for a deputation from your organisation to see him on the subject'.<sup>2</sup> It was in keeping with his attitude to foreign affairs. In spite of his later assertion that he had 'never suggested that "foreign policy should not be the subject of public debate", <sup>3</sup> Aiken eschewed any form of public consultation. Issues of international importance, he argued, should not become matters for political debate.

In a system lacking any history of consultation between interest groups and foreign policy makers,<sup>4</sup> groups like the IAAM struggled to find a voice. Aiken's absence in New York for large parts of the year and his curt responses in the Dáil did little to encourage dialogue. In contrast to the high levels of 'active citizenship' in the Nordic states, the absence of a culture of debate in Irish society also worked to the IAAM's disadvantage. It was only in the last two years of the decade that the movement's fortunes changed markedly, due in equal parts to its work in building a support base and broader societal changes that radicalised the environment for protest.

<sup>\*</sup> Placard from the IAAM-organised march against the Springbok rugby tour on 10 Jan. 1970; quoted in Anne Harris, 'The march to Lansdowne... as one girl saw it', *Irish Press*, 12 Jan. 1970.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Desmond to Aiken, 5 May 1964, NAI DFA 96/3/93.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Ennis to Desmond, 25 May 1964, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Frank Aiken (signed as Prionsias MacAogáin) to ed., *The Irish Times*, 27 May 1969.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> For a general description of Irish pressure group activity in the 1960s and 1970s, see Maria Maguire, <sup>6</sup> Pressure groups in Ireland', *Administration*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (Autumn 1977), pp. 349-64, and Basil Chubb, *The government and politics of Ireland* (1<sup>st</sup> ed., London, 1970), pp. 97-119. For a description of pressure group activity in Irish foreign policy, see Keatinge, *Formulation*, pp. 267-94.

The influence of the mass media coverage of the American civil rights movement, the anti-war campaign, student and worker strikes in France, Germany, Italy and Britain, and the situation in Northern Ireland created an atmosphere conducive to the growth of an organisation like the IAAM. Prior to that time, the movement had won minor successes, but its protest against the South African rugby tour of Ireland in January 1970 served to alter the dynamic of Irish foreign policy making. That campaign forms a natural chronological division for this chapter. The first part explores the Irish government's policies along familiar lines, examining its support for the United Nations, the state's relationship with the Afro-Asian group and the Western powers, and the impact of those relationships on Ireland's identity and role in the international system. By 1968, the influence of the IAAM and the pressures to maintain Ireland's identity visibly impacted on Irish policies at the United Nations as was evidenced in its willingness to support more radical resolutions put forward by the Afro-Asian group. At home, the dynamic of foreign policy making changed gradually as domestic pressures, for so long a vital contributing factor in the foreign policies of other moderate states like Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Norway, assumed an increasingly important role. The second part of this chapter focuses on charting the rise of the IAAM and its short-term impact on Irish foreign policy, culminating in an examination of the movement's campaign against the 1970 rugby tour.

#### SOUTHERN AFRICA IN CONTEXT

The period was marked by the continued entrenchment of minority rule in southern Africa. From 1968 the Nixon administration offered assistance to the 'Portuguese imperialist project' as a means of securing support against Soviet gains in Africa.<sup>5</sup> Continued military support from Britain and United States opposition to economic sanctions allowed the South African government not only to survive but to broaden the scope of its apartheid policies. The death of Prime Minister Verwoerd – stabbed by a white parliamentary messenger in the House of Assembly in September 1966 – did little to alter the course of South African policy. Jack Spence suggested in 1971 that 'the real challenge to its integrity came not from the United Nations (which could only

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Norrie MacQueen, *The decolonization of Portuguese Africa: metropolitan revolution and the dissolution of empire* (London, 1997), p. 55.

be as effective as its most powerful members were prepared to allow it to be), but from the threat of internal uprising or wars of liberation mounted and supported beyond its borders'.<sup>6</sup> Apartheid increasingly drove African nationalists to more extreme forms of action. In Tanzania in 1969, the potential for serious armed struggle inside South Africa's own borders became more evident following the ANC's decision to commit itself 'to the armed struggle and the mobilisation of the people for revolution'.<sup>7</sup> The ANC and, to a lesser extent, the PAC continued their international campaign, involving anti-apartheid organisations and governments across the West in support of their goal of African liberation. They drew support from governments in the Netherlands and the Nordic states, as well as from NGOs and left-wing political parties in other Western states.

Considerable attention continued to be focussed on South Africa's role in South West Africa. In July 1966, the International Court of Justice delivered its verdict on the question, declaring that the case against South Africa 'had failed to establish any legal right in respect of the claims which it had put before the Court, and that it could not therefore pronounce upon these claims one way or the other'.<sup>8</sup> The United Nations General Assembly reacted by terminating the South African mandate and recognising the territory as the renamed Namibia. In 1969 the Security Council followed suit and called upon the South African government to withdraw its administration. By then, SWAPO had stepped up its activities, forcing the South African government to introduce the Terrorism Act in 1967 which gave it greater power and led to the arrest of various SWAPO leaders. The movement viewed the ICJ's decision as the end of passive resistance and the beginning of a new phase of militant nationalism. The verdict, it believed, 'would relieve Namibians once and for all from any illusions which they may have harboured about the United Nations as some kind of saviour in their plight ... We have no alternative but to rise in arms and bring about our liberation.'<sup>9</sup>

SWAPO's indictment of the United Nations was symptomatic of the latter's limited influence in resolving the situation in southern Africa. In spite of growing Afro-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Jack Spence, 'South Africa and the modern world', in Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson (eds.), *The Oxford history of South Africa II: 1870-1966* (Oxford, 1971), p. 523.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> James Barber and John Barratt, South Africa's foreign policy: The search for status and security 1945-1988 (Cambridge, 1990), p. 153.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Spence, 'South Africa and the modern world', p. 516.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> SWAPO statement quoted in Cooper, *Occupation*, p. 98.

Asian dominance in the General Assembly, the potential for real and lasting change lay in the co-operation of the major Western powers. The same could be said in the case of Southern Rhodesia. The Rhodesian Front's unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) on 11 November 1965 laid a challenge to the international community. Economic sanctions introduced first on a voluntary and later on a mandatory basis by the Security Council had limited effect as goods continued to arrive through Mozambique and South Africa. Divisions within the African resistance movement, between the Zimbabwe African Peoples' Union (ZAPU) and the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), did little to help the majority's cause, and successive British attempts to impose a solution, most notably aboard the *HMS Tiger* in 1966 and *HMS Fearless* in 1968, failed to end the regime's intransigence. Rhodesian society, though 'full of the contradictions and paradoxes which mark every society of human beings',<sup>10</sup> was galvanised by the fact of being ostracised from the international community.

### UDI AND IRISH FOREIGN POLICY

In the weeks leading up to UDI, the Irish delegation at the United Nations found itself embroiled in a familiar argument with the Afro-Asian group. During the Fourth Committee debate on Southern Rhodesia on 27 October 1965, Tadhg O'Sullivan questioned a draft resolution which proposed that the United Nations 'would oppose any declaration of independence which was not based on universal adult suffrage'.<sup>11</sup> He reasoned that it was not for the committee to determine whether representatives of the African population would be prepared to accept such a compromise.<sup>12</sup> The African reaction read like a repeat of the debate on South West Africa four years earlier (see chapter three), playing on the Irish government's construction of its identity through its history and relationship with the developing world. The Liberian representative questioned whether the Irish government 'was contesting the right of the people of Southern Rhodesia to universal adult suffrage',<sup>13</sup> a link made more explicit by the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Peter Godwin and Ian Hancock, '*Rhodesians never die*': the impact of war and political change on white Rhodesia, c. 1970-1980 (Oxford, 1993), p. 15.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Tadhg O'Sullivan, UNGA Fourth Committee, 27 Oct. 1965, UNORGA, A/C.4/SR.1540.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Extract from the Irish delegate's report on the United Nations Fourth Committee, twentieth session, undated [1965?], NAI DFA 2000/14/46.

Cameroonian delegate who 'expressed surprise that Ireland, with her traditional love of liberty, should be among the advocates of appeasement'.<sup>14</sup>

It had the desired effect. A private representation from the Kenyan delegate impressed on Irish officials the gravity of O'Sullivan's statement. Aiken's response fell into what became a familiar pattern. O'Sullivan, he stated, should vote in favour of the offending paragraph, but in his explanation of voting should make clear that the Irish delegation 'considered that universal adult suffrage should be introduced through the implementation of provisions acceptable to all sectors of opinion'.<sup>15</sup> The divisions between the Afro-Asian group and the Western moderates were again readily apparent. As it had in the 1962 debates on the territory, the Irish delegation felt pressed to assert its support for the fundamental aims of the Afro-Asian group, while at the same time it was mindful of its relationship with the British government. To Irish officials, the latter remained the best hope of finding a solution to the impasse. Aiken's policy accorded closely with that of the Swedish government which largely followed the 'British line' of argument and supported continued bilateral negotiations between British officials and the Southern Rhodesian authorities.<sup>16</sup>

The same could be said of the states' reaction to UDI. The Irish response emphasised its distaste for the Rhodesian government's actions while at the same time afforded itself space to manoeuvre according to future developments. Lemass's statement to the press on 12 November was a model of restraint:

the recent declaration of independence does not mean freedom for its people, but is a device to perpetuate the rule of the minority ... It is our hope that the pressure of world opinion will compel those who at present exercise power in that country to accept the justice and inevitability of majority rule, under which an independent Rhodesian state could develop, with harmony within its borders and with the goodwill of the other nations of the world.<sup>17</sup>

Aiken echoed Lemass's concern. On 15 November, in an address on Afro-Asian affairs in St John's University, New York, he condemned UDI as purporting 'to proclaim a sovereignty based on a denial of fundamental democratic principles'.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Tadhg O'Sullivan, UNGA Fourth Committee, 1 Nov. 1965, UNORGA, A/C.4/SR.1544.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Sellström, Sweden and southern Africa: Vol. I, pp. 331-2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Department of an Taoiseach press release, 12 Nov. 1965, NAI DFA 2000/14/45.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Quoted in 'Aiken criticises Rhodesian denial of democracy', *The Irish Times*, 16 Nov. 1965.

The government wished to avoid tying its hands 'unduly', particularly in the possible event of economic sanctions being introduced against what was now simply called Rhodesia.<sup>19</sup> On this question it had long been clear. It followed a formulation, expressed clearly in its policies on Portuguese Africa: 'the [General] Assembly should not adopt resolutions which seek to impose economic sanctions in the absence of assurance of support for such measures from States whose co-operation would be of vital importance for their success'.<sup>20</sup> Only resolutions enacted by the Security Council carried the force of international law. The same criteria applied to Rhodesia. Both the Irish and Swedish governments welcomed the Security Council's recommendation of 20 November 1965 that all member states should take measures to boycott the Rhodesian economy by condemning the regime. The Swedish Prime Minister Tage Erlander praised it as 'an extremely important decision', but warned that 'the prerequisite condition for a policy of sanctions against Southern Rhodesia [...] is [that it is] generally supported [...] It is our hope that all states, loyally and without delay, will sustain the United Nations in its endeavours.'21 Aiken shared Erlander's concern. He believed that 'sanctions should only be imposed when they are likely to be politically and economically effective', in spite of the feeling of some of his fellow Cabinet Ministers that it was inconsistent 'to impose sanctions on Rhodesia while refusing to impose them on South Africa'.<sup>22</sup>

His response was to make certain that 'if they were not effective, the blame or any share of it, could not be thrown on us'.<sup>23</sup> The Irish government immediately imposed restrictions on the issue of licences for the export of arms, ammunition and military equipment, and on 11 January 1966 extended its restrictions to include imports of tobacco, asbestos and all other commodities. The decision was taken with two essential factors in mind: the Security Council resolution imposed 'a moral obligation' on Ireland; and failure to implement sanctions would leave Ireland open to accusations of 'frustrating British action'.<sup>24</sup> British officials made sure to impress the implications

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Telegram, DEA to PMUN (Brennan to Ronan), 11 Nov. 1965, NAI DFA 2000/14/45.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Con Cremin, UNGA plenary meeting, 21 Dec. 1965, UNORGA, A/PV.1407.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Quoted in Sellström, Sweden and southern Africa: Vol. I, p. 334.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> 'Government impose trade sanctions on Rhodesia', *The Irish Times*, 12 Jan. 1966.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 226, Col. 979 (9 Feb. 1967).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> DEA memorandum for the government, 'Application of Economic Sanctions against Southern Rhodesia', 22 Dec. 1965, NAI DFA 2000/14/54.

of the latter on the Irish government and it made little sense in the interests of Anglo-Irish relations to refuse their request. The conclusion of the Anglo-Irish Free Trade Agreement in December 1965 and the free movement of goods that it portended made it all the more pressing for the Irish government to impose strict measures.

The timing of the announcement that Ireland would apply full economic sanctions (11 January 1966) showed the extent of British influence, since its officials had requested that it be made 'before the conclusion of the Commonwealth Ministers' Conference to be held in Lagos on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> January'.<sup>25</sup> In the period that followed, Irish officials continued to be concerned at the possible use of Ireland as a back door to British markets. In January 1967, Paul Keating of the Irish Embassy in London reported that several London businessmen were convinced that Rhodesian tobacco was 'coming into Britain by way of Ireland' in 'considerable' quantities.<sup>26</sup> Given Rhodesia's low share in the Irish tobacco industry's raw material imports (3.7% of the total)<sup>27</sup> there was real difficulty in identifying the movement and use of the offending leaf. The problem was made greater by sustained British pressure on the Irish government. A line of contact remained open between the British Embassy and the DEA, providing a flow of information for the latter, and a point of pressure for the former. British officials closely analysed Irish trade and made frequent representations to DEA officials, specifically over a consignment of chrome ore on its way from Mozambique to Cork (1966), the reported purchase by the Rhodesians of Lockheed Constellation aircraft based at Shannon (1967), and a suspected consignment of Rhodesian graphite (1969).<sup>28</sup>

The approach to economic sanctions and to policy more broadly naturally led to accusations that the Irish government had 'abandoned the effort to exercise an independent judgement'.<sup>29</sup> The reality was more complicated. As early as March 1966, Aiken instructed one of his aides to tell British officials that the Irish government could not agree to its actions 'being policed' by others.<sup>30</sup> Irish officials were conscious of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Addendum to memorandum for government, 'Application of Economic Sanctions against Southern Rhodesia', 7 Jan. 1966, NAI DFA 2000/14/51.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Keating to Ronan, 18 Jan. 1967, NAI DFA 2001/43/160.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Patrick Hillery, Dáil Éireann Debates, Vol. 218, Col. 488 (27 Oct. 1965).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> See NAI DFA 2000/14/50 and NAI DFA 2002/19/32.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Conor Cruise O'Brien, Ireland, the United Nations and southern Africa (Dublin, 1967), p. 8.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Note by Donal O'Sullivan, 31 March 1966, NAI DFA 2000/14/50.

British interests and sensitive to British representations, but the decision to implement sanctions, including the mandatory sanctions introduced by the Security Council on 16 December 1966, was in keeping with Irish attitudes dating to the earlier part of the decade. It coincided with the view that the United Nations should offer Britain assistance to breaking the Rhodesian government's resolve. The comparison with Finland was again instructive. The Finnish government adopted a cautious approach to the Rhodesian question based on the fulfilment of its obligations to the United Nations, and the fact that its interests in relation to Britain and the West 'were greater than its solidarity with the Zimbabwean people'.<sup>31</sup> Finland's low levels of trade with Rhodesia meant that '[t]here was not much to lose' in applying sanctions.<sup>32</sup> The same was true of the Irish case. What little trade occurred between Ireland and Rhodesia was restricted through a licensing system that operated on a case by case basis. It had little to deal with; February 1968's only exports were 'other animals not for food (dogs)'.<sup>33</sup>

At the United Nations the debate on Rhodesia followed a familiar pattern. The Irish delegation continued to support calls for independence 'based on universal adult suffrage, by which we understood an electoral system acceptable to all people, including the Africans'.<sup>34</sup> In keeping with its preference for a negotiated settlement, it rejected any suggestions that appeared to interfere with the ongoing consultations between the British government and the Rhodesian regime. The actions of the Afro-Asian group, in particular its call for the United Nations to support the use of force, continued to distance it from Ireland and the other Western European moderates. During the Fourth Committee discussion on Rhodesia in November 1966, the delegates of the United Arab Republic and Somalia both made reference to the use of force in the Irish struggle for independence. The inference was rejected by Tadhg O'Sullivan: 'Ireland was proud of the fact that countless Irishmen had been willing to lay down their lives in the cause of freedom ... It was not, however, the function of the United Nations to make a virtue of violence, to advocate forceful methods in the solution of disputes or to urge great nations to employ their military power before every other

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Soiri and Peltola, Finland and southern Africa, p. 134.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> For the monthly returns to the UN of trade with Rhodesia, see, for 1965-8, NAI DFA 2000/14/58, and for 1969-73, see NAI DFA 2004/7/118.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Extract from the memorandum for the government on the 21<sup>st</sup> Session of the UNGA, undated [1966?], NAI DFA 2000/14/47.

means.<sup>35</sup> Force, the last part of his statement implied, should not come before peaceful negotiation. In Aiken's view, 'to assist the guerrilla movements in Southern Africa [was] to encourage them to engage in a hopeless struggle and thus promote needless bloodshed'.<sup>36</sup> Nor was it the place of the United Nations to urge the British government to take military action to remove the Smith regime.

Nevertheless in its language and voting pattern, the Irish delegation at the United Nations revealed its susceptibility to Afro-Asian pressure and its attempt to maintain its independent stance. In March 1968 it condemned the execution of political prisoners by the Rhodesian government as 'an abhorrent violation of fundamental rights which endangers international peace'.<sup>37</sup> In October of the same year, Aiken instructed his delegation to vote in favour of a draft resolution that came before the Fourth Committee which reiterated the need for majority rule before Rhodesia might become independent, 'as a statement of principle',<sup>38</sup> leaving it in a more radical position than the Nordics, who abstained. The approach struck a balance between the Irish government's natural inclination to offer support to the Western powers in the hope of promoting negotiated settlement, and the necessity to buttress its waning influence with the Afro-Asian group. Dennis Kennedy accurately summarised the policies in *The Irish Times* on 21 January 1970: '[i]f there is a pattern to the voting [on southern Africa] it is one in which Ireland is rarely seen in direct opposition to the two major Western Powers though by no means following their lead'.<sup>39</sup>

### THE NAMIBIAN QUESTION

Aiken's experience led him to the realisation that the British Labour government's policies and actions were crucial in Rhodesia and the most likely to produce a lasting solution. The lessons of the previous ten years gave Irish policies a pragmatism based on the premise that the most effective solutions were those supported by the major powers. The potential for change in southern Africa, Aiken believed, lay not in attempting the impossible in South Africa or Rhodesia, but in concentrating

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> Tadhg O'Sullivan, UNGA Fourth Committee, 9 Nov. 1966, UNORGA, A/C.4/SR.1631.

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Dennis Kennedy, 'Apartheid – a test of international consciences', *The Irish Times*, 21 Jan. 1970.
 <sup>37</sup> Government statement issued through the Government Information Bureau, 6 March 1968, NAI DFA 2000/14/48.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> Telex, DEA to PMUN, 30 Oct. 1968, NAI DFA 2000/14/49.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Dennis Kennedy, 'Apartheid – a test of international consciences', The Irish Times, 21 Jan. 1970.

international efforts on South West Africa. He felt that 'the best way to get rid of [apartheid] in South Africa and in Rhodesia is to get South Africans prized out of South West Africa. That would change the whole picture in that part of the world.'<sup>40</sup> The South Africans would not fight for the territory with the same vigour as they might defend their own republic, since South West Africa's established business interests were mainly foreign-owned. To the Western powers the territory carried less strategic importance, though it was not clear how Aiken envisaged the transformation of the territory following South Africa's exit.

The ICJ's decision on 16 July 1966 removed an obstacle to Aiken's resolve his commitment to and respect for the processes of international law. He and his delegation had refrained from putting forward their ideas while the Court's deliberations were ongoing. The verdict caused a definite shift in emphasis. Aiken and his officials furtively engaged in analysing its implications, and the DEA's memorandum for the government on that autumn's session of the United Nations General Assembly made it clear that a 'strong reaction' by the Afro-Asian group 'would be justified and deserving of Ireland's support'.<sup>41</sup> It translated into a significant Irish response. In a speech to the United Nations General Assembly on 3 October Aiken described the judgement as 'an outrageous waste of time and money ... I submit that, since South Africa has not only repudiated the Mandate but has now openly proceeded to govern South West Africa as part of her national territory, we require no further opinion of the Court.'42 The United Nations, he argued, should either recognise South Africa's power over the territory or 'proceed to exercise sustained pressure and persuasion to secure the peaceful and orderly transfer of the administration of the territory to the United Nations for the purpose of bringing it to independence within the shortest possible time'.<sup>43</sup> In order to achieve this, Aiken suggested the formation of a committee to report on ways to terminate the mandate of South Africa as soon as possible 'and bring the territory to independence'.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> Seanad Éireann deb., Vol. 63, Col. 399 (7 June 1967).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> 'Draft for Memorandum for Information of the Government – 21<sup>st</sup> Session of the General Assembly', undated [Aug. 1966?], NAI DFA 2000/14/265.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> Ireland. Department of External Affairs, Ireland at the United Nations 1966 (Dublin, 1967), p. 18.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> Ibid., pp. 18-19.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

His plan, which took on the informal title of the 'Irish Formula', formed the basis of the discussion that followed. Aiken's contribution was viewed by other member states as 'a model of moderation and restraint' and appreciated by the Western states, Latin Americans, and several Afro-Asian delegations.<sup>45</sup> There were limits however to his influence. The divisions between that moderation and Afro-Asian attitudes remained. On 27 October 1966 the General Assembly voted to terminate South Africa's mandate and set up a fourteen-member *ad hoc* committee to consider how it should be administered. The decision ran counter to Aiken's respect for procedure and his realistic appraisal of the United Nations' dependency on the Major Powers. At the May 1967 special session of the General Assembly, reconvened to deal with the South West African question, the Irish delegation based its approach on the premise that Security Council involvement was 'the most effective way to speed the attainment of independence by the people of South West Africa'.<sup>46</sup> Aiken had talks with a number of delegations in New York concerning Irish proposals 'that the special representative ... should be appointed by the Security Council on the request of the Assembly'.<sup>47</sup> It exposed the underlying difference in approach between the two groups: the levels of commitment to the proper use of the structures of the United Nations. Along with Sweden, the Irish delegation abstained on a General Assembly resolution of 4 May 1967 which created a United Nations Council to take over the administration of the Territory. Aiken was clear in his appraisal of the situation; on 19 May he told the General Assembly that that 'the people of the territory can only be brought to freedom in the most peaceful and orderly manner if the Assembly resolves to place the responsibility where the authority and power belong - that is, on the Security Council and particularly on the permanent members thereof'.<sup>48</sup>

Behind the scenes, Aiken continued to canvass strongly to try to obtain the support of the United States and other delegations, though he later admitted that in private he had made it clear to African delegates that 'he supported the use of force by the United Nations to expel South Africa from South-West Africa ... [and] that Ireland

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> Note from DEA to Taoiseach, 17 Oct. 1966, NAI DFA 2000/14/265.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> Note on 'Question of South West Africa', 11 May 1967, NAI DFA 2000/14/266.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Cremin to sec. DEA, 12 May 1967, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> Quoted in 'Aiken maintains stand on South-West Africa', *The Irish Times*, 20 May 1967.

could back the use of force'.<sup>49</sup> The principles established over a long period were readily in evidence: support for constructive action, peaceful settlement and the institutions of the United Nations, and a strong belief in the principle of self-determination. It brought with it the recognition of Ireland's changed role in the world. The approach placed the Irish delegation firmly in the Western camp, though in the company of the progressive Nordic states. The majority of the Afro-Asian group viewed the question in an altogether different light. Chief Adebo, the Nigerian Ambassador to the United Nations, told the General Assembly that though Aiken

gave a clear demonstration of the interest that he and his country have in this subject ... we were not able to subscribe to the suggestion that he made. He very courageously proposed that the first step that was necessary was an approach to that dreaded institution of this Organisation called the Security Council. I think my colleagues will appreciate how difficult it would be for a great many Members of this Organisation to agree entirely with him, but it was a logically argued suggestion, as were a number of other suggestions that we had from other individual countries.<sup>50</sup>

The influence of the moderate states over the Afro-Asian group and their attempt to win the group to support their view of the United Nations had waned considerably. Aiken told the Seanad that the Afro-Asian states were 'trying to do the impossible [at the Special Session] – to draft a resolution that would be acceptable to the Great Powers'.<sup>51</sup> If the United Nations could be persuaded in the following session of the General Assembly to 'put this problem of the freedom of South West Africa where it belongs, on the shoulders of the five permanent members of the Security Council, we will have a good chance of bringing pressure to bear on any recalcitrant member of the permanent five members and get them to line up and take whatever action is appropriate and necessary to bring the people of South West Africa to freedom'.<sup>52</sup> But while the issue showed he and his colleagues at odds with the Afro-Asian group, it offered an indication of the new definition of Ireland's role in international affairs. Aiken's active and persistent pursuit of a solution indicated that, far from lost, Ireland's independent stance had been redirected to potentially more profitable, and, in many ways, less visible targets. Irish officials no longer believed that

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> 'Candid Aiken unwinds on External Affairs', *The Irish Times*, 1 Nov. 1969.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> Quoted in Cremin to sec. DEA, 18 May 1967, NAI DFA 2000/14/266.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> Seanad Éireann deb., Vol. 63, Col. 397 (7 June 1967).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> Seanad Éireann deb., Vol. 63, Col. 400 (7 June 1967).

they could take a leading role on a broad range of questions, but instead preferred to concentrate on issues like Namibia which carried the potential for constructive change. It took time for the General Assembly to see the merit in Aiken's argument. In December 1968 it requested the Security Council to take steps to bring the re-named Namibia to independence, supported by the Irish delegation, and the following year the Security Council terminated South Africa's mandate and requested it to withdraw from the territory.

## IRELAND AND SOUTH AFRICA: AID AND TRADE

Aiken's dedication to the pursuit of peace and stability through the United Nations, while in keeping with the policies of his moderate counterparts, lacked an essential flexibility to undertake positive action when that organisation was beset by the kind of deadlock caused by the intransigence of the Afro-Asian group and the withholding of support by the major powers. Within the United Nations Irish policies were limited further by a suspicion of the motives of the Afro-Asians and an increasing emphasis on the power of the Security Council to the exclusion of other equally profitable though less visible forms of assistance. The Irish government's attitude gradually marked the effectiveness, though not the intent, of its policies as distinct from its moderate European counterparts. In March 1966, for example, it declined an invitation to the first international conference on South West Africa at Oxford, at which the Swedish government was represented by Minister for Transport and Communication, Olof Palme, who later became Prime Minister. Prompted by activity within Swedish society on a level the IAAM could not match, the Swedish government began to act increasingly outside the boundaries of the United Nations. In October 1964 it became the first Western government to donate funds directly to the London-based International Defence and Aid Fund (IDAF), which worked to provide financial assistance to the families of political prisoners in southern Africa. In 1965, Denmark and Norway followed suit.

The Irish government was more circumspect. It ignored the IAAM's assertion that IDAF was 'the only organisation which has both the confidence of the liberation movement and the ability to channel funds allocated for this kind of work'.<sup>53</sup> Financial considerations were an obvious constraint, but so too was the government's fear of IDAF's links with the liberation movements. It was left to the IAAM to collect for the organisation and quietly send contributions to southern Africa, through the Irish Defence and Aid Fund which it created in October 1967. If it had matched its political commitment to the United Nations with a concurrent dedication to that organisation's multilateral aid channels, the Irish government might have deflected some criticism of its approach to IDAF. As it was, not even the recognition of 'the extremely low level of Ireland's contributions ... as compared with those of other countries in Western Europe<sup>, 54</sup> served to spur the government to effective action. Its attitude to the United Nations Educational and Training Programme for Southern Africa (UNETPSA) and the United Nations Trust Fund for South Africa (UNTFSA), the main forms of financial assistance to the African populations in Namibia, Rhodesia, South Africa, and the Portuguese territories, mirrored its policies on southern Africa and development aid more broadly (see chapter eight): caution, deliberation, and a dependency on others to provide the stimulus for action.

In February 1966 the DEA argued that the United Nations-sponsored programmes were 'primarily motivated by the political aspects of the apartheid problem ... because of the political nature of the projects under consideration we should not make any financial contribution'.<sup>55</sup> Instead, it preferred to 'wait to see what support the appeal gets' in view of the 'phase of national economic stringency' which Ireland was then experiencing.<sup>56</sup> Political prudence led the DEA to consider a contribution to the UNTFSA in August 1966. Seán Ronan argued that the Irish government should 'not expose ourselves to the charge of seeming indifference to the lot of the victims of apartheid'.<sup>57</sup> A donation might be made 'only if and when the Minister decided that the number of pledging countries warranted this step'.<sup>58</sup> By December 1966 twenty-three member states had done so, and the knowledge that at the previous session of the General Assembly 'unfavourable attention was paid to States who are vocal opponents

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> Kader Asmal to Aiken, 31 May 1968, NAI DFA 98/3/57.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> Donal O'Sullivan to sec. Dept. of Finance, 5 Sept. 1967, NAI DFA 98/3/58.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> Connolly to Nolan, 1 Feb. 1966, NAI DFA 2004/7/50.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> Brennan to Ronan, 2 March 1966, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> Ronan to Sec. DEA, 16 Aug. 1966, ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

of apartheid but who do not appear to engage in any practical measures aimed at the alleviation of its effects' led Aiken to consider it 'desirable politically' that the Irish government should make a contribution.<sup>59</sup> In January 1967, with little enthusiasm, it pledged its first contribution of \$1,000 to UNTFSA. The question of contributing to the UNETPSA had to wait until later in 1967 when, during a Seanad motion brought by Professor W.B. Stanford, Aiken admitted that it was 'probably the fund through which most could be done for the people of South Africa'.<sup>60</sup> In its subsequent investigations the DEA's argument for a contribution recognised the responsibilities that arose from 'the fact that we are listed by the UN as one of the 26 economically developed Member States'.<sup>61</sup> At the General Assembly later that year, the Irish delegation pledged a donation of \$5,000 (£3,500), a figure suggested by Aiken himself, who 'felt strongly that an increase in these contributions was most desirable' and that the better financial conditions afforded Ireland the opportunity to do so.<sup>62</sup>

The DEA's tentative approach was in marked contrast to the admittedly more affluent Nordic states. They openly embraced commitments in the field of development assistance as another element in their foreign policy ethos at the United Nations. The Swedish Ambassador to the United Nations chaired the Trust Fund, and his government had already begun to make significant contributions to development assistance. In 1964 the Danish government established 'a special humanitarian budget allocation', nicknamed 'the Apartheid Appropriation', which initially gave small grants to South African students in exile, in accordance with the United Nations' recommendations, and later expanded to provide what Morgenstierne described as 'a channel for almost bilateral relations with national liberation movements struggling for independence throughout Southern Africa'.<sup>63</sup> The Norwegian government adopted a similar approach in recognition of the effectiveness of the funds.

In all three states, the official resources allocated through IDAF, UNTFSA and UNETPSA were backed by considerable public fund-raising activity and a close correlation between public activism and political decision-making. In Ireland, in spite

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> Ronan to sec. Dept of Finance, 23 Dec. 1966, ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Seanad Éireann deb., Vol. 63, Col. 398 (7 June 1967).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup> Small to Sec. DEA, 26 June 1967, NAI DFA 98/3/58.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup> Donal O'Sullivan to sec. Dept. of Finance, 5 Sept. 1967, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup> Morgenstierne, Denmark and southern Africa, p. 18.

of the best efforts of the IAAM, a more obvious divide existed between public debate and the policy-making process. At a July 1966 public meeting of the IAAM, Conor Cruise O'Brien attacked Aiken's policy for 'closely following that of Britain and the United States'.<sup>64</sup> O'Brien continued to be a thorn in his side. Unused to public debate and dismissive of its worth in external affairs, Aiken was clearly annoyed by the criticism. Privately, he believed that O'Brien's approach was an attempt 'to secure publicity by goading me into a public controversy with me', and was equally dismissive of O'Brien's 'pinkish friends', among whom he no doubt included members of the IAAM.<sup>65</sup> The movement's influence grew gradually. In March 1969, Aiken responded hesitantly to a suggestion made by a Ghanaian official at the United Nations that the UN Special Committee on Apartheid might meet in Dublin that summer. He felt that the visit 'could give rise to some difficulties here vis-à-vis the Irish anti-apartheid movement and from the publicity point of view'.<sup>66</sup> Timing was of primary concern. Its arrival in late May or early June potentially coincided with the External Affairs estimate in the Dáil and/or a general election. Given his later insistence that he had 'no desire to see the vital questions affecting the lives and fortunes of millions of people turned into an election gimmick',<sup>67</sup> the possibility that the IAAM might use the visit to stir up debate at a politically sensitive time led Aiken to instruct Cremin to 'gently discourage the Committee from having a meeting here this year and indicate that we should be glad to have them at another time'.<sup>68</sup>

Decisions the Irish government had made in the past without recourse to any media comment became politically sensitive issues. In September 1967, the renegotiation of Ireland's trade agreement with South Africa was highlighted by the DEA as a potential cause for embarrassment, both at the United Nations and at home, where criticism 'might be directed at the Minister ... by the Anti-Apartheid Movement as well as by certain opposition deputies in the Dáil'.<sup>69</sup> In the context of the Irish government's stand on South West Africa, it was felt that the renewal of a trade

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> Quoted in 'Conor Cruise O'Brien condemns pusillanimous Rhodesia policy', *The Irish Times*, 11 July 1966.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>65</sup> Aiken to Cordier, 23 July 1968, UCDA Aiken Papers P104/7062.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>66</sup> McCann to Cremin, 26 March 1969, NAI DFA 2001/43/77.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup> Frank Aiken (signed as Prionsias MacAogáin) to ed., *The Irish Times*, 26 May 1969.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>68</sup> McCann to Cremin, 26 March 1969, NAI DFA 2001/43/77.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>69</sup> Note, [Nolan?] to O'Sullivan, 16 Sept. 1967, NAI DFA 2000/14/267.

agreement which included that area, and the attendant publicity attached thereto, would prove detrimental to the government's reputation. But while it made the Irish government increasingly conscious of its policies, it was more reluctant to compromise them. The DEA argued that Ireland's policies at the United Nations did 'not require us to cut off our trade with South Africa'.<sup>70</sup> They did, however, require a re-examination of 'the desirability of continuing to encourage officially the large expansion of that trade which has taken place in recent years'.<sup>71</sup> Imports from South Africa rose from £1,424,161 in 1965 to £2,378,930 in 1969, with a concurrent rise in exports from £153,620 in 1965 to £996,962 in 1969,<sup>72</sup> but even these statistics did not tell the full story. In March 1967, Elliot Zupnick, Professor of Economics at the City University of New York, delivered a paper in which he placed Ireland as one of South Africa's 'major trading partners'.<sup>73</sup> Zupnick's figures, Seán Ronan of the DEA commented, were another example of 'the old problem of Shannon',<sup>74</sup> the free-trade zone statistics of which did not appear in the government's official trade returns.

The figures brought home to Irish officials that 'it wasn't a good approach to keep bending over backwards to find ways of living with all kinds of wording' in United Nations resolutions.<sup>75</sup> The Irish delegation had already extended itself to vote for increasingly radical resolutions on Rhodesia and South West Africa, and continued this trend in its approach to South Africa. The language it adopted grew increasingly condemnatory; it intervened at the Special Political Committee debate in November 1968 'because of its belief in the importance of stressing and repeating that the world community unequivocally rejected the principle upon which the policy of apartheid was based'.<sup>76</sup> At the same committee in 1969, the delegation voted in favour of the main resolution on apartheid, but in its explanation of vote made it clear it did not accept individual paragraphs which called for Member States to 'prohibit financial and economic interests under their national jurisdiction from co-operating with South

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup> Holmes to sec. DEA, 4 Dec. 1969, NAI DFA 96/3/95.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup> Figures for 1965 from 'Note for the Minister's Information: Ireland's attitude towards the Apartheid Policies of South African Government', undated [Oct. 1969?], NAI DFA 96/3/95; and figures for 1969 from 'Trade with South Africa', undated [March 1974?], NAI DFA 2005/4/11.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>73</sup> Telex, PMUN to DEA, 28 March 1969, NAI DFA 2001/43/77.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup> Hand-written note, Ronan to Holmes, 2 April 1969, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>75</sup> Interview with Dorr (12 April 2005).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>76</sup> Noel Dorr, UNGA Special Political Committee, 8 Nov. 1968, UNORGA, A/SPC/SR.610.

Africa', 'an end to all international co-operation with South Africa', and for an embargo on airline and shipping services to South Africa.<sup>77</sup>

### THE GROWTH OF THE IRISH ANTI-APARTHEID MOVEMENT

From the end of 1967 the IAAM began to have an increasing influence in stimulating public debate. Its fortunes were closely related to broader patterns of social change. On 5 January 1968, Robert Fahey, a UCD arts student from Raheny, wrote to the IAAM to request information about its aims and activities. By his own admission, Fahey knew little about the movement. His characterisation of it relied heavily on media depictions of American civil rights protesters; 'Whenever I hear the words "Anti-Apartheid Movement" an image of folk-singers and Communists are [sic.] brought to mind.<sup>78</sup> In a year of global protest that influence was inescapable. In Sweden, Denmark and Norway the boycott movement evolved into a strong popular and political expression of solidarity with the African liberation movements. Swedish society embraced debate on international issues and the influence of the European New Left and the anti-Vietnam war campaign created a broad-based anti-imperial movement that expanded debate on southern Africa far outside apartheid South Africa. The political repercussions of this popular debate were not long in arriving. In 1969 the Swedish government decided to offer official humanitarian assistance to the PAIGC in Guinea-Bissau, the first direct support of its kind between a Western government and an African liberation movement. In Finland, where public participation in foreign affairs was at a level similar to Ireland, the effect of global media and international protest movements was also clearly visible. The Committee of 100, the Finnish Students' UN Association, and the South African Committee had a role in stimulating debate on southern Africa. As a result, 'Finnish society saw a rise in activism never experienced before'.<sup>79</sup> 1968 became a 'crucial' year,<sup>80</sup> radicalising political divisions within Finnish society.

Geopolitical and cultural differences aside, the parallels to the situation in Ireland were obvious. The student strikes that swept France, Germany, Italy and Britain inspired activists in Ireland. Carol Coulter recalled that Dublin in the summer of 1968

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>77</sup> Dennis Kennedy, 'Apartheid – a test of international consciences', *The Irish Times*, 21 Jan. 1970.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>78</sup> Fahey to IAAM, 5 Jan. 1968, NLI IAAM Papers Roll 3, Part 14.1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>79</sup> Soiri and Peltola, Finland and southern Africa, p. 29.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

'sparkled with excitement. The feeling, experienced by students and young people everywhere, that the world was going to change and that we were the generation that was going to bring this about, had taken root.<sup>31</sup> For others, the allure of the American civil rights movement proved stronger. Bernadette Devlin of the Belfast-based People's Democracy rejected the ideas of the 'weirdos' in Paris and London; 'we saw ourselves basically as blacks. Many of us weren't even aware that we lived in ghettos until we discovered the black ghettos and said, that's our position, we're all stuck here on the edge of towns with the worst social conditions.<sup>82</sup> The radicalisation of protest in Northern Ireland had a visible effect south of the border on a population shedding what Fergal Tobin called 'the mantle of national innocence'.<sup>83</sup> The advent of television and mass media made the 'sixties' what Arthur Marwick described as 'very much the age of "spectacle",<sup>84</sup> and Ireland was no different. Tobin recalled that Irish society began to 'behave in a fashion that approximated more and more to the broader Anglo-American and Western European culture which was characteristic of the developed capitalist world'.<sup>85</sup> It made the reception of ideas and public activism all the more popular, particularly on such a relatively straightforward moral issue as apartheid.

The IAAM's experience of those changes fitted into broader global patterns of protest movement activity. In the exchanges described by Doug McAdam and Dieter Rucht, the successful adoption of ideas between movements depended 'on the interplay of relational and non-relational channels'.<sup>86</sup> In Ireland, the latter was visible in Coulter's references to Europe in 1968, Devlin's evocation of the American civil rights movement, and Fahey's characterisation of the IAAM. Students and others who travelled to the United States brought back ideas from the streets and university campuses. At an IAAM meeting in April 1965, Peadar O'Donnell, a veteran Irish republican also involved with Irish Voice on Vietnam, spoke proudly of 'the news that

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>81</sup> Carol Coulter, 'A view from the south', in Michael Farrell (ed.), *Twenty years on* (Dingle, 1988), p. 106.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>82</sup> Quoted in Ronald Fraser, with Daniel Bertaux, Bret Enyon, Ronald Grele, Béatrix le Wita, Daniele Linhart, Luisa Passerini, Jochen Staadt, and Annemarie Troger, *1968: a student generation in revolt* (London, 1988), p. 205.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>83</sup> Fergal Tobin, *The best of decades: Ireland in the nineteen sixties* (Dublin, 1984), p. 235.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>84</sup> Arthur Marwick, *The sixties: cultural revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, c.1958-c.1974* (Oxford, 1998), p. 15.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>85</sup> Tobin, Best of decades, p. 229.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>86</sup> Doug McAdam and Dieter Rucht, 'The Cross-National Diffusion of Movement Ideas', Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 528 (Jul., 1993), pp. 73-4.

at a public meeting in Dublin apartheid was denounced and the Alabama marchers acclaimed'.<sup>87</sup> In addition to these exchanges, the IAAM could rely on relational channels in its links with other anti-apartheid groups. Kader and Louise Asmal's personal connections with the British AAM were important in the transfer of ideas and continued dialogue between the two movements. Campaign literature, posters, flyers, and, occasionally, financial assistance from the British movement greatly helped its Irish counterpart, though the exchange was not solely in one direction. Kader Asmal remembered that the two movements 'shared information, we shared material, we often ran campaigns jointly with them, or we picked up on campaigns that they had started and inaugurated'.<sup>88</sup> The IAAM also looked to other movements for inspiration. Kader Asmal's membership of the ANC fostered a close association with that organisation, its aims and objectives. The IAAM's involvement with IDAF and participation in international conferences and seminars on southern Africa created an open exchange of ideas and strengthened its international links. In March 1966, for example, the British AAM hosted a meeting of anti-apartheid groups from Denmark, France, Holland, Norway, Sweden, the United States, and Ireland, 'at which there was a valuable interchange of ideas'.89

The importance of those exchanges and of international media influence however should not obscure the distinctly Irish character of the movement. The borrowed structures, methods, ideas, and campaigns were adapted to an Irish context. Most importantly, the movement attempted to frame Irish support for southern Africa in a manner that closely paralleled the Irish government's description of the state's identity in the debates on decolonisation at the United Nations. It based its call for members on the assertion that '[t]he Irish people have always opposed oppression. As the first country in this century to take up arms for national freedom, the African people look especially to us for help.<sup>90</sup> In a 1965 pamphlet, it called on the Irish government 'to let no pressures or considerations of expediency deter it from acting on apartheid in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>87</sup> Quoted in 'Speakers criticise Irish government', The Irish Times, 10 April 1965.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>88</sup> Interview with Asmal (19 April 2006).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>89</sup> Roger Fieldhouse, Anti-Apartheid: a history of the movement in Britain – a study in pressure group *politics* (London, 2005), p. 248. <sup>90</sup> Undated IAAM leaflet [1964?], UCDA Desmond Papers P221.

a way that is consonant with the Irish people's love of freedom'.<sup>91</sup> The similarities were extended to create a direct bond between the Irish struggle for independence and the contemporary struggle in southern Africa. At the outset of his visit to Ireland to mark South African Freedom Day on 26 June 1968, ANC President Oliver Tambo placed a wreath on the graves of the victims of the 1916 rising at Arbour Hill, on behalf of the 'freedom fighters' of South Africa.<sup>92</sup>

The emphasis on history and the Irish colonial experience formed part of a further attempt to follow the example of the ANC and the British AAM to seek 'a broad political image' and appeal to as wide a cross section of society as possible.<sup>93</sup> The IAAM's first chairman was Ernest Wood, a Senior Counsel, and its list of sponsors included members of all political parties and a broad cross-section of Irish society. In recognition that 'you were legit if you had somebody with a Roman collar, and you were respectable',94 the movement invited Father Austin Flannery, editor of the Catholic journal Doctrine and Life and active on Dublin's housing crisis, to take a place on the committee. What it lacked in official religious support, the movement enjoyed in 'an enormous amount of support from individuals in the churches because they saw it as a moral issue'.95 That did not mean, as Greg Spelman claims, that Catholic missionaries had a 'substantial' influence on the IAAM.<sup>96</sup> Instead they provided a considerable moral justification for its efforts that legitimised its aims in the eyes of the Irish public. The same could be said of the other Christian churches, whose authorities exhibited an equal reluctance but whose ordinary followers the IAAM also counted as active supporters. Reverend Dr Terence McCaughey, Presbyterian minister and lecturer in Irish at Trinity College, was invited to take a role on the committee early in its existence, and later became chairman of the movement.

The IAAM adapted its approach to the demands of the times. Left-wing groups like Connolly Youth, the Communist Party of Ireland (CPI), the Maoist Internationalists, and Sinn Féin were important to its success though the IAAM, like its

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>91</sup> Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement, Ireland and South Africa: the case against apartheid (Dublin, 1965), p. 5. <sup>92</sup> Lionel Fleming, 'African seeks help in freedom fight', *The Irish Times*, 27 June 1968.

<sup>93</sup> Fieldhouse, Anti-Apartheid, p. 57.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>94</sup> Interview with Gearóid Kilgallen, Dublin, 9 Nov. 2005.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>95</sup> Interview with Kader Asmal, Cape Town, 2 July 2006 (interview conducted by Thomas Alberts using a set of questions supplied by author).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>96</sup> Spelman, 'Ireland at the United Nations', p. 246.

British counterpart, preferred to keep them 'largely out of sight'.<sup>97</sup> The importance of trade union support in the success of the boycott movements in the Nordic states, and the British AAM's recognition of the importance of the unions (in 1964 it set up a special sub-committee to deal with trade union work) did not go unnoticed. Donal Nevin of ICTU, Mick Reilly of the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers' Union (ATGWU), and Communist Party member Mick Mullen of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (ITGWU) offered consistent support from the beginning. ITCU's Barry Desmond became the movement's first honorary secretary, a position he held until 1969 when his election to the Dáil led him to resign his post in the IAAM. Desmond and his colleagues' attempts to court trade union support built on familiar grounds: shared worker solidarity and the strong if fractured links between trade unionism and republicanism in Ireland. The movement held seminars, meetings, and conferences to stimulate the interest of trade union members in southern Africa. On 9 September 1966, for example, it organised an Irish trade union conference on apartheid in (of all places) the Shelbourne Hotel, Dublin, titled 'Brother Lend a Hand'. It placed the aims firmly in keeping with Ireland's colonial past. During the day's debate, Charles McCarthy, General Secretary of the Vocational Teachers' Association, 'pointed out that Ireland's struggle with England 40 years ago was greatly aided by the conscience of the world, which opposed Britain's rule; and that it was a duty for Ireland to assume a stand which the opinion of the world needed today against apartheid'.<sup>98</sup>

The IAAM's aim to educate led it to target secondary school pupils to whom it provided information leaflets and speakers and for whom it held a schools' conference on racism, and an annual essay competition. They joined with university students – another mainstay of Western anti-apartheid groups – and trade unionists in offering considerable support to IAAM campaigns and demonstrations. In its everyday work, however, the movement relied on a core committee of fifteen to twenty individuals who formulated campaigns, produced its literature – a monthly newsletter, *Amandla*, an annual report, and occasional pamphlets – and organised the movement's activities. The forceful character of Kader Asmal had a strong influence on proceedings, though the

<sup>97</sup> Fieldhouse, Anti-Apartheid, p. 57.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>98</sup> 'Irish Trade Union Conference on Apartheid', *IAAM Newsletter*, Vol. 11 (Oct. 1966), UCDA Desmond Papers P221.

voices of his colleagues on the committee – occasionally leading to fundamental disagreement – ensured that he did not dominate.

The movement's aims were simple: 'to inform the people of Ireland about apartheid'; to campaign for international action and action by the Irish government; 'to co-operate with and support South African organisations campaigning against apartheid'; and 'to co-operate with and support the Defence and Aid Fund'.<sup>99</sup> As they suggested, the IAAM's role in mobilising Irish support and encouraging political action on the part of the Irish government was inseparable from its responsibilities as part of the global campaign against apartheid. Its cultural boycott of South Africa, supported by a broad base of Irish playwrights, poets and authors, the relatively unsuccessful economic boycott, and other minor campaigns contributed to this international debate.

They could not compete, however, either in their effectiveness in stimulating debate or their effect on southern Africa, with the sports boycott. Sport was at the heart of white society in Rhodesia and South Africa and offered an opportunity to compete against the best in the world. Godwin and Hancock's study of white Rhodesian society noted that its population 'deified their heroes and relied upon their national teams to restore or sustain national morale'.<sup>100</sup> In 1977, a survey of white South Africans identified the loss of international sport as one of the three most damaging consequences of apartheid.<sup>101</sup> For the Africans who suffered under segregation, apartheid laws in education, health, voting, housing, and access to amenities greatly reduced their ability to compete with white athletes. The South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee (SANROC) led the international campaign against apartheid in sport and in 1968 its pressure was crucial in securing the withdrawal of the International Olympic Committee's invitation to the white South African team for the Olympic Games in Mexico City after African states threatened to boycott the event. The boycott created a 'paranoid obsession' among white South Africans rooted in what Rob Nixon described as 'an ethnic nationalist exasperation at being denied just such

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>99</sup> 'Constitution', undated [May 1965?], NLI IAAM Papers Roll 1, Part 1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>100</sup> Godwin and Hancock, 'Rhodesians never die', p. 38.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>101</sup> Rob Nixon, 'Apartheid on the run: the South African sports boycott', *Transition*, No. 58 (1992), pp. 75-6.

opportunities to compensate for the smallness of their population, their geographical marginality, and their political ostracism'.<sup>102</sup>

It had an equally significant impact in the West, where sporting campaigns 'gave vital impetus to local anti-apartheid movements'<sup>103</sup> through the visual representation of segregation they afforded. Encouraged by Kader Asmal's friendship with Dennis Brutus, the head of SANROC, the IAAM was quick to capitalise on its potential. On 29 May 1964, just over a month after it was formed, it organised a picket at the Iveagh Grounds in Crumlin, Dublin, at an international match between a South African bowling team and the Bowling League of Ireland. In October of the same year it made the 1965 visit of the South African rugby team the focus of its activities. The campaign epitomised the status of the IAAM, its relationship with the Irish government, and public receptiveness to international issues at that point. Politically, it was moderately successful. The President, Eamon de Valera, acceded to the movement's request not to attend the international at Lansdowne Road on 10 April 1965 and the DEA warned that the receipt of the South African players by the President at Áras an Uachtaráin 'would be bound to give rise to an outcry by the Anti-Apartheid Movement and it might be better for the President to avoid it'.<sup>104</sup> Among the general public, the campaign had mixed success. IAAM protesters picketed the matches and some sections of the population proved willing to engage with the issue. One rugby supporter sent Louise Asmal his tickets for the Lansdowne Road match - 'which unfortunately I had to buy' - with the instruction that she '[u]se them entirely at your discretion. Two brave black S[outh] Africans should be able to create quite a din if given them.'105

Singing the American civil rights anthem 'We Shall Overcome', the 350 protesters who marched from St Stephen's Green to Lansdowne Road on 10 April were evidence of the minor, though not insignificant, levels of support for the campaign. Their numbers, praised by the IAAM as 'very heartening',<sup>106</sup> were not sufficient to rouse widespread public attention in the week of a general election. Four days

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>104</sup> Hand-written note, Ronan to Ennis, 1 April 1965, NAI DFA 305/94 VI.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>105</sup> Minch to Louise Asmal, undated [March/April 1965?], NLI IAAM Papers Roll 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>106</sup> Quoted in 'Protests at international rugby match', *The Irish Times*, 12 April 1965.

previously, only fifteen people had protested at the match between the Springboks and a Combined Irish Universities side in Limerick. Although several prominent politicians, public figures, and organisations such as the Union of Students in Ireland indicated their support for the IAAM's campaign, the lack of a large trade union presence hampered its success. The Irish public was not sufficiently informed or roused from apathy to engage widely with the issue put before it. The Minister for Agriculture Charles Haughey may not have attended the match, but his explanation was indicative of many attitudes towards the tour: 'As I never go to rugby matches the question of attending, or refusing to attend, does not arise.'107

#### THE 1970 SPRINGBOK RUGBY TOUR

Progress was gradual. In October 1966 about 100 demonstrators, including a large proportion of African students, marched to the National Stadium in Dublin to protest against an international boxing match between Ireland and an all-white South African team. Inside, the match took place in front of a full house, and, Seán Ronan of the DEA commented, the protest 'did not seem to attract any great interest or support'.<sup>108</sup> In spite of its failure, the protest maintained the IAAM's visibility. The message slowly began to permeate through Irish society. In 1968 the IAAM amended its constitution to include all of southern Africa and continued its focus on the sports boycott. With SANROC's assistance, it ran campaigns against Irish participation in that year's Olympic Games and another calling for the withdrawal of Irish rugby internationals from the British and Irish Lions' tour of South Africa that summer. In the same year that the Security Council adopted comprehensive sanctions against Rhodesia, the movement persuaded the Irish Ploughing Association not to send competitors to the World Ploughing Championship in the rebel state.

The campaigns had two important lessons. The first was embodied in a comment by Tony Foley, secretary of the Draftsmen and Allied Technicians Association, who at the press conference to launch the Lions' campaign indicated his regret 'that the trade unions were not playing the dominant role they should be in the

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>107</sup> Haughey to Desmond, 11 March 1965, NLI IAAM Papers Roll 7, Part 25.1,
 <sup>108</sup> Ronan to Cremin, 31 Oct. 1966, NAI DFA 96/3/96.

Anti-Apartheid Movement'.<sup>109</sup> The second related to the difficulties of translating moral support into direct action, and in persuading the Irish government to support the IAAM's cause. The government remained adamant that it could not 'interfere with sporting or similar competitions on political grounds'; it could only 'make it clear to those in the countries concerned that the Irish people strongly condemn the policy of discrimination practised by the authorities involved'.<sup>110</sup> At the same time, the IAAM's activities increasingly created tension between the relationship of the Irish people with 'the children of the Boers whose own struggle once excited deep sympathy in Ireland',<sup>111</sup> and the fact that public opinion, expressed here in the case of Rhodesia, was primarily 'ar thaobh gnáth-mhuintir Afraiceach na tíre [on the side of the ordinary Africans of the country]'.<sup>112</sup> By 1969, thanks to the minor successes it enjoyed and the changes in Irish society, the movement felt itself in a position to capitalise on this undercurrent of popular support. Its campaign against the South African rugby tour, to arrive in Ireland in January 1970, formed the focal point for its efforts, but there were other indicators of the movement's popularity.

The IAAM was conscious that to translate this moral sympathy into positive government action required the cultivation of the kind of cross-party political support so important to the success of the public campaigns in the Nordic states. In June 1969 it sent a questionnaire to all candidates in the forthcoming general election to ascertain their views on southern Africa. The results revealed a great deal about the movement's support base. Of the 74 overwhelmingly positive responses, almost half (36) came from Dublin candidates, indicating the Dublin-centred nature of the movement.<sup>113</sup> It drew most of its support from the Labour Party, whose thirty-eight replies made up a disproportionately large number of the total. Labour TD Michael O'Leary responded to the question '[h]ave you any suggestions that might help us?' by answering simply, 'Vote Labour'.<sup>114</sup> Outside that base, there existed a notable cross-party agreement on the issue. Senator Garret FitzGerald, a Fine Gael candidate, noted the potential for

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>109</sup> 'Killanin and "Lions" under fire', Irish Press, 27 March 1968.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>110</sup> Ennis to Kader Asmal, IAAM, 5 March 1968, NLI IAAM Papers Roll 7, Part 25.1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>111</sup> 'Statement for Delivery on 31 October, 1967 by the Representative of Ireland, N. Dorr, in the General Debate in the Special Political Committee on the Question of Apartheid', NAI DFA 2001/43/76.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>112</sup> 'Zimbawe [sic.] nó an Róidéis?', Comhar, Vol. 24, No. 11 (Samhain [Nov.] 1965), p. 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>113</sup> The following analysis is based on an examination of the responses to the questionnaire and their collated totals by IAAM contained in NLI IAAM Papers Roll 8, Part 26.7.1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>114</sup> Michael O'Leary's response to IAAM questionnaire, ibid.

differences on questions such as sanctions, but stated that 'all the Irish political parties were opposed to apartheid'.<sup>115</sup> The IAAM itself, defining itself as 'a strictly non-party political organisation', promoted named candidates from all parties associated with the movement.<sup>116</sup> But the results also indicated the movement's limitations. The number of responses from outgoing TDs (thirteen) and Fianna Fáil candidates (eight) was low. Aiken regarded the questionnaire as having little importance,<sup>117</sup> and this undermined Fianna Fáil Senator (and IAAM supporter) Eoin Ryan's assertion that his party's candidates had not replied since they 'were aware that the views of the party had been consistently expressed at the United Nations, and were well-known'.<sup>118</sup> The movement itself knew that there were 'very few votes to be won by a public statement of issues touching upon race'.<sup>119</sup>

It could at least count itself part of the way towards achieving its goal of influencing official policy. The campaign against the 1968 Lions tour taught it that, while white South Africans' exclusion from international competition in other sports was 'ultimately expendable', rugby was central to South African, particularly Afrikaner, identity, and by extension that of the Rhodesian minority.<sup>120</sup> With the IAAM increasing its influence in Ireland, events in Britain focussed public interest on the apartheid issue. The inclusion of 'coloured' South African-born cricketer Basil D'Oliveira in the England squad and the subsequent cancellation of England's tour of South Africa in 1968 inspired a group of anti-apartheid activists ('Stop the Seventy Tour') to protest against a proposed return tour. What began as a trial run for the cricket tour quickly focussed on the South African (Springbok) 25-match rugby tour of Britain and Ireland scheduled to begin in October 1969. The direct nature of the protests revealed a great deal about student confidence across Europe and the United States in the late 1960s. Student demonstrations against a Davis Cup tennis match between Sweden and Rhodesia at Båstad in May 1968 have been viewed as 'the first major

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>115</sup> 'Candidates are against apartheid', *The Irish Times*, 12 June 1969.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>116</sup> 'General Election', *Amandla*, Vol. 4, No. 5 (May 1969).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>117</sup> Aiken to O'Connor, 6 June 1969, NAI DFA 96/3/93.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>118</sup> 'Candidates are against apartheid', *The Irish Times*, 12 June 1969.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>119</sup> Kader Asmal to ed., The Irish Times, 20 June 1969.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>120</sup> David R. Black and John Nauright, *Rugby and the South African nation: sport, cultures, politics and power in the old and new South Africas* (Manchester, 1998), p. 69.

manifestation in Sweden of the 1968 worldwide student revolt<sup>121</sup> and the protests against apartheid in Dublin were symptomatic of the radicalisation of protest on the island of Ireland. In July 1969 the IAAM staged a protest against a cricket match between Ireland and an all-white South African team selected by South African businessman Wilfred Isaacs. Dominated by a Co-ordinating Committee Against Racialism (CARA) formed specially for the tour and made up of 'members of various left-wing groups',<sup>122</sup> the protest quickly became more radical than the IAAM envisaged. While the movement picketed the entrances to the Leinster Cricket Ground in Rathmines, members of CARA threw smoke bombs on to the field of play, and three of its members sat on the crease and had to be removed by Gardaí. The angry scenes were repeated in Britain, where the radical tactics of Stop the Seventy Tour's organisers almost led the British AAM not to participate in its campaign. The protests themselves were sporadically successful. Two matches were cancelled - in Oxford due to the destruction caused by protesters who sprayed 'Oxford Rejects Apartheid' in weedkiller on the pitch; and in Belfast, scheduled for 29 November, due to the threat the match posed 'to the preservation of peace and the maintenance of order'  $^{123}$  – and on 20 December, around 5,000 people turned up at the demonstration at the international against England at Twickenham.

Their efforts could not, as the head of Stop the Seventy Tour Peter Hain noted, compete with the reaction that the South Africans received in Ireland in January 1970.<sup>124</sup> The latter campaign benefited greatly from the publicity afforded to the Springboks' tour of Britain and the protests surrounding it. By the time the tour arrived in Ireland, the IAAM and the Irish public were ready with their response. The movement began its campaign early. On 8 January 1969, Noel Harris wrote to the secretary of the Irish Rugby Football Union (IRFU) to make 'a final appeal ... to reconsider your invitation' to the Springboks.<sup>125</sup> The IRFU's response was unsurprising: within its jurisdiction it permitted 'the playing of matches by its members against any team, regardless of race, nationality or political affiliations, which conforms

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>121</sup> Sellström, Sweden and southern Africa: Vol. I, p. 348.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>122</sup> 'Protesters on cricket pitch', Irish Press, 21 July 1969.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>123</sup> Peter Hain, Don't play with apartheid: the background to the Stop the Seventy Tour campaign (London, 1971), p. 138.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>124</sup> Ibid., p. 144.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>125</sup> Harris to sec. IRFU, 8 Jan. 1969, NLI IAAM Papers, Roll 5, Part 19.4.1.1.

to the accepted principles and disciplines of amateur rugby football'.<sup>126</sup> The IAAM's letters to all Irish rugby clubs, leaflets at club matches, pickets, and public meetings in opposition to the tour did little to change the IRFU's attitudes. The latter 'emphatically denied that by playing against the South African team Irish rugby players would support racial discrimination in sport'.<sup>127</sup> Playing the match was not an endorsement of racism, it claimed, and as a body it existed 'solely to foster, control and safeguard the game of amateur rugby in Ireland' and would not 'engage or take sides in any political controversy or agitation'.<sup>128</sup>

The success of the IAAM's campaign therefore lay not in its impact on the IRFU but in the broad support it enlisted among the Irish public. In eliciting trade union support, it built on what Michael Mullen called 'one of the avowed principles for which the trade union movement stands, i.e. the brotherhood of man'.<sup>129</sup> The trade unions at times drew criticism, particularly their suggestion of a media boycott, but the organisation they offered was central to the success of the protests. It provided the IAAM with the support of a sector of the population sorely missing in the movement's previous campaigns. It was not its sole success; the varied backgrounds of the 131 signatories to an IAAM declaration condemning the tour in December 1969 indicated the support it enjoyed among 'Irish men and women from all walks of life'.<sup>130</sup> Organisations as diverse as Bray Literary and Debating Society and Sinn Féin came out in opposition to the tour, and three rugby clubs – Greystones, Palmerston, and Trinity College – refused to allow their grounds to be used for training purposes.

The breadth of this support did not go unnoticed by the Irish government. In October 1969 Noel Dorr, an official at the Irish Mission to the United Nations, commented that 'recent developments in Dublin on the question of our attitude to Apartheid' meant that the question was likely to be 'a particularly sensitive one for us this year'.<sup>131</sup> The IAAM attempted to capitalise on this discomfort. In October 1969 it suggested to the Taoiseach, Jack Lynch, that 'a restatement of your attitude to apartheid in sport would be of great significance and would be a concrete manifestation of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>126</sup> Towers to Harris, 31 March 1969, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>127</sup> FitzGerald to Harris, 7 Oct. 1969, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>128</sup> 'Game does not back racial laws – I.R.F.U.', Irish Independent, 2 Dec. 1969.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>129</sup> 'Trade unions', Amandla, Vol. 4, No. 8 (Nov. 1969).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>130</sup> 'Springboks protest plans outlined', *The Irish Times*, 11 Dec. 1969.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>131</sup> Dorr to Ó Tuathail, 28 Oct. 1969, NAI DFA 2001/43/77.

Ireland's policy as expressed at the United Nations'.<sup>132</sup> A further letter called on the Taoiseach to 'prohibit the all-white South African rugby team from entering Ireland'.<sup>133</sup> To the IAAM's disappointment, Lynch stood firm on the government's policy on sporting contacts. This corresponded closely with policy on the exclusion of South Africa from the United Nations, as Lynch told the organisation: 'I am not satisfied that the refusal of all contacts, including sporting contacts, with citizens of a country whose Government practises discrimination is necessarily the best way to end it.<sup>134</sup> Nor could the government 'go so far as to interfere with sporting or similar competitions on political grounds'.<sup>135</sup> Its confidence could not disguise the success of the IAAM's pressure. President de Valera declined an invitation to attend the match, though he 'gave no explanation but just said he was unable to attend'.<sup>136</sup> The Taoiseach and all Cabinet Ministers also declined to attend, and the DEA admitted privately that it 'would not be distressed if the visit were cancelled'.<sup>137</sup> In response to a request from the Department of Defence, it recommended that the Number 1 Army Band, which traditionally played at internationals, 'should not be made available on this occasion'.138

In January 1970, after months of campaigning to stop the tour, the IAAM changed its emphasis 'to make the opposition to the tour so clear that no future invitation will be issued to a racialist South African team'.<sup>139</sup> In fact, it benefited more from the exposure afforded to its protests than if the tour had been cancelled. Terence McCaughey recalled the tour's impact among middle-class Protestants: 'Some of them were very very angry and against it, but at least they were angry, instead of just ignoring us.'<sup>140</sup> Austin Flannery emphasised that 'the important thing was that there was a large crowd of Irish people [who] came together to protest about apartheid'.<sup>141</sup> The Springboks' visit became a central news story for the duration of their stay. On their arrival at Dublin airport on 7 January, the Springboks were met by sixty

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>132</sup> Harris to Lynch, 30 Oct. 1969, NLI IAAM Papers Roll 7, Part 25.1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>133</sup> Harris to Lynch, 4 Nov. 1969, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>134</sup> Lynch to Harris, 10 Nov. 1969, ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>136</sup> 'President will not go to match', Irish Independent, 4 Dec. 1969.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>137</sup> Hand-written note by Brendan Gallagher, 8 Dec. 1969, NAI DFA 96/3/96.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>138</sup> Ó Tuathail to sec. Dept. of Defence, 25 Nov. 1969, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>139</sup> 'No racialism in rugby', Amandla, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Jan. 1970), NLI IAAM Papers Roll 10, Part 23.1.2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>140</sup> Interview with Rev Dr Terence McCaughey, Dublin, 30 Aug. 2005.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>141</sup> Interview with Fr Austin Flannery, Dublin, 26 July 2005.

protesters, and some sympathetic rugby followers. The Starlight Hotel in Bray, where they stayed for the duration of their visit to Dublin, took on 'the appearance of a place under siege. Gardaí protected every point, inside and out; the front doors were barred; the rear entrances were barricaded with vans and the fences were topped with barbed wire.<sup>142</sup> An attempt was made to throw a home-made bomb at the hotel, and several fake bomb warnings were phoned to its management. On 9 January, the day before the match, there were clashes between the Gardaí and protesters outside Leinster House after Fine Gael TD Dr Hugh Byrne, branded 'Fine Gael's Enoch Powell' by protesters, invited the Springboks on a tour of the premises.

The following day an estimated 8,000 protesters marched from Parnell Square to Lansdowne Road, where the international took place. The radical politics of the period went hand in hand with the IAAM's broad support base. The march was led by the ITGWU band, whose members walked alongside the Workers' Union of Ireland, the Dublin Trades Council, the ATGWU, Bray Trades Council, Limerick Trades Council, and other trade union activists. Protesters from Connolly Youth and the Young Socialists with 'short anoraks, long hair' lined up alongside the trade unionists with their 'short hair, long coats'.<sup>143</sup> Banners from all Irish political parties were visible, as well as those of Coiste Cearta Sibhialta na Gaeltachta, People's Democracy, Students for Democratic Action, and other social movements. The march was headed by Patrick Lynch (Professor of Economics in UCD and chairman of the IAAM), Bernadette Devlin, Conor Cruise O'Brien, and Alec Foster (a former Irish international). At the ground itself, Garret FitzGerald, Noel Browne and several members of the IAAM picketed the supporters who attended the match.

The march passed off with only a few minor incidents. Gardaí had to step in to halt the exchanges of stones, fruit and eggs that flew between rugby supporters and marchers at the ground. Inside, Lansdowne Road 'resembled an armed camp'.<sup>144</sup> The small crowd of 19,000 watched from behind a cordon of barbed wire and a five-foot barrier of straw. That sense of siege and conflict extended to the protesters themselves. The 'whiff of Northern air' the march brought to Dublin was not confined to the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>142</sup> Jim Eagles, 'Barbed wire and pickets', *Irish Press*, 8 Jan. 1970.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>143</sup> Anne Harris, 'The march to Lansdowne ... as one girl saw it', Irish Press, 12 Jan. 1970.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>144</sup> 'Clashes as protest treks for big game', *Evening Herald*, 10 Jan. 1970.

prominence of Bernadette Devlin and People's Democracy.<sup>145</sup> On the evening of the match, there were further scuffles between Gardaí and members of People's Democracy, Young Socialists, and the Connolly Youth Movement outside the Royal Hibernian Hotel, where the IRFU treated the Springboks to dinner. Some of the protesters followed the Springboks to Limerick for their match against Munster on 14 January. There they met with more fierce opposition from locals who supported the Springboks and rejected perceived interference from Dublin. The limits to the IAAM's support were exposed in a traditional rugby heartland. Local Labour Party TD Steve Coughlan clashed with fellow Labour Party member Barry Desmond,<sup>146</sup> and the protesters were branded 'left-wing political perverts' by locals.<sup>147</sup> The local press backed the Springboks, and the *Limerick Leader* worried at the spread of Maoism in the city.

#### CONCLUSION

In spite of the presence of only 400 protesters, and the counter-protests, the IAAM was happy with its success in Limerick, describing it as a 'good demonstration'.<sup>148</sup> The huge public and media interest in the events had the added bonus of involving an ever-widening number of people in the movement. The vocal support base and the cross-section of interest it involved gave an added legitimacy to the movement's aims and its negotiating power with the Irish government. Where once it might have been dismissed as a movement dominated by communists and 'Trinity pinks', the IAAM could now validly claim to speak for a large proportion of the Irish population. One IRFU official later admitted that had the tour began in Ireland, the matches would almost certainly have been cancelled.<sup>149</sup> The Springbok protests, and its precursor against the South African cricket tour, spoke volumes about Ireland in 1970. The *Irish Press* felt the march 'marked the coming of age of the politics of the street'; it was symptomatic of the rejection of 'everything symbolising the State' among the youth in Western

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>145</sup> 'The Outdoor Life', *The Irish Times*, 12 Jan. 1970.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>146</sup> For Desmond's side of the story, see Barry Desmond, *Finally and in conclusion: a political memoir* (Dublin, 2000), pp. 158-9.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>147</sup> 'Scuffles as pro-'Boks group march', Irish Press, 14 Jan. 1970

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>148</sup> IAAM, Annual Report 1969-70 (Dublin, 1970), no page numbers.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>149</sup> Interview with McCaughey (30 Aug. 2005).

democratic society.<sup>150</sup> It was no longer enough to view Ireland and its societal change in isolated terms; the influence of international media images and the tactics of international protest movements changed the environment of debate and interaction between the Irish public and its government. The Irish campaign against the Springbok tour was inextricably linked to wider protests, first in the British Isles, and secondly in the global campaign against apartheid. However bemused the Springbok team and its staff may have been at the reaction they received, it brought home to the South Africans the weight of public opinion against apartheid, at least in sport, and led indirectly to the introduction of the pseudo-integration laws in sport in 1971 and 1976.

The IAAM's success in persuading the Irish government to boycott the match and the latter's nervousness surrounding the tour indicated a radically different policymaking environment to that which had prevailed earlier in the 1960s. Then foreign policy had been the sole preserve of Aiken and the officials in the DEA, its influence at the United Nations General Assembly of paramount importance to the Irish government and its assertion of an independent role in international affairs. The situation looked a lot different in 1970. Aiken had been replaced as Minister in July 1969 by Patrick Hillery, a younger man more willing to embrace dialogue. The lessons of the Nigerian civil war (see chapters five and six) and the IAAM's campaigns taught Irish officials that they could no longer exclude public opinion in the formulation of foreign policy. The stronger language and voting pattern adopted at the United Nations testified to an Irish delegation struggling to come to terms with this increased influence from below and the pressures from the continued redefinition of the role of moderate states like Ireland in the international system.

The extent of that change was more than evident to officials in the DEA. In his May 1970 response to a request from Hillery to investigate future roles for Ireland at the United Nations, Seán Ronan was pessimistic. He commented that 'it was very difficult any more to think of initiatives, even in the disarmament field where we still had a part to play and that the only really new initiatives in the UN in the last couple of years had been the Swedish one on the Environment Conference and the Dutch one last year on hijacking.<sup>151</sup> Later that year his colleague Cremin wrote an assessment of

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>150</sup> 'Street Politics', *Irish Press*, 12 Jan. 1970.
 <sup>151</sup> Ronan to Cremin, 21 May 1970, NAI DFA 417/220.

Ireland's standing at the United Nations since it joined in 1955 that carried an equal degree of realism and pessimism for the state's future role. The Irish public, Cremin asserted, 'tended to overestimate, or wrongly assess, our standing in the Organisation at given times'.<sup>152</sup> In the General Assembly of 1970, 'the need for intermediaries of the kind who proved useful in the late '50s [was] no longer so great.<sup>153</sup> The Afro-Asian reaction to the 'Irish Formula' in the debate on South West Africa in 1967 was a perfect example of this change; Aiken's attempt to propose a solution based on his and the other European moderates' interpretation of the proper use of the United Nations' institutions met with Afro-Asian intransigence. The power of the latter made Ireland's realistic appraisal of the situation, based on the need to secure Security Council support for an end to South Africa's mandate, unworkable, even as it adopted 'a stronger line than the Africans themselves'.<sup>154</sup>

While Cremin and Ronan's appraisal of Ireland's role in international politics carried a great degree of accuracy, it was perhaps too narrow an appraisal of the potential Irish contribution to international relations. It was not enough to excuse the Irish government's inaction simply on the changed nature of the United Nations. The actions of the Nordic governments, including Finland who, in spite of its relatively conservative approach to international affairs, adopted a more active approach to the southern African question from the end of the 1960s, showed that considerable scope existed to pursue a constructive approach outside the narrow confines of the General Assembly. Whether through the other institutions of the United Nations, such as the UNETPSA and UNTFSA or through their engagement in direct dialogue with the national liberation movements, the Nordic states (and the Netherlands, which adopted a similar line) took on an increasingly important role in promoting the end of minority rule in southern Africa by adopting a flexible approach to their principles of foreign affairs. In the early 1970s, the IAAM put increasing pressure on the Irish government to do the same. How it reacted testified to its adaptation to its changing world role.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>152</sup> Cremin to Ronan, 10 Sept. 1970, ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>154</sup> 'Aiken asks UN to act in S-W Africa', *The Irish Times*, 12 Dec. 1967.



Map 2: Nigeria and the secessionist region of Biafra, with locations referred to in the text

# Biafra: Ireland, Nigeria and the Politics of Civil War

Opposition in principle to apartheid and racial segregation in southern Africa and support for the decolonisation process earlier in the decade were almost entirely uncontroversial. The principles publicly espoused by all parties - the right of subject peoples to self-determination and political freedom - built on historic references to Ireland's own past. In the conduct of its foreign policy, the Irish government continued to rely on those principles to inform and direct its approach. The rise of the Afro-Asian group at the United Nations tempered its influence and caused disagreement about the best means for attaining those goals, but it did not diminish its commitment to them. The subject of those debates however changed. Outside southern Africa, the African states' emphasis shifted to issues of development and economic advancement. Within the continent a new set of norms emerged governing the relationships between the newly-independent states, institutionalised in the emergence of the OAU, whose explicit recognition of the importance of sovereignty and non-interference came to dominate inter-African relationships. Built on colonial boundaries, the model had implications not only for inter-state relations in Africa but on global attitudes to the concept of self-determination. The Congo crisis in 1960 highlighted the complexity of post-independence politics on the continent. The residual presence of Belgian colonial forces, however, distinguished that crisis from superficially similar cases that followed. The attempted secession of the Eastern Region of Nigeria - renamed Biafra by the rebels – between 1967 and 1970 provided a case of an established African state beset by what were, for the most part, internal tensions, and Biafra's search for recognition forced the international community to re-define its view of Africa. As Charles Nixon noted, the case 'lay outside the presumptions of earlier UN declarations and actions which applied the concept of self-determination to the process of decolonisation<sup>1</sup> and introduced a different set of issues concerning the right of nationalities to autonomy after the creation of sovereign independent states.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Charles R. Nixon, 'Self-determination: the Nigeria/Biafra case', *World Politics*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (July 1972), p. 493.

It posed a challenge to the Irish government's treatment of the concept of selfdetermination and its attitudes to international relations, particularly the pursuit of international stability, its relationship with the African states and the West, and its attitudes to outside intervention. This was not an ordinary case of formulating an Irish response to a remote conflict, however. The high levels of Irish missionary activity in Nigeria and particularly in what became Biafra altered the factors governing the Irish government's policy. It forced policy-makers to prioritise the safety of Irish missionaries not only in the Biafran territory but across Nigeria. The attempt to minimise public discourse, or any activity that might associate Ireland with the secessionist cause, became central to those efforts and carried additional discomfort for a government unused to critical engagement on foreign policy issues. The interplay of these various strands to its approach and the policies it produced form the focus of this chapter. The first part analyses the political response to the conflict by examining the missionaries' position, the government's attempts to alleviate the pressure on them, and its interaction with the Irish media. The chapter then examines the broader ramifications of the government's policy by placing it in the context of its foreign policy as a whole, before concluding with an examination of its response to the end of the conflict, the plight of the missionaries that remained in Biafra, its efforts to secure their safety, and its attempt to 'normalise' relations with the Nigerian government in the years that followed.

## NIGERIA IN CONTEXT

At its independence in 1960, Nigeria embodied many of the hopes and expectations for a successful independent Africa. This multi-ethnic state, with one-quarter of Africa's population, appeared set for a role as one of the continent's leading states. Its federal political system balanced power between the country's three dominant ethnic groups: the largely Christian Yoruba (West) and Igbo (East), and the Muslim Hausa/Fulani in the North. The absence of a unifying national force, however, placed considerable pressure on co-operation at the centre. Parties divided firmly along ethnic and regional lines. Fears of dominance and ambitions for power abounded. The ambitious, mobile and well-educated Igbo became particular targets. In 1966 these tensions developed into open and bloody rivalry. In January Major-General John Aguiyi-Ironsi assumed control of the country after he defeated a three-day Igbo-led coup that had seen the murder of the Federal Prime Minister and the premiers of the Western and Northern regions. Ironsi, an Igbo, concerned himself with the restoration of 'Nigeria's failing health'.<sup>2</sup> His ideas were simple – to introduce increased centralisation in order to strengthen the unity of Nigeria as a whole – but to the Hausa and Yoruba they amounted to an attack on their autonomy.

In May riots broke out in the Northern Region, beginning in Kano, in which several hundred Igbos were killed and thousands more fled fearing for their safety. The violence paved the way for a third coup in the space of seven months. On 28 July 1966 a group of Northern subalterns shot their garrison commander and two other senior Igbo officers dead at Abeokuta. Three days later, the coup's leaders installed the army Chief of Staff, Major-General Yakubu Gowon, a Christian Tiv from the middle belt, as head of the Nigerian Federal Military Government. Only the Eastern Region, led by the Ironsi-appointed Lieutenant-General Odumegwu Ojukwu, succeeded in defeating the Northerners' coup. As Gowon attempted to create a new constitution for Nigeria, the movement of Easterners from the North created a country divided between the East and the rest. The particularly brutal and indiscriminate pogroms against Igbos remaining in the North in September and October 1966 convinced those remaining to abandon all they possessed and return to the East. As both sides began to arm, a series of negotiations failed to bring them closer to their stated goals. Ojukwu stood firm on his desire for further Eastern autonomy in a confederal structure. On 27 May 1967, under pressure from Ojukwu, the Eastern Consultative Assembly passed a resolution mandating the former to create the Republic of Biafra. Gowon, unwilling to countenance change (or the loss of valuable Eastern oil deposits) responded by redrawing the Nigerian administrative map and replacing the old four-state system with a series of twelve smaller states.

It was too late. On 30 May Ojukwu announced to the world that the Eastern Region was to unilaterally secede from Nigeria and become the independent republic of Biafra. Within five weeks the two sides were at war. It was a conflict the Biafrans had little hope of winning. After some initial success, including the capture of the Mid-Western state in August 1967, Biafra found itself gradually worn down by the Federal

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> John de St Jorre, *The Nigerian civil war* (London, 1972), p. 47.

army's military superiority. The latter recaptured the Mid-Western state in October 1967 and in May 1968 the Biafrans lost their only access to the sea at Port Harcourt. In spite of its strong international campaign, headed by the Swiss PR firm Markpress (later employed by the Irish government in its publicity campaign on Northern Ireland in the early 1970s), the Biafran government succeeded in persuading only four states – Tanzania, Ivory Coast, Zambia, and Gabon - to give diplomatic recognition, while France offered conditional support in the hope of securing oil interests and destabilising British influence in West Africa. The OAU stood firm in supporting the 'territorial integrity' of Nigeria, backed by the majority of the international community, although many of them, notably Britain and the Soviet Union on the Federal side, and China, Portugal, France and South Africa on the Biafran side, were liberal in their definition of non-intervention. By the time peace talks opened in Addis Ababa in August 1968, the war was over its most active phase and the world's attention turned to a new crisis: the starving millions of Biafran men, women and children dving in increasing numbers from disease and a lack of food and medical supplies. By September 1968 Biafra had been reduced to an area half the size of Ireland in which a population of 8 million people squeezed. With the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Joint Church Aid (JCA), and others flying aid into Biafra, the humanitarian situation reached crisis levels, with between 3,000 and 10,000 Biafrans dying each day.<sup>3</sup> Hunger, a lack of supplies, and ever-increasing Federal gains wore down Biafran resolve. On 11 January 1970, after two-and-a-half years of struggle, Ojukwu fled and Biafra collapsed.

#### **PROTECTING IRISH CITIZENS**

The location of the Irish state's only Embassy on the continent, Nigeria was the 'showpiece of Ireland's "religious empire".<sup>4</sup> No other country in the world had seen so much Irish missionary activity. Irish missionaries dominated the Nigerian Catholic hierarchy and at the outbreak of the civil war an estimated 1,449 Irish Catholic missionaries, drawn largely from the Holy Ghost Fathers, the Society of African Missions (SMA), St Patrick's, Kiltegan Fathers, Holy Rosary Sisters, and Medical Missionaries of Mary (MMM), worked there, almost half of them in the Eastern

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 208.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Staunton, 'The case of Biafra', p. 513.

Region.<sup>5</sup> The Irish missionaries' shared experience of British rule strengthened a natural identification with their local parishioners. That affection was particularly strong with the predominantly Catholic Igbo ethnic group whose people held a strong interest in education, in which the missionary influence was prominent.

In the worsening tensions in Nigerian society this close relationship created potential dangers, of which the Irish Embassy was increasingly aware. In 1965 three academics on secondment from Trinity College Dublin to the University of Lagos found themselves at the centre of a political controversy over the appointment of a Yoruba vice-chancellor of the university in place of the Igbo incumbent. One of them, Dr T.B.H. McMurry, found himself in 'a very exposed position' as a member of the Provisional Council of the University, though all three escaped without harm.<sup>6</sup> The events of 1966 compounded the Irish officials' concern. The pogroms in the North that autumn led the Irish Ambassador Kevin Rush to warn that the missionaries' close identification with their Igbo parishioners might make them targets for ethnic violence. The situation at that stage, Rush felt, was so difficult that although he could not advise any Irish citizen to leave 'until at least the Americans or British start to do so', he would 'not try to dissuade' any Irish citizens from leaving; 'The more the better, in fact.<sup>7</sup> In the coming months he and first secretary Eamon Ó Tuathail worked in close consultation with British officials and Catholic authorities to prepare the missionaries for the possible threat of civil war.

On 30 May 1967 Ó Tuathail was in the East finalising the details of a coordinated evacuation scheme when he woke in Enugu, the region's capital, to hear Ojukwu's dawn broadcast announcing the East's secession and the creation of Biafra. His immediate concern was to secure the welfare of Irish citizens in the area. He called on all his contacts: missionary, business, and other local contacts. Careful 'not to identify myself too closely with the British or for that matter with the Americans when dealing with the authorities',<sup>8</sup> he nonetheless relied heavily on both for the success of his activities. Their local consular officials provided information about possible Federal

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> 'Missionary Service Centre, Irish Missionary Personnel in Developing Countries: Statistical Analysis March 1968', supplement to *Catholic Missions*, Vol. 133, No. 2 (April 1968).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Note by Ó Tuathail, 'Crisis in Lagos University', 7 April 1965, NAI DFA Lagos Embassy (hereafter Lagos) A3/8

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Rush to McCann, 3 Aug. 1966, NAI DFA 2000/14/16.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Ó Tuathail to Gallagher, 14 Oct. 1967, NAI DFA 2000/14/19.

attacks which allowed Ó Tuathail to warn missionaries in outlying areas of the impending dangers. The first evacuation of Irish citizens on 6-10 June 1967 was part of an operation organised by the US Consulate and the second (21 July) on an Italian ship organised by British and US officials. After the fall of the Mid-Western Region to Biafran forces on 9 August, Ó Tuathail could no longer send messages by mail to Rush in Lagos and became completely reliant on British radio communication channels, at least until the radio at the British High Commission was removed by the Biafran authorities.

The situation remained precarious. In early August some 620 Irish nationals remained in Biafra. In Lagos and Dublin a palpable tension arose at the worsening situation and the difficulty in securing the missionaries' safety from their remote locations. The slow access to information made things more difficult. In September 1967 the DEA chastised Rush for the lack of reporting on Ó Tuathail's position vis-àvis the Biafran authorities; 'we are handicapped by reason of the fact that we have no recommendation from you in the matter'.<sup>9</sup> In fact, there was little Rush could do from Lagos than to keep his 'fingers crossed'.<sup>10</sup> Rumours abounded on the Federal side that the missionaries were 'mercenaries and/or collaborators and will be treated as such'.<sup>11</sup> The stories that emerged from Biafra were equally disturbing. As the Federal Army advanced, one MMM sister remembered having 'to flee with our patients to a school in the middle of the bush. We were there for ten very fearful days.<sup>12</sup> On 13 July 1967, five MMM nuns were held at gunpoint by Federal soldiers at Ndubia hospital and alleged to be 'concealing [a] spy' by a 'malicious informer formerly employed there'.<sup>13</sup> At Ogoja, the Kiltegan Bishop Thomas McGetterick was taken at gunpoint by Federal soldiers. The same month four Irish Holy Ghost missionaries who remained at their post at Nsukka were met with a heavy handed response from the Federal Army. Two priests 'were taken for Biafran mercenaries [and] were badly beaten up'.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Gallagher to Rush, 7 Sept. 1967, NAI DFA 2001/43/128.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> McEntee to Moberly, 3 Aug. 1967, NAUK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (hereafter FCO) 38/275.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Copy of telegraph, Rush to Ó Tuathail, 28 July 1967, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Sister Joan Cosgrove, quoted in Irene Christina Lynch (ed.), *Beyond faith and adventure: Irish missionaries in Nigeria tell their extraordinary story* (n.p., 2006), p. 263.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Copy of telegraph, Rush to Ó Tuathail, 19 July 1967, NAUK FCO 38/275.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> O'Sullivan to Conway, 18 Feb. 1968, Holy Ghost Provincialite Archives (hereafter HGPA), Biafra Papers (hereafter BP), Box 12: unmarked folder.

In Enugu conditions continued to deteriorate for Ó Tuathail. In August he came under increasing pressure from the Biafran authorities to deal with its new Ministry for Foreign Affairs, a move which would imply some form of recognition for the rebel government. The DEA, anxious to avoid that eventuality, hoped that he could continue operating as he was 'for as long as possible ducking the question of recognition and of opening an office in Enugu'.<sup>15</sup> In the event, on 2 October Ó Tuathail was given no choice but to flee as Federal forces shelled the city. Anxious that they should not be caught in the line of fire, he left advice that 'there should be an immediate thinning out of the numbers of Catholic Fathers'.<sup>16</sup> From his new base at the Presidential Hotel in Port Harcourt, Ó Tuathail continued to press on the missionary authorities the need for all 'non-essential' missionary personnel to be sent on leave from Biafra. The fall of Calabar to Federal forces on 18 October meant that he continued his work without any consultation with Rush after communications channels were severed. Just over two weeks later, on 2 November, Ó Tuathail persuaded the Biafran authorities to put a plane at his disposal and, with 36 Irish citizens and a number of other expatriates on board, he flew to Luanda, Angola. He left only 267 Irish nationals in Biafra, of whom all bar two wives of Biafrans and an Irish engineer were attached to missionary societies.

In Dublin the Irish government's approach to the war was heavily influenced by the need to safeguard the missionaries' interests. It steadfastly refused to recognise the breakaway state, asserting that to do so would closely identify Ireland with the secessionists, further endanger the missionaries in the line of the Federal advance, and attach a stigma to those who operated in the rest of Nigeria. The delicacy of the situation was obvious. Aiken felt that the Irish government was 'caught very badly with Missionaries both in the east and all over the Federation'.<sup>17</sup> He was determined 'that they would not be associated with a break-away province in Africa as Irish Missionaries all over Africa would have to pay the price for that'.<sup>18</sup> To lessen the impact he endeavoured to avoid 'public debate of any kind, and even public comment of any description, because erroneous or biased reports of them are so likely to be

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Collins to Middleton, 4 Sept. 1967, NAUK FCO 38/249.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Ó Tuathail, 'Report on Nigerian Crisis – Protection of Irish Nationals in Eastern Nigeria ("Biafra") – 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1967', 23 Dec. 1967, NAI DFA 2001/43/129.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Note by Ronan dated 29 March 1968 of a meeting between Aiken and Bishop James Moynagh, 26 March 1968, NAI DFA 2000/14/20.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

circulated in Nigeria greatly to the detriment of our citizens on either or both sides of the front, especially isolated missionaries'.<sup>19</sup> The missionary authorities were in broad agreement. On 19 July 1967 the Missionary Service Centre warned all orders that missionaries evacuated from the war zone

will have been under strain for many weeks past. They will be overwrought, nervy, talkative – and feeling guilty at leaving the country. They will be inclined to talk too much and too loudly. People who meet them should endeavour to get them out of the public eye (airports, quays, railway stations) <u>quickly</u>, and to prevent them, as far as possible, from talking about their experiences... You must not forget that there will be large numbers of our own people who have to go on living in Biafra. Don't let it be made more difficult for them – it's difficult enough already.<sup>20</sup>

The SMA, whose missionaries were based solely in the North and West of Nigeria, led the charge. The order's authorities enjoyed a close relationship with the Irish government. In Lagos Irish officials consulted closely with Archbishop McCarthy of Kaduna and Fr John McGuinness, an SMA priest in the Catholic Secretariat. In Dublin the DEA was in regular contact with Fr Larry Carr, the SMA Provincial. It established similarly close relationships with the Holy Ghost and Kiltegan Fathers, with whom DEA officials remained in close contact. Criticised by the Kitegan Fathers for their at times 'overpanicy [sic] attitude',<sup>21</sup> the SMA authorities felt that any action that associated Irish missionaries with the rebel government would bring catastrophe to those in the rest of Nigeria. Its local authorities, particularly Archbishop McCarthy and Bishop Finn of Ibadan, were highly critical of the activities of the orders, notably the statements of the Holy Ghost members of the Catholic Secretariat in Lagos.<sup>22</sup> The Kiltegan and Holy Ghost authorities in Dublin shared their fears. The Kiltegan Superior Father Peter O'Reilly told DEA officials that 'whatever their private sympathies might be he thought it was important not publicly to take the side of Biafra against the Federal Government and he thought it was a pity that some of the missionaries had done so. The interests of the Church should not be identified with those of the secessionist

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> McCann to Ó Súilleabháin (DT), 11 Dec. 1967, NAI DFA 2001/43/125.

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> 'Twelfth News Bulletin, 24 July 1967', HGPA BP Box 1: Missionary Service Centre Dublin 1967-68.
 <sup>21</sup> Ó Tuathail, quoting the Kiltegan Superior, Fr Peter O'Reilly; Ó Tuathail to Ronan, 18 Sept. 1968, NAI DFA 2000/14/23.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Report by Joseph Small 'On his tour of the West, Mid-West and Kwarra States in February/March 1969', 18 March 1969, NAI DFA 2000/14/18.

regime.<sup>23</sup> Fr W.J. Higgins, the Holy Ghost Second Assistant in Rome, agreed; 'The Biafran Fathers are asked to remember that Holy Ghost Fathers also work in the northern region ... and nothing must be said to make <u>their</u> lot more difficult or draw the anger of Gen Gowon on their heads. The work of the Church in those regions is as important as the work of the Church in Biafra.<sup>24</sup>

It was more difficult to impose these decisions on the ground. The missionaries' close identification with their parishioners naturally led them to sympathise with their cause. John Horgan wrote from Biafra in March 1968 that 'when you hear an Irish missionary use the word "we", he doesn't mean Irish, he means Biafran'.<sup>25</sup> The Holy Ghost missionaries came in for particular criticism. The Nigerian mission of the order was a district in its own right and Biafran-based missionaries 'were not inclined to regard the Irish Provincial as having any immediate authority over them'.<sup>26</sup> They were based at the heart of the Biafran and Igbo area, fostering an even closer identity with that people. The open vocal support offered by the missionaries made them conspicuous, and was added to by their actions in the face of the Federal Army's advance. Early in the war the local superior, Fr Donal O'Sullivan, decided that his charges should 'abandon their missions and retreat south before the advancing Nigerian battle line'.<sup>27</sup> From 29 July 1967, Holy Ghost missionaries were instructed to 'remain in the Mission only if the people remained, and to leave if the people evacuated'.<sup>28</sup>

O'Sullivan acted on the evidence of the treatment of those priests caught in the line of the Federal advance and the fact that they drew suspicion in equal measure from the Federals (for supporting the Biafran cause) and the Biafrans (for being collaborators). His judgement strongly echoed the assessment of Archbishop McCarthy and British officials in the North who were more than aware of the missionaries' dilemma. If they remained at their posts they risked being branded as 'mercenaries and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Note by Brian Gallagher on his meeting with Fr O'Reilly, 13 Feb. 1968, NAI DFA 2000/14/20.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Higgins to Dinan, 5 Feb. 1968, HGPA BP Box 1: Fr Dinan Papers – C.S.Sp. Official Documents and Letters, 1968.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> John Horgan, 'The Church and the War (I)', *The Irish Times*, 19 March 1968.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Michael Reynolds, 'The Nigerian crisis and its effects on Spiritan Missions', in Congregation of the Holy Spirit Anniversaries Commission, *Spiritan anniversary lectures: commemorating the Mission of the Irish Province of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit since 1859* (Dublin, 2004), p. 72.
<sup>27</sup> O'Sullivan to Conway, 18 Feb. 1968, HGPA BP Box 12: Unmarked folder.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Fr Donal O'Sullivan, 'Biafra War: C.S.Sp. Policy', 23 March 2001, ibid.

spies who will carry information back to the East if given half a chance'.<sup>29</sup> By 'running' with their parishioners they risked being even more closely identified with the Biafran cause.

Operating behind the Biafran lines alongside a besieged people, the Holy Ghost Fathers came to identify more and more with the Biafran cause and to become more vocal in their support for it. Father Matthew Murphy told the *Irish Press* in August 1968 that he would be 'branded a Biafran collaborator for certain' if and when Biafra fell.<sup>30</sup> The majority of missionaries were concerned only with the distribution of relief, and to offer comfort and assistance to their parishioners, but there were a small number who actively blurred the distinction between their everyday parish and humanitarian activities and political action. In February 1968 the Belfast-born Fr Desmond McGlade, who had his hands broken by the Federal army before being deported at the beginning of the war, returned to Biafra where he was greeted warmly by his former parishioners who were 'overjoyed to see him, most of them having thought that he had been killed by the Nigerian soldiers in July last year [1967]'.<sup>31</sup> He worked at co-ordinating the relief effort at Owelli where some of his actions treaded the fine line between political and humanitarian support. On 8 June 1968, as the Federal army advanced on the area, McGlade recorded that

Col Nwatuego [of the Biafran army] visited me and asked for permission to set up the anti-aircraft installation in my compound. The big gun and its team are now just 20 yards from my house, well-concealed by the thick bush. As no aircraft appear to-day there was no chance of using the gun, which with its crew had just come from Port Harcourt and I sincerely hope that it will prove more effective here.<sup>32</sup>

The fierce criticism Fr O'Sullivan received for his policy derived from the contrasting fortunes of the Kiltegan Fathers whose authorities decided early in the war to allow the conflict to 'roll over' their missionaries, with the proviso that 'the decision in particular circumstances was left to the men on the spot'.<sup>33</sup> The order's geographical spread on the periphery of the Biafran territory made it an easier decision in many

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Laird to McEntee, 25 July 1967, NAUK FCO 38/275.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Quoted in Paul Muldowney, 'Danger awaits Biafran priests', Irish Press, 10 Aug. 1968.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> O'Sullivan to Lefebvre, 10 Feb. 1968, HGPA BP Box 12: unmarked folder.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> "Awgu falls into Federal Hands" – Fr Des McGlade's Account (6<sup>th</sup> June to the 14<sup>th</sup> June, 1968)'; this entry is for 8 June 1968, HGPA BP Box 7 – Wartime Accounts.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Kiggins, Maynooth Mission to Africa, p. 242.

ways. Its missions were quickly overrun and, in spite of some rough treatment at the hands of the Federal army, senior officers in general 'treated the missionaries well'.<sup>34</sup> Missionaries were given scope to privately express their opinions – as Bishop James Moynagh of Calabar did in meeting British officials in London in 1967 – but publicly the authorities managed to restrain their charges from overtly vocal support of the Biafran cause. The policy worked to the order's benefit and allowed it to escape relatively unhindered in its humanitarian and parochial work.

At a remove from the remote mission areas after Ó Tuathail's departure, Irish officials found it difficult to keep tabs on and ensure the missionaries' safety. Rumours of a Nigerian government 'black list' only added to the tensions.<sup>35</sup> The difficulty arose in reconciling the Irish government's belief that no anti-Catholic bias existed in the Nigerian government with the continued suspicion at the unpredictability of its military officials. The erratic and at times deliberate bombing and strafing of villages and mission hospitals heightened its concern. Kevin Rush received 'broad hints' from military sources in Lagos 'that these Irish priests need expect no mercy if they are caught. This is, apparently, because of the considerable moral support which they gave given to the Biafran administration, army and people and allegedly the external support they have organised for Biafra.'<sup>36</sup> The general 'depreciation' of the Lagos Embassy's records did not help.<sup>37</sup> The complete record of all Irish citizens in Nigeria that Ó Tuathail put 'a lot of hard work and sweat into' before his departure had disappeared by the spring of 1969 and the Embassy was forced to create a new registry.<sup>38</sup> Officials in Dublin and Lagos worked hard to build their influence with the Nigerian authorities. They met regularly to maintain a visible presence and passed lists of missionaries to the authorities with the request that they respect and ensure their safety.

It was more difficult for the DEA to know if its representations had any effect. Brian Gallagher noted in conversation with Fr O'Reilly in April 1968 that 'while it was possible the Ambassador, or Lagos would not in fact be able to impose their wishes on

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 245.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> Keating to Ó Tuathail, 12 Sept. 1968, NAI DFA 2000/14/23.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Rush to sec. DEA, 5 May 1968, NAI DFA Lagos P13.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Murphy to Ó Tuathail, 21 April 1969, NAI DFA Lagos P13/13/1

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> Hand-written note by Ó Tuathail appended to Ó Tuathail to Murphy, 16 April 1969, ibid.

the military commanders in the occupied areas, it was clearly well worth trying'.<sup>39</sup> The efforts appeared to have some impact. Only one Irish missionary was killed during the war, Mother Cecilia Thackaberry, a Dublin-born nun of the Presentation Convent in Buxton, Derbyshire. On 17 September 1969, she and another Irish nun, Sister Elizabeth Murray, were travelling to a refugee clinic near Owerri in Biafra, when their car was strafed by a Nigerian jet. As the nuns jumped from their car into the bush, Mother Cecilia was shot and the nuns' driver also killed. Patrick Hillery told the Dáil that it was 'not an accidental death',<sup>40</sup> and Rush's successor as Ambassador, Paul Keating, felt that it was 'highly probable that the pilot of the plane was able to identify the missionaries as such'.<sup>41</sup> Keating, however, was pragmatic about the effectiveness of any protest. He argued that the Nigerian authorities would not apologise for the incident and that 'to stress this matter is to introduce an element of grit in the smooth workings of our relations with the Ministry of External Affairs'.<sup>42</sup>

## PUBLIC PRESSURE AND IRISH GOVERNMENT POLICY

It proved equally difficult to implement Aiken's directive that all discussion of the Biafran problem be avoided. The missionaries' vocal support for the Biafran cause and the unprecedented media coverage of the conflict made it difficult, and the Irish government, and Aiken in particular, was not ready to deal with the pressure. Its reaction illustrated not only its concern for the missionaries' safety, but, like the debate surrounding the Springboks' tour in 1970, was symptomatic of what Keatinge described as 'a persistent difference over the government's obligation to justify policy as well as to make it'.<sup>43</sup> Aiken in particular had a long and fractured relationship with the Irish media. As Minister for the Co-ordination of Defensive Measures during the Second World War he jealously guarded Irish neutrality by implementing a strict series of censorship measures. Those measures were based not only on limiting the spread of information that might be useful to either set of belligerents, but aimed to ensure that 'nothing should be published which seriously questioned neutrality; and even material

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Note by Gallagher on his meeting with Fr O'Reilly, 19 April 1968, NAI DFA 2000/14/20.

<sup>40</sup> Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 242, Col. 39 (4 Nov. 1969).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Keating to sec. DEA, 16 Dec. 1969, NAI DFA 2001/43/146.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> Keatinge, *Formulation*, p. 183.

on purely domestic economic and social issues should be subject to scrutiny lest, intentionally or not, it might undermine the national consensus on staying out of the war or harm public morale'.<sup>44</sup> The public's right to debate policy was subverted in the necessity of maintaining national unity.

Aiken retained these attitudes in his later political career and his approach was shared by officials in the DEA. When a proposal to form an Irish United Nations Association was put forward in January 1956, for example, Boland commented on the desirability that any initiative 'would be taken by the right people on lines that would ensure any association formed in Ireland remaining in the right hands'.<sup>45</sup> When he became Minister in 1957 Aiken made it clear that on issues of international importance he could countenance no debate that might hinder the assertion of a singular national policy. He reverted to an argument similar to that advanced during the war: that 'censorship protected citizens from losing their sense of perspective ... and so helped to maintain neutrality'.<sup>46</sup> In spite of criticisms from the press, including *The Irish Times*' claim in May 1965 that his 'answers to deputies in the Dáil are often unnecessarily brusque and delivered in a tone that suggests that no-one should dare trespass on his private preserve', <sup>47</sup> Aiken insisted that the Irish public was 'quite well informed about foreign affairs and our activities in international relations. In recent years our newspapers, Radio and Television provide such good coverage that I rarely find it necessary to repeat the reasons for Government actions and policy.<sup>48</sup>

If, in Aiken's view, 'the keeping of UN activities out of internal policies was a benefit beyond value',<sup>49</sup> it was an obvious extension to limit any activity that might in his view endanger the safety of Irish citizens. In April 1967 the Irish government recalled an RTÉ film crew on its way to North Vietnam, leading to widespread criticism of its undue influence on the state television service.<sup>50</sup> The problem repeated itself less than a year later. In January 1968 the American Bob Goldstein, in

<sup>44</sup> O'Halpin, Defending Ireland, p. 211.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> Boland to Murphy, 6 Jan. 1956, NAI DFA 417/132.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> Clair Wills, *That neutral island: a cultural history of Ireland during the Second World War* (London, 2007), p. 269.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Wesley Boyd, 'External Affairs – department's success abroad', *The Irish Times*, 22 May 1965.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> 'Interview with Mr Aiken, TD, Minister for External Affairs, by Catholic Herald [John Horgan]', undated [Jan. 1965?], UCDA Aiken Papers P104/6533.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> Note by Ronan, 22 Feb. 1966, NAI DFA 417/220.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> John Horgan, Broadcasting and public life: RTÉ news and current affairs, 1926-1997 (Dublin, 2004), pp. 44-5.

consultation with the Biafran authorities, arranged a flight to Biafra for journalists from across the world to cover the crisis. Goldstein visited Dublin with his associates and made tentative arrangements with RTÉ to reserve three or four seats on the plane for reporters from its current affairs television programme 'Seven Days'. Irish Holy Ghost missionary Fr Raymond Kennedy, who had just returned from an eight day tour of Biafra with 'a Hollywood film unit', was also on the plane.<sup>51</sup> The flight had reached Lisbon when, on 25 January 1968, an RTÉ statement announced that 'on consideration of the various inherent risks of the Biafran situation, it was decided by the directorgeneral, Mr Kevin C. McCourt, to divert the team to another assignment'.<sup>52</sup> McCourt later claimed that he 'was not informed that it had been decided to send a team to Biafra until the team was already on its way' and recalled it on the grounds that 'it would be improper for an organisation like RTÉ to cover a civil war such as is taking place in Nigeria from the secessionist side only'.<sup>53</sup> It was difficult to ascertain the extent of his knowledge. Hibernia claimed that he had to have known: 'surely he would have been told about a trip of such importance and possible danger to the crew'.<sup>54</sup> His Controller of Programmes Michael Garvey certainly knew about the flight: John Horgan noted that he 'had been informed in advance and had agreed'.55

In the confusion, RTÉ was concerned to avoid any criticism of government interference. A spokesman 'emphatically denied that there had been any consultation with or direction from the Department of External Affairs'.<sup>56</sup> In fact, McCourt phoned Hugh McCann, secretary of the department, on the afternoon of 24 January to discuss the matter. The latter warned McCourt of the possible dangers to Irish missionaries of any RTÉ broadcast that might be misconstrued as biased in favour of Biafra. In spite of his later protestations to the contrary,<sup>57</sup> Aiken also knew about the trip – McCann informed him of the conversation that afternoon – and 'fully shared' McCann's

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> 'Priest went to Biafra', Irish Press, 31 Jan. 1968.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> 'Biafra "too risky" for RTÉ team', Irish Press, 26 Jan. 1968.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> Quoted in 'McCourt tells why he made transfer', *The Irish Times*, 22 Feb. 1968.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> 'A funny thing happened on the way to Biafra!', *Hibernia*, Feb. 1968.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> Horgan, *Broadcasting and public life*, p. 54. In his memoir, RTÉ Chairman C.S. Andrews later claimed that Garvey did not know about the flight: C.S. Andrews, *Man of no property: an autobiography (volume two)* (Dublin, 1982), p. 278.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> 'TV team sent to another assignment', *The Irish Times*, 26 Jan. 1968.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 241, Col. 1937 (28 Oct. 1969).

views.<sup>58</sup> His assertion to the contrary put 'quite a different gloss' on McCann's account.<sup>59</sup> Aiken was nervous of the power of the media, particularly television, and its potentially damaging consequences. He could only have been further aggrieved at the 'Seven Days' programme on Biafra that followed less than two weeks later. Broadcast on 6 February 1968, it relied heavily on UPI-ITN film, as well as clips from Granada Television's 'World in Action' programme, with commentary from the 'Seven Days' reporters. Brian Cleeve, one of those who had been on the recalled team, told viewers that Irish missionaries in Biafra, 'who have seen their hospitals burned and bombed, their mission schools destroyed, their converts hunted into the bush and killed... are bitterly angry at what they believe to be the pro-Nigerian policy of the Irish Government'.60 Cleeve recounted the story of 'an Irish priest', one of the chief organisers of the media trip - undoubtedly Fr Raymond Kennedy - who defied the orders of his superiors in Dublin to return to Biafra. There, Cleeve stated, his 'divided loyalty' was 'echoed by hundreds of priests and nuns who know that, if the Nigerians win, their Biafran converts will be killed in thousands, and that no pennies for black babies will ever bring them back to life again'.<sup>61</sup>

There was obvious discomfort in the DEA and the government about the broadcast. The Minister for Posts and Telegraphs Erskine Childers told Aiken that he was 'sorry for this setback. But of course in television there will always be mistakes and some distortion.<sup>62</sup> Childers described how McCourt had 'spent some hours' with the 'Seven Days' team and the makers of other programmes reviewing programming standards and 'nearly sacked' Cleeve; 'but these kind of people are very difficult to get out'.<sup>63</sup> In RTÉ the dispute escalated far beyond the Biafran situation and later led to a tribunal into the workings of 'Seven Days'.<sup>64</sup> For the Irish government, the potential of television and the media to embarrass and endanger the safety of Irish citizens was highlighted by the affair. On 8 February 1968 A.P. Akpoyoware, the Nigerian Chargé d'Affaires in Dublin, called to see Aiken to discuss the 'Seven Days' programme and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> 'Secret' note by McCann, 25 Jan. 1968, UCDA Aiken Papers P104/7150.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> Horgan, Broadcasting and public life, p. 54.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup> Quoted in "Angry" Biafra missionaries', Irish Press, 7 Feb. 1968.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup> Childers to Aiken, 7 Feb. [1968], UCDA Aiken Papers P104/7151.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> See Horgan, *Broadcasting and public life*, pp. 53-7.

the attendant publicity in the Irish newspapers. Aiken told Akpoyoware that, while freedom of press was important in Ireland, he was 'disturbed by the recent press publicity' and commented that 'the camera is a very crude instrument'.<sup>65</sup> In private, Akpoyoware thanked Aiken for the Irish government's attitude which, he commented, had been 'completely correct and helpful'.<sup>66</sup> His statements to the press, however, which described the programme as 'shocking' and gave the impression of 'equating a rebel faction with an independent government',<sup>67</sup> highlighted the potential for misconception. McCann had warned McCourt on 24 January that 'the press in that part of the world are notorious for printing scare stories on rather slender evidence'.<sup>68</sup> The missionary authorities' attitudes to publicity underlined the extent of their fears. In March 1968, Archbishop McCarthy told Rush that he had been questioned by senior local officials 'who had reproached him with the pro-Biafran attitude being adopted by the Irish Government-owned Television Service and by the leading Irish newspapers'.<sup>69</sup>

It might have been worse. To add to the accusations of moral and political support, rumours surfaced that Irish missionaries were engaged in gun-running on behalf of the Biafrans. The claims were directly linked to Federal criticism of the humanitarian relief flights that flew into Biafra, often carrying Irish missionaries and, the Nigerians claimed, arms for the Biafrans. It was not only missionaries that were involved; the DEA had 'strong suspicions' that an Irish company Aer Turas carried arms to Biafra.<sup>70</sup> One incident in the autumn of 1968 highlighted the government's fears. On 9 October, the Federal Nigerian Commissioner for Information, Chief Anthony Enahoro, paid an official visit to Dublin during which he and Aiken discussed a variety of issues, including the recognition of Biafra, the course of the war, and the relief situation. Enahoro expressed his appreciation of the help of 'some' Irishmen but conceded that there had been 'a bit of bother' with the Holy Ghost missionaries, some of whom 'were so emotionally involved that it was hard to distinguish them from rebel

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>65</sup> Unsigned DEA note, 8 Feb. 1968, NAI DFA 2000/14/20.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup> Quoted in 'Nigeria angry at RTE programme', Irish Independent, 13 Feb. 1968.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>68</sup> 'Secret' note by Hugh McCann, 25 Jan. 1968, UCDA Aiken Papers P104/7150.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>69</sup> Memorandum by Rush, 'Reactions of Irish Bishops in Northern Nigeria to recent pro-Biafra activities in Dublin', 6 March 1968, NAI DFA 2000/14/20.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup> Ó Tuathail to Holmes, 9 June 1969, NAI DFA 2000/14/25.

supporters'.<sup>71</sup> Aiken agreed that 'a few of the younger priests had done things they should not have done instead of looking after their parishioners and had refused to accept discipline. There were, however, only three or four of these and the rest were motivated purely by humanitarian considerations.'<sup>72</sup>

The same afternoon, Enahoro gave a press conference in the Shelbourne Hotel which was heavily picketed by Biafran supporters. In the course of questions he inferred 'that some Holy Ghost Fathers were playing a role other than humanitarian in Biafra'.<sup>73</sup> Afterwards, in an 'off the record' conversation with Holy Ghost missionary Fr Fintan Kilbride, Noel Conway of the *Irish Press*, Dr Hugh Byrne, and Des Mullan of the *Irish Independent*, Enahoro suggested that Aiken had told him that he had the names of 'at least four' Irish missionaries who were involved in seeking arms for Biafra.<sup>74</sup> When Kilbride asked if he implied that Irish Holy Ghost missionaries were involved in gun-running, Enahoro replied that they were 'not confining their activities to missionary work'.<sup>75</sup> He was adamant that the Nigerian government had proof 'and your Foreign Minister knows about it. In my talks with him this morning he agreed that he knew of four or five cases where Holy Ghost priests were involved. We, in Lagos, know there are many more.<sup>76</sup>

Enahoro's claim met with understandable indignation in Ireland. Aiken stated categorically that there had been 'no allegation of gun-running by the Irish Holy Ghost Fathers either by the Commissioner or myself during his visit to me ... There were no names of Holy Ghost missionaries mentioned during the conference.'<sup>77</sup> The order was understandably concerned, believing that if they appeared in the Nigerian press, the charges would be 'tantamount to murder'.<sup>78</sup> On this occasion they were lucky. Aiken immediately dispatched Keating to make an approach to the Federal government regarding the safety of Irish citizens. His response told a lot about the DEA's frustration

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>71</sup> 'Report of meeting in Iveagh House at 11 am on the 9<sup>th</sup> October, 1968, between the Tánaiste and Chief Enahoro, the Federal Nigerian Commissioner for Information, who was accompanied by the Nigerian Ambassador. Also present were the Secretary and Mr Denis Holmes', NAI DFA 2000/14/27.
 <sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>73</sup> 'Sharp exchanges with Nigerian Minister', Irish Independent, 10 Oct. 1968.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup> Des Mullan, 'Chief DID accuse Irish priests', *Evening Herald*, 11 Oct. 1968.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>75</sup> Quoted in 'What Enahoro really said', *Evening Press*, 11 Oct. 1968.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>77</sup> DEA press release, 10 Oct. 1968, NAI DFA 2000/14/24.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>78</sup> Note by Ó Tuathail of telephone conversation with John Carbery, Chargé d'Affaires, Irish Embassy, Holy See, 14 Oct. 1968, NAI DFA 2000/14/27.

with the Nigerian authorities and the difficulty in dealing with the Irish media. Keating reported that the missionary 'rank and file' appeared to be safe from danger and that 'the Nigerian authorities are going to be much more intelligent and less hysterical about this matter than the rather stupid people in Dublin who ensured that it got so much publicity'.<sup>79</sup>

It was difficult to estimate the extent of the threat. Holy Ghost missionaries in other parts of Nigeria experienced no retribution as a result of their colleagues' outspokenness. Several Catholic bishops informed Rush in March 1968 that they had heard no criticism of Ireland and were unaware of activities in Ireland over Biafra.<sup>80</sup> In March 1969, Joseph Small, First Secretary in the Irish Embassy in Lagos, formed the impression from his tour of the West, Mid-West and Kwarra States that the danger to the missionaries was minimal. Though many of the missionaries Small met in the Mid-West had had 'nasty experiences', they were 'unanimous in the view that in general in the relaxed situation that now obtains ... they have no difficulty whatsoever at road blocks as they are allowed to pass without hindrance when their clerical garb is seen by the soldiers'.<sup>81</sup> Others in Biafra discounted the threat and argued that the Federal government was 'particularly sensitive to world opinion and would hardly run the risk of incurring international displeasure by taking reprisals on Irish personnel'.<sup>82</sup> It was better not to find out, the government might have argued.

The experience – particularly the 'Seven Days' incident – had further implications for the Irish government's foreign policy. The worsening humanitarian situation in Biafra brought greater scrutiny of the government's policies (see chapter six), which Aiken found increasingly hard to deal with. In February 1969 he was uncharacteristically moved to write to *The Irish Times* to defend his government's policies in the face of a critical editorial in the newspaper.<sup>83</sup> Aiken also asked his close friend, and 'strongly anti-Biafran', Dr Robert Collis, an Irishman who had spent a great deal of time in Nigeria, to write a series of pro-Federal articles for *The Irish Times*,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>79</sup> Keating to Ó Tuathail, 18 Oct. 1968, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>80</sup> Memorandum by Rush, 'Reactions of Irish Bishops in Northern Nigeria to recent pro-Biafra activities in Dublin', 6 March 1968, NAI DFA 2000/14/20.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>81</sup> Report by Small 'On his tour of the West, Mid-West and Kwarra States in February/March 1969', 18 March 1969, NAI DFA 2000/14/18.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>82</sup> John Horgan, 'The Church and the War (I)', *The Irish Times*, 19 March 1968.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>83</sup> Aiken (signed as Prionsias MacAogáin) to ed., *The Irish Times*, 8 Feb. 1969.

which were eventually published after Aiken's departure from office on 29 and 30 July 1969.<sup>84</sup>

His successor, Hillery, was more adept at dealing with the public. Hillery was comfortable with media involvement, and his public statements and the review of policy he engaged in immediately on entering office emphasised his awareness of the necessity to engage with public discussion, making a greater amount of information available than his predecessor. He was praised by *The Irish Times* for 'making foreign policy the policy of the people, not of the Minister or the Department'.<sup>85</sup> This, he undoubtedly felt, was a more effective counter to Biafran propaganda than maintaining silence.

## POLICY PRINCIPLES

In spite of Hillery's assertion that the Irish government's policy on Biafra was 'decided by the Government ... not the policy of Deputy Aiken',<sup>86</sup> the latter's influence had been inescapable. On his return to Dublin in November 1967, Ó Tuathail, with his first-hand experience of the conflict, assumed considerable responsibility for the government's policy. He recalled that Aiken had 'already decided his policy before I came back. He decided policies on his own anyway; he could accept recommendations but he made up his [own] mind very much.'<sup>87</sup>

The Irish government's attitude to decolonisation, to southern Africa, and the Congo crisis, was based on three strands: the rejection of outside interference (which might bring the extension of the Cold War and its attendant impact on international stability); the need for constructive, negotiated settlement; and a view that it shared with the Swedish government – the 'search for non-violent solutions' to international crises.<sup>88</sup> The Biafran case posed a challenge to the Irish conception of self-determination in a post-independence situation, particularly its implications for the partition of Nigeria. Aiken returned to his basic outlook on foreign affairs which emphasised what Alexander Wendt would much later describe as the concept of a 'co-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>84</sup> Tadhg O'Sullivan to sec. DEA, 13 Nov. 1970, NAI DFA 2001/43/159.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>85</sup> 'Foreign Policy', The Irish Times, 29 Oct. 1969.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>86</sup> *Dáil Éireann deb.*, Vol. 241, Col. 459 (9 July 1969).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>87</sup> Interview with Ó Tuathail (24 Jan. 2006).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>88</sup> Sellström, Sweden and southern Africa: Vol. I, p. 343.

operative' world security system 'in which states identify positively with one another so that the security of each is perceived as the responsibility of all'.<sup>89</sup> Aiken and his officials were far from convinced of the ultimate viability of an independent Biafra and wished to avoid the consequences for stability in the region associated with the creation of a failed state. His attitude to the conflict could be traced back to July 1960 when, following his visit to Congo and Ghana, he advocated the creation of a system of tribunals to deal with Africa's internal problems and to find African solutions.<sup>90</sup> His experience at the United Nations and first-hand knowledge of Africa over seven years helped to inform his attitude. In September 1961 he returned to Congo to visit Irish troops stationed in Katanga. Just over three years later he paid an unofficial visit to Nigeria to his son Frank Jr, an engineer who was employed building churches in Owerri diocese in the Eastern Region. In Lagos he met several prominent Nigerian government officials and while in the East he had the opportunity to consult with 'some of the leading personalities of that region'.<sup>91</sup> His travels convinced him of the need for a constructive approach to Africa's regional and ethnic tensions. When speaking on Nigeria he admitted that 'Europe made a savage cutting up of Africa',<sup>92</sup> but argued that state boundaries should remain 'unless they can be changed by negotiations and peaceful measures'.93

The argument, elaborated on by Noel Dorr later, turned on the idea that 'if you started tinkering with the borders, even where they cut across tribal groups, you'd be opening a pandora's box'.<sup>94</sup> The result, Aiken argued, of the 'balkanisation' of Nigeria would be to 'start a movement that would result in Africa's future history being as bad as Europe's past history has been from the point of view of wars, slaughter and famines'.<sup>95</sup> Aiken's fears echoed those of African leaders. In March 1969 General Gowon warned that '[i]t was the Congo and Tshombe yesterday, it is Nigeria and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>89</sup> Wendt, 'Anarchy', p. 400.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>90</sup> Boland to O'Brien, 7 July 1960, NAI DFA PMUN 81 X/34.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>91</sup> Note by Rush, 'Visit to Nigeria October 1964 of Minister for External Affairs and Mrs Aiken', NAI DFA Lagos D6/3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>92</sup> Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 241, Col. 1935 (28 Oct. 1969).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>93</sup> Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 234, Col. 1710 (22 May 1968).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>94</sup> Interview with Dorr (12 April 2005).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>95</sup> Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 241, Col. 1936 (28 Oct. 1969).

Ojukwu today, who knows which African country it will be next<sup>96</sup> For Aiken, peaceful, negotiated change was the only solution: '[a]ny country which is a true friend of the African people ... should encourage and assist peaceful change if change be necessary, but must stand firmly against attempts to change State boundaries by force<sup>97</sup> From its outset, he and his officials regarded the Nigerian crisis as firstly a Nigerian problem and secondly a problem for the African continent or, more specifically, the OAU. The approach coincided closely with that of the other Western powers and that of the United Nations Secretary General U Thant.

To public calls that the Irish government offer itself as a mediator, Aiken maintained that it had 'never been asked by either side' and did 'not think our offering to mediate would serve any useful purpose'.<sup>98</sup> The reality was complex. In April 1968, Chief Adebo, a Nigerian official at the UN with whom Aiken had consulted in the latter part of 1967, told Cremin that 'the Tánaiste, for whom he has admiration and respect, might conceivably be able to do something'.<sup>99</sup> When Cremin suggested that 'any action by a non-African personality might be resented by Africans generally ... [Adebo] rather discounted any risk of that, especially if the personality were someone like the Tánaiste'.<sup>100</sup> Adebo's comments echoed those made by several Irish commentators that the government was well-placed to make a constructive intervention in solving the conflict. Keating believed that the attitude 'that this must be left to the Africans themselves is in many ways unrealistic. It is a pity indeed that in this matter as in so many others an attempt should be made to suggest that white humanity and black humanity are somehow different.<sup>101</sup> Suzanne Cronje pointed up an additional paradox in Western support for the OAU: 'if the war was an internal Nigerian question, then the OAU was no more entitled to intervene that any other international body'.<sup>102</sup> The difficulty lay in the apparent paralysis this induced in the West – apart from the Nordic states who later offered to mediate to find a solution - when the OAU's attempts to find a solution repeatedly fell short.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>96</sup> Suzanne Cronje, *The world and Nigeria: the diplomatic history of the Biafran war 1967-1970* (London, 1972), p. 293.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>97</sup> Aiken (signed Prionsias MacAogáin) to ed., The Irish Times, 8 Feb. 1969.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>98</sup> Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 240, Col. 977 (13 May 1969).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>99</sup> Cremin to Ronan, 17 April 1968, NAI DFA 2000/14/20.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>101</sup> Keating to sec. DEA, 20 Feb. 1969, NAI DFA 2001/43/148.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>102</sup> Cronje, *The world and Nigeria*, p. 320.

The efforts of Hillery, however, appeared to validate Aiken's argument. Eager 'to do something to help in bringing peace', <sup>103</sup> Hillery proclaimed himself 'prepared to go anywhere, meet anyone, if there is any help I can give in this situation'. <sup>104</sup> The difficulties in doing so were soon in evidence. Sent to Addis Ababa by Hillery to sound out the OAU about a possible Irish role, Keating was told by the Ethiopian Foreign Minister that he 'did not think that there was much that could usefully be done by third parties at the present time other than to continue if they were already doing so to persuade their contacts with both sides of the need to negotiate and to endeavour to settle the conflict in Nigerian terms'. <sup>105</sup> Hillery reverted to Aiken's tactic of 'quiet diplomacy' and in November 1969 assured the Dáil that '[w]e are not doing anything publicly but we are doing a lot privately'. <sup>106</sup>

The results of this quiet diplomacy may not have had many publicly visible outcomes, but they were important nonetheless in the pursuit of the Irish government's interests. By keeping the channels of direct communication open, Aiken reasoned, he and his officials had a far greater hope of securing its policy goals, first of all the safety of Irish citizens. The essentially social nature of inter-state relations, Aiken judged, made the application of quiet diplomatic pressure the most beneficial to the cultivation of Irish influence. He hoped that by winning the confidence of the Nigerian authorities, the Irish government might exert a greater influence on their conduct of the war. Aiken preferred this kind of discussion, which he also urged on Nigerian and Biafran officials, away from 'the glare of the cameras'.<sup>107</sup> His approach betrayed his pro-Federal assessment of the situation. In a meeting with Akpoyoware in August 1968, Aiken warned that 'Federal propaganda was weak and many were influenced by the humanitarian aspects of the appeals of the other side.'<sup>108</sup> Irish officials, particularly in Lagos, may have found it difficult to 'communicate with the Nigerian authorities with

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>103</sup> Note by Ó Tuathail, 17 July 1969, NAI DFA Lagos P13/3 B.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>104</sup> Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 241, Col. 460 (9 July 1969).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>105</sup> Note by Keating, 'Interview with the Ethiopian Foreign Minister, Mr Ketema Yifru [on 25 July 1969]', 29 July 1969, NAI DFA 2001/43/148.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>106</sup> Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 242, Col. 2110 (27 Nov. 1969).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>107</sup> 'Note of interview given by the Tánaiste to Mr I.S. Kogbara and Mr A. Modu, representatives of Lt.-Col. Ojukwu in London, at 4 p.m. on 15<sup>th</sup> April, 1969', NAI DFA 2001/43/128.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>108</sup> 'Note of interview given by the Tánaiste to the Nigerian Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. [on 14 Aug. 1968]'; note dated 20 Aug. 1968, NAI DFA 2000/14/23.

reasonable speed',<sup>109</sup> but the latter came to Aiken with an open ear. Akpoyoware repeatedly expressed his authorities' appreciation 'for the personal advice on particular aspects of the problem which [Aiken] had offered'.<sup>110</sup> An attempt, perhaps, to retain Ireland's co-operation, the assertion highlighted the good working relationship between the two governments.

Tentatively at first, these channels of communication extended to an open dialogue with the representatives of the Biafran authorities. With many vocal supporters among the missionaries and, increasingly, among the broader Irish public, the Biafrans used familiar arguments to court Irish support. Ojukwu told John Horgan of The Irish Times that the Irish people had 'a peculiar experience which is somewhat akin to ours, and we have had historical associations with Ireland'.<sup>111</sup> Just as Irish officials in Lagos spent a lot of time explaining to the Nigerians the distinction 'between government attitude and popular attitude', <sup>112</sup> Ojukwu continued to hope that Irish public support for Biafra would 'be transmitted to their accredited representatives and the Government'.<sup>113</sup> His emissaries were more realistic. In February 1968, Francis Ellah, the Biafran representative to Britain and Ireland, told the media that 'he did not intend to embarrass [the Irish government] by making any formal approach to them'.<sup>114</sup> He was right to be wary of the government's reaction. In July 1968, after it had been suggested by Ignatius Kogbara of the Biafran office in London that he might request official recognition, Aiken told a reporter from The Irish Times that while Ireland 'had no request for recognition from Biafra ... even if we got a request we would have to reject it'.<sup>115</sup> It preferred to use the connections with Biafran representatives in a manner similar to that exhibited in its dealings with Nigerian officials, and stressed the need to find a negotiated solution that could be made 'only between themselves [the Biafrans] and the Federal authorities'.<sup>116</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>109</sup> Keating to Ó Tuathail, 5 Oct. 1968, NAI DFA 2000/14/18.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>110</sup> Note by Holmes, 'Meeting between the Tánaiste and the Nigerian Chargé d'Affaires, Mr

Akpoyoware, in Iveagh House, at 11.30 a.m., 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 1968', NAI DFA 2000/14/24.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>111</sup> John Horgan, 'Biafra seeks Irish support for cause', *The Irish Times*, 9 March 1968.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>112</sup> Interview with Joseph Small, Dublin, 26 May 2006.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>113</sup> 'Tape of "Night Flight to Uli" – Radharc RTE programme', 5 Feb. 1969, NAI DFA Lagos P13/B.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>114</sup> 'Outside intervention in Biafra urged', *The Irish Times*, 13 Feb. 1968.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>115</sup> Quoted in 'No recognition for Biafra', *The Irish Times*, 5 July 1968.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>116</sup> 'Note of interview given by the Tánaiste to Mr I.S. Kogbara and Mr A. Modu, representatives of Lt.-Col. Ojukwu in London, at 4 p.m. on 15<sup>th</sup> April, 1969', NAI DFA 2001/43/128.

The parallels with Western attitudes to the war were inescapable. The Western powers advocated a policy of non-interference and stressed the need to pursue an African solution to the problem. The British government viewed Biafra as 'a Nigerian and an African problem first and foremost'.<sup>117</sup> It believed that 'if the principle of secession on a tribal basis were once accepted there would be chaos on the continent'.<sup>118</sup> The American State Department agreed, as did most Western states, only breaking to criticise the Nigerian government's attitude to the humanitarian crisis in Biafra. Anxious to secure international conformity, British officials pressed the Irish government early in the war to follow their government's policies. In spite of protestations that they did not wish 'to push [the Irish government] in a certain direction', <sup>119</sup> they had a very clear idea of what it should be. They need have worried little. Seán Ronan told Charles Lovitt of the British Embassy on 29 May 1967, the day before Ojukwu's announcement, that 'the Irish Government's policy on recognition is influenced by the attitude of the major Western Powers, ourselves [Britain] and the USA'.<sup>120</sup>

The issue was more complex, however, than a simple subservience to British and American interests. For one thing, it carried a pragmatic recognition of the limitations to the Irish government's international role. For foreign policy makers in small states, the choice of action was always subject to restraint; as Williams noted, 'policy cannot be a single, grand design and freedom of action is limited'.<sup>121</sup> In the case of Biafra, Cronje speculated that the extent to which 'the Western European governments, despite their grave misgivings, toed the Anglo-American line on this question might help to define the degree of latitude enjoyed by medium-sized powers in arriving at foreign policy decisions which clash with leading Western interests'.<sup>122</sup> The policies of small states like Ireland built on a realistic assessment of their limited role in international affairs. Robert Keohane insisted that the considerable amount of faith they placed in collective action at the United Nations came in the recognition that 'although

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>117</sup> 'Nigeria: A background note on British interests and the Government's approach to the civil war', undated, NAUK FCO 65/179.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>119</sup> Note by Nolan, 18 Sept. 1967, NAI DFA 2001/43/128.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>120</sup> Lovitt to Moberly, 29 May 1967, NAUK FCO 38/274.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>121</sup> Williams, 'Irish foreign policy', p. 137.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>122</sup> Cronje, The world and Nigeria, p. 323.

they may be able to do little together, they can do virtually nothing separately'.<sup>123</sup> In bilateral relations small states had to choose their approach carefully so as to maximise the potential benefits for their own interests. However formulated, on many occasions those policies coincided directly with those of the Western powers. The principles of non-interference and the pursuit of an African solution that recognised the territorial integrity of Nigeria were consistent with the Irish government's attitude to the international system. The DEA's analysis of European opinion in 1969 revealed a strong coincidence with its own policies.<sup>124</sup> The Nordic states followed a closely similar policy which recognised the primacy of the OAU's role, and Danish officials commented on the close relationship between their government's approach and that of the Irish government.<sup>125</sup>

There was further evidence of the independence of Irish policy. A United States request in November 1969 that Irish officials pass on 'the suggestion that it would be a good thing for Ojukwu to first propose an African second level negotiator<sup>,126</sup> was dismissed by Keating as 'an attempt to continue purely United States policies by mild confidence tricks on intermediaries'.<sup>127</sup> Keating had reason to be wary of Western motives. Rumours persisted in Catholic circles that the British High Commission in Lagos was anti-missionary. In May 1968 Rush reported stories that the High Commissioner himself believed 'the Irish missionaries in Biafra will have to be put out of Nigeria and kept out when the war is over'<sup>128</sup> and in January 1969 Keating described the High Commissioner as 'fundamentally not pro-missionary'.<sup>129</sup> The British Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Maurice Foley, told Ó Tuathail in August 1969 that he considered the Holy Ghost missionaries 'committed to the Biafran position' and wondered if 'it might not be better for them to pull out altogether'.<sup>130</sup> In spite of the British assertions that the rumours had no substance, they were enough to make the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>123</sup> Robert O. Keohane, 'Lilliputians' dilemmas: small states in international politics', *International Organisation*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Spring 1969), p. 296.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>124</sup> Staunton, 'The case of Biafra', p. 530.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>125</sup> Fogarty to sec. DEA, 3 Oct. 1969, NAI DFA 2001/43/154.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>126</sup> 'Visit of Mr Brubeck (US State Department official) to Department re Nigeria/Biafra on 11 November 1969', NAI DFA 2001/43/153.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>127</sup> Keating to Ó Tuathail, 20 Nov. 1969, NAI DFA 2001/43/149.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>128</sup> Rush to sec. DEA, 5 May 1968, NAI DFA Lagos P13.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>129</sup> Keating to Ó Tuathail, 22 Jan. 1969, NAI DFA Lagos P13/13 B.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>130</sup> Note by Ó Tuathail, 'Conversation with Mr Maurice Foley, MP, British Minister of State for Foreign Affairs – 8<sup>th</sup> August, 1969'; dated 14 Aug. 1969, NAI DFA 2002/19/29.

Irish government wary of associating themselves too closely with British assistance. The rumours persisted even after the end of the war. On 23 January 1970 Keating wrote that 'far from getting British support for the continuation of our missions in the East they are hostile to their remaining'.<sup>131</sup> For their part, British officials were adamant that such claims were 'nonsense' and suspected them to have been spread by 'disgruntled Irish priests'.<sup>132</sup> It was difficult to ascertain the degree of truth to the rumours, but they were enough for the Irish government to retain a degree of pragmatism and independence.

# IRELAND AND THE END OF THE WAR

After two-and-a-half years of attempting to secure Irish interests and the safety of Irish missionaries, the Irish government was faced in January 1970 with a renewed and urgent set of problems. After failed attempts to get both sides together in Addis Ababa for peace talks in December 1969 under the chairmanship of Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie, the war ended on 11 January 1970 'like a flash of tropical lightning'.<sup>133</sup> The Biafran army's resolve collapsed and Federal troops swept across Biafran territory. Ojukwu fled the country, leaving his people to face the Federal advance. The dangers for Irish missionaries were all too evident. On 9 January British officials anticipated 'that all expatriates, especially white, will be especially vulnerable in the situation we are considering, both because they might be mistaken for mercenaries and because many of them have been closely identified with the Biafran cause'.<sup>134</sup> Irish officials were already busy preparing for the missionaries protection. In December 1969 Small undertook an official tour of the 'liberated' areas of the East Central State and parts of the South Eastern State and Benue Plateau State, the first by an Irish official since Ó Tuathail's sojourn in Biafra in 1967, and used the opportunity to impress on local officials 'the wider implications of any action they would like to take against any of our citizens'.135

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>131</sup> Keating to sec. DEA, 23 Jan. 1970, NAI DFA Lagos P13/13 C.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>132</sup> Telegraph, British High Commission Lagos to FCO, 4 Feb. 1970, NAUK FCO 65/815.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>133</sup> De St Jorre, *The Nigerian civil war*, p. 393.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>134</sup> Telegraph, Foreign and Commonwealth Office to British Embassy, Dublin, 9 Jan. 1970, NAUK FCO 65/761.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>135</sup> 'Report on Mr Small's official tour of liberated areas of the East Central state and parts of South Eastern and Benue Plateau States in December 1969', NAI DFA 2004/7/112.

After Small's return to Lagos on 24 December, Conor Murphy, Third Secretary at the Embassy, prepared a provisional census of Irish citizens across Nigeria. This list formed the basis of Irish efforts to secure the safety of the missionaries in the coming month. On 9 January 1970 Keating wrote to the Nigerian Ministry for External Affairs to express his hope that the missionaries' 'status will be recognised by the Nigerian Army and that they will be provided with such assistance and protection as they may need should they be overrun'<sup>136</sup> and Murphy's list was handed in immediately to the Nigerian Ministry for External Affairs. Keating remained in constant contact with the Nigerian authorities and continued to press for their attention, however difficult he found it, to maintain a visible presence and concern for the missionaries' safety. In Dublin the DEA passed the list of Irish citizens to the British government, and asked the US State Department for 'any assistance they can give about our citizens'.<sup>137</sup>

The problems experienced during the war resurfaced. The broadcast made on the Irish government's behalf by the BBC World Service revealed its difficulties in securing the safety of Irish missionaries because of their often remote location: 'The Government have [*sic.*] made representations to the Nigerian Government to ensure their protection. Notwithstanding every effort being made, there is always a risk to persons remaining in a fighting area and the only guarantee against such risk is to move away from the fighting area until hostilities have ceased.'<sup>138</sup> Only a physical presence in the former secessionist region could ensure the missionaries' safety. At the request of Bishop Joseph Whelan of Owerri, on 15 January Small returned to the South-Eastern state, first at Calabar, before moving on 18 January to Port Harcourt in the Rivers State where a number of Irish missionaries had been brought for questioning.

All this was in the future when on Sunday 11 January 1970 the news filtered through that Biafran resistance had collapsed. On 12 January, Holy Ghost Missionary Fr Jim McNulty at Ihiala mission recorded in his diary feeling 'hopeless. This evening my mind in sadness went over many events of the past two and a half years ... We are

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>136</sup> Keating to Clarke, 9 Jan. 1970. NAI DFA Lagos P13/13 C,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>137</sup> Note by Ó Tuathail, 'Action up to present on Nigerian position, 10.00 a.m., 12.1.70', NAI DFA 2001/43/127.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>138</sup> Telegraph, British Embassy Dublin to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 12 Jan. 1970, NAUK FCO 65/761.

so much needed now, if we are allowed to stay.<sup>139</sup> At least the Irish government's exhortations to leniency appeared to have made an impact on the Federal troops. When they arrived at Ihiala, Fr McNulty recorded being 'greeted most courteously by the troops'.<sup>140</sup> Good treatment at the hands of the advancing Federal troops, however, did not equate to an acceptance of the missionaries' position and the Holy Ghost missionaries were rounded up by Federal officers and told to report for 'expatriation'. A week after the end of the war, Fr McNulty left Ihiala under the instructions of a Federal officer. Among his last memories were that of the small group of people who saw them leave - they had not told the people they were to be expatriated - who 'became quite terrified when they saw us with our cases packed to go',<sup>141</sup> fearful (erroneously as it turned out) that the absence of missionary witnesses would lead to violent retribution by the Federal forces. The missionaries were brought from different areas of Biafra to Port Harcourt, where they were placed under house arrest at the Cedar Hotel. Over the following ten days Small worked hard in an effort to secure their safety. His movements were constantly monitored by the Nigerian Special Branch who tried to move him to alternative accommodation and Small managed to 'miss' several flights the authorities booked him on in order that he might meet what they called the orders from 'Lagos' for his 'immediate recall'.<sup>142</sup> His activities up until then were greatly appreciated by the missionaries. What the Federal Ministry of External Affairs called his 'reportedly unfortunate behaviour',<sup>143</sup> reassured them that, although Small was unable to find any lawyer willing to take the missionaries' case, there was someone acting in their interests in Port Harcourt.

To Small it was 'pretty clear that the authorities were very anxious that I should not be around for the court proceedings' on 27 January when the missionaries were charged and sentenced before he could be informed of events.<sup>144</sup> Fr Des O'Sullivan recalled that 'without any warning or legal defence we were brought to court and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>139</sup> 'Biafran Diary: Donated by Fr Jim McNulty, C.S.Sp., 21/9/2006'; this reference is from Fr McNulty's entry for 12 Jan. 1970, HGPA BP.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>140</sup> Ibid., entry for 13 Jan. 1970.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>141</sup> Ibid., entry for 18 Jan. 1970.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>142</sup> 'Report on Mr Small's visit to Port Harcourt in connection with the safety and welfare of Irish citizens who remained in the area after the collapse of "Biafra", 30 Jan. 1970, NAI DFA 2004/7/112.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>143</sup> Note from Nigerian Ministry of External Affairs to Irish Embassy, Lagos, 9 Feb. 1970, NAI DFA Lagos P13/13 C.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>144</sup> 'Report on Mr Small's visit to Port Harcourt in connection with the safety and welfare of Irish citizens who remained in the area after the collapse of "Biafra", 30 Jan. 1970, NAI DFA 2004/7/112.

charged as criminal offenders for illegal entry and acceptance of employment without the Nigerian Government's permission'.<sup>145</sup> There was confusion over the sentencing. Some of the group, including Fr O'Sullivan, were sentenced to six months' imprisonment, others fined. In Lagos Keating and his British colleagues worked furiously to implore the Federal authorities to overturn the decision. Whatever its feelings on the missionaries' status, the British High Commission's involvement behind the scenes was crucial in having the sentences commuted. On 3 February, after a week in extremely cramped conditions in a Port Harcourt prison, the missionaries were 'given three minutes to collect our "luggage"; and instructed to leave behind whatever might be of use to other European prisoners'.<sup>146</sup> They were then taken to Lagos airport for deportation. Other groups of missionaries followed similar patterns of arrest, detention, trial, charges, and eventual deportation.

In Dublin, all attention focussed on the missionaries' safety. *The Irish Times* expressed its hope that the private diplomatic channels through which the government maintained it continually pressed both sides for peace were 'now busier than ever'.<sup>147</sup> Hillery twice made himself available to travel personally to Lagos to try and secure the missionaries' safety. On the first occasion Keating's enquiries 'met with a blank wall of refusal' and Keating pronounced himself 'relieved ... The Minister if he came here would really find he was wasting his time.'<sup>148</sup> *The Irish Times* agreed, feeling that were Hillery to fly into Nigeria uninvited, it would 'incense further the Federal authorities'.<sup>149</sup> After the missionaries' sentences were announced, Hillery again stated that he would be willing to go to Nigeria, but again the Nigerians indicated that such a visit would be 'unwelcome'.<sup>150</sup> Whatever influence the Irish government built up with the Nigerians in the course of the war was tested to the limit. The Nigerian Ministry for External Affairs made it clear that the Federal government had acted with what it perceived as some leniency:

As a genuine gesture of friendship towards Ireland, a country with which Nigeria has and intends to continue to have, most cordial and friendly

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>145</sup> 'Not for publication', Fr Des O'Sullivan, Kimmage Manor, 11 Feb. 1970, HGPA BP.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>146</sup> Fr Michael Brosnahan Scrapbook; entry for 3 Feb. 1970 in 'Ihioma Mission – Diary of Events',

C.S.Sp. Newsletter, Rome, 'Special Issue on East Central Nigeria', 18 Feb. 1970, HGPA BP.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>147</sup> 'Busy channels?', The Irish Times, 23 Jan. 1970.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>148</sup> Keating to Ó Tuathail, 19 Jan. 1970, NAI DFA Lagos P13/13 C.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>149</sup> 'Busy channels?', *The Irish Times*, 23 Jan. 1970.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>150</sup> Keating to sec. DEA, 30 Jan. 1970, NAI DFA Lagos P13/13 C.

relations ... these aliens, who could have been tried for war crimes, were merely tried and convicted in civil courts. Thereafter they were allowed to leave Nigeria. The Ministry hopes that the Embassy fully appreciate the kindly motives behind this unprecedented act of clemency on the part of the Federal Military Government.<sup>151</sup>

The statement testified to the apparent success of the Irish government's policy of 'quiet diplomacy'. In private, the SMA authorities praised 'the consistently sound attitude adopted ... While safeguarding the interests of Irish citizens in Nigeria, your policy has helped our members immensely in their role as missionaries also.<sup>152</sup> Hillery was grateful that 'the wisdom of the policy we [he and Aiken] both pursued is appreciated in some quarters at any rate!<sup>153</sup> He and his officials resigned themselves to the expulsion of the Holy Ghost missionaries and set about rebuilding the relationship between the two states so that the order might be allowed to return. In April 1970 they responded quickly to rumours that Ojukwu might seek asylum in Ireland in the belief that his presence 'would confirm all the suspicions people have about us and would militate strongly against any expansion of our missions here as well as effectively preventing forever ... any return of the Holy Ghost Order'.<sup>154</sup> As the dust settled in Nigeria continued attempts were made to restore the diplomatic relationship. On his tours of Nigeria in 1971, the new Irish Ambassador Tadhg O'Sullivan made a deliberate effort to communicate with the Muslim North, and was pleased with the warm appreciation of Irish efforts throughout Nigeria.<sup>155</sup> In April 1972, Hillery paid an official state visit to Nigeria, which was reciprocated by Okoi Arikpo, the Nigerian Commissioner for External Affairs, who visited Dublin in December of the same year.

The visits were largely symbolic gestures, though they did touch on one important issue of common interest: trade. Previous attempts to stimulate trade between the two countries stalled in the early 1960s, leaving Guinness as the only major company with Irish links operating in Nigeria. In the early 1970s the rapid growth of the Nigerian economy thanks to the exploitation of large oil reserves rejuvenated Irish interest in the possibilities for trade. Michael Flynn, appointed Ambassador to Nigeria

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>151</sup> Nigerian Ministry of External Affairs to Irish Embassy, Lagos, 9 Feb. 1970, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>152</sup> Carr to Hillery, 30 Jan. 1970, UCDA Aiken Papers P104/7182.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>153</sup> Hillery to Aiken, 13 Feb. 1970, UCDA Aiken Papers P104/7183.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>154</sup> Keating to Ó Tuathail, 2 April 1970, NAI DFA 2002/19/37.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>155</sup> Tadhg O'Sullivan to sec. DFA, 5 July 1971; Tadhg O'Sullivan to sec. DFA, 15 Dec. 1971, NAI DFA 2002/19/56.

in 1974, remembered that 'the main thrust of Irish policy in Nigeria was trade promotion'.<sup>156</sup> In February 1974 two CTT representatives came on a fact-finding visit to Nigeria, followed in May of the same year by a trade mission. A CTT officer was appointed to Lagos and an office opened in 1975 which oversaw a significant increase in trade and technical co-operation. The relationship lasted until the early 1980s, when the end of the economic boom forced many exporters out of the Nigerian market and in 1984 the CTT office was closed.

#### CONCLUSION

The experience of the conflict provided Irish officials with some important lessons. In the Arab-Israeli war of the summer of 1967 the Irish government relied on British officials to provide consular assistance to its citizens in Israel and Jordan, and Italian assistance in Egypt.<sup>157</sup> The Nigerian crisis repeated the situation on a much larger scale where Irish officials again relied heavily on British assistance in spite of the presence of Irish diplomatic officers in the territory. It was a valuable exercise in practical diplomacy. The government may have over-exaggerated the threat to the missionary orders in those parts of Nigeria outside Biafra, but it could point to its success that only one Irish missionary had been killed and only the Holy Ghost Fathers were expelled in the aftermath of the war. By maintaining a close relationship with the Federal government, Irish officials managed to secure future influence and, as the missionaries' post-war fate suggested, at least moderate Nigerian government reactions. If it had recognised Biafra, it would have effectively ended all possibility of influencing the Nigerian government, whether for its own interests or for broader concerns.

There were other reasons for not recognising the secessionist government. Irish officials were never convinced that the secessionist region was likely to emerge victorious from the war, nor that it could ever be viable as an independent state. They based their approach on a strongly principled attitude that nonetheless recognised the limitations to Irish influence and closely corresponded with general Western views. In November 1969 Paul Keating questioned whether 'we are right in thinking that our role

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>156</sup> Interview with Michael Flynn, Galway, 11 April 2005.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>157</sup> Rory Miller, 'The politics of trade and diplomacy: Ireland's evolving relationship with the Muslim Middle East', *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, Vol. 15 (2004), p. 129.

has been quite so passive.' He regarded the Irish government's contribution to the conflict as 'a very positive course of action for a small country which cannot offer a solution to the problem any more than can any other outside group'.<sup>158</sup> The attempts to exert a quiet influence appeared far removed from the heady days of Irish influence at the United Nations in the late 1950s, but broadly reflected the state's role at that organisation ten years later. Outside the United Nations a small country like Ireland had limited scope to play a leading role in negotiating a solution to a crisis like Biafra. Within that framework, however, its late attempt (under Hillery) to play a more constructive role and its continued support for the OAU after that organisation had shown itself to be ineffectual highlighted the essential need to adopt a more flexible approach, such as was called for by several leading Irish commentators.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>158</sup> Keating to Ó Tuathail, 20 Nov. 1969, NAI DFA 2001/43/149.

# Concern for Africa: Ireland and the Biafran Humanitarian Crisis

The criticism levelled at the Irish government for its apparent inactivity in seeking a solution to the Biafran crisis highlighted a telling change in the relationship between its policies and public discussion. The June 1969 Irish general election returned a number of new deputies, including Conor Cruise O'Brien, Barry Desmond, Garret FitzGerald, and Hugh Byrne, many of whom later became vocal on Biafra and other foreign policy issues. Aiken's replacement by Hillery as Minister, and the latter's more open attitude in dealing with the media, reflected a changing environment. After his first estimates debate in October 1969, Hillery drew praise from The Irish Times for his 'willingness to listen to other points of view on Biafra',<sup>1</sup> a thinly veiled criticism of the introverted approach of his predecessor. By then Biafra had become a matter for widespread public debate. More than the political consequences of its attempted secession, the humanitarian crisis it precipitated aroused widespread public interest and spurred charitable activity in Ireland and the rest of the developed world. Large numbers of Irish missionaries, volunteers, and other interested individuals succeeded in creating a direct link between Irish public opinion and the suffering Biafran population. The birth of Africa Concern in 1968 (later abbreviated to Concern to reflect its diverse international role) came as a direct result of this process and had an important impact on the Irish public's relations with the developing world.

The increased media debate that made Biafra what Harrison and Palmer described as 'the first famine disaster story to receive wide and continuing coverage in the West,'<sup>2</sup> transformed the nature of discussion on foreign policy in Ireland. The growth of Africa Concern mirrored international trends as NGOs evolved into bodies that acted 'as a medium for the transformation of individual humanitarian concern into direct assistance measures'<sup>3</sup> and the organisation's activities linked the Irish public

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> 'Foreign Policy', The Irish Times, 29 October 1969.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Paul Harrison and Robin Palmer, News out of Africa: Biafra to Band Aid (London, 1986), p. 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Peter Macalister-Smith, International humanitarian assistance: disaster relief actions in international law and organisation (Dordrecht, 1985), p. 117.

directly with its counterparts in the developing world without the necessity for state intervention. The compelling persuasiveness of the humanitarian argument presented the Irish government with an additional set of difficulties: how to reconcile its attempts to avoid public discussion or any activity that might be interpreted as Irish support for the secessionist region with a need to match public concern with compassionate action. This chapter explores the interaction between this activity from within civil society and the policies pursued by the Irish government. It first briefly examines the context for NGO activity in Ireland, the level and nature of debate on development and disaster relief prior to Biafra, and the way in which that crisis transformed public and religious interaction with those issues. Building on that foundation the second part of the chapter outlines the Irish government's response and its attempts to reconcile its political approach with a desire to add constructively to the humanitarian effort, looking at the channels for its support and the political implications of its policies, which became particularly evident in the aftermath of the war, an examination of which forms the concluding part of this analysis.

#### THE HUMANITARIAN CONTEXT

The Biafrans' short-lived military successes, followed by the loss of the main foodproducing areas in the region, put enormous strain on the resources of the secessionist government. In the later months of 1967 and early 1968 the serious humanitarian cost of the war became increasingly apparent. Kwashiorkor and marasmus, both associated with a severe lack of essential proteins, became increasingly prevalent among the huge number of refugees fleeing the Federal advance into an ever-shrinking Biafran territory. The international community responded in kind. In November 1967, the ICRC, invited to operate in the conflict under the Geneva Convention, chartered its first plane to fly medicines to Port Harcourt and the following April received official Federal approval to co-ordinate relief operations on the Federal side of the conflict zone. Earlier that year it had been joined by UNICEF, the Protestant World Council of Churches (WCC), Nordchurchaid (a Nordic Protestant relief group), and the Catholic relief body Caritas Internationalis, and other smaller groups in the provision of aid. Under the banner Joint Church Aid (JCA or 'Jesus Christ Airlines' to its pilots), Nordchurchaid and Caritas flew relief cargoes from the Portuguese island of São Tomé off the West coast of Africa to the roadway-turned-airstrip at Uli in Biafra.

The political connotations of its activities, and those of the other organisations that operated relief into Biafra, were inescapable. To widespread criticism the Biafran government used the plight of its citizens as a propaganda tool against the Federal government, which it accused of starving the Biafran people into submission. The Federal government's attitude did little to lessen the fears of such an eventuality. Federal military commander Colonel Benjamin Adekunle, nicknamed the 'Black Scorpion', proclaimed that he wished 'to prevent even one Ibo having one piece to eat before their capitulation'.<sup>4</sup> The Federal authorities argued that the humanitarian assistance given to the Biafrans simply prolonged the war, not least by the weapons, fuel and other comforts it claimed JCA and other aid agencies carried alongside their humanitarian cargoes. The suspicion was mutual. With the JCA, ICRC and other aid flights a target for the Federal Air Force – to the extent that they flew only at night – repeated efforts to negotiate a land-based relief corridor met with suspicion on the Biafran side that the Federal army would use it to its advantage. Among the Biafran people and a considerable number of relief workers, the ICRC's relationship with the Federal authorities placed it under immediate suspicion. In many instances the Biafrans refused to eat food supplied by the ICRC in the belief that it had been poisoned during its transit through Lagos.

It put additional strain on the JCA air lift, which assumed the primary role of supplying relief. Several JCA pilots perished in awkward landings at the barely-lit Uli airstrip and those that continued lived in constant danger of attack from the Federal air force. In June 1969 a Swedish DC-7 plane carrying Red Cross supplies which took off too early was shot down by Federal pilots. By then the relationship between the Federal government and the ICRC had disintegrated, and the latter was instructed by the authorities to transfer responsibility for its operations to the sole custody of the local Nigerian Red Cross. Between then and the end of the war seven months later, repeated efforts to re-start ICRC relief operations failed. When Biafra collapsed in January 1970 the Nigerian government held fast to the suspicions it had developed during the war,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Quoted in Tony Farmar, *Believing in action: Concern the first thirty years, 1968-98* (Dublin, 2002), p. 25.

and refused to allow any of the aid organisations that had operated unauthorised relief flights to take part in the rehabilitation effort.

The prominent role assumed by Nordchurchaid, Caritas Internationalis, and smaller NGOs highlighted the international impact Biafra had on the role of development NGOs in the provision of relief. It came during a time of increasing debate about the role of aid, stimulated by changes in the international system after the Second World War and Western discussion about the role of development assistance in the promotion of international peace and stability. As the emphasis shifted to what Colette Chabbott described as 'the conceptualisation of international development as an essential global undertaking<sup>5</sup>, it stimulated the growth of non-denominational NGOs able to undertake aspects of development out of reach of inter-governmental aid. As Peter Macalister-Smith noted, its practical effect was to 'bridge functionally the separation that exists between the State and the individual in international law doctrine'.<sup>6</sup> Individuals in the developed world could relate directly to their counterparts in the developing world without recourse to state intervention. Biafra and the extensive media coverage it enjoyed revolutionised that process even further. During the conflict there was a marked rise in the number of development NGOs formed internationally, and the experience it offered indirectly gave birth to a number of organisations, including the French NGO Médécins Sans Frontières, whose founder members included a group of French Red Cross doctors who had served in Biafra.<sup>7</sup> The crisis marked a turning point for the global acceptance of development NGOs as actors in the transfer of resources, so that by the 1970s and 1980s their role and identity in the provision of this form of relief had been broadly accepted.<sup>8</sup>

The Irish experience of growth in the development NGO sector followed a broadly similar pattern. Prior to the Biafran crisis dialogue on development issues in Ireland was limited. Fund-raising took place primarily in a religious context, through

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Colette Chabbott, 'Development INGOs', in John Boli and George M. Thomas, *Constructing world culture: international nongovernmental organisations since 1875* (Stanford, 1999), p. 237.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Macalister-Smith, International humanitarian assistance, p. 117.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> For a brief history of the organisation, see Joelle Tanguy, 'The Médecins Sans Frontières experience', in Kevin M. Cahill (ed.), *A framework for survival: health, human rights and humanitarian assistance in conflict and disasters* (London, 1999), pp. 226-44.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Aengus Finucane, 'The changing roles of voluntary organisations', in Kevin M. Cahill (ed.), *A framework for survival: health, human rights and humanitarian assistance in conflict and disasters* (London, 1999), p. 246.

collections at parish level for missionaries and other relief (including the British charity Christian Aid). It stimulated very little in the way of public debate on the merits and structures of development assistance and the role of the state and NGOs in the provision of relief. Secular activity was equally limited. The Irish Red Cross, which had operated a hospital in the Normandy town of St Lô in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War and later deployed its resources in India, responded generously to ICRC requests for assistance but did little to encourage widespread public involvement.<sup>9</sup> In the 1960s it assumed an additional role, at the request of the Irish government, undertaking the day-to-day operations of the Irish Freedom from Hunger Campaign (FFHC), part of an effort by the FAO to provide long-term solutions to the developing world through the provision of equipment and training in agricultural methods. The Irish Red Cross's involvement with the FFHC from the latter's inception in 1960 until 1965 epitomised the nature of Irish NGO activity in the 1960s. The public's response was good, if not overwhelming. Schools, businesses, and small groups of interested individuals involved themselves in various fund-raising schemes, including walks and flag-days, to raise money and awareness. The difficulty lay in translating these pockets of active support into a broader fund-raising and educational awareness campaign.

In an effort to stimulate greater public interest, the campaign's organisers fell back on an image of Ireland's relationship with the developing world influenced largely by missionary activity. In April 1962 they decided to concentrate the campaign's efforts on Africa 'on the grounds of language, existing Irish connections, and popular appeal'.<sup>10</sup> In the early part of 1964 a village settlement scheme with a farmers' training centre was established at Mlale in Tanzania, and run by two Irish agricultural graduates, Bill Harty and Paschal Hennessy. By the end of May 1965, the moderate figure of £143,685 had been collected from public contributions, all of which went towards the project, with an additional £12,000 provided by the Irish government towards the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> For a history of the Irish Red Cross operation at Saint-Lô, see Phyllis Gaffney, *Healing amid the ruins: the Irish hospital at Saint-Lô (1945-46)* (Dublin, 1999).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, 'Note of Discussion [re FFHC] on 11<sup>th</sup> April, 1962', NAI DFA 2001/43/1167.

scheme's servicing costs.<sup>11</sup> The difficulties the project faced were a reminder of the Irish NGOs' inexperience and the problems of translating goodwill into constructive action. After a good initial start, in the autumn of 1966 Hennessy left after the project had been restructured, and after further interference – or 'local manoeuvring' as one Department of Agriculture official described it<sup>12</sup> – Harty followed in May 1967 and the project was handed over to the Tanzanian government.

While the relative failure of the Mlale project owed much to outside interference, it was manifestly insufficient for the organisation of the FFHC to remain a subsidiary operation of the Irish Red Cross. The considerable strain it placed on the latter hindered its own success and made it difficult to sustain growth. From the latter part of 1964, officials in the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (which had primary official responsibility for the FFHC), in consultation with the Taoiseach's office, began the process of creating a national body to deal solely with the campaign. Rejecting overtures from Oxfam to take on a role in collecting for the FFHC in Ireland, officials structured a new body with a wide-ranging base in Irish society. The launch of Gorta by the Minister for Agriculture Charles Haughey on 8 November 1965 was the result. Stressing his hope for a strong Irish response to the campaign - since the Irish people 'know well the meaning of famine and hunger'<sup>13</sup> – Haughey's speech highlighted the limited extent to which the FFHC's message had permeated Irish society. He described one of Gorta's primary aims as an attempt to 'awaken public opinion ... to an awareness of the problem of world hunger and the steps which must be taken to alleviate it'.<sup>14</sup> Five years after the FFHC began in Ireland, it struggled to stimulate the kind of widespread public involvement necessary to transform its fortunes. It continued to be a movement from above rather than a campaign of the people. President de Valera acted as patron, the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries was made president of Gorta, and a representative of that department took a permanent position on its committee. The Minister controlled the appointment of committee

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Department of Agriculture and Fisheries memorandum for the Government, 'The FAO Freedom from Hunger Campaign', 10 Aug. 1965, NAI DFA 2003/17/265.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Nagle to Blaney, 23 June 1967, NAI DFA 2001/43/1175.

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> 'Address by the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, Mr Charles J Haughey, at the inauguration of GORTA, the Freedom from Hunger Council of Ireland, at the Shelbourne Hotel, Dublin, on Monday, 8<sup>th</sup> November, 1965', NAI DFA 2001/43/1156.
 <sup>14</sup> Ibid.

members, which included representatives from agriculture, industry, political organisations, church bodies, and various other organisations. What Tony Farmar described as its attempt 'in a rather literal-minded way to be representative of all walks of Irish life'<sup>15</sup> merely created an additional burden by the over-complicated structure it imposed. The gap between the organisation and popular involvement was too great and in spite of a gradually increasing number of Irish men and women working in the developing world with organisations like the United Nations Development Programme and the Catholic lay missionary organisation Viatores Christi, levels of public interest and activity remained very modest.<sup>16</sup>

The inclusion of church representatives on Gorta's committee testified to the churches' importance in shaping public attitudes towards the developing world, a role reiterated by the increasing involvement of missionaries in relief on a more practical level. In 1967, for example, Gorta collaborated with Irish Catholic missionaries in setting up a project to bring water to the Kitui region of Kenya. The role of the missionary was evolving in other respects too. Several Holy Ghost missionaries, notably Fr Tony Byrne and Fr Aengus Finucance, both of whom became important to the aid effort in Biafra, completed university courses in development prior to the conflict, all of which formed part of a broadening of missionary work beyond churchbuilding to include roads, schools, wells, and other kinds of physical development. The same changes were visible at a higher level in the Church's structure where the emphasis had begun to shift. Caritas Internationalis's activities as part of JCA during the Biafran crisis and Pope Paul VI's 1967 encyclical *Populorum Progressio* testified to a new role for the Catholic Church in development and disaster relief.

During the Biafran conflict, missionaries assumed a prominent role in the distribution of relief, offering a ready-made network of volunteers and distribution centres that distinguished the humanitarian response from those that went before it, and almost all that went after,<sup>17</sup> and were critically important in the global context. A

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Farmar, Believing in action, p. 30.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Viatores Christi was formed in 1960 by a group of interested lay individuals and fostered by the Legion of Mary and the lay missionary quickly assumed an important role as what one missionary publication described 'a co-worker, a reliable friend, a fellow missionary with the priest on the mission field,' 'The place of the lay helper on the missions', *Catholic Missions*, Vol. 126, No. 3 (July 1962), pp. 6-7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Finucane, 'The changing roles of voluntary organisations', p. 249.

number of Irish Holy Ghost Fathers, including Fr Raymond Kennedy, Fr Fintan Kilbride, Fr Tony Byrne, and Fr Dermot Doran, played central roles in international discussion and debate and in generating action on behalf of Biafra. Several were transformed 'into the role of international celebrities' through their role in publicising the plight of the Biafran people.<sup>18</sup> As their stories filtered through to the Irish media and directly to the Irish public, they became the primary shapers of popular discussion. Their experience of the war testified to the new and active role they played among the people of their parishes. One Marist Brother based at Uturu in Biafra recorded his experience of a typical day on his mission:

Two brothers had the early morning task of digging a grave and burying any child who died during the night. The grave was not then filled; just a light coat of clay covered the corpses. Invariably another little corpse had to be put into the grave before dinner, a few more during the afternoon and as darkness fell there were always five or more in the grave when the Brothers went to fill it in.<sup>19</sup>

The suffering did not recognise religious boundaries, to which the experience of Irish Protestant missionaries testified. Robert Burke, a former Senator from Galway, worked as a missionary with the Anglican Church Missionary Society under George Cockin, Bishop of Owerri, in Biafra. The scenes he and his wife witnessed in Biafra were typical of those who worked in the provision of relief:

Hundreds of hungry people come to us from 7 am to 7 pm and later appealing for food ... even if our supplies were doubled, we would not have enough. Besides destitute individuals, the appeals come from over 300 refugee camps, more than 250 feeding centres, many hospitals and clinics, even from prisons ... the human suffering in many of our camps is terrible. If I were in their condition I would pray for death.<sup>20</sup>

#### THE BEGINNINGS OF IRISH AID TO BIAFRA

These private accounts of the humanitarian crisis augmented the public activities of those who campaigned on Biafra's behalf. Chief among them was Fr Raymond Kennedy, director of orientation in Owerri diocese, who was undertaking a training course in the United States when the region secended. Determined to have a positive

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Ken Waters, 'Influencing the message: the role of Catholic missionaries in media coverage of the Nigerian civil war', *The Catholic Historical Review*, Vol. 90, No. 4 (2004) p. 698.

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> 'Brother Francis writes on Marist Mission in Nigeria', HGPA BP Box 7 – Wartime Accounts.
 <sup>20</sup> Quoted in Hodgins, *Sister island*, p. 22.

impact, Kennedy began to canvass support for Biafra in various American circles. He used the connections of his brother Colm, an engineer resident in California, to meet with Hank Wharton, an American entrepreneur and active supporter and supplier of military assistance to Ojukwu's regime, who ferried Kennedy to Biafra on one of his planes in December 1967. In the week he spent there to assess conditions, Kennedy met with Catholic and government officials and was 'reported to have arranged interviews' with Oiukwu.<sup>21</sup> He returned with a list of requests from the Catholic Bishops for altar bread and wine and from doctors for medical supplies. With the intention of launching an appeal to raise funds to send the goods to Biafra, Kennedy's brother, John O'Loughlin Kennedy, organised a press conference in the Shelbourne Hotel for 12 December 1967, less than twenty-four hours after Raymond's return from Biafra. The latter's motives clashed directly with those of his Holy Ghost Superior, Fr Dinan, who refused to allow him permission to participate. The press conference was led instead by John O'Loughlin Kennedy, but to little avail; the appeal received only a few lines in the Evening Press after 'somebody' rang the newspapers and 'killed the story'.<sup>22</sup> It was, however, at least a qualified success; a supply of fibrinogen was immediately dispatched from Ireland, followed later by a consignment of dried milk, paid for from the money collected as a result of the appeal.

Within twenty-four hours of the press conference an annoyed Fr Kennedy returned to the United States to work with Doran and Kilbride in raising awareness of Biafra's plight. His brother John and sister-in-law Kay were left to continue their work to raise awareness of the issue. In January 1968, a Dublin doctor Charles Hamilton organised a consignment of medical supplies which was sent to Biafra in co-operation with 'a special committee headed by Mr John O'Loughlin Kennedy'.<sup>23</sup> The issue slowly gathered momentum. On 19 March 1968, using their contacts in Viatores Christi, the Kennedys invited members of the Holy Ghost, Kiltegan and Vincentian missionary orders, as well as other individuals, including Vincent Grogan, Supreme Knight of the Knights of Columbanus, to a meeting in their home on Northumberland Road in Dublin. 'Without a clear idea of what was to be done',<sup>24</sup> the group assumed the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Ó Tuathail to Gallagher, 19 Dec. 1967, NAI DFA 2000/14/19.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Interview with John O'Loughlin Kennedy, Dublin, 16 Jan. 2006.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> 'Irish medical help for Biafra', Irish Independent, 23 Jan. 1968.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Farmar, *Believing in action*, p. 15.

name 'Africa Concern' and decided to meet every Tuesday night 'until we found some way of doing something'.<sup>25</sup> Its fund-raising activities gradually began to bring subscriptions and volunteers to Northumberland Road. At the same time, Grogan began to receive 'a number of subscriptions ... as a result of a reference made to me in a press interview' with Chief Jerome Udoji and Chief Robert Olisa, two representatives from Biafra sent to Europe by the Archbishop of Onitsha, on their visit to Dublin in March 1968.<sup>26</sup> In April the Knights of Columbanus joined with other groups in forming an inter-denominational appeal called the Nigeria/Biafra Refugee Fund, which involved Judge Kingsmill Moore, Donal Nevin and others. By the end of June, the fund had raised £3,500 for the relief of refugees, part of which was sent to Dr Joseph Whelan, the Holy Ghost Bishop of Owerri.<sup>27</sup>

These activities, the slowly increasing media attention, and the vocal support for the issue from among the missionary ranks began to have a visible effect elsewhere. In April 1968 the Irish Red Cross sent £5,000 in aid to Biafra in response to the ICRC's worldwide appeal, and the following month a UCD 'committee to aid Nigerian civil war refugees' was created among its staff and graduates. The Catholic Hierarchy also became involved, and by the end of June had raised what the Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise, Cahal Daly, called 'a princely contribution by Irish Christianity to our suffering brothers' of £40,000,<sup>28</sup> channelled through the Irish Red Cross. The groups succeeded in raising limited support, but on their own their activities were somewhat disjointed. Like Oxfam in Britain, Catholic Relief Services in the United States, and various other development NGOs, they struggled to transform their actions into substantial public support in the months prior to the media's full embrace of the subject. All changed in the early summer of 1968. On 12 June British television station ITV broadcast film footage from a refugee camp in Biafra of 'heart-breaking scenes of children slowly dying in makeshift hospital beds because they had no food or medicine'.<sup>29</sup> The images broke the media silence on the mounting humanitarian

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> John O'Loughlin Kennedy, quoted in John A. Daly and Anthony G. Saville, *The History of Joint Church Aid: Volume III* (1971), p. 844; a copy of this three-volume unpublished manuscript is held by the HGPA.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Grogan to ed., *The Irish Times*, 29 March 1968.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Grogan to ed., *The Irish Times*, 28 June 1968.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Quoted in 'Biafra dominates meeting of Knights', *The Irish Times*, 28 June 1968.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Waters, 'Influencing the message', p. 697.

disaster. Newspaper coverage had had an enormous impact, but it was the transformation of television as a medium for the transmission of graphic news that proved most significant. Biafra became what Aengus Finucane later described as 'the first major disaster that was brought into the living rooms of the world by television, which, with its visual immediacy, challenged indifference to faraway suffering'.<sup>30</sup>

Laurie Wiseberg argued that to be effective the humanitarian campaign required that the concern it articulated had 'already been viewed as a matter of importance by some minimal number of societal groups or organisations'.<sup>31</sup> The groundwork done by missionaries, Africa Concern, the Nigeria/Biafra Refugee Fund, and others created the kind of environment conducive to a widespread acceptance of their message. The arrival from Biafra of George Cockin, Anglican Bishop of Owerri, and Limerick-born Dr Joseph Whelan, his Catholic counterpart, in late June 1968 transformed the Irish public's relationship with the crisis. With the intention of initiating a campaign to raise relief funds, the bishops presented their case in terms designed to evoke the maximum response from the Irish public. In his speeches Whelan described the Irish people as 'kin to the Biafrans',<sup>32</sup> their relationship forged by a common historical experience. Where Haughey defined the Irish people's connection with Gorta in the broadest terms, Whelan made the link directly between Ireland's past and the present difficulties of the Biafran people: 'The Biafrans like the Irish suffered persecution for faith and Fatherland. And now there is one final and terrible likeness. Biafra is in the grip of a great hunger ... Let the Voice of Ireland carry the message of Biafra to the world and save Ireland's spiritual children from extermination.<sup>33</sup> His use of the phrase 'great hunger', borrowed from the title of Cecil Woodham-Smith's popular 1962 book on the Irish Famine,<sup>34</sup> illustrated how Irish historical experience could be appropriated for a new purpose. It played on the presumed existence of popular memory of famine to which both John O'Loughlin Kennedy and Fr Tony Byrne later attributed the strength

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Finucane, 'The changing roles of voluntary organisations', p. 247.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Wiseberg, 'The international politics of relief', p. 548.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Bishop Joseph Whelan, 'The Great Hunger: Biafra and Ireland', 26 June 1968, HGPA BP Box 1: Bishop Whelan Papers.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Cecil Woodham Smith, *The great hunger: Ireland 1845-9* (London, 1962).

of the Irish public's response,<sup>35</sup> and it gave new and practical meaning to the link between Irish history and the contemporary developing world.

# THE IRISH HUMANITARIAN EFFORT

The bishops' message was more than a simple exhortation to action based on vague notions of Irish identity, and its success lay in what Wiseberg described as 'the reducibility of the issue to dimensions that can be readily understood by a large cross section of the population. People can readily understand and react to "the need to feed starving children".'<sup>36</sup> On 28 June they appeared at a meeting at Ely Hall organised by Africa Concern to debate the relief situation and used the occasion to launch the Joint Biafra Famine Appeal (JBFA), a combined effort between Africa Concern and the Nigeria/Biafra Refugee Fund. Its aim was simple: to raise £100,000 in five weeks to 'Send One Ship' of supplies to Biafra. The simplicity of the request and the manner in which it was presented brought immediate success. News of its launch filtered out on the morning of 28 June and before that evening's meeting contributions of £5,000 came in from the Irish public. As Whelan continued his tour of Ireland, meeting individuals, groups, and officials, including the President, the JBFA continued to gain momentum. By the time he left Ireland on 9 July the environment had been transformed; Whelan found himself 'moved' by the extent of the Irish people's response.<sup>37</sup>

The public's generosity, stimulated by the urgency of the bishops' appeal, also owed much to the Irish media's attitude to the crisis. In the immediate aftermath of the Ely Hall meeting the *Evening Herald* put its full weight behind the Biafran relief campaign. On 2 July 1968 it ran large front-page photos of starving Biafran children under the heading 'Faces of Despair',<sup>38</sup> and the following day launched its UNICEF/Herald Biafran Fund from contributions that arrived on the back of the images. It presented the conflict in simple terms and pressed the Taoiseach to recognise the plight of 'a young Biafran child too young to know what the civil war is all about and suffering too much to care'.<sup>39</sup> The television coverage was not long in following.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> Interview with Kennedy (16 Jan. 2006); and interview with Fr Tony Byrne, Dublin, 21 Feb. 2007.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Wiseberg, 'The international politics of relief', p. 550.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> 'Moving tribute by Bishop to Ireland', Irish Independent, 10 July 1968.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> 'Faces of Despair', *Evening Herald*, 2 July 1968.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> 'Please Mr Lynch', *Evening Herald*, 6 July 1968.

In early July 'Seven Days', 'with understandable caution' and with every effort 'to maintain a neutral position', re-opened the question of Biafra. In the course of its programme it broadcast a short film report introduced by an Irish nun with the comment 'What you see is more eloquent than words'.<sup>40</sup> Ken Gray's report in *The Irish Times* noted the shift in the question: 'The continuous, animal-like crying of starving and emaciated children, for whom a quick death is the only merciful prospect, cannot be answered in terms of argument about the strategy of war or the niceties of diplomatic relationships.<sup>41</sup> The purely political basis for policy-making had changed and, the *Carlow Nationalist* noted, a stage reached 'when niceties of diplomatic procedures have to take second place and our humanitarian instincts allowed to have free rein'.<sup>42</sup>

The JBFA's success depended largely on its ability to translate this media attention into popular action. Africa Concern used its connections to persuade businesses to donate space, furniture, and office supplies to the campaign and filled donated advertising space with advertisements carrying emotional slogans such as 'Is one meal a day too much to ask?' alongside photographs of malnourished Biafran children. It installed its own telex to become a purveyor and shaper of news on Biafra. To assist its collections the JBFA introduced a system of county-by-county quotas devised by John O'Loughlin Kennedy which gave each county in Ireland a target contribution and helped to instil a healthy sense of rivalry and competition and to increase the amount collected at the same time. It proved extremely successful. By the end of August 1968 the appeal collected £148,819, easily surpassing the initial target of £100,000.43 In March 1969 Bishop Whelan announced to a press conference in Dublin that the JBFA had surpassed £300,000 and was, per person, 'the highest contribution made in any part of the world'.<sup>44</sup> Throughout the conflict the appeal continued to benefit from the generosity of the Irish public, and Africa Concern's income during the war exceeded £1 million, a level not matched until the Ethiopian famine of 1983/84.45

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> Ken Gray, 'The Biafran horror – television', *The Irish Times*, 11 July 1968.
 <sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> 'Ireland's role in Nigerian crisis', *Carlow Nationalist*, 5 July 1968, NAI DFA 2000/14/22.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> Figures from Africa Concern, *First annual report of the Joint Biafra Famine Appeal for the year ending 30<sup>th</sup> June 1969* (n.p, n.d. [1969]), p. 18.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Quoted in 'Lead world in aid for Biafra', Irish Independent, 29 March 1969.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> Farmar, *Believing in action*, p. 24.

In July 1968, shortly after chartering an English ship, the SS Korbach, to convey relief supplies to Biafra, the organisation was incorporated as Africa Concern Ltd in order to allow it to purchase a ship, re-named the Columcille, to distribute its relief supplies. It had a somewhat 'testy' relationship with JCA on São Tomé, the latter frowning on Africa Concern's tendency to include what it termed 'luxury' items (including beer for relief workers) with its relief supplies.<sup>46</sup> In February 1969 Africa Concern began its own airlift from Libreville in Gabon directly to Biafra. The decision to co-operate with Belgian International Air Service (BIAS), which transported arms to Biafra, in the airlift, compounded the organisation's dubious reputation in the eyes of the Federal authorities. Its close relationship with the Holy Ghost Fathers and the involvement of Fr Kennedy - in October 1968 appointed general manager of Africa Concern and the following month labelled the head of 'an alleged gigantic Catholic operation currently bringing hundreds of mercenaries into Biafra<sup>,47</sup> – confirmed its bias in Federal eyes. Not even a visit by Grogan to Lagos in December 1968, where he met with officials from the Federal government, could counter the 'considerable irritation in Lagos government circles about reported statements of some Irish missionaries and about what was thought to be Irish support for the Biafran political cause'.<sup>48</sup>

The accusations appeared to matter little to the Irish public, which continued to contribute to the campaign. The attention it generated had a considerable knock-on effect on the activities of established NGOs in Ireland. The Irish Red Cross found itself 'swamped ... with Biafran relief supplies donated by Irish people' in the week after Bishop Whelan's visit.<sup>49</sup> On 9 July 1968 the organisation shipped £40,000 worth of relief to Santa Isabel, a Spanish island off the West African coast, from where it was to be airlifted to Biafra. In the course of the war it continued to offer considerable assistance, including the provision of a number of medical teams important to the ICRC relief effort. Gorta, by contrast, 'was established to help people ... to help themselves,'<sup>50</sup> part of a longer-term strategy for development. Prior to the Biafran crisis it had only begun to establish itself in Irish public consciousness through its fund-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> Interview with Kennedy (16 Jan. 2006).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> 'Priest "isn't mercenary organiser", Irish Press, 28 Nov. 1968.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> 'Famine relief chief back from Lagos', *The Irish Times*, 14 Dec. 1968.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> 'No stop in famine aid to Biafra', *Irish Press*, 8 July 1968.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> Bean T. de Barra to ed., *Irish Press*, 27 June 1968.

raising and the projects it ran in Tanzania and Kenya. Its initial foray into Nigeria in 1967, a £2,500 grant to a project in Kaduna, Northern Nigeria, was to be matched by projects planned for Onitsha, Owerri, and Ogoja in the Eastern Region before 'the outbreak of hostilities prevented these from being carried out'.<sup>51</sup> During the conflict the organisation ran a small number of projects in Federal-run areas, part of an effort to regenerate the area in the aftermath of the conflict, all of which were 'based upon proposals submitted by missionaries and projects which are or will be managed by missionaries'.<sup>52</sup> They provided the tools to reconstruct the lives of those who suffered during the conflict: 'funds for basic material inputs such as seeds, tools, fertilisers and such things as garri grinders and rice threshers'.<sup>53</sup>

This kind of work was what Gorta's mandate from the FFHC demanded, but in the face of a humanitarian disaster on the scale experienced in Biafra, it placed the organisation in a position of difficulty. Long-term reconstruction projects could not, nor did they purport to, deal with the immediate difficulties of food shortage, malnourishment and starvation, nor could they grasp the attention of the broader public in the manner of disaster relief. In March 1969 the Minister for Agriculture Neil Blaney suggested that Gorta 'might consider co-operating with emergency relief organisations in stricken areas such as Biafra'.<sup>54</sup> The instructions publicly issued to the organisation's committee captured the essence of the problems it faced: 'to examine the best means whereby Gorta can fulfil its primary long-term objectives of helping others to feed themselves, but also to consider if we can give encouragement and practical help in that ghastly intermediate period of despair and hopelessness'.<sup>55</sup> Gorta found itself caught between a desire to remain true to its defined objectives and the pressure exerted by the more immediate question of disaster relief. Within months, the immediacy of Africa Concern's campaign and its promotion of a new form of development NGO from within Irish society eclipsed Gorta's fund-raising activities. By the middle of 1969, the organisation privately complained of 'a big reduction in subscriptions due primarily to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> 'Gorta in Nigeria', Gorta News, No. 1 (1970).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> Gorta document, 'Projects – Current and Planned. Annex "A" to minutes of Council Meeting on 9 Oct. 1969', NAI DFA 2005/145/1608.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> 'Gorta may help famine fighters', Irish Press, 20 March 1969.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> Quoted in ibid.

the preoccupation of the public and press with the Nigeria/Biafra situation'.<sup>56</sup> Africa Concern's close relationship with the Irish media, its growth from within an interested section of the population, and its simple direct message, contrasted with Gorta's complex and unwieldy committee structure and its close association with the Irish government, and this left it simply unable to compete.

# THE IRISH GOVERNMENT'S HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

The impact of Africa Concern's activities was not limited to the NGO sector. The widespread support it generated placed considerable pressure on the Irish government, which had hitherto largely eschewed public debate on Biafra. It presented Irish officials with a dilemma akin to that raised by the missionaries' position: a desire to assist in their efforts married to a necessity to minimise the political impact of its policies. The principle of non-interference and the desire to avoid any activity that might associate Irish citizens with the Biafran cause, central to its policy of non-recognition of Biafra, informed its approach to the humanitarian crisis. In October 1968 Keating warned that 'participation in relief in this country [Nigeria] is essentially a political one and that we should consider everything done by the State ... not merely in terms of relief for Nigeria but in terms of political consequences for us'.<sup>57</sup> It followed that the Irish government should channel its relief contributions through agencies acceptable to the Federal government: the ICRC and, later in the war, UNICEF.

Influenced by Federal preferences, the decision fitted a broader pattern of Irish foreign policy. The ICRC was a universally accepted supra-national body whose activities took place 'outside the political sphere and pronouncing no judgements'.<sup>58</sup> Its neutrality of action made the ICRC, in Aiken's view, 'a most valuable organisation in a situation such as the civil war in Nigeria'.<sup>59</sup> The precedent set in previous crises was at least as important; since the Irish Red Cross was already the government's 'accepted channel of relief aid ... it would be very foolish to depart from a practice which the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> Blaney to Hillery, 29 July 1969, NAI DFA 2005/145/1608.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> Keating to Ó Tuathail, 28 Oct. 1968, NAI DFA Lagos P13/7/2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> Macalister-Smith, International humanitarian assistance, p. 90.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> Hand-written notes by Aiken on Nigeria, undated, UCDA Aiken Papers P104/7148.

people accepted'.<sup>60</sup> The correspondence between the Irish government's political attitude to Biafra and the manner in which it approached the humanitarian crisis paralleled broader international trends. The Canadian government, whose political assessment of the war the Irish government closely matched, channelled all of its aid contributions through the ICRC, and argued that that to do otherwise 'would violate the principle of non-interference in Nigeria's internal affairs'.<sup>61</sup> The Nordic governments, the United States, and West Germany, more willing to become involved pro-actively in mediation, provided relief through both the ICRC and the JCA airlift. The French government, which offered support but not recognition to Biafra, gave assistance to the independent French Red Cross airlift from Libreville in Gabon directly to Biafra.

In each case, the nature of government response corresponded closely with the levels of public activity on the issue. The Irish government was no different. It chose 28 June 1968, the day Cockin and Whelan launched the 'Send One Ship' campaign in Dublin, to announce its intention to contribute £100,000 to the Irish Red Cross 'for the purchase of food and medicines in Ireland for despatch to Nigeria, and particularly to the distressed districts in the Eastern Region'.<sup>62</sup> The wording of its statement was important. It assumed a leading role for the government in the direction of relief, and allowed it to distance itself from accusations that it favoured either side, while simultaneously recognising that it was in the East that the problem was most significant. When the Irish Red Cross consignment left Dublin port on 9 July, DEA officials were present, having persuaded the Nigerian Chargé d'Affaires also to attend. As the JBFA gained momentum, on 29 August 1968 the Irish government donated a further £25,000 to the Irish Red Cross, and the efforts of Hillery to review policy the following year were a direct reaction to the evolving public debate. The comparison with the Canadian government's attitude is instructive. The latter made three contributions to the relief effort, in May, July and September 1968, each the result of public pressure and debate.63

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup> 'Note on interview given by Tánaiste to Mr John O'Loughlin Kennedy of Africa Concern Ltd on 17<sup>th</sup> April 1969', NAI DFA 2000/14/36.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup> David R. Morrison, Aid and ebb tide: a history of CIDA and Canadian development assistance (Ontario, 1998), p. 75.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup> DEA press release, 28 June 1968, NAI DFA 2000/14/37.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup> Wiseberg, 'The international politics of relief', pp. 255-6.

The initial contribution of £100,000 apart, the problem with the Irish government's policies stemmed from the fact that they were largely reactive rather than pro-active. Its assertion that the ICRC offered a 'central authority' through which relief could be channelled most effectively and efficiently,<sup>64</sup> ran into difficulty as the organisation's operations gradually lost their effectiveness. The argument essentially became self-defeating since, as Wiseberg noted, 'using this criterion, a policy change should have logically come about in June 1969, if not sooner'.<sup>65</sup> The refusal to countenance any alternative channel for Irish humanitarian assistance drastically reduced the effectiveness of its contributions. The Irish Movement for Peace in Nigeria/Biafra, a loosely-based pressure group, warned in March 1969 that the Irish public would 'not easily be convinced that financial contributions to the Red Cross relieve their Government of the obligation to live up to this statement of its duty'.<sup>66</sup> The review initiated by Hillery on his appointment as Minister in July of the same year recognised the shortcomings of government policy. His meetings with officials from both sides of the war, representatives of the missionary orders, and officials from various Irish relief agencies added an urgency to the situation missing in Aiken's private attempts to exhort the Federal authorities to open a relief corridor and to re-open the ICRC airlift. On 17 July Hillery instructed Keating to explore with the Federal government 'most urgently, for the short term, ways to restart relief supplies going into Biafra'.67

When those attempts proved less than fruitful, he continued his efforts elsewhere. In Geneva the Chargé d'Affaires Brendan Nolan remained in close contact with ICRC officials, including Auguste Lindt, the organisation's Commissioner General, and in September 1969 Ó Tuathail travelled to an ICRC conference in Istanbul in order to represent the Irish government's interests in re-starting the airlift. By November 1969, in the belief that 'we cannot postpone further assistance any longer',<sup>68</sup> Hillery entered into negotiations with Africa Concern's representatives about the most effective form of assistance to Biafra. The result – a £25,000 loan to UNICEF to charter

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> Keating to Ronan, 27 Aug. 1968, NAI DFA 2000/14/36.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>65</sup> Wiseberg, 'The international politics of relief', p. 196.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>66</sup> Hanahoe to Aiken, 4 March 1969, NAI DFA 2001/43/133.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup> Ó Tuathail, 'Briefing Note No.4 on Nigerian Relief', 1 Sept. 1969, NAI DFA 2000/14/35.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>68</sup> Hillery to de Barra, 27 Nov. 1969, NAI DFA 2002/19/24.

the *Columcille* to use it for the shipment of relief supplies and equipment along the Nigerian coast – compromised between Aiken's commitment to multilateral channels and Hillery's determination to take positive action. The additional £10,500 made available to UNICEF for its relief operations and a further £50,000 to the Irish Red Cross underlined the seriousness of Hillery's commitment.

The decision to channel Irish funds through UNICEF carried two further implications. In the publicity stakes, the direct contribution of £10,500 offered 'an opportunity to make up for our very poor record in supporting UNICEF over the years by comparison with other countries', and to match the £30,000 already sent by the Irish National UNICEF Committee.<sup>69</sup> The decision had further, negative connotations. By transmitting its assistance through another body. Irish officials gave further indication of their inherent distrust of Africa Concern and their fear of being closely associated with its activities. From its inception, the relationship had been strained. What Ó Tuathail described as Africa Concern's 'extreme impatience with bureaucracy'<sup>70</sup> was in marked contrast with the Irish government's cautious approach to the conflict. John O'Loughlin Kennedy of Africa Concern captured the essence of the disagreement; '[they] found us impetuous and too ready to take a risk. We would have found them totally unready to take a risk.<sup>71</sup> The success of Africa Concern and its form of direct assistance challenged the Irish government to arrive at an adequate response. As Tony Farmar noted, it simply 'had very little experience or understanding of the kind of lobbying and activism that Africa Concern was involved with'.72

In a conflict in which the Irish government had little direct interest, Africa Concern's approach might have tested the former's patience. Given the situation of the Irish missionaries across Nigeria, the NGO's tactics, perceived political bias, and close association with the Holy Ghost Order became a source of constant irritation for the Irish government. The involvement of Fr Kennedy, known personally to Aiken (his father had fought alongside Aiken in the civil war) and to Ó Tuathail (whom he had taught at school) aroused the DEA's suspicion from the outset. Before he departed for

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>69</sup> Ó Tuathail to Holmes, 5 June 1969, NAI DFA Lagos P13/5/4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup> Ó Tuathail, 'Note on visit to Joint Biafra Famine Appeal/"Africa Concern" Headquarters: conversation with Father Doheny and Mr and Mrs John O'Loughlin Kennedy', 9 Nov. 1968, NAI DFA 2000/14/36.
<sup>71</sup> Interview with Kennedy (16 Jan. 2006).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup> Farmar, *Believing in action*, pp. 25-6.

Biafra in December 1967, Kennedy travelled to New York to meet with Aiken in an attempt to persuade the latter to act in favour of Biafra. He was not impressed; Kennedy later recalled that he 'more or less patted me on the back in a benign way, advised me not to go to Biafra, but rather to return to my comfortable parish in California and the saying of my prayers piously, and leave weighty affairs of State to competent mature experts like himself<sup>7</sup>.<sup>73</sup>

The suspicion aroused by Fr Kennedy's political bias and his association with Hank Wharton and others extended to Africa Concern. Before the Columcille left Dublin for São Tomé in August 1968, Seán Ronan told the general manager of Irish Shipping Limited of his department's 'fear that the ship might carry arms', possibly loaded outside Irish jurisdiction.<sup>74</sup> Ó Tuathail went as far as to investigate the possibility of 'making an order to prohibit the transport of arms and ammunition in Irish-owned ships', but was told by a Department of Transport and Power official that to do so would require new legislation.<sup>75</sup> The fear that any Irish relief effort might be used to transport ammunition drove the Irish Embassy in Lagos to even greater extremes. In Keating's eyes, the shipment had already been tarnished by its close association with Fr Kennedy and Fr Des Byrne of the Catholic Secretariat. The Ambassador was 'sorry to see so much goodwill and energy going to waste because the misdirected zeal of the organisers inevitably is pushing it to a dead end' and worried that John O'Loughlin Kennedy might endeavour to gain publicity for his organisation by setting out 'to embarrass both the Government and me by an approach to this Embassy should the opportunity arise'.<sup>76</sup> In the event, Keating may have done as much to draw attention to the shipment as Africa Concern. On 26 September 1968, he visited the Nigerian Commissioner for Transport and explained that the Columcille 'was in the hands of an Irish group, whom he might regard as having behaved in an over-emotional and irresponsible way'.<sup>77</sup> Aiken was more circumspect; though he viewed Africa Concern as a 'somewhat misguided endeavour', he was anxious to avoid public

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>73</sup> Quoted in 'Government inaction over Biafra is condemned', *The Irish Times*, 21 June 1969.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup> Note by Ronan, 9 Aug. 1968, NAI DFA 2000/14/36.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>75</sup> Ó Tuathail to Ronan, 12 Aug. 1968, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>76</sup> Keating to Ronan, 27 Aug. 1968, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>77</sup> Keating to Ó Tuathail, 27 Sept. 1968, ibid.

controversy and felt that 'all we can do with them is to be as helpful as possible in their particular endeavour'.<sup>78</sup>

Irish officials remained suspicious of and frustrated by Africa Concern's motives. In April 1969 Ó Tuathail speculated that the organisation was 'moving towards a more neutral and less explicitly pro-Biafran stance',<sup>79</sup> but a 'political statement' made by Fr Kennedy at a public meeting less than two months later was described by the same official as 'a good piece of pro-Biafran propaganda'.<sup>80</sup> Hillery's review of policy in July 1969, which asked officials to comment on the possibility of channelling relief directly through Africa Concern, simply served to re-emphasise the distance between the two parties. Ó Tuathail – praised in hindsight by John O'Loughlin Kennedy for being 'immensely helpful'<sup>81</sup> – and Keating exhibited a deep-rooted mistrust of the organisation. Ó Tuathail argued that to support Africa Concern was 'to some extent giving in to Ojukwu<sup>82</sup> and worried that the accusations of gun-running against it might lead the Irish government to become too closely associated with the Biafran cause. Less convincingly, but equally symptomatic of the Irish government's cautious approach, Ó Tuathail argued that to provide official assistance through Africa Concern would set a precedent for funding individual NGOs. In Lagos Keating went even further. He warned that '[a]ny direct grant of funds to Africa Concern will be regarded in Lagos as an appreciable change in policy'.<sup>83</sup> He worried at the level of control the Irish government would retain over the funding, given what he rather disingenuously described as the 'poor' methods of organisation employed by Africa Concern.<sup>84</sup> In November 1969, during the debate surrounding the lease of the Columcille through UNICEF, Keating returned again to his argument. He warned against any direct funding for the NGO and denounced 'the general amateurishness of Africa Concern's organisation, accounting procedures, etc, and the possibility of the danger of scandal at home if anything went wrong and the danger to the Government if

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>78</sup> Ronan to Keating, 9 Sept. 1968, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>79</sup> Ó Tuathail to Keating, 16 April 1969, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>80</sup> Ó Tuathail was reporting on the events at a public meeting in Ely Hall on 9 June 1969: Ó Tuathail to Holmes, 10 June 1969, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>81</sup> Interview with Kennedy (16 Jan. 2006).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>82</sup> Note by Ó Tuathail, 'Question of contributing Governmental funds towards Africa Concern air lift', 30 July 1969, NAI DFA 2001/43/134.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>83</sup> Keating was quoted in Ó Tuathail to private sec. to the Minister, 30 July 1969, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>84</sup> Note by Ó Tuathail, 'Question of contributing Governmental funds towards Africa Concern air lift', 30 July 1969, ibid.

too closely associated with Africa Concern'.<sup>85</sup> The organisation's 'pro-Biafra views' made it politically unacceptable in Lagos, he added, and commented on the 'carelessness of Africa Concern in the past in allowing arms to be mixed up with ... relief cargo'.<sup>86</sup>

Keating's comments testified to the strain placed on Irish officials by Africa Concern's popularity and the direct methods it adopted. Finding it impossible to control the direction of discussion on Biafra, the Irish government struggled to find an alternative strategy to its attempts to avoid 'public debate of any kind, and even public comment of any description'.<sup>87</sup> Its relationships with other NGOs relied on the same principles. Its praise for the activities of Caritas Internationalis, the Catholic relief agency that operated through JCA from São Tomé, could not dispel the perception among Irish missionaries in Biafra that the relief organisation was 'frowned upon by the Government'.<sup>88</sup> They were correct. In spite of Fr Tony Byrne's support for the policy of non-recognition,<sup>89</sup> and JCA's strict policy of checking its cargoes, the Irish government preferred to err on the side of caution in the face of the Federal government's accusation of gun-running against the organisation. When Fr Byrne was appointed acting director of Caritas Internationalis in Rome in January 1969, Ó Tuathail could not hide his disappointment; 'a lay-man or a non-Irish and non-C.S.Sp. [Holy Ghost] priest would have been better. Father Byrne's appointment can only feed the fears and suspicions of the Federal Government of a Caritas/Catholic/Irish C.S.Sp. anti-Federal conspiracy.<sup>90</sup>

Byrne had conspiracy theories of his own. In January 1969 a proposed interview on Raidió Éireann's 'Weekend Round About' programme was pulled at the last minute. Byrne claimed that Jim Sheeran, the programme's presenter, telephoned him the night before and told him, 'in an agitated manner, that his authorities were not agreeable to his interviewing Father Byrne during the Radio Programme'.<sup>91</sup> Ó Tuathail's denial of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>85</sup> Keating was paraphrased by Ó Tuathail in his note, 'Re Government's proposed contribution of £25,000 for Biafran relief', 16 Nov. 1969, NAI DFA 2000/14/39.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>87</sup> McCann to Ó Súilleabháin (DT), 11 Dec. 1967, NAI DFA 2001/43/125.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>88</sup> Shields to Holmes, 4 Feb. 1969, NAI DFA 2000/14/38.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>89</sup> Note by Ó Tuathail, 15 July 1968, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>90</sup> Hand-written note, Ó Tuathail to Holmes, 2 Jan. 1969, appended to cutting of 'Plans to beat Biafra famine', *Evening Herald*, 2 Jan. 1969, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>91</sup> Note by Ó Tuathail, 9 Jan. 1969, ibid.

any DEA involvement in the decision could not disguise his department's inherent conservativeness in dealing with Caritas Internationalis.<sup>92</sup> He and his officials argued that to support Byrne's airlift would be unconstitutional under Article 44.2 in which the state is prohibited from endowing any religion. In spite of Byrne's protestations that the article provided 'very little in the way of an obstacle',<sup>93</sup> the DEA maintained its opposition. The lightweight nature of the argument it put forward undermined the seriousness of its actual concerns. In November 1969, on investigation of the issue, the DEA's legal advisor found that the provision of assistance through JCA could not 'be remotely construed as endowing a religion under Article 44/2 of the Bunreacht'.<sup>94</sup>

The same was true of its relationship with Gorta, whose difficulty in competing with Africa Concern and the attempts by members of its committee to persuade the organisation to adopt more dramatic and visible projects created additional concerns for the DEA. Keating complained at the organisation's misguided motives and warned that 'Gorta may cause the Government and Irish missionaries in Nigeria grave embarrassment if it proceeds to dash money around without proper thought in an effort to compete with Africa Concern'.<sup>95</sup> The DEA's critical interest in Gorta's activities was in marked contrast to its previous attitude towards the organisation. As late as September 1968 Gorta's committee invited the DEA to co-operate with it on the grounds that its presence 'would be a very great help. Not only in the coordination of aid programmes generally but also in bringing influence to bear on developing countries to deal expeditiously with assistance projects which Gorta would be proposing.<sup>96</sup> Donal O'Sullivan thought the idea 'a good one', and was backed by McCann, but Aiken was opposed to the proposal.<sup>97</sup> In January 1969 he appears to have changed his mind about Gorta's importance, and responsibility for monitoring its affairs was transferred to the political section of the DEA.

Worried at the *ad hoc* and unstructured nature of Gorta's approach, the DEA attempted to use its influence to direct its efforts to more politically acceptable schemes in the West, North and 'liberated' areas of the East of Nigeria. In the hope that 'with

92 Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>93</sup> Shields to Holmes, 4 Feb. 1969, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>94</sup> Note by Ó Tuathail, 20 Nov. 1969, NAI DFA 2000/14/39.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>95</sup> Keating to Ó Tuathail, 25 Feb. 1969, NAI DFA Lagos P13/7/1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>96</sup> Donal O'Sullivan to sec. DEA, 18 Sept. 1968, NAI DFA 2002/19/275.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

patience we may still be able to lead Gorta like a bull by the nose towards a properly formulated programme', <sup>98</sup> Ó Tuathail involved himself closely in its activities. He met with missionaries, relief officials, and Gorta representatives and attempted to placate the organisation by giving it 'so much information that they can not complain that they have nothing from us and try to justify a trip to Nigeria/Biafra on these grounds'.<sup>99</sup> As his efforts met with the intransigence of some members of the committee – notably its secretary Commandant Sheeran, who visited Nigeria in January 1970 just prior to Biafra's collapse – Ó Tuathail became increasingly frustrated. In May 1969 he wrote of his wish that he 'could get Gorta straightened out ... they are taking up much too much time and unlike the Red Cross we do not see any worthwhile end product'.<sup>100</sup>

# IRELAND, THE LUNS/HAGUE GROUP AND HUMANITARIAN RELIEF

In the midst of Ó Tuathail's attempts to deal with Gorta, Keating wondered if the DEA's conservative approach had in fact hindered it in its attempts to win over the relief organisations to its way of thinking. In a letter to Ó Tuathail discussing Gorta's proposed activities on 29 May 1969, Keating wondered if the DEA 'should not be much more active in its co-ordination of relief activities – after all it provides most of the money when one takes the Red Cross into account also'.<sup>101</sup> He referred to the attitude of the Luns Group (also known as the Hague Group) of states, formed in the early part of 1969 at the behest of Dr Joseph Luns, the Dutch Foreign Minister, as a discussion group on developing relief operations in Nigeria. Its members were the EC states (except France), Denmark, Norway, Sweden, the United States, and Canada – all major aid-giving states to Nigeria. Keating commented that those states had 'a much more positive line with regard to relief and can depend on considerable co-operation from their relief authorities'.<sup>102</sup> An examination of the policies of the Nordic states bore testimony to his attitude. They shared a similar political approach to the war to that of Ireland but took a considerably more constructive attitude to the humanitarian crisis. In

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>98</sup> Ó Tuathail to Keating, 24 April 1969, NAI DFA Lagos P13/7/1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>99</sup> Ó Tuathail to Small, 23 July 1969, NAI DFA Lagos P13/5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>100</sup> Ó Tuathail to Keating, 16 May 1969, NAI DFA Lagos P13/7/1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>101</sup> Keating to Ó Tuathail, 29 May 1969, ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

addition to providing relief through the ICRC, each of the states provided aid through JCA, via Nordchurchaid.

The Irish government, by contrast, continued to adopt a defensive attitude to the humanitarian question. Its response to an invitation to join the Luns Group in March 1969 was typical. Eoin MacWhite, Irish Ambassador to the Netherlands, argued that membership would put Ireland

in excellent, indeed, impeccable company. Its direct sources of information and close liaison with the International Red Cross give us the opportunity to get a valuable spectrum of up-to-date information and opinion. The fact that the group includes the countries giving about 75% of the aid to Biafra makes it potentially effective and in view of our involvement in this aid, I think we should join it.<sup>103</sup>

His Minister took a more cautious view. Aiken saw

many possible difficulties in the Dutch initiative and in our participation in the group, in view of the great delicacy of all aspects of the Nigerian civil war at present ... As you will realise, the humanitarian issues arising out of the civil war have all along been closely interwoven with the political issues, and it cannot be expected that the Luns group will succeed in taking them in isolation, despite any wish they may have to do so.<sup>104</sup>

The conservativeness born of his political assessment of the conflict continued to dominate Aiken's approach. He dismissed the motives of the participating states, who were all, he argued, 'under strong public pressure on the whole Nigerian question'.<sup>105</sup> The Irish government was under similar pressure, but would not let itself be associated too closely with the group's efforts for fear of their political implications.

When he later agreed that Ireland join the group, Aiken included the caveat, expressed by Ó Tuathail at the first meeting of the group he attended on 31 March 1969, that 'participation would not commit [the Irish government] to action'.<sup>106</sup> Aiken's attitude paralleled the approach taken by the Finnish government, the exception among the Nordic states, which shared Aiken's wariness. It joined the Luns group alongside Ireland, Switzerland and Austria in March 1969, and at its first meeting on 31 March made a similar statement about its commitment to action. The essence of the two states' concerns was presented in an aide memoire delivered to the meeting by

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>103</sup> MacWhite to sec. DEA, 15 March 1969, NAI DFA 2001/43/153.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>104</sup> Ronan to MacWhite, 21 March 1969, ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>106</sup> Confidential US Embassy report from the Hague, 2 April 1969, NAUK FCO 65/279.

Ó Tuathail which outlined the Irish government's fears 'about possible misrepresentation of such joint consultations and if these were to give rise to misleading press speculation which might tend to postpone the opening of negotiations [between Nigeria and Biafra], they would wish to be free to restate their position'.<sup>107</sup> In spite of Dutch assurances that 'participation commits no one to more than [the] search for agreements on parallel actions and that [the] Group should do nothing that would hinder political settlement',<sup>108</sup> Aiken remained cautious. After the Dutch misleadingly stated in June 1969 that a meeting of the group had agreed to obtain permission for daylight flights to Uli, he informed them that Ireland's participation was 'now under consideration'.<sup>109</sup> Described by Ó Tuathail as an attempt to 'put down a marker',<sup>110</sup> it highlighted the government's nervousness at the potential implications of the group's activities.

In keeping with his more energetic attempt to find a solution to the humanitarian crisis and to consolidate Ireland's relationship with the EC states, Aiken's successor Hillery took a more positive approach. In a meeting with Luns on 15 July 1969 he expressed Ireland's 'appreciation ... for the initiative he had taken in relation to the Nigerian conflict' and asked 'whether there was anything further which he thought could be usefully done in the matter'.<sup>111</sup> Later that year Hillery used Irish participation in the group to his advantage as evidence of his constructive approach to the humanitarian crisis, describing it as 'a group of the major donor countries sharing a generally similar stand as regards the political issues' which met 'for informal discussions on the problems involved'.<sup>112</sup> In reality, as Hillery showed, the actions of the Luns Group were of little significance to the Federal government or to the Biafran authorities. Hillery's statements had no impact on Irish missionaries and did not bring any negative action against them. He recognised that Ireland could only benefit from its participation, in terms of its position on the conflict, its contribution to the relief effort,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>107</sup> Confidential aide-memoire, March 1969, NAI DFA 2001/43/153.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>108</sup> Confidential US Embassy report from the Hague, 2 April 1969, NAUK FCO 65/279.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>109</sup> Ó Tuathail to MacWhite, 13 June 1969, NAI DFA 2001/43/153.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>111</sup> 'Report of [a] meeting between Dr Hillery, Minister for External Affairs, and Dr Joseph Luns, Netherlands Minister for Foreign Affairs, on 15<sup>th</sup> July, 1969', ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>112</sup> Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 241, Col. 1886 (28 Oct. 1969).

and, indirectly, its standing in Europe by being involved with a group that promoted pan-European co-operation.

#### IRELAND AND THE END OF THE CONFLICT

When the war ended in January 1970, the world feared the worst, particularly after the Federal government refused to allow foreign aid organisations, journalists, or observers to enter the Eastern Region. It quickly appealed to 'friendly governments' to offer aid, and rejected offers from 'certain governments such as France, Portugal, South Africa and the rebel regime in Rhodesia, which have been studiously hostile to the Federal cause throughout the crisis'.<sup>113</sup> A list was produced of international relief agencies, including JCA, Caritas Internationalis, Africa Concern and all of the organisations that operated the flights into Biafra, that were unacceptable in the new environment, and the National Committee for Rehabilitation and the vastly improved Nigerian Red Cross were left to operate what became a more efficient relief programme, albeit one which might have benefited from the experience and expertise of international assistance.

The DEA and Irish officials in Lagos had been preparing ideas about relief operations before the war had ended. Their approach underlined the primacy of the Irish government's political considerations. On 9 January Ó Tuathail prepared a note on 'Planning for Relief and Reconstruction in Nigeria', which focussed on providing relief 'in a way acceptable to the Nigerians who are very sensitive of appearing to rely on outside (white) help, [and] secondly, while working within the limitations imposed by the Nigerians, to see that relief supplies reach the needy people they are intended for and that medical teams are utilised and provided with supplies and supporting services'.<sup>114</sup> Ó Tuathail was not insensitive to the possible advantages that could accrue. He recommended that the Irish government 'should be selective in aid schemes, i.e. concentrate on neglected areas and/or projects where we can get some return, e.g. thro' [*sic.*] furthering Irish mission interests'.<sup>115</sup> All efforts were directed through the frameworks provided by the Nigerian government and agencies acceptable to it. The

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>113</sup> Quoted from the Federal government's press release, 'Nigeria bans Irish relief agency', *The Irish Times*, 16 Jan. 1970.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>114</sup> Ó Tuathail, 'Planning for Relief and Reconstruction in Nigeria', 9 Jan. 1970, NAI DFA 2001/43/136.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>115</sup> Hand-written note by Ó Tuathail, dated 11 Jan. 1970, appended to Ó Tuathail to Ronan, 9 Jan. 1970, ibid.

Irish government's immediate pledge of £80,000 for the use of the National Rehabilitation Commission in Nigeria was to be spent 'in accordance with the wishes of the Nigerian authorities'.<sup>116</sup> The government also pledged £10,000 to UNICEF (along with Canada the first to do so) and the same amount to the Nigerian Red Cross for reconstruction. Both of the latter contributions were taken up, but the £80,000 remained unused and Irish officials were unwilling to interfere in pressing for its use. They preferred to continue the government's policy of "fence mending" ... even though this may not perhaps be altogether popular here at home'.<sup>117</sup>

Calling on Irish relief agencies – particularly, by inference, the banned Africa Concern – to 'co-operate fully with the Nigerian Government in the relief effort',<sup>118</sup> the government maintained this line. Careful to avoid the accusation of interference with Nigerian affairs during the war, the Irish government was even more careful in post-war Nigeria. Ó Tuathail worried that putting pressure on Nigerian officials to use the £80,000 would lead the latter to 'suspect anything we do as an attempt to buy back their favour and resent this'.<sup>119</sup> DEA officials repeatedly discouraged Gorta attempts to establish projects in Nigeria throughout 1970. By February 1971, when the £80,000 contribution was re-submitted to Hillery for his consideration, it was felt that if re-opened 'it would stir up the whole Biafran question in the Dáil' and that the climate of 'financial stringency' would make it difficult to provide fully for the funds.<sup>120</sup> The issue was left to rest and the £80,000 went unspent, although it was included in figures given for post-war relief expenditure.

Banned by the Nigerian government, Africa Concern continued 'more or less surreptitious activity' in Biafra after January 1970.<sup>121</sup> As the Irish government pressed for the normalisation of relations with the Federal government, Africa Concern's activities put a strain on the organisation's relationship with the Holy Ghost Order. Bishop Whelan met with John O'Loughlin Kennedy in April 1970 and, 'in so many

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>116</sup> DEA press release, 13 Jan. 1970, NAI DFA 2000/14/39.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>117</sup> Ó Tuathail to Keating, 22 Jan. 1970, NAI DFA 2001/43/136.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>118</sup> Quoted in 'Co-operate with Nigerian leaders: Lynch's plea to charities', *The Irish Times*, 17 Jan. 1970.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>119</sup> Note by Ó Tuathail, 'Question of further aid for Nigeria', 25 March 1970, NAI DFA 2000/14/39.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>120</sup> Gaynor to Tadhg O'Sullivan, 4 Feb. 1971, NAI DFA Lagos P13/7/4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>121</sup> Farmar, Believing in action, p. 32.

words, warned him and Africa Concern off Nigeria'.<sup>122</sup> Whelan told DEA officials that the Holy Ghost authorities 'were considering cutting themselves adrift altogether from Africa Concern if Africa Concern persisted with their present activities'.<sup>123</sup> The Irish government was equally concerned. In April 1970 Keating wrote privately to John Horgan of The Irish Times to draw his attention to the need for care among Irish journalists to avoid misunderstandings about Nigeria; 'The kindest and most constructive thing Africa Concern can do now is to let the scars have time to heal and allow Nigeria, for the present at least, seek peace and quiet.<sup>124</sup> Keating was accordingly incensed when John O'Loughlin Kennedy arrived in Lagos in July 1970 on a ship under the surname Ó Cinnéide in order to avoid detection by the Lagos authorities.<sup>125</sup> The emotion created by the war took a long time to dissipate, even as Africa Concern began to diversify its own projects elsewhere in the developing world. In February 1971, with the organisation still in a state of re-definition, a joint statement issued by the Nigerian Embassy and Grogan emphasised that from then on, 'Africa Concern would at all times consult with the Nigerian Embassy to ensure that future activities of Africa Concern are objective and reflect the actual situation'.<sup>126</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

It took longer for the Irish government to make its peace with Africa Concern, and it was not until the mid-1970s and the launch of Ireland's ODA programme that any meaningful reconciliation occurred. In the meantime the organisation's activities during the Biafran conflict had a considerable impact on the reception of development issues among the Irish public. The question became one for public and media discussion, a topic for constructive debate in an unprecedented manner. While Gorta struggled to generate public interest in its activities, the combination of Africa Concern's zeal and the vocal involvement of a significant missionary community transformed attitudes towards the developing world, and, more specifically, Irish obligations towards it. In

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>122</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>123</sup> Note by Ó Tuathail, 'Interview with Bishop Whelan of Owerri, Fr C. O'Brien, Superior, Kimmage Manor, and Messrs J. O'Brien and E. Ó Tuathail of the Department re Africa Concern,' 23 April 1970, NAI DFA Lagos P13/7/3 D.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>124</sup> Keating to Horgan, 27 April 1970, NAI DFA Lagos P13/7/3 B.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>125</sup> Keating to Ó Tuathail, 10 July 1970, ibid.; interview with Kennedy (16 Jan. 2006).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>126</sup> Statement issued by the Nigerian Embassy, Dublin, signed by Vincent Grogan (Africa Concern) and

S. Kolo, the Nigerian Ambassador, 11 Feb. 1971, UCDA Aiken Papers P104/7185.

his Christmas Day RTÉ television address in 1968, the Archbishop of Armagh Cardinal William Conway concentrated on the question of world poverty and the need 'to make public opinion waken up to the problem'.<sup>127</sup> In October 1969 the Catholic Church created the Irish Commission for Justice and Peace (ICJP), one of whose first publications, titled *The Third World War*, warned of the Irish public's shortcomings in contributing to development; 'simply to support missionaries [was] emphatically not sufficient to discharge our duties to the rest of the world'.<sup>128</sup> Earlier that year the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland has also decided to formalise its contribution to development assistance and make a regular donation to the developing world.

The churches' embrace of the issue had a considerable impact. The Christian missions in post-independence Africa - including the Catholic Church in the secessionist Eastern Region - moved towards greater involvement by the local clergy in the operation of their churches and exposed, Colette Chabbott noted, 'larger and larger segments of the Western public to a Third World that was in some sense equal to the First, inhabited by individuals with universal needs and rights'.<sup>129</sup> In Ireland, the Catholic Church's rudimentary presentation of Africa from the earlier part of the decade was replaced during the Biafran crisis by what was a by no means detailed investigation of the continent's subtleties, but one which carried an increased emphasis on development issues, evidenced in the considerable space afforded to the issue in the missionary orders' publications, particularly *Missionary Annals*, the organ of the Holy Ghost Fathers. The message they conveyed - that Ireland had an obligation to assist in the developing world – and the urgency of the Biafran case placed considerable pressure on the Irish government to adopt a constructive response to the crisis. In the context of its efforts to protect the safety of Irish missionaries in Nigeria, the conservative nature of the Irish government's response was understandable and in a different social environment it might arguably have escaped without criticism. The intense scrutiny of its approach, however, made it difficult to hide its shortcomings. The difficulty lay in Aiken's outright dismissal of all forms of official relief other than

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>127</sup> Quoted in 'Plea for concern on world poverty', *The Irish Times*, 27 Dec. 1968.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>128</sup> Jerome Connolly, The Third World war (Dublin, 1970), p. 44.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>129</sup> Chabbott, 'Development INGOs', p. 234.

that directed through the ICRC. To have contributed to the JCA airlift, as the Nordic states did, might have deflected some criticism and indicated publicly that the Irish government desired to take a more positive attitude. Channelling all official relief through the ICRC was broadly in keeping with Aiken's attitude to international affairs and the principle of non-intervention, but as the limitations of that organisation's relief effort became apparent, it left the Irish government open to criticism that its desire to maintain its relationship with the Federal authorities was more important than its concern for those suffering the consequences of the conflict.

The more positive approach adopted by Hillery, including the compromise arrangement to loan the Columcille to UNICEF, showed up his predecessor's shortcomings. In the context of the broader societal changes visible in the activities of the IAAM (see chapter four), and the growing desire for a more transparent approach to foreign policy making, it marked something of a departure from Aiken's 'almost Roman character' and aloof style of policy-making, built as it was on a very particular view of Ireland's role in the world.<sup>130</sup> Hillery's embrace of Ireland's involvement in the Luns Group pointed to a more broadly European focus for the state, and his willingness to engage in dialogue on the Biafran issue recognised the changes in the relationship between policy makers and the Irish public. Stimulated by those very debates and perhaps by his own background as a medical doctor and the fact that he had, as Minister for Labour, represented the Irish government at the second United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in New Delhi in February 1968, Hillery appeared interested in development assistance in a way not shared by Aiken, in spite of the latter's broader concerns with international stability and recognition of the role of economic development in promoting equality between states. Hillery's political attitude towards the Biafran war may have diverged little from his predecessor's, but in the area of ODA he quickly began to have a considerable impact. Within weeks of coming to office he instigated an internal review of the Irish government's policy in that area. Born of the pressures of the Biafran crisis and the debate it stimulated in Irish society, its fruits became evident in the years that followed.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>130</sup> Dorr, 'Ireland at the United Nations' (2002), p. 110.

# Re-shaping the Relationship: Ireland, the EC and Southern Africa

7

In his 1971 analysis of the members of Dáil Éireann, Brian Farrell commented that 'Ireland, while retaining some traditional patterns and relationships in the recruitment of its political elite, is moving closer to the general norms of stable and mature political systems'.<sup>1</sup> The younger, more educated parliament did not bring about any significant change in the structures of the Oireachtas, but had a discernable influence on the style and attitude of debate. The changes fitted a broader shift in Irish society that was consonant with international trends, as Farrell's description of the deputies as 'the 1969 generation' implied. The successes of Africa Concern and the IAAM were inseparable from the context of international change within which they occurred. Africa Concern was one of a number of development NGOs formed internationally in the period of the Biafran crisis,<sup>2</sup> while the IAAM's protests against the Springbok tour in Ireland were matched by events in Britain and the reaction to subsequent tours in Australia and New Zealand.

At a more local level, Farrell noted a shift 'from the so-called "revolutionary generation" of original Irish political leaders to a more professional political elite'.<sup>3</sup> Hillery's appointment as Minister for External Affairs recognised the need to embrace a new attitude to foreign policy to accommodate growing public activism and discussion, and to prepare the state for accession to the EC. From 1973, membership of the Community exposed the Irish government and its population to new influences and offered new opportunities to exert an influence as a member of one of the strongest political groupings in the world. For lobbyists it offered new avenues to pressure policy makers and encouraged cross-Community co-operation between similar issue groups, such as the 1979 conference on the EC and apartheid hosted by the IAAM in Dublin,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Brian Farrell, 'Dáil deputies: "The 1969 generation", *The Economic and Social Review*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (April 1971), p. 324.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> See graph, 'International non-governmental development organisational foundings, 1900-1985', Chabbott, 'Development INGOs', p. 227.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Farrell, 'Dáil deputies', p. 324.

and the emergence of Brussels as a target for the lobbying activities of Irish development NGOs.

The Fianna Fáil majority government that guided the transition into the EC was replaced in the spring of 1973 by a Fine Gael/Labour 'national coalition' whose cabinet and backbenches demonstrated Farrell's argument for the transitory nature of the Irish political system. In foreign affairs the change of government was marked by both continuity in the central principles of its policies and change in the new opportunities offered by EC membership. It forms a natural division in this chapter. The first section examines the three years following the Springbok tour protests, the impact of the IAAM on Irish society and on dialogue on foreign affairs, the assimilation of those changes into official policy, and their political manifestation in the context of broader international reaction to events in southern Africa. The second section is concerned with two central issues: the influence of the IAAM on the new government and the impact of EC membership, not only in the latter's policies on southern Africa, but in the extension of Irish influence and the evolving role it assumed through the Community. It concludes with a brief examination of an issue which in many ways epitomised Irish identity on the world stage: the role played by Irish-born Bishop Donal Lamont in the struggle for majority rule in Rhodesia.

# SOUTHERN AFRICA IN CONTEXT

In its battle to halt the advance of African nationalism within its own borders and the encroachment of what it termed communist influence without, the South African government continued to enjoy the support of the major powers in the West. Leonard Thompson later commented that Western governments 'were loath to disturb the status quo ... With their Cold War perspective they were prone to exaggerate the communist menace, and with their business perspective they tended to assume that economic growth was bound to erode apartheid.'<sup>4</sup> On the African continent, the South African government continued to find itself in isolation, aided only by its Rhodesian and Portuguese neighbours and states like Malawi who broke with the broader line for the sake of economic benefit. It was a measure of how isolated it had become that Vorster's

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Leonard Thompson, *A history of South Africa* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., New Haven, 2001), p. 218.

visits to the Ivory Coast in September 1974 and to Liberia the following February 'could be classified as achievements'.<sup>5</sup> Internally, after the relative inactivity of the 1960s, the years 1973 to 1976 saw renewed agitation among the indigenous African population, strike actions and widespread protest. In June 1976 this agitation reached a peak in Soweto when a massive demonstration by African schoolchildren against the use of Afrikaans as a medium for instruction escalated into serious unrest, with a death toll of around 700 by the end of the year.

The violence drove large numbers of black South Africans over the borders into Botswana and Swaziland, where they proved eager recruits for guerrilla movements. African nationalists took increasing heart from the success of their counterparts in Portuguese Africa and in Rhodesia. In 1970 the Vatican took the unprecedented step of granting an audience to the three main nationalist leaders from the Portuguese territories, and two years later the United Nations General Assembly voted to accord observer status to delegations from each of their movements. The Portuguese responded by stepping up their campaigns to new levels of political oppression and torture. In 1971 expelled White Fathers from Mozambique brought international media attention on the massacre of 400 villagers at Wiriyamu. The publicity embarrassed Portugal's NATO allies and brought the leading nationalist group FRELIMO 'concrete financial and moral support' from the World Council of Churches.<sup>6</sup> Elsewhere in the Portuguese territories, the nationalist movements gradually increased their gains. In September 1973 the PAIGC declared Guinea-Bissau independent and the 'state' was admitted to the OAU two months later. Following the collapse of authoritarian rule in Portugal in the Revolution of the Carnations in April 1974, it became the first of Portugal's African territories to gain full independence, followed by Mozambique (June 1975), Cape Verde (July 1975) and Angola (November 1975).

The divisions that hindered nationalist development in Mozambique and Angola prior to 1975 emerged into full-scale and bloody civil wars in both states soon after independence. In Angola the impact of the war was accentuated by the intervention of the United States, the Soviet Union, Cuba, and others. South Africa's involvement

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Davenport, *South Africa*, p. 461.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Alan Isaacman and Barbara Isaacman, *Mozambique: from colonialism to revolution, 1900-1982* (Hampshire, 1983), p. 106.

alongside opposition UNITA forces and the aid it gave to that organisation's military campaign against the MPLA government formed part of its policy of fostering destabilisation with the intention of securing Namibia from guerrilla attack from bases in southern Angola. The international community continued to place considerable emphasis on the fate of Namibia and on the ending of South Africa's control over the territory. In July 1970 the Security Council asked the International Court of Justice for an advisory opinion on the legal implications of the situation and the court found that 'South Africa was indeed occupying Namibia and was under an obligation to withdraw its administration immediately.'<sup>7</sup> The South African government refused to be deterred. It followed its policy of racial division along the lines of the Bantustans until in September 1974 Vorster adopted a new strategy that has been described as 'a neocolonial settlement ... that would allow the government of South West Africa to be run by African collaborators'.<sup>8</sup>

To its north, South Africa faced another problem. As tensions escalated in Rhodesia and the effects of sanctions became increasingly visible, Vorster's government worried about its ability to continue to prop up the minority regime. Vorster, like Kaunda and other African leaders, wished to avoid 'a southern African bloodbath',<sup>9</sup> and the potential consequences within South Africa that might result. Within Rhodesia, the confidence shown by the Smith regime in declaring the state a republic in March 1970 became increasingly eroded after 1972 when the British-led Pearce Commission, set up to investigate African reactions to the proposed Rhodesian Front-written constitution, found an overwhelming majority of the African nationalists 'genuinely believed in persisting with non-violent methods',<sup>10</sup> and the country descended into guerrilla warfare that lasted almost until the end of the decade when, in 1980, the new state of Zimbabwe was formed and African rule in place.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Cooper, Occupation, p. 100.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 102.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Davenport, South Africa, p. 459.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Martin Meredith, *The past is another country: Rhodesia 1890-1979* (London, 1979), p. 103.

## BUILDING ON THE SPRINGBOK TOUR: THE IAAM, 1970-73

The support afforded to South Africa and Portugal by Western governments was matched by increased popular protest. In the Nordic states public activism continued to grow, while in Britain and the United States the anti-apartheid movements maintained their roles as leaders of popular opinion. The emergence of the European New Left, the Vietnam War protests, and the events of 1968 radicalised considerable sections of Western society. In Britain and Ireland the protests against the Springbok tour in 1969/70 tapped into this growing public discontent and made the anti-apartheid movements look inwards at their structures and approaches. The organisers of the British AAM decided that it had 'gone too far along the path of being a parliamentary pressure group and that it must go back to its origins and attempt again to build a grassroots movement'.<sup>11</sup> The tour offered an opportunity for the movement to engage with 'the post-1968 radicalism amongst students and young people'.<sup>12</sup> In Ireland, the experience of similar societal change and an equally strong reaction to the rugby tour offered the more youthful IAAM the opportunity to transform its fortunes and establish itself within Irish society. The result of what it termed the raised 'level of political consciousness<sup>13</sup> amongst the Irish public was a gradual growth in awareness of the effects of minority rule in southern Africa which at its height stimulated the kind of spontaneous reaction among those outside its core membership seen in the Dunnes Stores strikes of the 1980s, and had a considerable effect on the organisation's standing.

Increased public interest in the issue legitimised the movement's goals in the eyes of the Irish public and made them more difficult for policy-makers to ignore. In the immediate aftermath of the Springbok tour the IAAM used its new-found position to target one of the more contentious aspects of the Irish government's policy on South Africa: the continued existence and extension of its trade with the apartheid state. In the latter part of 1968, remarks by a South African Embassy official to his Irish counterparts on the low levels of Irish exports to the country provided the impetus for a renewed investigation of the investment opportunities it offered to Irish exporters. When the Inter-Departmental Foreign Trade Committee met to discuss the matter early

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Christabel Gurney, editor of *Anti-Apartheid News* (1969-79), quoted in Fieldhouse, *Anti-Apartheid*, p. 477.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Fieldhouse, Anti-Apartheid, p. 477.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> IAAM, Annual Report 1970-71 (Dublin, 1971), p. 9.

the following year, it agreed that CTT 'should be informed that no Government policy would be contravened in encouraging selected Irish exporters to avail of the opportunities in that market'.<sup>14</sup> In the coming months CTT stepped up its investigations. In July and August 1969 it carried out a preliminary examination of potential sectors for Irish investment and in October invited the Commercial Counsellor from the South African Embassy in London to address a Dublin conference of Irish exporters.

CTT's assertion that its role was 'to serve the needs of exporters, to develop markets where the scope exists, and where there is no ban on such trade<sup>15</sup> did not impress the IAAM. Emboldened by the increasing public interest in its Springbok campaign, the movement sought to highlight the inconsistencies in the government's policies. In July 1969 its newsletter condemned CTT's activities as 'increased collaboration with apartheid',<sup>16</sup> and in November described as 'absurd as well as hypocritical' the government's intention to increase trade 'with a country whose politics we condemned'.<sup>17</sup> Its protest outside the Dublin meeting organised by CTT for 21 October made clear its condemnation. One placard read 'CTT – put people before profit', and Labour TD Conor Cruise O'Brien criticised the event as further evidence of a foreign policy that paid 'lip service to principles ... such as the "brotherhood of man regardless of race", but on the strict understanding that where there is the possibility of a lucrative deal these principles will be regarded as irrelevant'.<sup>18</sup> A meeting between the movement and Michael Killeen, CTT's managing director, in November 1969 provided evidence of the IAAM's changing status in Irish society. Killeen agreed that CTT would not exhibit at the Rand Spring Fair 'as this is a segregated event', <sup>19</sup> but the IAAM was unsuccessful in persuading him to end the promotion of trade with South Africa.

The January 1970 protests transformed the IAAM's profile as it continued to push for further concessions. On 4 February the movement wrote to CTT citing the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> 'Foreign Trade Committee: Minute No. 2727: Trade with South Africa', undated [9 Jan. 1969?], NAI DFA 96/3/95.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> 'TDs join in S. African picket', *The Irish Times*, 22 Oct. 1969.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> 'Irish Sell-Out in South Africa', Amandla, Vol. 4, No. 5 (July 1969), UCDA Desmond Papers P221.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> 'Córas Tráchtála Collaborates with South Africa', *Amandla*, Vol. 4, No. 8 (Nov. 1969).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 241, Col. 1927 (28 Oct. 1969).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Harris to Barnes, 4 Feb. 1970, NLI IAAM Papers, Roll 7, Part 25.1.2.

'considerable public opposition that exists to any collaboration with apartheid' brought into the open by the Springbok visit, and 'strongly urged' the organisation 'to abandon its promotion campaign for South Africa'.<sup>20</sup> In a letter to George Colley, the Minister for Industry and Commerce, dated the same day, it adverted to the conflict between Ireland's stance at the United Nations and the continued promotion of trade, a contradiction that was of increasing concern to DEA officials.<sup>21</sup> In November 1969 Denis Holmes proposed a stark choice: that the government do something about trade 'or modify our UN voting position'.<sup>22</sup> He suggested that it either arrange 'that in future neither CTT nor any other official body would be permitted to undertake any special trade development activities with South Africa' or change its affirmative voting position to abstention on apartheid resolutions in the General Assembly.<sup>23</sup> A month later, responding to a suggestion that an honorary trade commissioner for South Africa be appointed in Dublin, Holmes argued that there had been 'a radical change in the situation since such a post was first agreed to by us in 1946 and also since it was last filled in 1958'.<sup>24</sup> While Irish policy at the United Nations did not require the end of trade with South Africa, it did 'require us to examine the desirability of continuing to encourage officially the large expansion of that trade which has taken place in recent years'.<sup>25</sup> The protests against the Springbok tour had the desired effect. On 2 March 1970, George Colley informed the IAAM that while it was 'not the Government's policy to interfere with the activities of individual Irish firms wishing to trade with South Africa or to withhold normal facilities from such firms', CTT would refrain from sending 'any Trade Missions to South Africa, or organise such missions, and will not themselves directly engage in any activities aimed at promoting exports to that country'.26

The gravity of Colley's decision became evident when compared with Ireland's progressive European counterparts. In its efforts to influence the Irish government the IAAM claimed that 'other countries, such as Sweden, do not apply sanctions yet are

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Harris to Colley, 4 Feb. 1970, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Hand-written note, Holmes to sec. DEA, 4 Nov. 1969, NAI DFA 96/3/95.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Holmes to sec., 4 Dec. 1969, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Colley to Harris, 2 March 1970, NLI IAAM Papers, Roll 7, Part 25.1.2.

being careful not to increase trade with South Africa'.<sup>27</sup> In reality it was more difficult to distinguish between the Irish government's policies and those of its Nordic colleagues. Throughout the 1960s Swedish officials actively engaged in the promotion of the state's commercial interests in South Africa. Trade between the two states increased annually from the late 1950s and reached a short-term peak in 1975 with a balance of trade extremely favourable to Swedish exporters.<sup>28</sup> The parallels did not end there. The Swedes were equally wary of the pressures brought by vocal groups within civil society. One South African-based Swedish official noted in November 1970 that he was 'authorised to conduct a certain number of export promotional activities, but it should be done in such a manner that those circles and news media in Sweden that oppose an increase of the Swedish-South African trade exchange will not be alarmed'.<sup>29</sup> The Finnish government took a similar line, although, like Sweden, as a proportion of overall trade the exchanges with South Africa were 'miniscule'.<sup>30</sup> A South African Embassy opened in Helsinki in 1967, and trade became 'the main interaction between the two countries'.<sup>31</sup> The parallels with the Irish case emphasised two significant factors in the foreign policy of small states: the importance of business interests in dealing with South Africa, even in states with relatively low levels of trade with the apartheid government, and the growing influence of pressure groups on foreign policy.

Colley's decision put the significant gains enjoyed by the IAAM into practical effect. The movement may not have been as large or influential as its Nordic colleagues, but it was beginning to enjoy considerable success. In South Africa itself, the strains began to show among white sports men and women 'forced into a corner' by their exclusion from international competition in an increasing number of sports.<sup>32</sup> Anti-apartheid campaigners in the West, buoyed by these signs of success, continued to use the sports boycott to their advantage. In June 1971 students in Queen's University, Belfast, forced the University rugby club to cancel a proposed tour to South Africa, and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> 'Irish Sell-Out in South Africa', *Amandla*, Vol. 4, No. 5 (July 1969), UCDA Desmond Papers P221.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Sellström, Sweden and southern Africa: Vol. II, p. 891.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Quoted in Sellström, Sweden and southern Africa: Vol. I, p. 214.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Soiri and Peltola, Finland and southern Africa, p. 146.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 145.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Richard E. Lapchick, *The politics of race and international sport: the case of South Africa* (London, 1975), p. 203.

in December 1972 the IAAM persuaded the Irish Squash Rackets Association to cancel its international fixture with an all-white South African team. The IAAM's success continued in other areas. On 4 and 5 June 1971 the United Nations Special Committee on Apartheid visited Dublin at the movement's invitation, and it met with Hillery and officials from the DFA,<sup>33</sup> Seán MacBride of Amnesty International, representatives of the ITGWU, and members of the IAAM. The contrast between the Irish government's attitude to the committee's proposed visit in 1969 (see chapter four) and its accommodating welcome on this occasion reflected the changed circumstances. In September 1971 the DFA provided £200 towards the costs of running an international conference on 'The Churches and Racialism' in Dublin, whose high calibre of speakers, including Ruth First (a South African author), Fr Michael Traber (a Swiss missionary deported from Rhodesia), and Bishop Donal Lamont, made it the 'highlight' of the IAAM's activities in the International Year against Racism.<sup>34</sup>

# FIANNA FÁIL AND SOUTHERN AFRICA, 1970-73

The success of the churches' conference and the support the IAAM built up led *The Irish Times* to conclude in September 1971 that the movement could 'justly claim to have been a constructive influence on Government policy in many ways'.<sup>35</sup> At the United Nations the Irish delegation 'almost contorted itself' to find ways of voting for resolutions on apartheid that had previously been viewed as too extreme.<sup>36</sup> It co-sponsored resolutions at the Special Political Committee (along with the Nordic states, among others) calling for more educational material to be made available by the United Nations (1971), and condemning the use of torture against political prisoners by the South African government (1972). The language adopted by its officials is equally instructive in highlighting the changes. Where once it had been highly critical of the Afro-Asian group's misuse of the term, in an October 1971 address to the Special Political Committee Ronan spoke of the 'serious threat to international peace and security' constituted by apartheid.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> The department changed its name from External Affairs to Foreign Affairs in March 1971.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> IAAM, Annual Report 1970-71, p. 13.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> 'Racialism and the Churches', The Irish Times, 29 Sept. 1971.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Interview with Dorr (12 April 2005).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Ireland. Department of Foreign Affairs, Ireland at the United Nations 1971 (Dublin, 1972), p. 81.

The charge of hypocrisy against the government remained. In February 1971 Ronan noted that the Irish delegation tended 'to vote for resolutions which contain clauses on which we abstain and on which we do not intend to act'.<sup>38</sup> The difficulty lay in reconciling its more radical support with its continued adherence to a set of established principles. Willing to support 'any draft resolution aimed at putting an end to apartheid',<sup>39</sup> the Irish government could not countenance recourse to sanctions or the expulsion of South Africa from the United Nations. Sanctions were a 'matter for the Security Council' alone,<sup>40</sup> and their efficacy was questioned by the Irish government; 'indeed their effect on the non-white population of the country may be so great as to vitiate their usefulness'.<sup>41</sup> It continued to hold the view that 'exposure to the world community ... hastens rather than retards the erosion of apartheid policies in South Africa'.<sup>42</sup>

Built on its principled commitment to international organisation and to the pursuit of international stability, the Irish government shared its approach with the Nordic states, in spite of the latter's growing direct links with the liberation movements in southern Africa. As in previous years, Nordic attitudes acted as important prompts for Irish policy makers, for example in the provision of relief to those who suffered under minority rule. The DEA recognised that the 'developed countries that have adopted a forward policy in opposing apartheid and racial discrimination in southern Africa' contributed significant amounts to the United Nations funds set up to benefit the region, the UNTFSA and UNETPSA.<sup>43</sup> In the aftermath of the Biafran crisis, development assistance came to assume an increasingly important role in the Irish government's attitudes to the developing world (see chapter eight). One month after taking office Hillery pronounced himself 'concerned lest our extremely modest

<sup>39</sup> Con Cremin, UNGA Special Political Committee, 25 Oct. 1972, UNORGA, A/SPC/SR.822.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> Ronan to sec. DEA, 18 Feb. 1971, NAI DFA 2005/145/30.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> Extract from the memorandum for the government, UNGA 26<sup>th</sup> Session, 17 Sept. 1971, NAI DFA 2002/19/3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Keating to sec. DFA, 30 Oct. 1972, NAI DFA 2004/7/48.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> Note by Ó Tuathail, 'Apartheid item – Special Political Committee: Explanation of vote after voting', 24 Nov. 1970, NAI DFA 2002/19/3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> DEA memorandum for the government, 'Proposed contributions to international aid agencies', 5 Oct. 1970, NAI DFA 98/3/58.

performance in certain important aspects of the aid field should subtract from the country's general international standing and prestige'.<sup>44</sup>

In practical terms his concern led to an immediate increase in official contributions; to \$1,500 to UNTFSA and \$5,000 to UNETPSA in 1970; \$3,250 (UNTFSA) and \$6,000 (UNETPSA) in 1972; and \$4,000 (UNTFSA) and \$8,000 (UNETPSA) in 1973. The impact of the changed domestic and international circumstances was inescapable. The increases were made in recognition of the fact that Irish government policy was likely to come 'under increasing scrutiny both at home and abroad' in the context of the Second United Nations Development Decade, which began on 1 January 1971.<sup>45</sup> The decision to announce Ireland's pledge annually on 21 March, the anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre, the DFA noted, emphasised its <sup>b</sup>practical concern with the racial situation in Southern Africa, secures some publicity at the UN and ... [was] pleasing to the [Irish] Anti-Apartheid Movement'.<sup>46</sup> In the context of Ireland's accession to the EC, it was viewed as additionally important that the state's contributions be brought more in line with its Western European contemporaries, with whom it compared 'very unfavourably'.<sup>47</sup> A 1970 DEA memorandum contrasted the Irish government's contributions of \$1,500 to UNTFSA and \$5,000 to UNETPSA with the \$60,012 (UNTFSA) and \$93,335 (UNETPSA) provided by Denmark, and the \$15,000 (UNTFSA) and \$10,000 (UNETPSA) provided by Finland, states described as 'more or less comparable with Ireland'.<sup>48</sup>

The inclusion of Portuguese Africa under the terms of UNETPSA made it the most significant Irish contribution to the decolonisation process in those territories. The Irish government, like the IAAM, concentrated its efforts largely on Rhodesia, Namibia and South Africa. Policy on the more distant Portuguese Africa was dominated by a familiar set of concerns: support for the principle of self-determination, a belief in structured, negotiated settlement, and a commitment to the primacy of international law. At the United Nations, the Irish delegation framed its approach in a manner

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Donal O'Sullivan to sec. Dept. of Finance, 7 Aug. 1969, ibid.

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> Summary of memorandum for the government, 'Proposed contributions to international aid agencies',
 5 Oct. 1970, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> De Paor to Keating, 14 March 1973, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> McDonagh to sec. Dept. of Finance, 14 Oct. 1971, NAI DFA 2004/7/50.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> DEA memorandum for the government, 'Proposed contributions to international aid agencies', 5 Oct. 1970, NAI DFA 98/3/58.

consistent with its attitude to international affairs: 'this country had fought for centuries for its independence so ... we had a deep sympathy for other peoples seeking their right of self-determination'.<sup>49</sup> It could not, 'mindful of our own struggle for independence, fail to record our deep regret at the suppression of the rights of the peoples of these [Portuguese] territories to self-determination and independence'.<sup>50</sup> It did so in a framework that recognised that Ireland had for 'centuries had ties of genuine friendship with the Portuguese people, inhabiting as we do the Western edges of the European continent'.<sup>51</sup> In keeping with its policies on South Africa and Rhodesia, the Irish government emphasised the need for a constructive approach. In December 1970, for example, McCann noted his intention to match positive action by the Portuguese government with a change in Irish policies, hindered only by an incident in West Africa; 'were it not for [the] Secco [Security Council] mission's report implicating Portuguese armed forces in [the] invasion of Guinea I would have been inclined to recommend abstention so as to encourage Portugal to go further on decolonisation'.<sup>52</sup>

A similar attitude marked its policies on Rhodesia. The Irish government continued to implement United Nations sanctions in the same diligent fashion and to support attempts to reach a negotiated settlement. In December 1971, the Irish delegation abstained on a resolution in the Fourth Committee which called for the rejection of British settlement proposals for Rhodesia. J.M. Craig told the committee that his delegation was in favour of 'no independence before majority rule', but supported the process of 'careful consultation with all sectors of the Rhodesian population' to create a solution acceptable to the society as a whole.<sup>53</sup> As ever, Irish officials were conscious of the needs of their British neighbours, who thanked them for refraining 'unlike some others ... from pre-judging the proposals until the views of the Rhodesians themselves have been fully canvassed by the Pearce Commission'.<sup>54</sup> When the results of that commission's report made clear the African population's resounding rejection of the proposed constitution, however, the Irish delegation responded in kind.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> Note by Ronan, 'Portuguese Territories', 21 Oct. 1970, NAI DFA 2002/19/12.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> Explanation of vote on UNGA Fourth Committee Resolution on Portuguese Territories, 20 Nov. 1970, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> Hand-written note, McCann to Hillery, 8 Dec. 1970, appended to Ronan to McCann, 7 Dec. 1970, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> J.M. Craig, UNGA Fourth Committee, 16 Dec. 1971, UNORGA, A/C.4/SR.1972.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> Williams to Ronan, 28 Feb. 1972, NAI DFA 2004/7/115.

On 30 November 1972 it voted in favour of the draft resolution on Rhodesia presented to the Fourth Committee (Britain, Portugal and the United States voted against) in the belief that the Rhodesian regime could no longer deny that 'the majority ... were willing and able to assume responsibility for the future development of their country'.<sup>55</sup> The desire to support self-determination continued to be matched by a more realistic appraisal of the situation. The Irish delegate Carmel Heaney stressed that 'the administering Power [Britain] had to deal with a regime which, albeit illegal, was in *de facto* control of Southern Rhodesia',<sup>56</sup> and she voted against a second draft resolution which accused the British government of refusing to take measures against the Smith regime.

On the question of Namibia the Irish government continued to be influenced by the formula put forward by Aiken in 1966. It supported the Security Council's decision to send the question to the International Court of Justice and voted in favour of a number of resolutions at the General Assembly, with its customary proviso that it could only support action taken by the Security Council. It withheld support for the Council and Commissioner for Namibia appointed by the General Assembly 'since the Council is, on its own admission, incapable of carrying out its mandate'.<sup>57</sup> The delegation preferred to base its efforts on the need for 'a more practical approach to the problem'.<sup>58</sup> In contrast to its earlier reluctance to support UNTFSA and UNETPSA, the Irish government supported the creation of the UN Trust Fund for Namibia and made a contribution of \$1,000 when the fund became operational in 1972. It also kept in touch 'on a fairly regular basis' with Seán MacBride, who served as United Nations Commissioner for Namibia between 1973 and 1976.59 MacBride had a history of involvement on the apartheid and Namibian issues. He had visited South Africa in 1958, was a co-founder of Amnesty International, served as Secretary-General of the International Commission of Jurists, and had in the past condemned South Africa's

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> Carmel Heaney, UNGA Fourth Committee, 30 Nov. 1972, UNORGA, A/C.4/SR.2009.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> Extract from memorandum for the information of the government on the 26<sup>th</sup> Session of UNGA, 17 Sept. 1971, NAI DFA 2005/145/1234.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> Kennedy to sec. DFA, 5 Feb. 1976, NAI DFA 2006/131/75.

policy of apartheid.<sup>60</sup> The Irish government, however, mindful of the controversies of the early 1960s, was careful to emphasise his activities as those of an employee of the United Nations rather than any link with the Irish government.

Events in Portuguese Africa, Rhodesia, and Namibia were linked by a growing emphasis among the Afro-Asian group on the need to provide practical support to the national liberation movements. The question divided the group from progressive Western states like Ireland who sought 'to ensure that a rule of law, rather than force, will finally determine the emergence of all peoples to natural and democratic freedom'.<sup>61</sup> Thomas Mulkeen noted in 1973 that while 'South Africa's and Portugal's racial policies are unjustifiable on any grounds, [the Irish government] also believes that physical force is not the business of the U.N.<sup>62</sup> In a November 1970 resolution on the Portuguese territories, the Irish delegate to the Fourth Committee rejected the insertion of a clause that called on member states to support the use of force. DEA officials exhibited a distinct discomfort in their relations with the liberation movements. An approach by two representatives of ZAPU through the Irish Embassy in London for assistance in November 1965 was rejected.<sup>63</sup> In June 1968 the DEA postponed its decision on an invitation to meet with ANC leader Oliver Tambo until after hearing whether his remarks to an IAAM meeting would prove 'too extreme or otherwise hostile to our policy'.<sup>64</sup> By the time it was decided to meet him, Tambo had left Ireland, although Aiken emphasised that he himself did 'not feel himself restricted as to the people he should see'.<sup>65</sup>

There were other forces influencing the Irish government's reticence. In October 1971 DFA officials advised Hillery against receiving the PAIGC leader Amilcar Cabral on his visit to Dublin on the grounds that 'the present situation in the Six Counties' made it 'inadvisable for him to receive a guerrilla leader'.<sup>66</sup> These concerns were shared by the Fine Gael/Labour coalition. In July 1973, when the question of providing support to the liberation movements was raised among members

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup> Elizabeth Keane, Seán MacBride: a life (Dublin, 2007), pp. 212-23.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup> Thomas Mulkeen, 'Ireland at the UN', *Eire-Ireland*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Spring 1973), p. 12.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup> See NAI DFA 2000/14/55, passim.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> Holmes to Ennis, 26 June 1968, NAI DFA 96/3/93.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>65</sup> Memorandum by Edward Brennan, June 1968, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>66</sup> Unsigned DEA note, 26 Oct. 1971, NAI DFA 2002/19/12.

of the Labour Party, the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs Conor Cruise O'Brien informed his cabinet colleague Garret FitzGerald of the move, and his opposition to it.<sup>67</sup> FitzGerald was largely in agreement with O'Brien's assessment. It was, he wrote, 'far from easy to identify those who are genuinely representative of peoples oppressed by the apartheid system; and second, we could not condone many of the forms of protest carried out on behalf of these peoples'.<sup>68</sup> In the Dáil the following February he was adamant that his government was 'not prepared to support guerrilla activities,'<sup>69</sup> although the decision not to offer material support did not preclude dialogue with the liberation movements. In September 1974, Peter Katjavivi, SWAPO representative in London, met officials of the DFA during a visit to Dublin. The content of their discussion, however, was telling of the changing international role of the Irish government, and Katjavivi focussed largely on persuading it to 'oppose any future trading arrangements sought by South Africa with the EEC'.<sup>70</sup>

Outside official circles, the IAAM and more radical elements in Irish society made the most of their links with the liberation movements. The *United Irishman* included several articles on what it termed the 'revolutionary people's wars' in southern Africa.<sup>71</sup> The IAAM, Kader Asmal recalled, had a 'close, intimate, virtually symbiotic' relationship with the liberation movements based predominantly on his close links with the ANC and thus to its associates ZAPU, SWAPO, FRELIMO, PAIGC, and MPLA.<sup>72</sup> In 1975 Kader and Louise Asmal attended the celebrations of Mozambique's independence as the guests of the new FRELIMO government. While Kader Asmal sidestepped the issue of how much support the IAAM actually gave to the liberation movements,<sup>73</sup> he was clear that 'in the end the logic of the [Irish] government's position should have been to support the liberation struggle, as other countries did'.<sup>74</sup> Nordic solidarity groups had long courted direct links with the liberation movements, putting increasing pressure on their authorities to do the same. In May 1969 the Swedish government made its first contribution to the PAIGC, later extended to ZANU,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup> O'Brien to FitzGerald, 4 July 1973, NAI DFA 2005/145/1365.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>68</sup> FitzGerald to O'Brien, 17 July 1973, ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 270, Col. 1113 (20 Feb. 1974).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup> 'Trade with S. Africa opposed', *The Irish Times*, 19 Sept. 1974.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>71</sup> 'Fortress Zambia and the liberation struggle', United Irishman, July 1969.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup> Interview with Asmal (19 April 2006).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>73</sup> Interview with Pat Carroll, Dublin, 27 Oct. 2005.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup> Interview with Asmal (19 April 2006).

SWAPO, MPLA, FRELIMO and the ANC. Denmark, Norway and Finland soon followed suit. They framed their support in a manner in keeping with their broader approach to foreign affairs. The Swedish government asserted that its assistance could 'not be allowed to enter into conflict with the rule of international law, which lays down that no state has the right to interfere in the internal affairs of another'.<sup>75</sup> Its Norwegian counterpart insisted that support be 'solely humanitarian' and was therefore concentrated, for example in the case of SWAPO, on work undertaken to assist refugees in neighbouring countries,<sup>76</sup> and when the Finnish government introduced its first direct support in 1973 it included the asserted that it was 'humanitarian aid which is not aimed to support armed or violent activities'.<sup>77</sup>

The difference between the Nordic approach and that of the Irish government was not simply to do with the latter's domestic problems with the IRA – though that was a sizeable factor. Irish politics lacked an individual like Olof Palme, the Swedish Prime Minister, whose left-leaning politics were cited by Holden Roberto, the leader of the American-backed FNLA in Angola, as the reason for the Swedish government's support for the Marxist MPLA.<sup>78</sup> In addition, the Irish government did not have the structures to implement a policy of humanitarian assistance, whether it be through the liberation movements themselves, or through Irish or international NGOs. The introduction of a structured development assistance programme in 1974 concentrated on a small number of states in order to focus the effectiveness of its limited resources (see chapter eight). The support it provided for Lesotho, Zambia, and Tanzania – all affected by the struggle against apartheid – offered an alternative to direct humanitarian assistance to the movements themselves.

# THE NATIONAL COALITION, THE EC AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

The adoption of more radical policies by the Nordic governments was a natural progression as the activists of the 1950s assimilated into their states' political systems. Many of those who campaigned on behalf of southern Africa when members of the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>75</sup> Standing Committee on Appropriations of the Swedish Parliament, quoted in Sellström, *Sweden and southern Africa: Vol. I*, p. 17.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>76</sup> Eva Helene Østbye, 'The Namibian liberation struggle: direct Norwegian support to SWAPO', in Tore Linné Eriksen (ed.), *Norway and national liberation in southern Africa* (Uppsala, 2000), p. 91.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>77</sup> Soiri and Peltola, *Finland and southern Africa*, p. 103.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>78</sup> Sellström, Sweden and southern Africa: Vol. I, p. 411.

Swedish National Union of University Students (SFS) in the 1950s, for example, later joined the Swedish foreign service and worked in senior positions at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and SIDA, its development assistance division. Among them, and '[b]v far the most important',<sup>79</sup> was Olof Palme, former chair of SFS's international committee (1949-51) and president of the organisation (1953-53), and later Swedish Prime Minister. In Ireland, the national coalition's roots were less in student politics but several of its TDs were no less concerned with the question of southern Africa. On the Labour side of the coalition, Barry Desmond, former honorary secretary of the IAAM, was elected a TD in 1969, along with David Thornley, Justin Keating, and Conor Cruise O'Brien, all active supporters of the movement. In spite of some internal criticism of the IAAM, in March 1972 the Fine Gael Ard Fheis passed a resolution put forward by its Dublin South-East constituency which pledged that 'a Fine Gael Government will take a strong stand against the apartheid regimes in South Africa and Rhodesia and will do everything in its power to ensure the return of human rights and the abolition of internment without trial, for all the inhabitants - irrespective of colour in these areas'.<sup>80</sup> Fine Gael's spokesman on foreign affairs, Richie Ryan, its finance spokesman Garret FitzGerald, and TD Declan Costello were all active supporters of the IAAM.

There were still very few votes to be won on foreign policy. In the 1973 election it was 'so far down the list of political priorities that annual party conferences tend not to reach it, and election candidates do their best to ignore it'.<sup>81</sup> That election was, Keatinge recalled, 'fought largely on the credibility of [the Fine Gael and Labour] alternative and on economic and social issues; foreign policy objectives were not important'.<sup>82</sup> Its outcome did however have some impact on the relationship between the IAAM and the government. The new cabinet contained five prominent IAAM supporters: Richie Ryan (Minister for Finance), Michael O'Leary (Minister for Labour), Conor Cruise O'Brien (Minister for Posts and Telegraphs), Justin Keating (Minister for Industry and Commerce), and Garret FitzGerald (Minister for Foreign Affairs).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>80</sup> 'Resolution for Fine Gael Ard Fheis', Amandla, Vol. 7, No. 2 (March 1972).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>81</sup> Dennis Kennedy, 'Foreign policy is far down the list', *The Irish Times*, 20 Feb. 1973.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>82</sup> Keatinge, Formulation, p. 258.

Their appointment to office altered the relationship between the IAAM and the Irish government. On 4 May 1973 FitzGerald met a deputation from the movement at Iveagh House during which the latter called on the government to be more pro-active in its dealings with southern Africa and commented on the need 'for leadership on this issue ... It is up to the government to think out the commitments Ireland has entered into at the United Nations and to make sure that these commitments are fully understood at home.'83 The movement presented FitzGerald with a memorandum detailing its concerns, which the Minister agreed to examine without commitment. The results of his department's investigations were instructive in highlighting the difficulties in pursuing a more pro-active policy. The DFA questioned whether it would be advisable to discourage Industrial Development Authority activity in South Africa; 'One could envisage a rather difficult situation if a South African concern wanted to establish a factory in an area of high unemployment and if the only consequence of refusal of IDA assistance would be that the factory would be set up in Northern Ireland.<sup>84</sup> On sporting contacts it was felt that the government should 'be very careful in our dealings with sporting organisations embracing the whole country and drawing support in the North from the Unionist community'.<sup>85</sup> It was reluctant to introduce visas for travel to South Africa or to introduce any restriction on travel, and advised against supporting IDAF in favour of channelling support through international organisations like the Red Cross and the United Nations because the latter gave more financial control and provided the state with 'much greater international recognition of its contributions'.86

The IAAM's representations met with their most positive response on Ireland's new status as a member of the EC. The DFA felt that 'we should do what we can in the European Communities to ensure that they avoid policies which strengthen apartheid or forms of neo-colonialism' and stated that there could be 'no question of our agreeing to an agreement between the European Communities and South Africa relating to Namibia'.<sup>87</sup> The comments hinted at the transforming effect of EC membership on Irish

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>83</sup> 'Foreign policy towards southern Africa', May 1973, NLI IAAM Papers, Roll 4, Part 16.2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>84</sup> Power to Keating, 20 June 1973, NAI DFA 2005/145/30.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>87</sup> Ibid.

foreign policy. At a Dublin conference of Irish Ambassadors and senior officials called by FitzGerald for 16 and 17 April 1973 to analyse the detail of Irish policy, officials were acutely aware that foreign policy was 'no longer just an attitude towards Britain or a role at the UN'.<sup>88</sup> In a practical sense it forced the DFA to physically expand its knowledge base and engaged the department with issues of which it had little or no previous experience, including those which dealt with areas of the former British and French empires brought closer by their association with the Community.

The political influence exerted by the EC became immediately evident. In November 1972, two months before it officially became a member, the Irish delegation abstained on a draft resolution on South Africa at the United Nations Special Political Committee which included a paragraph that called on international organisations such as GATT, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the EC, to halt all assistance to the South African government. To vote in favour of the resolution, Keating noted, appeared 'to be not very much out of line with what we have said before now', but to accept the clause might 'preclude Irish agreement to any understanding between the Community and South Africa, which may be much farther than we would want to go'.<sup>89</sup> Hillery agreed. The issue was 'not sufficient to hold out against [the] rest of [the] 9 if they are in agreement'.<sup>90</sup> That pattern continued after the national coalition came into government. In December 1974 the Irish delegation voted against the general resolution on apartheid at the United Nations for the first time on the grounds that it included a condemnation of those states with business interests operating in South Africa. Two years later it abstained on a General Assembly resolution that called for an arms embargo on South Africa, citing allegations made against a 'friendly country', and provoked the accusation that it bowed to 'pressure' from other Community members.<sup>91</sup>

The influence that EC membership brought to bear on Irish policies was understandable but not all-pervasive. The Irish government could also exert its influence on the nature of the Community policies. Tadhg O'Sullivan, Irish Ambassador to Nigeria, noted in his submission to the April 1973 conference of heads of mission that membership offered Ireland the opportunity 'to exercise a useful

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>88</sup> 'Home and Away', The Irish Times, 17 April 1973.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>89</sup> Keating to sec. DFA, 30 Oct. 1972, NAI DFA 2004/7/48.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>90</sup> Hand-written note, McCann to Keating, 1 Nov. 1972, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>91</sup> Keatinge, *Place among the nations*, p. 175.

intermediary role between the rich countries and the third world'.<sup>92</sup> The arguments put forward in shaping Ireland's identity at the United Nations over fifteen years earlier were re-visited by officials seeking to create a role for the state within the EC. In his first major speech to the Dáil as Minister on 9 May 1973 Garret FitzGerald told the assembly that the Irish government's attitude to decolonisation and apartheid would continue to be informed by the state's 'historic position as a nation which has suffered from colonialism and various forms of discrimination'.<sup>93</sup> As its later role in finalising the Lomé Agreement in 1975 (see chapter eight) suggests, membership of the EC offered the chance to re-visit the concept that Ireland's historic experience provided it with a unique perspective from within Europe and an opportunity to translate the concerns of those in the developing world into change at a European level. Membership immediately gave Ireland a more authoritative voice and an opportunity to shape European policies from within the process of European policical co-operation (EPC) rather than a simple acceptance of those policies.

On the surface EPC's structures appeared to tie the Irish government closely to the policies of the Community at large. In practice the nature and extent of that influence was often difficult to discern. EC member states found themselves 'involved in a complex system of interdependencies where their freedom of action ... [was] continuously being constrained'.<sup>94</sup> Mindful of the necessity of common action in a number of sectors, these interdependencies did not entail the complete loss of sovereignty. The structure of the EC, in Keatinge's 1978 judgement, remained 'predominantly a process of intergovernmental bargaining on the basis of national interests, and the political co-operation procedures still leave even the smaller states the scope to take distinctive positions on world issues'.<sup>95</sup> EPC in practice offered the smaller states like Ireland a greater voice in shaping Community policy. The Irish government aligned itself to the more progressive elements, particularly Denmark and the Netherlands – against whose policies DFA officials consistently measured Irish actions – and studies of EC voting patterns at the United Nations showed that Ireland

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>92</sup> 'Conference of Heads of Mission, 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> April 1973: Views of the Ambassador in Lagos [Tadhg O'Sullivan] on the future development of Irish foreign policy,' 31 March 1973, NAI DFA 2005/145/2348.

<sup>93</sup> Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 265, Col. 750 (9 May 1973).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>94</sup> Keatinge, *Place among the nations*, p. 78.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 80.

continued to be one of the most progressive members of the Community on decolonisation issues,<sup>96</sup> and frequently diverged from EPC on the questions of South Africa and Namibia.<sup>97</sup>

An essential continuity marked the coalition government's approach to the South African question. In his submission to the April 1973 conference, Seán Ronan, Irish Ambassador to West Germany, commented that the Irish government had until then played a 'positive role' on apartheid and that the 'prudent course would be to continue the present policy of non-encouragement of trade with South Africa and avoidance of official trade promotional contacts'.<sup>98</sup> The search for constructive settlement remained a cornerstone of the new government's approach. FitzGerald told the United Nations General Assembly on 24 September 1973 that his government would continue to work for an inclusive solution; the fears of the minority had to be taken into account 'without our ever for a moment relaxing our abhorrence of the evil itself or ceasing to counter the attempts by reactionary elements in some countries to mitigate or explain away this most degrading of all repressive policies'.<sup>99</sup>

The belief in constructive reform was matched by an assertion of the right to self-determination. The Irish delegation continued to take positive action to match its rhetorical support. In October 1973 it co-sponsored (with Australia, Austria, Finland, West Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, and Sweden) a resolution at the Special Political Committee that condemned South Africa's treatment of political prisoners. In the aftermath of its vote against the general apartheid resolution in 1974, it made a considerable effort to be 'as firmly positive as possible' in voting on the other three apartheid resolutions before the Special Political Committee in order to balance the effects of its general vote.<sup>100</sup> Three years later at a United Nations conference on apartheid in Nigeria, the Irish delegation voiced its concern, along with Denmark and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>96</sup> For a discussion of EC voting patterns at the United Nations in the 1970s, see Hurwitz, 'The EEC and decolonisation'; Foot, 'The EC's voting behaviour at the UN'; and Lindemann, 'Europe and the Third World'.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>97</sup> Patrick Keatinge, 'Ireland: neutrality inside EPC', in Christopher Hill (ed.), *National foreign policies and European Political Cooperation* (London, 1983), p. 144; and Foot, 'The EC's voting behaviour at the UN', p. 355.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>98</sup> 'Foreign Policy Review in Dublin, 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> April, 1973: Comments of Mr S.G. Ronan, Ambassador at Bonn,' 30 March 1973, NAI DFA 2005/145/2348.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>99</sup> Garret FitzGerald, UNGA Plenary Meeting, 24 Sept. 1973, UNORGA, A/PV.2125.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>100</sup> DFA note, 'UN Resolutions on Apartheid voted in the Special Political Committee on 28 November 1974', dated 2 Dec. 1974, NAI DFA 2005/145/32.

the Netherlands, at Western arms supplies to South Africa.<sup>101</sup> The continuity embodied in the coalition's policies emphasised the essentially non-political nature of foreign affairs in the Irish system. Just as the transfer from Cosgrave to Aiken in 1957 entailed the retention of the same core principles with the addition of a greater emphasis on taking an independent stance, the coalition government held many of the core beliefs of its predecessor, founded in what were seen as national principles inseparable from the historic identity of the Irish state: principles of international relations that emphasised the distinctive role of the small state in the promotion of international stability.

The final process of decolonisation in the Portuguese territories illustrated the complexity of Irish relationships with the EC. In September 1973, the People's National Assembly of Guinea-Bissau unilaterally declared its independence from Portugal, and made its application for membership of the United Nations. It provided the Irish government with a test of its commitment both to decolonisation and to international law. Florrie O'Riordan of the Irish Embassy to the United Nations felt that 'it would serve the Portuguese right if an independent Guinea-Bissau were recognised by the UN', but was not convinced that the Irish government should recognise the new state.<sup>102</sup> He commented that 'EEC membership needs a certain amount of compromise', and was particularly concerned that Ireland needed 'the political support of other EEC partners on many issues'.<sup>103</sup> Within that context, the nature of Ireland's alignment became more evident. O'Riordan emphasised the necessity to co-ordinate policy with Denmark and the Netherlands, both of whom had invested significant amounts of humanitarian aid in the region, and had 'clear anti-colonialist policies'.<sup>104</sup> Those states had 'excellent means of assessing African conditions on the spot as we have not'.<sup>105</sup> He recommended that the Irish delegation 'should follow a Nine abstention line ... if it exists. Otherwise I would be inclined to attach great weight to Netherlands and Denmark.'106

There were other political reasons for not recognising Guinea-Bissau. Although the EC took precedence, the decision was in keeping with the Irish government's

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>101</sup> Keatinge, *Place among the nations*, pp. 175-6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>102</sup> O'Riordan to Cremin, 19 Oct. 1973, NAI DFA 2005/145/201.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>106</sup> Ibid.

previous policies. Ryan asserted that 'recognition means the formal acknowledgement of a legal entity and does not imply any form of approval or disapproval of the regime in control of the territory in question'.<sup>107</sup> Cremin told the United Nations General Assembly plenary meeting on 2 November 1973 that the 'information available does not in our judgement establish that Guinea-Bissau has as yet acquired the characteristics of a State'.<sup>108</sup> The approach closely paralleled that of Sweden. In spite of the direct humanitarian assistance it gave to PAIGC from 1969, the Swedish government did not feel that Guinea-Bissau met its criteria for state recognition: 'that the Power to be recognised has gained a reasonable degree of external independence that is fairly generally accepted by the rest of the world'.<sup>109</sup>

The Irish government's recognition policies could also be used to enforce a more openly political agenda. After the fall of Caetano on 25 April 1974, the EC assumed an important role in the promotion of a stable and democratic future for Portugal. In a speech to the Dáil in November of that year, FitzGerald framed the Portuguese transition to democracy directly in terms of the EC's involvement, particularly the strengthening of the Community's economic relations with the state.<sup>110</sup> Diplomatic exchange and dialogue – as well as the EC's indirect influence – played an important role in the gradual promotion of Community values and norms, as the later accelerated membership negotiations for Portugal, Spain, and Greece illustrated. It put the onus on each individual member state to contribute to the effort. In this context, and in 'recognition of the change in situation', the Irish government reversed its policy in late 1974 on diplomatic representation and decided to appoint an Ambassador to Portugal.<sup>111</sup>

In support of the Portuguese government's 'formal steps to activate the process', in July 1974 the Irish government agreed to recognise Guinea-Bissau 'when

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>107</sup> Richie Ryan, *Dáil Éireann deb.*, Vol. 269, Col. 1803 (13 Dec. 1973). For a discussion of Irish recognition policy prior to 1963, see Paula L. Wylie, *Ireland and the Cold War: diplomacy and recognition 1949-63* (Dublin, 2006).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>108</sup> Con Cremin, UNGA plenary meeting, 2 Nov. 1973, UNORGA, A/PV.2163.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>109</sup> Note by Keating re meeting with Swedish Ambassador to Ireland, 23 Oct. 1973, NAI DFA 2005/145/201.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>110</sup> Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 275, Col. 921 (5 Nov. 1974).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>111</sup> FitzGerald, Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 275, Col. 922 (5 Nov. 1974).

Portugal has done so'.<sup>112</sup> It was viewed as additionally important 'that Ireland should be among the first of the West European countries to recognise the new Republic [since] Ireland has, over the years, consistently affirmed the right to self-determination and independence'.<sup>113</sup> Community attitudes to Mozambican independence were defined by the same values, but Angola proved a more difficult case. The agreement signed in January 1975 between the Portuguese government and Angolan nationalist leaders led to independence on 11 November 1975, but not to Irish or EC recognition. Irish officials insisted that state recognition depended on 'the existence of a central authority in effective control of the greater part of its territory', which it believed was not the case in Angola.<sup>114</sup> It was only when the French government called a meeting of the EC ambassadors in Luxembourg in February 1976 that the DFA considered recognition 'in step with our partners'.<sup>115</sup> In its memorandum to the government it noted 'the recent extension of control by the MPLA and the collapse of the opposing forces' as reason to afford recognition to the state.<sup>116</sup> Recognition, it added, 'would be of the State and not of the Government currently exercising authority in Angola. It should also be stressed that recognition of the political state of affairs that exists in no way implies approval of the regime there or of its actions'.<sup>117</sup> The provision of government authority to recognise the new state was made 'on the understanding that [the Minister for Foreign Affairs] will not announce such recognition except in conjunction with the other member States of the European Community should they so decide. If they should not all so decide he will come back to the Government again before making any announcement.<sup>118</sup> In the event, the member states could not agree on recognition, but the Irish followed France's decision to recognise Angola, and on 18 February announced its intentions to do so, the same day as the Netherlands and Britain did so.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>112</sup> DFA memorandum for the government, 'Recognition of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau', 31 July 1974, NAI DT 2005/7/500.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>114</sup> FitzGerald to Meek, 5 Dec. 1975, NAI DFA 2005/145/30.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>115</sup> Telex, Irish Permanent Representative, Luxembourg, to DEA, 13 Feb. 1976, NAI DFA 2006/131/75.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>116</sup> DFA memorandum for the government, 'Recognition of the State of Angola', 16 Feb. 1976, ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

## SPORT, THE NATIONAL COALITION AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

Domestic debates also continued to evolve after 1973 and had a visible impact on Irish government policy. In March 1973 FitzGerald overruled DFA officials to recommend that the Department of Defence refuse special leave of absence to Lieutenant Dan Shanahan to travel with the Irish hockey team on its tour of South Africa, Rhodesia and Malawi.<sup>119</sup> The same year, the DFA tackled what it later described as 'the most difficult "Rhodesia problem" the Dept. has faced',<sup>120</sup> the inclusion of a team representing Rhodesia in the World Ploughing Championship in Wicklow that October. The issue was seized upon by the IAAM, who lobbied the government to refuse entry. Rhodesia's involvement, the movement contended, was 'an implicit denial of the magnificent principles of fraternity and equality which [the organisers] themselves espouse'.<sup>121</sup> The DFA agreed. FitzGerald and his officials were concerned that to allow admission to the Rhodesians would contravene Security Council resolution 253 under which member states were prohibited from engaging in cultural relations with the rebel regime. FitzGerald felt that their admission 'would not go unnoticed abroad and would not enhance our standing, particularly at the United Nations'.<sup>122</sup> He expressed his desire 'to ensure that the Rhodesians are not permitted to enter the State (provided of course this can be done legally)'.<sup>123</sup> When the latter proved impossible because, the Department of Justice informed the DFA, the Rhodesian participants intended to travel on British passports,<sup>124</sup> the cabinet refused to attend the event in order to 'manifest their unwillingness to participate in an international meeting of this kind involving as it does a Southern Rhodesian presence'.<sup>125</sup> At the same time, however, the Irish government opposed any direct interference with Irish sporting organisations. It argued that the most it could do was to make its opposition to such activities known to those involved. The withdrawal of Lieutenant Shanahan was a special case, given that he had applied for extra leave for the sole purpose of travelling with the Irish hockey team. The following March, FitzGerald advised the Department of Education that 'it would be

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>119</sup> See NAI DFA 2005/145/31, passim.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>120</sup> Hand-written note, Craig to 'Ken', undated, NAI DFA 2005/145/154.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>121</sup> 'World Ploughing Championships', Amandla, Vol. 8, No. 6 (Oct. 1973).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>122</sup> Keating to sec. Dept. of Justice, 25 July 1973, NAI DFA 2005/145/154.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>123</sup> Hand-written note by Whelan, appended to note, Whelan to de Paor, 18 July 1973, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>124</sup> Ward to sec. DFA, 1 Aug. 1973, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>125</sup> GIB press release, 17 Sept. 1973, ibid.

undesirable' to cut the grant to the Irish Hockey Union, in spite of its ongoing refusal to sever relations with the region.<sup>126</sup>

On 20 May 1974 a special European session of the United Nations Special Committee on Apartheid was convened in Dublin to celebrate the IAAM's tenth anniversary, an occasion the movement viewed as 'a measure of the importance of the contribution to international action that Ireland has made'.<sup>127</sup> The movement could reflect on a decade of growth and some significant successes, not least the Springbok protests and the decision to stop trade promotion in South Africa. In June 1973 the new Labour Minister for Industry and Commerce Justin Keating – one of those who had picketed CTT's meeting with South African trade officials in October 1969 – made it 'official policy not to seek new investment from that quarter and that the Industrial Development Authority, who are aware of that policy, will in future pursue the same line'.<sup>128</sup>

When the committee arrived, the movement was in the throes of another rugby campaign against the British and Irish Lions tour of South Africa and Rhodesia in the summer of 1974. As part of a broader campaign known as the Stop the Apartheid Rugby Tour (SART), a conglomeration of anti-apartheid groups founded in Britain in the autumn of 1973, the IAAM urged the IRFU to 'consider the moral issue. Apartheid is an evil and monstrous doctrine and it will be a disgraceful act of collaboration with apartheid if our sportsmen go to South Africa and participate in a tour which is organised on racialist lines.'<sup>129</sup> Its campaign enjoyed moderate success. In January 1974 an appeal to the IRFU to 'make clear that any player who withdrew ... would not be discriminated against in future selection for Irish teams'<sup>130</sup> was met with a statement that participation in the Lions tour was 'a matter of individual decision' that would 'in no way prejudice his chances of future selection'.<sup>131</sup> The following month three Cabinet Ministers (FitzGerald, Keating and O'Brien) were among those who signed the IAAM's petition against the tour. On 1 April FitzGerald wrote an open letter to the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>126</sup> FitzGerald to Keating, 1 March 1974, NAI DFA 2005/145/31.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>127</sup> 'Ten years of solidarity with the peoples of southern Africa', Amandla, Vol. 9, No. 4 (May 1974).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>128</sup> Keating to Flannery, 22 June 1973, NLI IAAM Papers, Roll 7, Part 25.1.2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>129</sup> IAAM statement quoted in 'Seven Ministers among objectors to Lions tour of South Africa', *The Irish Times*, 1 Feb. 1974.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>130</sup> 'I.R.F.U. asked to reassure players', *The Irish Times*, 11 Jan. 1974.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>131</sup> 'S.A. tour up to each player – I.R.F.U.', *The Irish Times*, 17 Jan. 1974.

IRFU in which he called on the union to reconsider its decision and to 'appreciate that, in participating ... they are setting the Olympic principle at nought',<sup>132</sup> warning of the IRFU's responsibilities to Rhodesia and Namibia in terms of the United Nations' attitudes to both.

The outcome of the campaign was typical of the IAAM's standing in Irish society. The success of the tour on the field - the Lions won twenty-one of their twenty-two matches, drawing the other - overshadowed the protests. While the movement convinced a good many Irish citizens of the merits of change through isolation over change through association, not all sports bodies or supporters were willing to marry sport with politics. A letter from the Irish Hockey Union to the IAAM in March 1974 was indicative of this position: 'Our disapproval of the practice of racial segregation in South Africa or elsewhere is ... approached quite differently but nonetheless sincerely from the manner or methods which you would appear to urge upon us.<sup>133</sup> The failure of the boycott campaign, re-launched in June 1974 as the 'No Collaboration' campaign, evidenced the difficulty in transforming the growing awareness of the IAAM's goals into sustained protest. The movement could not hope to compete with the marketing budgets of South African industry: 'we must continue to rely on the efforts of members to take our material to the shops and shoppers'.<sup>134</sup> This form of individual protest could be, and often was, successful. In 1974 the IAAM's executive established a sub-committee under the direction of Tony Ffrench to deal with the question of Irish emigration to southern Africa.<sup>135</sup> The disruption of interviews became one of the movement's most effective forms of private action, and Ffrench was described by one former IAAM member as 'the master of the art'.<sup>136</sup> Using a variety of pseudonyms, including Mr P.C. Bumble, Mr Alex Overland, Mr Gerard Trench, and Miss B.S. Figgis to gain access to the interview stage, Ffrench disrupted numerous interviews with a vehement rejection of apartheid principles. His activities were quite successful. In 1974, Minister for Labour Michael O'Leary, a long-time IAAM supporter, replied to representations from the movement regarding interviews for

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>132</sup> Quoted in 'Implications of S.A. rugby tour explained by FitzGerald', *The Irish Times*, 2 April 1974.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>133</sup> Atkinson to Meek, 8 March 1974, NLI IAAM Papers Roll 5, Part 19.4.1.2.

<sup>134</sup> IAAM, Annual Report 1973-74 (Dublin, 1974), p. 4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>135</sup> The following observations are based on two interviews conducted with Tony Ffrench, Dublin, 1 Dec. 2005, and 2 Feb. 2006, and on private documents in his possession.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>136</sup> Interview with Kilgallen (9 Nov. 2005).

nursing posts in South Africa to the effect that he was 'having the matter considered to see what can be done, by way of amending existing or introducing new legislation'.<sup>137</sup>

## BISHOP DONAL LAMONT AND THE CREATION OF MODERN ZIMBABWE

As Ffrench and his colleagues in the West protested on behalf of the indigenous African populations, the Pearce Commission's resounding rejection of the Rhodesian constitution in 1972 strengthened the determination of African nationalists to go down the path of violent liberation. Many of the relatively small number of Irish missionaries based in the state became caught up in the escalating civil war. As they had done in Biafra, many Irish Catholic missionaries identified closely with the cause of their parishioners. The Carmelite Order, concentrated in Umtali diocese on the border with Mozambique, was especially vulnerable. After some initial difficulties, they developed a good working relationship with the guerrillas. Bishop Patrick Mutume remembered that some Irish priests were 'so much on [the guerrillas'] side that you had to sort of warn them that ... you could not show that visibly. It could be dangerous.'<sup>138</sup> The Carmelites built a strong relationship with the local people through their adoption of a kind of folk-Catholicism that adapted to local life.<sup>139</sup> To be Irish became 'a sure sign of acceptance by the guerrillas'.<sup>140</sup>

The Carmelite missionaries may have disliked the 'seigneurial style' of their bishop, Donal Lamont, but, David Maxwell noted, 'appreciated that his pastorals did at least go some way towards reflecting the needs and aspirations of rural Catholics'.<sup>141</sup> Lamont, whose name has appeared on more than one occasion in this study, was born in Ballycastle, Co. Antrim, in 1911 and joined the Carmelite Order immediately from school, going on to spend six years in Rome (1933-39) at the height of Italian Fascism. After being ordained as a priest in 1937, Lamont went to Southern Rhodesia in 1946, first to the missions at Inyanga, then as parish priest in Umtali and, from 1957, Bishop of the new Diocese of Umtali. Informed by his experiences in Rome, Lamont was

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>137</sup> O'Leary to Kader Asmal, 11 April 1974, NAI DFA 2005/145/30.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>138</sup> Janice McLaughlin, 'Avila Mission: a turning point in Church relations with the State and with the liberation forces', in Ngwabi Bhebe and Terence Ranger (eds.), *Society in Zimbabwe's liberation war* (Oxford, 1996), p. 94.

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>139</sup> David J. Maxwell, 'Christianity and the war in Eastern Zimbabwe: the case of Elim Mission', in
 Ngwabi Bhebe and Terence Ranger (eds.), *Society in Zimbabwe's liberation war* (Oxford, 1996), p. 77.
 <sup>140</sup> McLaughlin, 'Avila Mission', p. 94.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>141</sup> Maxwell, 'Christianity and the war in Eastern Zimbabwe', p. 73.

outspoken from his first days as Bishop. His assertion that Rhodesia was, in spite of its claim to uphold Christian ideals against communist encroachment, not 'a free Christian society' led him to be regarded as a prominent voice in favour of African independence.<sup>142</sup> He became a thorn in the side of the Rhodesian authorities, who viewed him as 'a person who was using the church to support terrorism'.<sup>143</sup> Lamont became one of the leading voices in favour of African political freedom, and travelled to London to meet with British officials, including Foreign Secretary Sir Alec Douglas-Home, whom he met in December 1973 as part of the latter's 'attempts to maintain contacts with all shades of opinion in Rhodesia'.<sup>144</sup> In March 1974 he lunched with two British Embassy officials who came to hear him address officers of the Irish Air Corps at Baldonnel.<sup>145</sup> The following October he denounced the Rhodesian government at the Fourth International Synod of Bishops in Rome 'for holding on to power through a policy of oppression against the majority African population'.<sup>146</sup>

In an effort to discredit the bishop, the Rhodesian authorities marked Lamont out for special treatment and outrageous rumours circulated of Lamont's 'alleged liaisons with African women'.<sup>147</sup> As president of the Rhodesian Justice and Peace Commission between 1974 and 1976 he oversaw the publication of detailed reports on torture and intimidation by Rhodesian Security Forces. In September 1976 Lamont was arrested and the following month was sentenced to ten years in prison with labour. Aged 65, he had his sentence commuted the following March, was stripped of his Rhodesian citizenship and deported. Lamont's actions were largely removed from his native Ireland, but he continued to be a source of information for the Irish government. On his visits to Rome he met frequently with Irish Embassy officials in the Holy See. He kept in contact with Kevin Rush (brother-in-law to Lamont's brother),<sup>148</sup> and appeared to have enjoyed a good relationship with Aiken. In March 1970 Lamont had

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>142</sup> Lamont, Speech from the dock, p. 58.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>143</sup> Former Rhodesian Special Branch officer, quoted in McLaughlin, 'Avila Mission', p. 91.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>144</sup> 'Record of a conversation between the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and Bishop Lamont at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office at 6.00 pm on 19 December 1973', NAUK Prime Minister's Office (hereafter PREM) 15/1877; and Lamont's 1973 diary, entry for 19 Dec. 1973, Lamont Papers, Box 1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>145</sup> 1974 diary, entry for 15 March 1974, Lamont Papers, Box 1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>146</sup> John Cooney, 'Irish-born bishop denounces Rhodesian regime at Synod', *The Irish Times*, 3 Oct. 1974.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>147</sup> McConville to Byatt, 11 July 1973, NAUK FCO 87/208.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>148</sup> Thanks to Mr Desmond Lamont for this information.

sent a copy of his latest pastoral, *A Crisis of Conscience*, to the former Minister '[w]ith all kind wishes to Mrs Aiken and the family'.<sup>149</sup> His appearances on the 'Late Late Show' in October 1972, his links with Trócaire on whose behalf he did some preaching in 1974, the frequent phone calls he received from the IAAM during his trial, and the tenor of his speeches suggest that for many he symbolised an Irish abhorrence for repression and racist rule. His vocal support for the rights of the African population echoed Irish public and official attitudes to colonialism and was presented in a manner akin to that in which Ireland's own policies were viewed. When he was sentenced in 1976, an Irish government press release described him as 'an Irishman who has given his life to the service of people of all races in his community and has won respect throughout the world for his devoted efforts on their behalf'.<sup>150</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The explicit and recurring reference to Ireland's past in the construction of its present institutional identity was returned to, and in many ways strengthened, after the state's accession to the EC. The core beliefs remained: a commitment to self-determination, the rejection of state repression, and - in reference to the principles assumed by the state after 1922 - the promotion of international peace through the pursuit of an independent, non-aligned (in lower case) attitude that aimed to judge issues on their own merits. Ireland's position within the EC reflected the role it had cultivated internationally in the previous eighteen years of United Nations membership. In recognition of its small-state status, the Irish government was conscious of the limits prescribed by the EPC and Community structures, and the political influences of its fellow member states. As it had done at the United Nations, it nonetheless attempted to construct its own identity within the Community framework. The assertion that the state had a constructive role to play in shaping EC policy on southern Africa, and the deliberate referral of Irish policies to the more progressive members of the community, Denmark and the Netherlands, were part of an attempt to define Ireland's diplomatic independence. The approach recognised the limits to Irish influence, but at the same

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>149</sup> Lamont to Aiken, 23 March 1970, UCDA Aiken Papers P104/7142.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>150</sup> DFA press release, 'Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr Garret FitzGerald, on the passing of sentence on Dr Donal Lamont in Rhodesia on 1 October 1976', NAI DFA 2006/131/123.

time attempted to maximise its potential in the pursuit of Community policies broadly in keeping with its goals. Its essence was described by Hillery in the year prior to accession: 'the role of [the Irish] Government is not to try to impose a grand "foreign policy design". It is rather to steer and develop our many existing contacts in accordance with some general ideas of what we stand for and what we want to achieve.'151

It was a little disingenuous of British officials to comment that in EC membership the Irish government had 'found a second string for a bow which for too long has had a single Anglo/Irish string'.<sup>152</sup> The Irish contribution to the United Nations had been more important than they suggested. There was, however, a certain element of truth in its implicit recognition of the waning role of moderates like Ireland at the United Nations. EC membership gave the Irish government a renewed opportunity to voice its attitude on world affairs as a shaper of policy and – its officials liked to imagine – a voice of reason in Community debates. It found itself assuming a role on issues in which its influence would otherwise have been marginal, such as the attempts to stimulate democratisation in Portugal through Community assistance and dialogue with it. The process of according recognition to the independent former Portuguese territories further highlighted both Community influence and the potential for an Irish contribution in the pursuit of the EC's broader goals. Irish attitudes to the legal implications demonstrated the high levels of continuity with past Irish government policies and downplayed the extent to which EC membership altered Irish attitudes. The continued high correlation between its policies and those of its Nordic counterparts on issues from sanctions and expulsion of South Africa, to trade and the recognition of Guinea-Bissau, situated Irish policy within both an EC and a wider progressive Western context.

The comparison with the Nordic states is additionally important in examining the changes within Irish society and domestic influences on foreign policy. The similarities in debate, discussion and the individual societies' reactions to international events situated the Irish foreign policy-making process in an entirely different context from what it had been twenty years before. The tone and direction of debate had

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>151</sup> Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 260, Col. 385 (18 April 1972).
 <sup>152</sup> Donnelly to White, 7 Nov. 1973, NAUK FCO 87/181.

changed considerably. The central point of reference in discussing South Africa was no longer the Boer War, but the agenda set by the IAAM during the Springbok tour with its emphasis on the struggle of the African population against segregation. The change in tone of this dialogue affected the process of policy-making and visibly changed its outcomes. The Irish delegation at the United Nations voted in favour of increasingly radical resolutions as it attempted to match public pressure with positive action. The decision to end trade promotion with South Africa was a significant one in this respect, particularly when compared with the approach of the Swedish and Finnish governments. Along with the large increases in Irish contributions to UNTFSA and UNETPSA, that decision was made in recognition of the growing scrutiny of Irish policy and the necessity to match its rhetoric with practical support. Its contributions to the United Nations funds carried an additional importance. Just as membership of the EC defined Ireland's traditional relationship with the developing world in a new context, the increasing commitment to development assistance altered the very nature of that relationship. By 1975, when Ireland assumed its first presidency of the EC and oversaw the final negotiations of what became the Lomé Agreement with the ACP states, the extent of its impact became more readily apparent.

# 'Aid to Developing Countries': Irish Official Development Assistance\*

As the states of the developing world consolidated their political independence, their agenda was increasingly shaped by questions of economic development and access to trade. Through institutions like UNCTAD, founded in 1964, they assumed a leading role in shaping international discourse on development assistance, emphasising issues of trade inequality, poverty alleviation, and economic development. UNCTAD had a major influence on Western responses. Originally conceptualised primarily in political terms to stem the growth of Soviet influence, in the 1960s Western ODA policies, confronted with 'a unified and assertive group of underdeveloped countries, agreed to harmonise their financial terms and conditions and to soften the financial terms of aid.<sup>1</sup> The effect of this discourse was not limited to inter-state relations. Within Western society, increased interest in issues like Biafra, apartheid, and Vietnam stimulated debate on society's moral responsibilities towards the developing world. In the more international character of Swedish society in the 1960s, for example, Per Sveastik noted that 'increasing awareness of "solidarity" with the third world, as well as its stance against the unjust apartheid system in South Africa ... [led to] the radicalisation in the future aid bills adopted by the government'.<sup>2</sup>

In Ireland the effect was similar, albeit on a smaller scale. The humanitarian disaster in Biafra, the Springbok tour, and the debate stimulated by Irish missionaries highlighted what S.K. Dey, the Deputy Secretary-General of the London-based International Voluntary Service, told an audience in Dublin in December 1970 was the West's 'moral, intellectual, and spiritual obligation to help our neighbours in need'.<sup>3</sup> The attitude to Ireland's role in the world also changed. The 1969 report produced by the World Bank's Commission on International Development (known as the Pearson

<sup>\*</sup> An earlier version of this chapter appeared as Kevin O'Sullivan, 'Biafra to Lomé: the evolution of Irish government policy on official development assistance, 1969-75', *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, Vol. 18 (2007), pp. 91-107.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Schmidt and Pharo, 'Introduction', p. 393.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Per Sevastik, 'The rule of law and Swedish development assistance', in Per Sevastik (ed.), *Legal* 

assistance to developing countries: Swedish perspectives on the rule of law (Dordrecht, 1997), p. 19.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> 'Ways to help developing countries', *The Irish Times*, 22 Dec. 1970.

report after its chair, Lester Pearson) identified Ireland among the twenty-one industrialised countries in the world, laying down thereby a challenge as to the state's international responsibilities.<sup>4</sup> It became more difficult to argue that Ireland's underdeveloped economy excused it from contributing to development assistance, or that missionary activity was a sufficient substitute for any significant financial contribution to ODA. As Irish NGO activity continued to grow, it offered an opportunity for greater involvement with the issue among the broader public, stimulated awareness of the developing world, and consequently put pressure on the Irish government to match public support with private action. This interplay between public and NGO activity and its effect on Irish government policy forms the core of this chapter. It is divided into three sections. The first briefly examines Irish attitudes to development assistance prior to the Biafran crisis at government and public levels, the second section focuses on the response of the Fianna Fáil government to that crisis, its policies and the extent to which Biafra affected its approach to ODA, and the final section deals with that government's successor, the Fine Gael/Labour coalition, the reforms it introduced and the circumstances within which those reforms were implemented. It focuses on a number of dimensions to those changes: the influence of Garret FitzGerald as Minister, the growth and consolidation of development NGOs, the influence of the EC on Irish policy, and the implications of ODA for Ireland's relationship with the developing world.

# THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT DEBATE

The transfer of resources between sovereign states – directly or through international agencies – that became known as ODA originally resembled what David Morrison described as the 'colonial development and welfare programmes initiated by some European imperial powers in their overseas territories before, during, and after World War II'.<sup>5</sup> At the end of the 1940s, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Britain began to engage in the kind of activity that could be defined as ODA, providing assistance directly to developing world states for the purpose of accelerating

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> World Bank. Commission on International Development, Partners in development: report of the

Commission on International Development (New York, 1969).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Morrison, Aid and ebb tide, p. 3.

the latter's economic development. By the mid-1950s the question had become more pressing. Encouraged by the United States, the West saw it as crucially important to persuade the newly-independent states of Asia and Africa 'that the economic system of the Western world was indeed superior to the communist system'.<sup>6</sup> Put more cynically by D.K. Fieldhouse, Western development assistance aimed 'to buy the continued friendship and political and economic collaboration of the prospective successor regimes'.<sup>7</sup>

The commitment of the Western Powers to ODA was based on what Schmidt and Pharo termed 'the widespread conviction that the developed world had a political and economic interest in, and moral obligation to modernise, the Third World'.8 ODA was viewed as important in ensuring the removal of the inequalities that potentially threatened international stability. It was however not solely based on political concerns. The involvement of the United Nations and the attitudes of the moderate Western states re-emphasised the moral aspect, and viewed ODA in terms of their commitment to international law, the primacy of international organisation, and the use of those institutions to limit the spread of conflict and instability. That attitude brought them into conflict with the Western Powers. The creation of the Special United Nations Fund for Economic Development (SUNFED) in 1953 threatened the Western approach to ODA since it offered little or no control over the direction of aid contributions. In an effort to counter SUNFED and assimilate some of its aims in a more effective form, in the late 1950s and early 1960s a number of alternative international organisations and special agencies emerged that tied aid to conditions shaped by the Western Powers. Between 1958 and 1962 the IMF, the World Bank's International Development Agency (IDA) and International Finance Corporation, GATT, the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC), and the EC's Development Fund were formed, joined by the aid provided by the United Nations' organs, the FAO and the World Food Programme (WFP). The process continued throughout the decade. The creation of UNCTAD in 1964 drove further debate and offered a voice for the developing world and non-aligned states to shape the ODA agenda. In 1969, the Pearson Report made a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Schmidt and Pharo, 'Introduction', p. 388.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> D.K. Fieldhouse, *The West and the Third World: trade, colonialism, dependence and development* (London, 1999), p. 231.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Schmidt and Pharo, 'Introduction', p. 391.

significant contribution to international debate, broadly establishing the norms of ODA as they are viewed today: a moral imperative, but one which has an important role in the preservation of international security through the elimination of poverty.

The influence of the Christian churches in these developments was not indiscernible. Apart from ascribing a moral imperative on Christians in the developed world to assist their less well off neighbours, the churches set definite goals in the pursuit of those responsibilities. In 1958, a World Council of Churches meeting at Nyborg in Denmark first put forward the formulation that developed states donate 1.0% of GNP to ODA. That figure was adopted by the United Nations First Development Decade in 1960, and later revised downwards to 0.7% for the Second Development Decade, the latter figure matching the Pearson Report's recommendation. By that stage, the Catholic Church had provided an added impetus to the global debate on development. Pope Paul VI's 1967 encyclical on the question, *Populorum Progressio*, and the widespread involvement of Catholic missionaries in projects on the ground, woke a large section of Western society to their obligations in the field.

By the end of the 1960s the effects of this international debate grew increasingly visible. In 1970 the Netherlands contributed 0.61% GNP to ODA, followed by Denmark (0.38%), Sweden (0.38%), and Norway (0.32%).<sup>9</sup> In the following decade, the Netherlands surpassed the 1.0% mark, with Denmark, Sweden and Norway close behind, all above the Second Development Decade's target of 0.7%. The discussion on ODA target figures and motivations was matched by a parallel debate on the manner in which those contributions were utilised. It mirrored closely political changes in the developing world. In the 1950s development approaches emphasised the importance of comprehensive economic planning, and in the 1960s, after the large majority of states had become independent, looked to specific theories of economic growth. As debate became more nuanced and the developing world found a collective voice at the international level, two forms of approach arose in the 1970s: poverty alleviation at the domestic level, and, at the international level, the search for a complete restructuring of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> World Bank, World Development Report 1982 (Oxford, 1982), p. 140.

the international economy and the creation of a New International Economic Order (NIEO).<sup>10</sup>

### IRISH OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE, 1960-70

In Ireland, the public and (until at least 1968) government officials were largely divorced from these debates. Efforts to suggest that the Irish people 'should increase our public contribution to international aid'<sup>11</sup> met with an apathetic response. In the NGO sector, the activities of the FFHC under the Irish Red Cross and Gorta (see chapter six) were not enough to stimulate widespread public interest in development issues. The Irish public and its officials instead preferred to argue that the state's relative economic under-development and the work done by its missionaries exempted it from considering any significant monetary contribution. It became enough simply to emphasise the public's contributions to church-gate missionary collections rather than engage in a debate on the nature of those responsibilities. The Irish public, the *Irish Independent* argued in 1963, had made 'a real contribution by helping missionaries whose work is invaluable even on a material plane'.<sup>12</sup>

Biafra changed that situation. By dramatically increasing the level of public debate and involvement on the issue of disaster relief, it forced a re-assessment of the assumption that Ireland was doing enough relative to its size and economic status. The discussion looked inwards, stimulated by growing concern within the Catholic Church at its moral obligations. The missionaries' stories of starvation and disease in Biafra, and their increased involvement in development projects elsewhere in the developing world, had a significant impact on discourse in Ireland. Missionary magazines added to their usual stories from far-flung parishes a new emphasis on 'the condition of millions of people in the under-developed part of our world'.<sup>13</sup> It brought about a more critical analysis, not only of government policies but of attitudes to the developing world. At the August 1968 Social Studies Conference in Antrim, Robert Cashman, Vice-President of the Superior Council of the St Vincent de Paul, was highly critical of the public

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> For a concise account of the main discourses in international development between 1950 and 1990, see Chabbott, 'Development INGOs', p. 239.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> 'Moral obligations of rich countries', *The Irish Times*, 28 April 1962.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> 'Is it a duty?', Irish Independent, 16 March 1963.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Farrell Sheridan, 'That cover', *Missionary Annals*, Vol. 51, No. 12 (Dec. 1968), p. 3.

contribution to development assistance. At times of disaster like Biafra, he told the audience, 'people responded generously, but in normal times ... Asians and South Americans suffer from disease, hunger and malnutrition without the Irish people as a whole being involved'.<sup>14</sup> In his Christmas 1968 RTÉ television address Cardinal William Conway, Archbishop of Armagh, emphasised that Ireland was among the twenty richest countries in the world and had an obligation to live up to the responsibilities that came with its privileged position.<sup>15</sup> The ICJP, formed by the Catholic hierarchy in October 1969, provided an organised voice for these new aspirations. Its secretary Jerome Connolly warned that 'simply to support missionaries [was] emphatically not sufficient to discharge our duties to the rest of the world'.<sup>16</sup> The Irish people, he argued, did not realise 'how serious their obligations were', and mistakenly felt that 'whatever this country does will make little or no difference internationally, because it is so small and insignificant'.<sup>17</sup>

Similar criticisms were levelled at the Irish government. The attention brought about by Biafra highlighted a decade of underachievement in the field of ODA. The rhetorical support for development assistance espoused at the beginning of the decade (see chapter one) had not been matched in practice. The programme established in 1960 to make up for Ireland's economic deficiencies by providing technical expertise failed to live up to its promise. In its first three years the scheme provided for a number of basic programmes introduced by the Departments of Health and Education to allow medical staff and teachers to work abroad, and to the *ad hoc* training of individual African officials in Ireland, but there was little attempt to create a comprehensive structure for its implementation. It relied instead on individual relationships to stimulate activity. In June 1963 James Skinner, an Irish barrister and advisor to Kenneth Kaunda, the Minister for Local Government and Social Welfare of Northern Rhodesia and soonto-be President of independent Zambia, visited Paul Keating at the Irish Embassy in London to discuss the possibility of providing work placement in Ireland for a number of 'future Civil Servants and technicians who will be available and trained when they

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> 'Fight against world hunger: Ireland's part evaluated', *The Irish Times*, 6 Aug. 1968.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> 'Rich Ireland in the "top twenty", Irish Press, 27 Dec. 1968.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Connolly, *Third World war*, p. 44.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

come into power as they expect to do'.<sup>18</sup> The relationship was the most fruitful to come from the government's commitment to technical assistance. In 1964 and 1965 a total of fifty Northern Rhodesian/Zambian officials were trained under a scheme run by the Institute of Public Administration (IPA) at the request of the Irish government. Smaller numbers followed, and many Irish men and women went in the opposite direction to work in the institutions of the fledgling state. Between 1967 and 1971 a number of Zambian Army cadets were trained at the Curragh as part of a further exchange between the two states.

The success of the Zambian contacts could not disguise the overall shortcomings in the technical assistance scheme, of which the IPA was more than aware. Before it agreed to run the initial programme, the organisation warned that it viewed the responsibility 'without enthusiasm; our advice is that there are much more effective and less hazardous methods of helping public administration in developing countries'.<sup>19</sup> A lack of planning on the part of the DEA, added to the IPA's unwillingness to promote the scheme, seriously inhibited its effectiveness. The demands placed on developing world states to contribute the cost of living for their officials for the duration of their stay in Ireland only further reduced the scheme's attractiveness. There were other examples of the Irish government's shortcomings. The Overseas Trainee Fund created in February 1964 'to assist in the training in Ireland of nationals of the young African and Asian States in administration, management and technical skills<sup>20</sup> received little support. Aiken believed that the Irish government 'should not go out of our way to look for projects'.<sup>21</sup> What the Connacht Tribune described in March 1964 as '[o]ne of the most progressive aspects of our foreign policy' had stagnated by the end of the decade and the £50,000 annual budget allocated to the fund went largely unspent.<sup>22</sup>

The IPA was extremely critical of the government's approach. Its director, T.J. Barrington, warned Donal O'Sullivan of the DEA in September 1964 that 'unless somebody was prepared to pursue the possibilities, there seemed little purpose in going

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Keating to Ronan, 26 June 1963, NAI DFA 2002/19/261.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Barrington to Murphy, 23 Aug. 1963, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Frank Aiken, *Dáil Éireann deb.*, Vol. 207, Col 1725 (27 Feb. 1964).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Donal O'Sullivan to Holmes, 3 Feb. 1965, NAI DFA 2002/19/299.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> 'Ireland's service to Africa', Connacht Tribune, 21 March 1964, NAI DFA 2002/19/298.

ahead with plans for the future. In a world where standards were rapidly rising it would be futile, if not damaging, to provide anything but a first-class course.<sup>23</sup> Barrington himself gained first-hand knowledge of African bureaucracy through his work assessing the Ghanaian civil service, his regular visits to Zambia, and his close relationship with Kaunda, which put him in an excellent position to assess the problem from both sides. By 1967, the training schemes had virtually come to a halt. That year's IPA annual report noted 'that if technical assistance in the field of administrative training is to be provided in this country for developing countries in Africa and elsewhere, it will involve carrying out some preliminary work in the countries in question and by offering financial assistance towards the cost of travel, tuition and subsistence'.<sup>24</sup> The will, it implied, did not exist to do so, and the government appeared uninterested in rectifying the situation.

The Irish government might have been excused its shortcomings had it matched them with a more positive commitment in other areas of ODA, but throughout the 1960s it returned to the excuses prevalent in wider Irish society. Its approach was marked by what Sutton deemed a 'noticeable tendency to shelter behind the tremendous work being done by the voluntary sector'.<sup>25</sup> In 1963 Lemass spoke proudly to a Washington audience of the role of Irish missionaries and lay men and women working in the developing world as the country's 'own brand of "peace corps"'.<sup>26</sup> Irish officials also continued to emphasise the state's relative economic under-development and its implications for ODA contributions. In spite of the recognition in 1963's *Second Programme for Economic Expansion* that the state should increase ODA 'according as our own economic capacity grows',<sup>27</sup> the delegation at the United Nations exempted Ireland from any significant contribution because, it argued, Ireland remained a net importer of capital.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> 'Report of meeting held on Friday (afternoon) 11<sup>th</sup> September, 1964, at 3.30 pm in the Department of External Affairs', NAI DFA 2002/19/262.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> 'Fewer attend African training course', Irish Independent, 11 Dec. 1967.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Sutton, Irish government aid, p. 13.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> 'Address by Mr Sean Lemass, Taoiseach, at Luncheon of National Press Club, Washington, DC,

Wednesday, 16<sup>th</sup> October, 1963', NAI DT 98/6/404.

COUNTRY	ODA AS % GNP								
	1960	1965	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976
Austria	-	0.11	0.07	0.07	0.09	0.15	0.18	0.17	0.12
Denmark	0.09	0.13	0.38	0.43	0.45	0.48	0.55	0.58	0.56
Finland	-	0.02	0.07	0.12	0.15	0.16	0.17	0.18	0.18
Ireland	0.05	0.04	0.03	0.05	0.04	0.05	0.08	0.08	0.10
Italy	0.22	0.10	0.16	0.18	0.09	0.14	0.14	0.11	0.13
Netherlands	0.31	0.36	0.61	0.58	0.67	0.54	0.63	0.75	0.82
Norway	0.11	0.16	0.32	0.33	0.43	0.43	0.57	0.66	0.71
Sweden	0.05	0.19	0.38	0.44	0.48	0.56	0.72	0.82	0.82

Table 8.1: Irish ODA in Comparative Perspective (selected years 1960-76)

Source: Sutton, *Irish government aid*, p. 76; Sutton, 'Irish ODA and the UN target', p. 20; World Bank, *World Development Report 1978* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 98-9; and World Bank, *World Development Report 1982*, p. 140.

That could not deflect from the fact that the state was not contributing its share. The Department of Finance admitted in 1964 that it was concerned at 'the appropriateness of the level of our total aid having regard to international comparisons'.<sup>28</sup> Viewed in the context of its European contemporaries, the extent of Ireland's shortcomings became more evident. In August 1964 Denis Holmes commented favourably on the Danish ODA programme and its many facets 'which should be open to us to emulate',<sup>29</sup> but in practice the Irish government was a considerable distance behind. At the beginning of the 1960s its contribution to ODA stood at 0.046% GNP,<sup>30</sup> Denmark's at 0.09% and Norway's at 0.11%.<sup>31</sup> By the end of the decade the comparison had become even less flattering, as Table 8.1 shows. Ireland's contribution in 1970 continued to compare extremely unfavourably with that of Denmark and Norway, and was behind states of relatively comparable economic development like Italy, Austria and Finland.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Draft note by Department of Finance, 'Ireland's Aid to Less-developed Countries', Aug. 1964, NAI DFA 2002/19/298.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Hand-written note, Holmes to Ó hÉideáin, 25 Aug. 1964, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Figures taken from Sutton, Irish government aid, p. 76.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> World Bank, World Development Report 1978, pp. 98-9; figures are for 1960.

# FIANNA FÁIL AND OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE, 1970-73

Biafra focussed attention on these shortcomings. Shortly after his appointment as Minister in July 1969, Hillery ordered an internal analysis of the government's ODA policies that not only examined its attitudes to relief in Biafra but shed light on its broader obligations in the field. The DEA's self-assessment was damning: prior to 1969 Irish ODA had been 'rather haphazard and not related to any systematic plan'.<sup>32</sup> Ireland's contributions to UN voluntary agencies were viewed as unfavourable, particularly in comparison with its Western contemporaries, and the department questioned whether the contribution to UNCTAD could be 'seen to represent a reasonable effort ... to move towards the UNCTAD targets'.<sup>33</sup> It commented on the need for greater co-ordination of policy inter-departmentally, a large increase in Ireland's contributions to UN voluntary agencies and a re-assessment of the bilateral element of Ireland's ODA policy. The context too was important. Donal O'Sullivan noted that the application for EC membership put additional emphasis on Ireland's ODA in comparison with its counterparts within the Community and would highlight fresh obligations to the Community's own aid programmes. Subsequent analyses of Irish ODA reiterated the importance of this factor, particularly in proposals put by Hillery to increase spending at the United Nations.

The more immediate influence of public commentary 'on the inadequacy of our aid programme as a whole and on the need for more effective coordination of activity in this sphere' was maintained by the activities of the NGO sector in the aftermath of the Biafran crisis.<sup>34</sup> Expelled by the Nigerian government at the end of the Biafran war, in March 1970 Africa Concern pledged to act as a relief channel 'for as long as the people of Ireland continue to be concerned with the welfare of their less fortunate brothers'.<sup>35</sup> As it debated its future role, the organisation continued to fund projects on an *ad hoc* basis, predominantly through Irish missionaries. The prominence it gained during the Biafran crisis was difficult to maintain, but in January 1971 Fr Kennedy described the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Draft DEA memorandum, 'Ireland's Development Aid Programme', undated [July 1969?], NAI DT 2000/6/482.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Donal O'Sullivan to sec. DT, 23 July 1969, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> 'African [sic.] Concern to continue giving aid', The Irish Times, 16 March 1970.

organisation as 'the only national society in Ireland that endeavours to aid the Third World in every way that aid is needed: educational, medical, financial, emergency relief, agricultural, etc'.<sup>36</sup> Disaster relief continued to provide the most publicly visible manifestation of its activities. In 1972 the organisation assisted in the provision of emergency assistance in the East Pakistan/Bangladesh famine, and the following year, under the shortened title of Concern, it assumed a prominent role in the famine that devastated parts of Ethiopia. Its success had implications for the other Irish NGOs. Gorta, badly affected by Concern's fund-raising during the Biafran war, struggled to define a role for itself in its aftermath. Its funding continued on a similar scale and with a wide geographical base, but its success was hindered by internal difficulties that in 1974 and 1975 brought its Irish structure to a virtual standstill and undermined public confidence in the organisation.

In 1973 Gorta gained another significant competitor in the form of Trócaire, the Catholic bishops' development assistance fund. Trócaire had originally been formed in October 1969 by the Catholic hierarchy as a means 'to channel funds to underdeveloped countries',<sup>37</sup> but remained idle until resurrected by the bishops in 1972. Under the eyes of its director Brian McKeown, the 'new' organisation aimed to offer a channel through which Irish Catholics could 'express their commitment on an ongoing basis to the needs of the Third World'.<sup>38</sup> It had a dual emphasis: to distribute financial aid to various relief projects across the world, and to educate the Irish public about the issue of poverty and development. It was immediately successful. Its first major attempt at fund-raising, the inaugural Lenten campaign launched in March 1973, raised £460,000, which Trócaire spent on relief in areas as diverse as Asia, Africa, South America, and the Caribbean.<sup>39</sup> Success on this scale had the additional effect of further elevating development assistance as a subject of widespread public interest. Launching the 1975 Lenten campaign, Bishop Eamon Casey commented that a greater public understanding of development assistance would put 'more pressure on the Government ... to increase its aid to the Third World countries'.<sup>40</sup> Trócaire was aware of the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Raymond Kennedy to ed., *The Irish Times*, 16 Jan. 1971.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> 'Bishops' appeal for the itinerants', Irish Press, 9 Oct. 1969.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> John Cooney, 'Irish bishops set up aid body', *The Irish Times*, 5 March 1973.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> John Cooney, 'Education on Third World promised', *The Irish Times*, 19 Dec. 1973.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> 'Trócaire aims to raise over £250,000 in Lenten campaign', *The Irish Times*, 11 Feb. 1975.

potential to build on its success to stimulate policy change. That year the campaign raised £650,000, leading the organisation's director Brian McKeown to lament the shortcomings of government action: '[u]nfortunately, the response of the government, in terms of what it is giving in aid this year, does not reflect the commitment of the people ... In fact the Government now lags far behind the public in its commitment towards the Third World.'<sup>41</sup>

In the three years between the end of the Biafran crisis and the (re-)birth of Trócaire, the broadening public discussion on the subject of development assistance had a noticeable effect on the Irish government's policies. The recommendations in Hillery's 1969 review were only partially implemented, but he continued to press for further reform. An October 1970 DEA memorandum emphasised the need for Ireland to show greater commitment to the United Nations voluntary agencies in the context of the UN's Second Development Decade. This need not mean the implementation of every aspect of the UN strategy, but it 'would entail the giving of some specific indications of what we conceive to be our obligations and how we propose to discharge them'.<sup>42</sup> Like his predecessor, Hillery emphasised the primacy of multilateral ODA. His attitude to the United Nations' funds for southern Africa - UNETPSA and UNTFSA - emphasised the link between political attitudes and ODA in the evolving international debate (see chapter seven). ODA assumed an increasing importance in shaping Ireland's policies towards the developing world and multilateral spending increased accordingly, with the United Nations voluntary agencies benefiting in particular. In 1969/70 Ireland's total contribution amounted to US\$ 237,000, but by 1972/73 they had reached US\$ 451,800, an increase of over 90%.<sup>43</sup>

While these increases were welcome, there was no attempt to reform the government's attitude to bilateral ODA, which continued to consist solely of the underutilised training courses and technical assistance budget. In August 1971 Barrington of the IPA returned to his earlier criticisms, arguing that the DFA 'did not push the courses enough but merely stated that they were available and then just sat back to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Quoted in 'Trócaire News', One World, Autumn 1975.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> DEA memorandum for the government, 'Proposed contributions to international aid agencies', 5 Oct. 1970, NAI DT 2004/21/412.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> 'Ireland's pledged contributions to UN voluntary agencies', undated [1975?], NAI DFA 2004/7/2573.

await reaction from abroad'.<sup>44</sup> He admitted that the IPA should have been more active in its attitude to the scheme, but argued that while 'Mr Aiken showed a keen interest ... the present Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr Hillery, appears totally taken up with the EEC'.<sup>45</sup> His final criticism appeared unfair, given Aiken's reluctance to promote the scheme and Hillery's broadly positive attitude to ODA, but the general tone of his criticisms hinted at the government's collective lack of initiative in the area. Hillery's good intentions took second place to more important issues, such as the EC accession process and the evolving situation in Northern Ireland. As was the case with Aiken before him, many of the positive steps taken during his tenure as Minister were not properly developed. The Inter-Departmental Committee on Development Assistance, for example, set up as a result of the re-think of policy, met too infrequently to have any lasting impact, and the attitude to the idea of government collaboration with the NGO sector remained negative.

The reaction of the DFA to proposals put to the government by a working group headed by Professor George Dawson of Trinity College Dublin – whose members included Barrington, TK Whitaker, Grogan, Dr Joseph Barnes of the Tom Dooley Foundation, the Holy Ghost Father William Jenkinson, and Garret Sheehan (who had served in Africa under Oxfam) – provided a further example of its conservative approach. Initiated by a Gorta sub-committee investigation and developed in consultation with a diverse number of Irish organisations including the Irish Red Cross, Africa Concern, the Irish Missionary Union, ICTU, the Confederation of Irish Industry and the Irish Nurses Organisation, the Dawson group's proposal returned to the common criticisms of Ireland's under-achievement in the field of development aid. It emphasised the over-reliance on the missionary contribution, the need to recognise the country's obligations as a 'developed' state under the terms of the Pearson Report, and the case for public activity in the field of development assistance.<sup>46</sup> In order to transform the situation, it called for the creation of a 'balanced programme of overseas aid by way of personal service', with a central Irish organisation to co-ordinate the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Don Buckley, 'IPA and the Third World', *The Irish Times*, 13 Aug. 1971.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> 'Government gets plan for foreign aid co-ordination: central organisation urged by group', *The Irish Times*, 11 Sept. 1971.

activities of Irish volunteers, financed largely by state grants.<sup>47</sup> It envisaged that the programme would be run by a council on which representatives of various government departments and official agencies would sit.<sup>48</sup>

The DFA noted in December 1971 (two months after it first appeared) that the Dawson group submission represented an 'important new proposal',<sup>49</sup> but by March 1972 the department's officials felt that it was 'not one of the priority issues with which we have to contend'.<sup>50</sup> When the Department of Finance wrote that 'our inability to move in the matter is the cause of no little embarrassment',<sup>51</sup> McCann re-emphasised the importance of multilateral ODA, particularly the support given to individual volunteers by the UNDP.<sup>52</sup> Africa Concern and the Nigerian civil war were also to the forefront of DFA thinking. Given, McCann wrote, that state funding would strongly associate the Irish government with the volunteers' activities, the Minister thought it desirable 'that the Government should have control over the activities of such an agency, especially in view of past experience with certain voluntary agencies operating in politically sensitive areas where damage to our relations with friendly Governments was a serious concern'.<sup>53</sup>

Some government departments, notably Labour and Agriculture and Fisheries, were not convinced by this argument, and rejected the claim that 'full State control is essential to avoid embarrassment to the Government'.<sup>54</sup> The DFA, however, remained adamant that everything possible should be done to ensure that public funds could not be used in support of a politicised campaign. Rejecting the suggestion that having a government representative on the council of the new body would be sufficient, it felt that '[t]he assistance which the Government extends to voluntary organisations ... must be subject to our control'.<sup>55</sup> The matter appeared to have reached an impasse, with the sides unable to agree on an acceptable format for the voluntary scheme. George Colley, Minister for Finance, wrote to Brian Lenihan, the new Minister for Foreign Affairs, in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> McCann to Charles Murray, 17 Dec. 1971, NAI DFA 2004/7/2561.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> Morrissey to Charles Murray, 29 March 1972, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> Charles Murray to McCann, 8 May 1972, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> McCann to Charles Murray, 12 May 1972, NAI DFA 2004/7/2556.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> Note by the Dept. of Agriculture and Fisheries, 'National Volunteer Agency', 15 June 1972, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> McCann to Charles Murray, 20 Sept. 1972, ibid.

January 1973, worried that 'little progress' had been made in attempts to get the DFA to meet with the voluntary organisations.<sup>56</sup> With some irony, Colley suggested that Lenihan meet with them in order to avoid the accusation that the government was 'dragging its feet'.<sup>57</sup>

YEAR	ODA (£m)	ODA as % GNP
1960-1	0.314	0.046
1961-2	0.270	0.037
1962-3	0.302	0.043
1963-4	0.444	0.053
1964-5	0.319	0.034
1965-6	0.442	0.044
1966-7	0.609	0.058
1967-8	1.119	0.097
1968-9	0.596	0.046
1969-70	0.590	0.040
1970-1	0.560	0.034
1971-2	0.861	0.045
1972-3	0.802	0.036
1973-4	1.461	0.054
1974	2.489	0.083
1975	3.007	0.082
1976	4.630	0.104
1977	6.270	0.117
1978	8.630	0.137
1979	13.300	0.180

Table 8.2: Iris	1 ODA Sp	ending 1960-79
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Source: Sutton, Irish government aid, p. 76; Sutton, 'Irish ODA and the UN target', p.20; and O'Brien, Ireland and the Third World, p. 16.

The debate was an excellent example of the limitations of the DFA's ODA policy. Hillery adopted a more progressive attitude than his predecessor Aiken, but appeared cautious in the context of the growing public debate on ODA. A comparison with the moderate states that shared Ireland's political values is more telling. In November 1967 the Canadian government initiated a programme which provided

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> Colley to Lenihan, 17 Jan. 1973, NAI DFA 2004/7/2561.
 <sup>57</sup> Ibid.

official funding through NGOs on a project-by-project basis. The reasoning behind it contrasted starkly with the Irish government's conservative approach. Maurice Strong, the Director-General of Canada's External Aid Office, spoke in January 1967 of his desire for the Canadian government 'to harness the substantial resources which exist in the private sector',<sup>58</sup> and was given the scope and funding to do so. A similar programme was in operation in the Netherlands, where from 1965 the government provided public finance for private development agencies, amounting to \$8 million in 1970.<sup>59</sup>

In spite of Hillery's attempts to stimulate growth, Fianna Fáil left office in February 1973 with little to show in the field of ODA. The increases he initiated in multilateral spending were no longer enough to meet public demand. In nominal terms, Ireland's official ODA contributions increased from £590,000 in 1969-70 to £802,000 in 1972-73 but this increase was not in keeping with the state's rate of economic growth, as table 8.2 illustrates. Its contribution of 0.036% of GNP in 1972-73 left Ireland far behind the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, and it continued to lag behind the states Irish officials recognised as comparable, including Austria and Finland (see Table 8.1).

## THE NATIONAL COALITION AND OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

The change of government in March 1973 was highly significant for the future of Irish ODA. In the 1960s and early 1970s several Ministers in the new cabinet, notably FitzGerald and Ryan, had been vocal on development issues. They brought a new attitude to ODA that impacted on policy decisions from the beginning. When approached by Dawson and Whitaker in his first weeks as Minister about the proposals for the voluntary scheme, FitzGerald's response was immediate. On 30 March 1973 his department put in an application for £50,000 for the provision of a voluntary agency, with the recommendation that the money should be made available for the financial year 1973/74, the details to be worked out in the following months.<sup>60</sup> In the meantime, FitzGerald and the DFA began the consultation process to find a suitable structure for

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> Morrison, Aid and ebb tide, p. 68.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> Arens, 'Dutch development policy', p. 460.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup> See NAI DFA 2004/7/2561 for the details of the creation of this voluntary agency.

the proposed agency. On 6 April McCann wrote to Charles Murray, secretary to the Department of Finance, that FitzGerald considered that 'if adequate safeguards are introduced' to ensure that government money was being used in an appropriate manner, 'he would not require the degree of control over the activities of the central agency which was previously held to be necessary'.<sup>61</sup> At a stroke, the major obstacle to DFA support for the project was removed. On 9 May, in the midst of negotiations as to how the agency would be constituted, FitzGerald announced to the Dáil that he had attained government approval in principle for it.<sup>62</sup> Two days later, following further discussions with Whitaker, he told McCann to begin work on the creation of an interim agency. Initially the agency was to be run by a board appointed by FitzGerald, and be handed over to a full-time voluntary committee when the organisation was in a position to secure its finances from other sources.<sup>63</sup>

In June 1973 the cabinet agreed to the creation of a new body entitled the 'Interim Agency for Personal Service in Developing Countries'. By 25 March 1974 the agency had proved so successful that the DFA recommended it be established on a permanent basis as the Agency for Personal Service Overseas (APSO). FitzGerald retained his preference for a speedy transition to minimum government involvement. The permanent agency was run initially by a nominated 'Interim Council', which would eventually pass its powers to a permanent council elected by the Agency's own members. This transfer would occur 'when the Minister is of opinion that the conditions of the Government's decision are met and in particular that a sufficient number of the private voluntary organisations have subscribed to the Memorandum of Association'.<sup>64</sup> Although some political boundaries were enforced by the DFA, APSO's activities were in essence co-operation between public funding and Irish NGOs. APSO was to provide a maximum of 75 percent of the cost of projects which it co-financed with Irish voluntary organisations. By the end of 1976 ninety-two APSO-subsidised personnel were operating in the developing world on voluntary, professional

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup> McCann to Charles Murray, 6 April 1973, NAI DFA 2004/7/2561.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup> Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 265, Col. 767 (9 May 1973).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup> FitzGerald to McCann, 11 May 1973, NAI DFA 2004/7/2561.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> DFA memorandum for the government, 'Interim Agency for Personal Service in Developing Countries', 25 March 1974, NAI DT 2005/7/326.

and expert terms.<sup>65</sup> From the seeds of an idea that had caused so much deliberation for the DFA under Hillery, a new and successful partnership had been formed.

The response to events in Africa three months into FitzGerald's term as Minister further emphasised the coalition's fresh approach. The famine experienced in the Sahel countries - Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Chad and Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso) - had been highlighted at several meetings of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the EC (COREPER) and at meetings of the European Council of Ministers, at which FitzGerald had been present. At his suggestion, on 23 May 1973 an Aer Lingus plane ferried 16 tons of dried milk powder from Paris to Dakar as part of the EC's aid effort, at a cost of £5,700. The crisis made the government consider its attitude to disaster relief. Its solution carried echoes of one suggested to Hillery in June 1971 by Fine Gael TD Dr Hugh Byrne. Byrne had called on the government to create a permanent relief committee 'which will have finance and personnel available at all times, to assist nations where populations are subjected to sudden and severe disasters',66 but his ideas had been rejected by Hillery, who preferred to direct Ireland's efforts through the Irish Red Cross. FitzGerald's reaction was the opposite. In June 1973 he persuaded the government to create a permanent fund for disaster relief, on the grounds that it was 'essential that the Government should be in a position to respond rapidly to requests for assistance to relieve the victims of such disasters'.67

The creation of APSO and the emergency fund were only two elements of the coalition's broader ODA policy. In a speech to the Dáil on 9 May 1973, FitzGerald spoke of the need to expand on the 'relatively low level' of ODA expenditure. As he told the Dáil, 'I am being generous in using the word "relatively".<sup>68</sup> He and his colleagues emphasised the necessity for a radical overhaul of the Irish government's ODA. Such reforms could not be rushed into operation, but rather, as Ryan told FitzGerald, would 'require very careful study involving detailed consultations' between

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>65</sup> Sutton, Irish government aid, p. 46.

<sup>66</sup> Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 255, Col. 244 (30 June 1971).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup> DFA memorandum for government, 'Disaster relief in developing countries', 19 June 1973, NAI DT 2004/21/412.

<sup>68</sup> Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 265, Col. 766 (9 May 1973).

the DFA and Finance.<sup>69</sup> Any commitment to increasing Irish ODA had to be reached in a balanced manner that would evenly reflect its distribution among multilateral and bilateral projects. When Ryan announced the doubling of Ireland's ODA contribution in his budget speech on 16 May 1973, he included the caveat that any increase would take place in the context of ongoing negotiations between his department and the DFA about the formulation of a comprehensive ODA programme.<sup>70</sup>

In November 1973 the DFA presented its plans to the government. The document focussed on the low level of Irish ODA in comparison with other states and on the government's plans to reach the UN Development Decade target of 0.7% GNP for official aid, or 1% for total aid (including private contributions).<sup>71</sup> It envisaged an annual growth rate of 0.05% per annum 'taking one year with another', and the creation of a 'comprehensive and coherent' programme to be developed over a ten-year period. The programme 'should be flexible so as to permit adjustment as between elements and sectors'. These sectors, most of which entailed both bilateral and multilateral commitments, consisted of 'cash grants and capital subscriptions', 'food aid', 'technical assistance', 'disaster relief', and 'loans and credits'. The cash grants were made up predominantly of contributions to international organisations, including the EC, the World Bank, the IDA, the OECD, and the United Nations voluntary agencies. Ireland's membership of the EC meant increased mandatory commitments and the memorandum recommended that significant increases in contributions to voluntary agencies should be undertaken immediately, and increased annually thereafter. Cash grants were also envisaged in the bilateral ODA sector, 'with a view to developing a bilateral programme which would be commensurate with Ireland's contributions to multilateral agencies.'72

The next two sectors were areas in which Ireland had traditionally been stronger in its support. Food aid – through the Food Aid Convention, EC distribution networks, the WFP, and the FAO's projects, particularly Gorta – was seen as an area in which Ireland had 'special interest and competence', and the DFA recommended a 10 to 15

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>69</sup> Ryan to FitzGerald, 7 May 1973, NAI DFA 2004/7/2574.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup> Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 265, Cols. 1257-8 (16 May 1973).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>71</sup> DFA memorandum for the government, 'Aid to developing countries', 1 Nov. 1973, NAI DFA

<sup>2004/7/2573.</sup> All figures for this and the following paragraph are taken from this source.  $^{72}$  Ibid.

percent increase in Ireland's contributions to that sector. Technical assistance was targeted for more substantial increases. The Interim Agency for Personal Service in Developing Countries received an initial contribution of £150,000 for 1974 with the intention of increasing the annual stipend to almost £1 million by 1980. The Overseas Trainee Fund, all but abandoned in the previous few years, was targeted for increases to provide a more comprehensive structure of scholarships and training schemes. Similar increases were envisaged in the disaster relief fund and a significant new outlay proposed for the provision of loans and credits. Finally, an inter-departmental committee was established 'to review the performance of the development aid programme in the light of the performance by other developed countries, the commitments arising out of EEC membership and other international developments.'<sup>73</sup>

After a further DFA memorandum on 13 February and two counter-submissions by the Department of Finance, the cabinet narrowly agreed on 26 April 1974 to approve the scheme. With an unusually low number of Ministers remaining, FitzGerald recounted that it was accepted by four votes to three, 'the balance being swung by one Minister who said, "If we're Christians at all, we must agree to this".<sup>74</sup> The memorandum highlighted both continuity and the difference in this government's policy on ODA. Many of the elements of the new programme had been debated previously by DFA officials or, like the inter-departmental committee, been previously implemented with no great impetus or success. Previous statements in the Programmes for Economic Expansion had hinted at the need for Ireland to broaden its ODA contributions; this memorandum, passed in a time of economic crisis in the Western world following the oil shock of 1973, went a step further towards meeting those commitments.

# A BILATERAL AID PROGRAMME

The new structures also contained provisions to extend Ireland's bilateral assistance, though FitzGerald had to overcome conservative attitudes within the DFA before their implementation. In contrast to the overall enthusiasm for the increases in ODA, some DFA officials felt the scope for Irish bilateral aid was limited. Tadhg O'Sullivan

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup> Garret FitzGerald, All in a life: an autobiography (London, 1991), p. 190.

commented in March 1973 that 'if we tried to have [a bilateral programme] the small amount of money we could apply to it would be swallowed up in the costs of administration'.<sup>75</sup> His colleague Ronan returned to the same difficulty: 'we hardly have the personnel to deal with large bilateral aid schemes'.<sup>76</sup> It took time to reach a suitable conclusion. In April 1974, at a special European Council of Ministers meeting in Luxembourg devoted to development co-operation, FitzGerald announced the Irish government's intention to build its bilateral aid programme. In its first year of operation, the programme's scope was limited. The government financed courses organised by the IPA and the Shannon Free Airport Development Company in training techniques, hospital administration and in the administration and development of industrial free trade zones. The Irish Management Institute provided a two-week development course for African owners and managers of small businesses of the Nairobi Industrial Estate in Kenya. APSO provided a channel for assistance through Irish NGOs, and would later provide many of the staff for further operations. It was from these projects that the impetus for a broader Irish bilateral assistance programme grew.

Its format borrowed from the past experience of other moderate states like Norway, whose government recognised that bilateral ODA 'could not reach far and wide, and the desire for visibility reinforced the tendency towards concentration'.<sup>77</sup> In the early summer of 1974 DFA officials travelled to Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Ethiopia and Sudan with a view to preparing the ground for possible bilateral agreements, though with no commitment to their respective governments. By the end of the year they had identified Zambia, Tanzania, India, Sudan and Lesotho as 'priority' countries for its bilateral contributions. The selection was based on a loose set of criteria that included the states' relative needs, the 'political regime', 'existing links with Ireland, including the presence of missionaries and voluntary bodies' and 'the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>75</sup> 'Secret. Conference of Heads of Mission, 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> April 1973: Views of the Ambassador in Lagos [Tadhg O'Sullivan] on the future development of Irish foreign policy', 31 March 1973, NAI DFA 2005/145/2348.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>76</sup> 'Foreign Policy Review in Dublin, 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> April, 1973: Comments of Mr S.G. Ronan, Ambassador at Bonn', 30 March 1973, ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>77</sup> Pharo, 'Norway's foreign economic assistance', p. 542.

prospects for linkage with trade and other activities'.<sup>78</sup> Each of the states had been under British rule and used English as the working language of government. The presence of Irish missionaries in each of the territories was also important, particularly as Gorta had successfully co-operated with them in projects in Tanzania and elsewhere. They all had relatively stable political systems which allowed the Irish government to be confident that aid would be used in a responsible manner. In keeping with the association Hillery made between the Irish government's support for UNTFSA and UNETPSA and its political attitude to developments in southern Africa (see chapter seven), the selections assumed an additional political significance. Three of the African states – Lesotho, Tanzania and Zambia – were in close proximity to the ongoing struggle against apartheid in South Africa and Rhodesia, and FitzGerald recounted that Lesotho had been chosen 'because it was surrounded by South Africa and it needed particular help for that reason'.<sup>79</sup>

When looked at individually the selections could be explained in similar terms. Zambia, although a relatively prosperous state, was selected because of its political stability and existing relationship with Ireland. In Tanzania Gorta already operated projects and President Julius Nyerere's politics were also conducive to co-operation. As FitzGerald had established an aid centre in India soon after being appointed, it too was an obvious choice, although it was soon dropped for practical reasons as Ireland's contribution was viewed as too small to have any meaningful effect. In Sudan, the Irish government believed it could make significant contributions through its knowledge of agriculture, an emphasis that echoed its strong commitment to the FAO, particularly the WFP and the FFHC. Although the project eventually proved unworkable, it was significant in its attempt to apply Irish expertise to a developing world situation. The selection of Lesotho owed its origins to more providential circumstances. On the plane returning from a meeting between the EC and the ACP states in Jamaica in July 1974, FitzGerald met with two representatives from the Lesotho government, whom he suggested should consult with the DFA later that year.<sup>80</sup> By cementing the bilateral links in a series of meetings in Dublin in October 1974, the Lesotho case served to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>78</sup> Unsigned and undated [Jan 1974?] note for the Minister, 'Bilateral Development Assistance Programme', NAI DFA 2007/111/1116.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>79</sup> Interview with Dr Garret FitzGerald, Dublin, 6 July 2005.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>80</sup> FitzGerald, All in a life, p. 190.

highlight what Rob Kevlihan has termed the 'opportunistic' nature of the selection process.<sup>81</sup>

The concentration on Africa, however, requires further investigation. At a time when Irish NGOs were diversifying their geographical bases (Concern in Bangladesh in 1972, Trócaire from its inception through projects across Latin America, Asia and Africa, and Gorta in the same regions), there was no compelling reason for the Irish government to limit most of its efforts on Africa. The decision was certainly not easily explainable in a comparative context. Irish bilateral aid to India could effectively be discounted due to the small size of the contributions and the ease with which they were withdrawn, but for other states India and Pakistan were considered amongst the most politically profitable areas for ODA spending because of the visibility they afforded to donors. The Irish decision to concentrate on Africa bore little relation to the policies of other moderate states: Canada's bilateral aid was concentrated largely in Asia, Norway's initial bilateral agreements were with India and Pakistan, and Sweden first gave bilateral aid to Ethiopia and Pakistan.

Why then did the Irish government choose to concentrate its ODA programme on the African continent? The decision might be explained by reference to broader international patterns in the 1970s. The OECD noted that flows of ODA to Africa increased substantially in that decade, 'reflecting both higher priority accorded to sub-Saharan Africa by official development agencies and a willingness of export credit agencies, banks and multilateral development lending institutions to increase their exposure in Sub-Saharan Africa'.<sup>82</sup> Disasters like the drought in the Sahel and improved African investment in areas like agriculture, industry and infrastructure made donors more willing to provide assistance to the continent. Wider European patterns were also important. The EC concentrated its aid entirely on its Associated States in Africa prior to the Lomé Convention in 1975, generating a further emphasis on the continent in European debates on development assistance. Nor was the decision without precedent in Irish policy. The technical assistance programme established in 1960 concentrated solely on Africa, and set a trend – however limited Irish efforts were in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>81</sup> Rob Kevlihan, 'Irish Bilateral Aid to Sudan – from modernisation to conditionality: Lessons learned and future prospects', *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, Vol. 15 (2004), p. 148.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>82</sup> OECD, Development co-operation: efforts and policies of the members of the Development Assistance Committee 1986 Report (Paris, 1987), p. 173.

the field of ODA – for the following decade. That decision was based on both political considerations – the prominence of the newly-independent African states and the promotion of international stability through development – and the influence of African-based Irish Catholic bishops who pressed the Irish government to assist the emerging states.

But neither could fully explain the emphasis on Africa in Irish ODA. Areas of Asia, like the Philippines for example, were equally under-developed, posed a similar potential threat to international stability, had an Irish missionary presence, and fulfilled similar criteria to the priority states, such as using English as a working language of government. One must look instead to the less easily quantifiable but equally influential popular perceptions of Africa. The image of the continent created by missionaries in the minds of the Irish public (see chapter one) dominated the country's perceptions of the developing world. The 'penny for a black baby' campaigns and other missionary activities, including their involvement in Biafra, crudely equated Africa with poverty and under-development to a degree not associated with Asia or Latin America. Neither was the kind of extensive missionary work undertaken in sub-Saharan Africa entirely similar to that which took place in Asia, for example, where the presence of large Muslim communities created an altogether different attitude among the Irish public, including to development assistance. Missionary activity helped to foster the kind of response seen during Concern's work to alleviate the East Pakistan/Bangladesh famine in 1972, but it was more frequently visible in relation to Africa, beginning with the Biafran crisis and reinforced by the continued media spotlight on disasters such as the famines in Ethiopia and the Sahel region in the early 1970s. Once the precedents had been set with the location of the first Irish FFHC project in Tanzania, the response to Biafra, and the considerable concentration of Irish NGO projects in Africa, it became difficult to divest the public of the popular emphasis on the continent in relation to development assistance. There was admittedly a random element to the selection of the individual priority states – as the Lesotho case highlighted – but for Irish officials it made sense to build on public sympathies with Africa and concentrate the state's limited resources in an area in which it felt it would see the greatest return.

Having established the beginnings of the ODA programme, FitzGerald set about providing the bureaucratic framework for it to have greater effect. In 1974 a

development co-operation division was created within the DFA with special responsibility for that sector. It was followed in September 1975 by the creation of the Development Co-operation Organisation (DEVCO) that aimed 'to co-ordinate the activities of State-sponsored bodies in the field of development aid',<sup>83</sup> under the aegis of the DFA. DEVCO's existence testified to the importance of the semi-state agencies to ODA, particularly bilateral ODA, where its influence was most visible. The same year, 1975, the programme's expansion led the Irish government to appoint John Kelly, the Chief Whip, as Parliamentary Secretary with responsibility for ODA. Most significantly, the creation of a bilateral aid division in the DFA in 1977, headed by Dermot Gallagher, allowed for a more specific focus on that element of the programme, and the appointment of Development Co-operation Officers in Lesotho (1978), Tanzania (1979), and Zambia (1980) strengthened ties with those states, and gave Ireland a visible presence on the ground in its priority states.

The projects themselves, however, lacked a central coherency. They were all 'of a small or medium size, as Ireland generally [lacked] the technology (or finance) for the larger, costlier projects',<sup>84</sup> and often relied on Irish semi-state agencies to provide expertise. The situation in 1978, the year after the creation of the bilateral aid division, provided a good example of the structures of the bilateral programme. Lesotho dominated the figures, accounting for almost 30% of all bilateral ODA.<sup>85</sup> Its two main projects were in rural development in Hololo Valley and pony breeding in Basutho. The ESB involved itself in assisting the Lesotho Electricity Corporation in its operations and undertook a similar project in Tanzania. In Sudan the largest project was a technical schools survey. In Zambia it was a co-operation project between Irish Cement Ltd and the Chilanga Cement Company, and in the same country the IPA operated a training programme for hospital administration. In addition to the priority countries (including India, on which expenditure was negligible), there were projects in Burundi, Colombia, Peru, and Swaziland, as well as training courses, grants in educational and other institutions, and a significant level of co-financing (through APSO) of projects

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>83</sup> Dennis Kennedy, 'Irish aid abroad to be co-ordinated', *The Irish Times*, 9 Sept. 1975.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>84</sup> O'Brien, Ireland and the Third World, p. 60.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>85</sup> Ibid., pp. 79-81.

run by Concern, Trócaire, Gorta, Caritas, Christian Aid, and a number of missionary orders.

### EVALUATING IRISH OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

The impetus for the increases in spending on ODA and the introduction of the first structured programme in that area owed much to the enthusiasm of FitzGerald and his coalition colleagues, but was also influenced by outside pressures. Accession to the EC not only necessitated an immediate increase in the Irish government's multilateral spending, but marked it out as the only state of the Nine without a bilateral aid programme. By 1976, nearly 39% of ODA was directed through the EC.<sup>86</sup> Membership influenced the increased contributions to the United Nations, the IDA, WFP, and the Food Aid Convention, and helped to drive the expansion of Ireland's ODA. In 1974, the EC Council of Ministers adopted a resolution stating that member states would make efforts to attain as soon as possible the 0.7% target set by the UN. Although Ireland, along with Luxembourg and Italy, was given more time to reach this goal because of its economic situation, this decision provided an example of a definite programme which Ireland was morally if not legally obliged to follow. EC membership also gave increasing impetus to Irish NGOs, who now had readily applicable and comparable statistics of aid contributions.

Community membership had another significant consequence. It offered the Irish government the opportunity to assume a leading role on issues of which it had previously had little or no knowledge and to pursue its political attitudes within the EC policy-making framework. FitzGerald told the Dáil in November 1974 that 'we have consistently pressed for more liberal provisions in respect of development aid, even though this must increase our contributions to the Community'.<sup>87</sup> At a meeting of EC Development Ministers in Brussels two months later, Frank Cluskey, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health, was 'one of only a handful of representatives who held out for the total amount' in deciding EC aid to developing states.<sup>88</sup> The same year, the state's first Presidency of the Community presented a very significant challenge to the DFA's capacity to adapt to the new environment. In response to the expansion of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>86</sup> Sutton, Irish government aid, p. 55.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>87</sup> Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 275, Col. 931 (5 November 1974).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>88</sup> Walter Ellis, 'EEC keeps up aid level to Third World countries', *The Irish Times*, 23 Jan. 1975.

the EC in 1973, particularly with the entry of Britain, it had become necessary to renegotiate the terms of the 1969 Yaounde Convention on EC trade with the Associated States in Africa. Expanded to include the more wide-ranging ACP group, negotiations were formally inaugurated between the two groups in Brussels on 25 and 26 July 1973, and continued throughout the following year and a half. It had been expected that the negotiations would be finalised in the course of the French Presidency of the EC in 1974, but when the parties failed to reach an agreed settlement, it fell to the Irish to complete the process.

It was a challenge for which, by its own admission, the Irish government found itself under-prepared. FitzGerald remarked that the issue 'didn't loom large because until I had to get involved our role was limited. And I was quite taken aback to find myself in charge of the negotiations.'89 Once involved, he framed Ireland's role in familiar terms, looking to what it, as a former colony, could offer in bridging the division between the Community and the developing world. FitzGerald's EC partners knew him well enough to trust his negotiating skills and his Francophile tendencies endeared him to many of the ACP states. He developed an excellent rapport with the African delegates, pressing them to push in certain areas in order to gain advantage in others. He used a special address to the Ivory Coast's Parliamentary Assembly to emphasize Ireland's unique perspective during the second round of negotiations in late-January 1975; FitzGerald felt 'able to speak in terms that nobody else in Europe would have done. Certainly not the British or French... I could communicate with them by talking in the same language about colonialism as they held. That was certainly helpful.<sup>90</sup> It was a role that Ireland played well, and one which was commended several years later by a Ghanaian envoy who described Ireland as the 'EC's moral conscience'.91

Agreement was reached on 1 February 1975 and the convention signed at Lomé in Togo five weeks later. The response in Ireland was overwhelmingly positive. In the November Dáil motion to ratify the convention Michael O'Kennedy, Fianna Fáil's spokesperson for Foreign Affairs, described it as 'another positive consequence of our

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>89</sup> Interview with FitzGerald (6 July 2005).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>91</sup> Quoted in Holmes, Rees and Whelan, Poor relation, p. 131.

EEC membership that we can be a party both in our own right as a nation and fortuitously as President of the Community, to such a convention'.<sup>92</sup> There was a large amount of national pride for Ireland's role and no little support for the central aims of the Convention, which was described by Labour TD Liam Kavanagh as 'a great step forward in international relations'.<sup>93</sup> Lomé highlighted the importance of development assistance to the international community, and the amount that Ireland could achieve through ODA rather than narrow political support. As FitzGerald recalled, Ireland 'could do something' through its assistance, and what it achieved was not insignificant.<sup>94</sup> British officials agreed; although the negotiations 'owed comparatively little to the Irish ... solutions would have been harder to find without the benefit of an intelligent, hardworking and well-intentioned chairmanship'.<sup>95</sup> They were particularly impressed by FitzGerald's commitment to the wider aims of the agreement, 'even when, as in the case of Botswana beef, this meant overriding a domestic vested interest'.<sup>96</sup>

The definition of Ireland's identity put forward by Lemass in an address to the National Press Club in Washington in October 1963 resonated in its approach to the negotiations twelve years later. Lemass had told the assembled on that occasion that Ireland's history made it

particularly conscious of the needs of countries following our path to freedom. We can thus understand and sympathise with the problems of the emerging nations of Africa and Asia. At the same time we are unmistakably European. We are thus in the position of having excellent relations with both the newly-independent nations and their former masters and can be of service in circumstances where the intervention of one of the Great Powers might be regarded with suspicion.<sup>97</sup>

In 1975 the Irish government and public appeared more prepared to come to terms with the state's position among the economically developed states of the world and the responsibilities that came with it. History still had a part to play in defining Irish

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>92</sup> Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 285, Col. 811 (4 Nov. 1975).

<sup>93</sup> Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 285, Col. 832 (4 Nov. 1975).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>94</sup> Interview with FitzGerald (6 July 2005).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>95</sup> 'Memorandum on the Irish Presidency of the European Communities', undated [July 1975?], NAUK FCO 87/418.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>97</sup> 'Address by Mr Seán Lemass, Taoiseach, at Luncheon of National Press Club, Washington, DC, Wednesday, 16<sup>th</sup> October, 1963', NAI DT 98/6/404.

attitudes, but it took place in a different context to that envisaged by Lemass. Ireland was not unique in framing its approach to ODA in terms of its history and political orientation; Dutch policy-makers emphasised that their government had 'a special role to play in the world' through its ODA.<sup>98</sup> The Nordic states described their responsibilities in a similar fashion: Pharo remarked that 'because of their history and political culture, [they] were particularly well suited to spearhead an altruistic effort to aid the under-developed world, and that accordingly they carried an obligation to do so'.<sup>99</sup> The similarities suggested that Ireland's political principles and attitude to foreign affairs – both, admittedly, shaped by its history – mattered at least as much as, and possibly more than, its status as a former colony.

Membership of the world's largest trading bloc and the Pearson Report's definition of Ireland's industrialised status re-emphasised the distance between its present situation and that of the developing world. The relationship was complicated, however, as the Irish government and public struggled to reconcile the obligations in the field of ODA with the state's reliance, particularly in less developed areas in the west of the country, on regional development funding from the EC. A March 1973 joint pastoral of the Irish Catholic bishops emphasised that 'Ireland was rich to some extent because other nations were poor. Part of our prosperity was due to the fact that people in the developing countries were not getting a fair deal.'<sup>100</sup> The economic downturn that followed the 1973 oil crisis, however, had a significant influence on official attitudes to ODA. Increased spending became more difficult to justify, and the Department of Finance was adamant that '[n]o matter how strongly this country may desire to provide much larger sums for official development aid', the government should 'make reasonably adequate provision for the less fortunate sectors of our own people first'.<sup>101</sup>

In spite of the immediate increases in nominal ODA spending in FitzGerald's first year in office, and the doubling of that figure by 1976 (see Table 8.2), the Department of Finance's fears continued to hinder the growth of ODA. FitzGerald was

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>98</sup> Arens, 'Dutch development policy', p. 459.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>99</sup> Pharo, 'Norway's foreign economic assistance', p. 532.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>100</sup> 'Help poor of Third World', Irish Independent, 5 March 1973.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>101</sup> Dept. of Finance memorandum for government, 'Observations on the Memoranda for the Government on Aid to developing countries dated 1 November, 1973, and 13 February, 1974, submitted by the Minister for Foreign Affairs', 20 Feb. 1974, NAI DT 2005/7/326.

adamant that Finance 'misinterpreted' his plan for percentage growth of GNP contributions, 'so that the rate of growth was less than I had intended it to be'.<sup>102</sup> The decision to increase ODA by 0.05% of GNP per year, taking one year with another, was taken with the goal of reaching 0.35% of GNP by the end of the decade. The problem lay in the interpretation of the rate of increase in ODA. If the 1974 figure of 0.1% of GNP that the government took as its base figure (rounded up from 0.083% GNP) was developed year on year, Ireland would have provided 0.15% of GNP to ODA in 1975, 0.20% in 1976, and so on until it reached 0.35% of GNP in 1979. Instead around the end of 1975 the figures were reinterpreted to increase ODA by 0.05% of the previous year's GNP annually, although by these calculations Irish government contributions should have reached around 0.25% by the end of the decade. In reality, Irish ODA had reached only 0.18% of GNP by 1979, just over half its original intended target. The Fianna Fáil government that replaced the coalition in 1977 continued the same policy, stating that 'in view of the economic variables involved', it was not possible to say how long it would take Ireland to reach 0.7% of GNP, nor was it possible 'to give an indication of the rate of progression towards this target'.<sup>103</sup>

The figure of 0.104% reached in 1976 remained the lowest in the EC, and throughout the decade Ireland vied with Italy for that ignominious title. In spite of the efforts to expand voluntary and bilateral ODA, the Irish government suffered in comparison with its EC counterparts in the large proportion of its contributions that were directed through the Community. In 1977, Denmark, which joined at the same time as Ireland, directed only 5.1% of its ODA through EC aid programmes, in comparison with Ireland's figure of 44.1%.<sup>104</sup> The situation led critics to point to a lack of initiative outside the multilateral sector. Outside the EC, even a state like Finland, whose ODA programme began from a relatively similar level to Ireland's, showed far more consistent growth throughout the 1970s. In 1970 the Finnish government contributed 0.07% of GNP to ODA, but by 1980 had reached 0.23%,<sup>105</sup> and by 1983 its contributions stood at 0.33% of GNP.<sup>106</sup> To those, including officials of the Department

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>102</sup> Interview with FitzGerald (6 July 2005).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>103</sup> Michael O'Kennedy, Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 305, Cols. 740-1 (13 April 1978).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>104</sup> Sutton, Irish government aid, p. 55.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>105</sup> World Bank, World Development Report 1982, p. 140.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>106</sup> Sutton, 'Irish ODA and the UN target', p. 14.

of Finance, who argued that spending on ODA diverted important funding away from regional development, and that comparisons between Ireland and wealthy states like Sweden, Denmark and Norway were unfair, others countered that economic performance had little to do with ODA; the Netherlands, the state with the fifth highest GNP per capita in the EC, was the first to reach the 0.7% target.<sup>107</sup>

Critics pointed to failures on the part of the government to live up to its commitments, such as the proposed White Paper on development suggested by FitzGerald in 1974, which failed to materialise in the course of the decade. FitzGerald had begun the paper, with the help of his colleague John Kelly, but had not been able to complete it by the time he left office in 1977. In announcing the state's expanded ODA programme to the Council of Ministers' meeting in Luxembourg in April 1974, FitzGerald had also promised that Ireland 'would be seeking membership' of DAC,<sup>108</sup> a move that led sections of the Irish public to hope that the body would exert an influence on the Irish government and lead to an increase in its contributions commensurate with that exerted on the Canadian and other governments in previous years,<sup>109</sup> but the country did not join DAC until 1986. It left the potential offered in 1974 largely unfulfilled as govt policies repeatedly fell short of public expectations and its own commitments, a situation that continued until recent years.

## CONCLUSION

The volume of public criticism of the state's ODA performance owed a great deal to the growth of the NGO sector and its stimulation of public interest in development assistance. In 1969-70 voluntary contributions, buoyed by the Biafran humanitarian crisis, had stood at £547,000, but by 1975 that figure had increased to £1,964,000.<sup>110</sup> Successive governments found themselves falling short of the notional targets set for them by the Irish public and the NGOs. As ODA growth slowed after 1975, criticism of the government's policies increased accordingly. The very introduction of targets for annual increases in ODA made the Irish government's policies easily quantifiable in a manner they had not been prior to 1973. The corollary was that increased public interest

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>107</sup> Sutton, Irish government aid, p. 18.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>108</sup> Telegram, British Permanent Representative, Brussels, to FCO, 1 May 1974, NAUK FCO 30/2279.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>109</sup> Morrison, Aid and ebb tide, pp. 45-7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>110</sup> Quinn with Carroll, *The missionary factor*, p. 14.

in development assistance legitimised the Irish government's increased spending in the sector. In the early 1970s, the increases in multilateral spending and review of ODA structures initiated by Hillery were driven by public reaction to the Biafran crisis and increased activity in the voluntary sector. Aided by the substantial ODA spending necessitated by EC membership, the coalition government brought these increases to a higher level again, one that 'took Ireland's official development co-operation efforts out of the realm of wishful thinking'.<sup>111</sup>

The coalition's programme was certainly the first attempt to create a comprehensive Irish ODA policy. For its first two years it was relatively successful. It introduced to a state with little experience in the field of ODA, and almost none in bilateral aid, a set of structures and a massive increase in spending that provided a platform for future governments. Its consequences can be seen to the present day in the structure of the bilateral programme and its continued operation in Lesotho, Tanzania, and Zambia, though Sudan was dropped as a priority state in the late 1990s. Involvement in decision-making at the EC level, through Lomé and everyday policymaking on the Community's aid programmes, offered the Irish government an opportunity to shape international debate on development assistance out of proportion to its spending on ODA. The same could be said of its contribution to UNCTAD in Nairobi in 1976, when the Irish delegation was 'one of a group of sixteen industrialised states which worked for a compromise position on the commodities fund proposed by the Third World governments'.<sup>112</sup> The coalition's positive attitude was central in advancing Irish ODA policy. Many of the initiatives it implemented had been discussed under previous governments, but it was only during FitzGerald's term as Minister for Foreign Affairs that the ideas were given proper structure.

By the end of the 1970s, ODA had become central to the Irish government's attitude to the developing world. Prior to 1968, the relationship was primarily based on political considerations, particularly Ireland's support for the right to self-determination and its support for the decolonisation process at the United Nations; Biafra brought a new set of issues, a new level of debate, and, with the Pearson Report's definition of Ireland's industrialised status, a new set of responsibilities in the field of ODA.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>111</sup> Sutton, Irish government aid, p. 21.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>112</sup> Keatinge, Place among the nations, p. 186.

Accession to the EC further revised the state's relationship with the developing world. FitzGerald's role in bridging the gap between the EC and the ACP states during the Lomé negotiations was done as representative of the Community rather than as an intermediary between the two worlds. The same sense of Christian responsibility, shared history, and anti-colonialism informed the Irish government's policies, but to them was added the opportunity to shape Community policy and to define a role for Ireland as anti-colonial from within its structures, attaching itself to the policies of the more progressive states, Denmark and the Netherlands.

The conflict remained between Ireland's economic status and its obligations in the field of ODA. In the difficult economic climate of the mid-1980s, a Fine Gael/Labour government programme for economic development, revealingly titled Building on Reality, promised that in spite of 'the present climate of exceptional budgetary restraint, the Government will, during the period of the plan, maintain the rate of increase in ODA already achieved'.<sup>113</sup> In 1986 ODA had reached 0.25% of GNP, but in the period of strict cutbacks that followed in all sectors of government spending, in 1988 the figure fell to 0.18%.<sup>114</sup> This pattern continued to the mid-1990s, when the rapid growth of the Irish economy was followed by increases in ODA spending. Early in the twenty-first century, Irish ODA finally passed the 0.35% of GNP mark, and in 2006 the government promised that it was 'firmly on course' to reach the 0.7% target of by 2012.<sup>115</sup> The pattern of increased spending in the last decade highlights the complexity of Irish attitudes to the developing world as expressed through ODA. As the economy improved, the sense of historical identification may have been diluted to some extent, but the commitment to assisting the developing world remains, though the July 2008 government decision to cut ODA by €45 million gives food for thought.<sup>116</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>113</sup> Quoted in Sutton, 'Irish ODA and the UN target', p. 8.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>114</sup> O'Neill, 'Ireland's official aid programme', p. 73.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>115</sup> Ireland. Department of Foreign Affairs, Irish Aid annual report 2006 (Dublin, 2007), p. 4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>116</sup> 'Goal chief condemns €45m cutback', *The Irish Times*, 9 July 2008.

# Conclusion

In April 1956 the British Ambassador to Ireland Alexander Clutterbuck described his impressions of Ireland's attitude to the United Nations to date: 'Opinion here, even on matters of more immediate consequence to the daily life of the people, is extremely slow to develop ... One feels that they are still somewhat bewildered, and not yet really awake to the fact that they will now have to take positions and vote upon the wider questions of the day'.<sup>1</sup> He identified three factors that he felt would govern the Irish approach to the General Assembly: 'man-power and money', 'religion', and 'their feelings towards us'.<sup>2</sup> Clutterbuck's narrow terms of reference may have described the Irish government's immediate concerns, but the reality of its contribution over the following twenty years was somewhat different. What another British official described in the late 1950s as the Irish compulsion 'to advance from their happy state of "foreign policylessness" to a position where they would have something positive to contribute to the United Nations debates<sup>3</sup> resulted in a state more comfortable in its world role. After the loss of confidence it suffered with the growth in Afro-Asian influence, Ireland approached its foreign policy with renewed energy after the change of government in 1973 and accession to the EC in the same year. Membership of the Community offered Ireland the opportunity to re-state its diplomatic independence. One of Clutterbuck's successors as Ambassador, Arthur Galsworthy, declared himself impressed by the manner in which Ireland handled its first Presidency of the Community in 1975. He wrote in July of that year that it was 'a matter of justifiable pride and some moment to this small country, involving its emergence, perhaps for the first time, on the European stage ... They set their minds to do this job properly and succeeded, laying the ghosts of Irish fecklessness and inefficiency in the process.<sup>4</sup> Derogatory though Clutterbuck and, to a lesser extent, Galsworthy's comments may have been, they offered a view from without that roughly accorded with the state of Irish foreign policy at opposite ends of this study. Ireland was transformed from a polity on the periphery of Europe to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Clutterbuck to Home, 13 April 1956, NAUK DO 35/10625.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Anderson to Preston, 23 April 1959, NAUK DO 35/10772.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Galsworthy to Callaghan, 10 July 1975, NAUK FCO 87/418.

a member of the most important regional grouping in the world and its political and economic standing were enhanced accordingly.

# Assessing Ireland's Role

This study began by asking how Ireland arrived at this position in 1975. J.B. Donnelly of the British Embassy in Dublin was wrong to assert in November 1973 that Irish foreign policy prior to EC membership (and apart from what he called 'transitory involvement' in peace-keeping) had been 'marked by withdrawal and passivity'.<sup>5</sup> Neither was it accurate to claim, as Conor Cruise O'Brien had done four years earlier, that the Irish government had shifted considerably closer to the policies of the Western powers and voted 'safely in the United States column' at the United Nations.<sup>6</sup> The situation was, as always, considerably more complicated. The principles that shaped Irish foreign policy in 1975 were in essence the same as those articulated eighteen if not twenty or more years before. Governed by their recognition of the limits to the influence of small states, Irish officials emphasised the importance of pursuing an independent role, one which achieved the maximum benefit within the boundaries prescribed by those limitations. They balanced Irish support for the principle of selfdetermination with a considered attitude towards the colonial powers and a belief in fully preparing subject peoples for the eventuality of self-rule. As the period progressed, the Irish government's experience of the Congo crisis and Biafra's attempted secession reiterated its long-held conviction that the key to international stability - and by inference its own security - lay in the rejection of outside interference and the promotion of co-operation through the medium of international law.

As a member of the EC the Irish government pursued a similar set of interests, aware of its limitations but also of its potential to influence Community policy in its favour. Positioning itself alongside states like Denmark and the Netherlands, who were viewed as the most progressive on developing-world issues, the Irish government's approach reiterated its diplomatic independence through the pursuit of a particular set of values. When FitzGerald wrote later that in the Lomé negotiations he made the most

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Donnelly to White, 7 Nov. 1973, NAUK FCO 87/181.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Conor Cruise O'Brien, 'Ireland in international affairs', in Owen Dudley Edwards (ed.), *Conor Cruise O'Brien introduces Ireland* (London, 1969), p. 132.

of 'the parallel colonial experiences of Ireland and the African countries',<sup>7</sup> he revisited an attitude long visible in the state's approach to international affairs. Ireland's history was held to make it naturally sympathetic to the states of the developing world. It was, Aiken asserted in 1960, 'the only Western European country which has had experience ... of a long historic epoch of foreign rule and of resistance to that rule',<sup>8</sup> and its development and consolidation of a democratic state were held as a model for the developing world to follow.

There were obvious difficulties with this construction, not least in reconciling Ireland's anti-colonialism with its natural sympathies towards the West. One British official remarked in June 1962 that Irish delegates to the Fourth Committee at the United Nations 'have had especial delight in claiming the role of the oldest victim of British imperialism while giving us a helping hand over some difficult resolution[s]<sup>9</sup>. It has proven equally problematic to evaluate the extent to which the Afro-Asian states distinguished the Irish government from its Western counterparts by virtue of its history. Apart from a few isolated references to Aiken's past and attempts to win favour with Irish officials by referring to the state's struggle for independence, the evidence suggests that there was little to distinguish it from, for example, the Nordic states and the Netherlands. The latter group of states often adopted an approach that was more in tune with the needs of the developing world. Their policies were constructed in a manner that accorded to them the kind of 'special' position coveted by Irish policymakers, to the extent that it became difficult to distinguish the importance of Ireland's history of colonisation in influencing policy from a set of shared political values held by each of the states.

While one must therefore be wary of exaggerating the extent of Ireland's 'special' relationship with the developing world, it is important not to dismiss the obvious importance of the country's history in several respects, most significantly in shaping attitudes within Ireland. The legacy of Irish folk memories of the Famine, for example, may have been important in shaping the response to the Biafran crisis, and Nkrumah's visit to Dublin in 1960 and those of other African leaders were framed in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> FitzGerald, *All in a life*, p. 151.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Frank Aiken, UNGA plenary meeting, 6 Oct. 1960, UNORGA, A/PV.890.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> 'Confidential. Irish Republic at the United Nations: Brief for visit of P.U.S. [Private Under-secretary] to Dublin, June, 1962', NAUK DO 181/9.

direct reference to Ireland's own struggle for independence. Ireland's missionary heritage featured prominently and brought sub-Saharan Africa to its pre-eminent role in the country's relationship with the developing world. Indirectly it fostered a sense of responsibility and the belief in a special connection between the Irish people and their less-well-off counterparts. In a more direct sense – in the case of Biafra and missionary involvement in development assistance – missionaries helped to bring issues of development and justice to the attention of the Irish public, and to make them matters of widespread public concern.

The growth of NGOs like Gorta, Concern, Trócaire, and more recently Goal, capitalised on this relationship. The emphasis on development assistance at official and public levels brought a further recognition of the changing status of the Irish state. Obligations (and self-perceptions) adjusted accordingly. This sense of responsibility and self-awareness continued to be visible in the decades that followed: in the response to the 1984 famine in Ethiopia, Live Aid, the Drop the Debt Campaign, and in Irish support for the Millennium Development Goals. The same could be said in a different sense of the activities of the IAAM, which built on similar attitudes among the Irish public (and on the government's stance against apartheid). It contributed directly to a re-definition of the country's relationship with South Africa, emphasising the importance of a shared historical experience, not in terms of the Boers' fight against British imperialism but the indigenous African population's struggle against the oppression of apartheid.

If the principles that informed Ireland's international role in the late 1950s remained largely intact two decades later, how then does one account for the apparent changes to its diplomatic influence? Dorr maintains that 'critics of that later period do not allow sufficiently for the fact that the [United Nations] General Assembly was changing rapidly at about this time', a factor that diminished the necessity for the Afro-Asian group to rely on moderate states like Ireland for support.<sup>10</sup> There is a lot to be said for this assertion. In the late 1950s the relatively straightforward nature of the decolonisation process allowed the Irish government to actively pursue its principles in a manner that accorded it respect on the international stage with the minimum of impact on the Western powers. As the Afro-Asian group grew in confidence and the agenda of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Dorr, 'Ireland at the United Nations' (2002), p. 116.

the United Nations became more complicated – notably the decolonisation process in Ruanda-Urundi, the disaster of the Congo, the calls from the Afro-Asian group to use force in Rhodesia, and the difficulty in prising Namibia from South African control – the role of moderate states like Ireland diminished. It became more difficult to straightforwardly (and openly) reconcile Irish government support for the principles of self-determination and international justice with its pragmatic recognition of its own status and desire to protect the institutions of the United Nations. In spite of its tendency to vote for increasingly radical resolutions at the General Assembly – particularly on the question of apartheid – the Irish delegation's influence was considerably curtailed, to the extent that by 1970 its officials had all but abandoned hope of resuming a leading role on anything but issues of peripheral importance.<sup>11</sup>

But if Dorr is correct in asserting that critics and historians have not accurately accounted for the impact of the changes to the international system, it is not enough, as Cremin did in 1970, to ascribe Ireland's diminished status simply to the fact that 'the voting majority which the Afro-Asians can command ... enables them to secure approval for a particular text ... to such an extent that they are indifferent to more moderate counsels'.<sup>12</sup> The changing make-up of the United Nations and the international system in a broader sense did have a significant effect, but the Irish government did too little to pursue policies that would allow it to surmount those obstacles. The contrast with its European counterparts is instructive. Though they shared many of the principles held by the Irish government, particularly its commitment to international stability and pursuit of peaceful solutions to international conflict, the Nordic states shifted their emphasis to other areas in which they could match their rhetorical support of the developing world with practical action. In the absence of any political progress in southern Africa, for example, they re-directed their efforts to the field of humanitarian assistance, providing support to those most in need through the United Nations funds (UNETPSA and UNTFSA) and directly through the liberation movements. The Irish government, by contrast, had to be pushed into contributing to UNETPSA and UNTFSA and rejected outright the suggestion that it provide direct assistance. The same was true of its reaction to the humanitarian crisis in Biafra

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Cremin to Ronan, 10 Sept. 1970, NAI DFA 417/220.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Ibid.

(however justifiable its approach to the politics of the conflict), when it continued to direct official humanitarian assistance through the ICRC even after that organisation ran into considerable difficulty. In that instance the Nordic states, while retaining a broadly similar political attitude to the Irish government, directed their aid through the unofficial airlifts from Sao Tomé (via Nordchurchaid) and took an altogether more pro-active approach to alleviating the situation.

The Nordic states' experience and the similarity of many of the problems they faced (see, for example, the issue of trade with South Africa discussed in chapter seven) highlight an inherent conservatism in the Irish approach. Previous assessments of this period have admittedly been skewed by the tendency to exaggerate the levels of Ireland's influence at the United Nations during the late 1950s and early 1960s, to the extent that they dwarfed the achievements that followed. Even in that earlier period, Dorr noted, policies 'had to be tempered with prudence and realism'.<sup>13</sup> Like its progressive Swedish counterpart, the Irish government understood the necessity of cultivating its relationship with the Western powers, and the pursuit of international stability through the United Nations was a central concern of both. But an examination of their respective attitudes to sub-Saharan Africa shows that Sweden simply adapted better in the changing environment of the 1960s. Not until the rise in public debate during the Biafran crisis and the Springbok tour – and arguably not until the change of government in 1973 – did Irish foreign policy-makers begin to fully re-assess their position.

## The Influence of the Few and the Many

The country's small size and limited resources lent considerable importance to the roles played by individual officials in shaping Irish foreign policy. During the late 1950s and early 1960s the more pro-Western leanings of Boland, Kennedy, Ronan and Cremin were balanced by the more deeply-rooted anti-colonialism of Aiken and O'Brien. Boland's influence was crucial. Described by O'Brien as 'a man who could make his own the words of the aged Duke of Newcastle's rebuke to the young Gladstone: "I confess, young man, I have a great notion of the horrors of enthusiasm",<sup>14</sup> Boland's

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Dorr, 'Ireland at the United Nations' (2002), p. 115.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> O'Brien, Katanga, p. 35.

was the most pragmatic voice in the Irish United Nations delegation. He was held in high regard in New York for his diplomatic skills, as his tenure as President of the General Assembly in 1960 illustrated. The interaction between Boland and his colleagues created a dynamic crucial in shaping Irish policy. As the 1960s progressed, this group was joined by a number of equally capable younger officials. Ó Tuathail and Keating became central in shaping Ireland's approach to the Biafran crisis, McCann was a steadying voice as secretary of the department, and Tadhg O'Sullivan's frequently frank appraisals were an invaluable source of commentary. Their input was crucial, as FitzGerald recognised on becoming Minister in 1973. The Heads of Mission conference organised in Iveagh House in April of that year emphasised the role played by DFA officials and gave them the opportunity to bring their opinions to bear in shaping the foreign policy of the new government.

Important as these officials were in constructing policy, the overall nature of the Irish government's approach was largely determined by the character of successive Ministers for External/Foreign Affairs. Cosgrave was in office for too little of this period to have any significant effect, though his 'three principles' in 1956 set the tone for Irish policy at the United Nations,<sup>15</sup> and he contributed to the creation of a foreign policy based heavily on the state's 'own national history'.<sup>16</sup>

Cosgrave's successor Aiken was considerably more influential. In the late 1950s and early 1960s Aiken assumed a prominent role in the pursuit of an independent Irish foreign policy. His strongly hands-on approach to decision-making and extensive political experience gave him considerable influence, and as a result the evolution of the Irish government's policies largely mirrored his evolving attitude to foreign affairs. Aiken's strident support for the principle of self-determination, allied to his strong belief in the importance of the United Nations in the pursuit of international stability, determined the independent character of the state's approach in the late 1950s and early 1960s. For that he was widely respected at the United Nations (see chapter one). In the period that followed, his hopes for the role of small states and for the United Nations itself were sorely dented by the Congo crisis, and the growing radicalism of the Afro-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Dáil Éireann deb., Vol. 159, Cols. 142-4 (3 July 1956).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Quoted in 'Ireland in the United Nations', Éire-Ireland: the Weekly Bulletin of the Department of External Affairs, No. 342, 29 Oct. 1956.

Asian group (however much he may have sympathised with their essential goals) became difficult to reconcile with his fealty to the United Nations Charter. As the 1960s progressed Aiken's slow response to circumstances at home and abroad, not least the growing importance of the EC, was echoed in his department's difficulty in coming to terms with the changing environment. He found the changes in Irish society equally problematic and preferred to view foreign policy as above politics and public debate. His reaction to the media intrusion on the Biafran issue – including his far from convincing explanation for the government's position on the recall of the RTÉ crew travelling to the secessionist region (see chapter five) – and his reluctance to accommodate groups like the IAAM, Concern and Gorta, epitomised the end of the old regime in Irish politics and the shift towards a new generation of decision-makers.

Aiken's successor Hillery has to be numbered among that new generation. His ease with the media and emphasis on Europe ushered in a new stage in the evolution of Irish foreign policy. His attempts to contribute to the resolution of the humanitarian crisis in Biafra translated public desires into practical action and he was praised accordingly for his openness. Although much of his effort was directed towards the EC and Northern Ireland, his willingness to embrace the question of ODA and to oversee increases in that sector was important in bringing Irish foreign policy in line with broader international developments. The appointment of FitzGerald heralded further change. Prompted by the demands of EC membership, FitzGerald in 1973 contributed to the expansion and re-invigoration of foreign policy and left an important legacy in the field of ODA which has lasted to this day. His background – and that of his Cabinet colleagues Ryan, O'Brien, Keating and O'Leary - in social activism on issues like apartheid (with the IAAM) and Biafra (with the Irish Movement for Peace in Nigeria-Biafra), and his vocal criticisms of the Irish government's ODA policies, marked him out immediately from his predecessors, particularly in his more inclusive approach – meeting with the IAAM and embracing partnership with NGOs through APSO; British officials commented on the 'undoubted influence Dr FitzGerald has had on galvanising the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ... his personal agency, enthusiasms and intellectual attributes have been responsible for the Irish progress in this area'.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Donnelly to White, 7 Nov. 1973, NAUK FCO 87/181.

FitzGerald's consultations with the IAAM and Irish NGOs gave an indication of the change in Irish public attitudes to foreign policy between the tendency 'to let the world go by except for an occasional glance'18 described by Clutterbuck in 1956 and the increased levels of activity visible in the mid-1970s. It returned to the question asked at the outset of this study: why and how the public became more involved in foreign policy and to what extent they effected policy change. International trends were again important. The growth of global media exerted a considerable influence, particularly the impact of television in highlighting the extent of the humanitarian crisis in Biafra. Nor was Ireland isolated from broader patterns of social change. The growth of social protest in the Western world, the civil rights campaign in the United States and student and workers' protests across Europe in 1968 had a visible influence in Northern Ireland and in the strength and direction of the IAAM's protests against the Springbok tour in 1970. Change also came from within the institutions that dominated Irish society. The decision by the Catholic Church to embrace issues of development and social justice in the latter part of the 1960s, for example, had a significant import on the Irish public's attitudes to the developing world.

The direct consequences of this shift in public opinion were difficult to gauge. There were instances, such as CTT's decision to abandon trade promotion in South Africa in 1970, when public pressure caused a direct change in policy but they were rare and often of only marginal importance. Foreign policy was by no stretch of the imagination an important electoral issue; Patrick Keatinge wrote in 1973 that '[s]pecial knowledge about breeding pigs may be a useful electoral aid in a pig-breeding constituency, but special knowledge of foreign affairs is not a qualification that recommends itself to Irish electors'.<sup>19</sup> The change manifested itself instead in a more subtle fashion by elevating the importance of international events in the Irish social conscience. Issues of social justice in southern Africa, equitable economic development, and the cause of self-determination became important considerations for Irish public representatives and government officials. The extent of their influence was relative, of course, particularly when contrasted with the higher levels of 'active citizenship' in Denmark, Norway and Sweden, but served to create what Skelly

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Clutterbuck to Home, 13 April 1956, NAUK DO 35/10625.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Keatinge, Formulation, pp. 214-5.

described as 'broad parameters that Iveagh House officials respected',<sup>20</sup> and which were reflected in government policies as a result.

## SITUATING IRISH FOREIGN POLICY, 1955-75

The complex process involved in weighing these multiple layers of influence and arriving at a coherent view of policy formulation has been all-too-infrequently applied in previous analyses of Irish foreign policy. This study goes some way towards redressing that balance. Building on a structure utilised by Keatinge and adapted to the study of Irish relations with the developing world by Holmes, Rees and Whelan,<sup>21</sup> it analyses foreign policy not as a process undertaken in isolation, but as a series of interactions between individual actors or groups of varying degrees of influence and the policy-making process. To Keatinge's strong analytical model it adds an additional historical context, drawing on a wide range of previously unavailable or under-utilised archival material from both inside and outside the official policy-making process. The result is a more complex picture than was hitherto apparent. In addition to the traditional narrative of official decision-making, considerable light is shed on the interaction between non-governmental actors and policy-makers, from the influence of Irish missionaries and the Catholic Church on official thinking, to that of the IAAM and development NGOs like Gorta, Concern and Trócaire, and the less tangible though equally important articulation of public attitudes to foreign affairs. The comparative element of this study is particularly important in this respect. By situating Irish policies alongside those of other moderate Western states, it offers several important insights into the dynamics of foreign policy-making in a small state that can be readily applied in both an Irish and a broader international context, not least the political and social processes by which policies and definitions of national interest are constructed.

To those broader patterns of decision-making, this study makes a number of additional, though no less important, contributions to understanding Ireland's relationship with the wider world. In that respect it is significant in following Kirby, Holmes, Rees and Whelan, Miller, and O'Malley in examining Ireland's relations with

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Skelly, Irish diplomacy, p. 285.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Keatinge, Formulation; Keatinge, Place among the nations; and Holmes, Rees and Whelan, Poor relation.

a world outside the traditional European, North American and United Nations bases.<sup>22</sup> There is much that can be learned from this diversification. Irish foreign policy on sub-Saharan Africa, for example, illuminates a number of patterns in the state's foreign policy and adds to our understanding of its growing internationalisation in this period, not least by analysing those more traditional relationships in a somewhat different context - in Irish discussions with Britain over Southern Rhodesia in 1962, for instance, or in the debate surrounding EC recognition of the former Portuguese territories in the mid-1970s. Of equal importance is this study's contribution in charting the evolution of new relationships between Ireland and the wider world. Building on work by Sutton, O'Brien and O'Neill,<sup>23</sup> this study is the first to detail the history of Irish development assistance from its beginnings in the early 1960s to the creation and consolidation of the state's first bilateral aid programme in the middle of the following decade. In so doing it offers an insight not only into the creation of official policy but adds considerably to our understanding of the dynamics of Irish development NGO activity in the same period, examining the previously unrecorded history of the FFHC and the formative years of Gorta, as well as the involvement of the Catholic Church in development issues, leading to its creation of Trócaire in 1973. In adding to Farmar's study of Concern<sup>24</sup> by analysing in detail that organisation's often strained early relationship with the Irish government, this study also sheds significant light on the interaction between development NGOs and the policy-making process, as well as highlighting the influence of NGO activity in stimulating discussion about development assistance at both public and official levels.

In all of these exchanges the dominant theme is one of Irish exposure to the wider world. The growth of Africa Concern was strongly linked to the international media's response to the Biafran humanitarian crisis and in turn to broader international patterns of NGO growth. It is a theme too often ignored in previous analyses of Irish foreign policy and one which this study aimed to address from the outset. It does so

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Kirby, *Ireland and Latin America*; Holmes, Rees and Whelan, *Poor relation*; Miller, *Ireland and Palestine*; Rory Miller (ed.), *Ireland and the Middle East: trade, society and peace* (Dublin, 2007); and O'Malley, *Ireland, India and Empire*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Sutton, *Irish government aid*; Sutton, 'Irish ODA and the UN target'; O'Brien, *Ireland and the Third World*; O'Neill, 'Ireland's foreign aid in 1998'; O'Neill, 'Ireland's official aid programme'; and O'Neill, 'The foreign aid policy of Ireland'.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Farmar, *Believing in action*.

primarily through comparison of Irish policies with other moderate Western states, adding depth to our understanding of Irish decision-making and the processes that inform it. The same can be said of its examination of Irish social change during this period. The comparison of the fortunes of the IAAM with similar movements in Britain and the Nordic states, as well as references made to broader patterns of Western social change and their effect on Ireland (including the radicalisation of protest in Northern Ireland), create a more nuanced view of the evolving dynamics of Irish society and the manner in which they were reflected in the political process, particularly the formulation of foreign policy.

The significance of this study however is not limited to understanding changes from within Irish society. Of equal importance is the contribution it makes to our understanding of Ireland's role in a broader international context, not least the manner in which it builds on the work of Howe and Kennedy in analysing the construction of an Irish diplomatic identity through explicit and repeated reference to the state's colonial heritage.<sup>25</sup> There have already been calls to situate the field of Irish Studies in a much broader international perspective, taking the discipline beyond its traditional focus on the Anglophone West. That process, Michael Cronin asserts, would offer the opportunity to re-think perceptions of Ireland's role in a global framework.<sup>26</sup> It points to an obvious extension of this study: to analyse its main trends and conclusions in the context of responses and commentaries from within sub-Saharan Africa and the broader developing world. Returning to Cronin's challenge in the immediate context, the importance of diversifying our understanding of Ireland's relationship with the wider world through the study of its attitudes to sub-Saharan Africa becomes readily apparent. In answer to the question 'what can Ireland, and by extension Irish Studies, offer to the world that is different?', the 2006 report of the Irish Forum identified 'the experience of a small nation in the area of peace-keeping, development aid, UN power politics, EU negotiations, etc' as one of four main areas of the state's potential contribution.<sup>27</sup> Considerable scope still exists to examine Irish influence in the creation of EC/EU

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Howe, Ireland and empire; and Kennedy, Colonialism, religion and nationalism.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Michael Cronin, 'Minding ourselves: a new face for Irish Studies', *Field Day Review*, No. 4 (2008), pp. 180-81.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Michael Cronin and Laura Izarra, 'Irish Studies in the non-Anglophone world', in Christina Hunt Mahony, Laura Izarra, Elizabeth Malcom, John P. Harrington, Ondřej Pilný and Catriona Crowe (eds.), *The future of Irish Studies: report of the Irish Forum* (Prague, 2006), p. 26.

policies – an issue addressed in chapters seven and eight of this study – but in each of the other four areas the importance of Ireland's contribution is illuminated by examining its policies on sub-Saharan Africa, particularly when addressed in the context of broader international changes and the experiences of other comparable states.

In addition to accounting for the evolution of Ireland's foreign policy in the twenty years after it joined the United Nations, this study raises a number of important issues as yet unresolved by historians. Too little has been done, for example, to document the histories of Irish NGOs and their important role in Irish society to the present day. The same might be said for the role of Irish missionaries of all denominations, particularly in the areas touched on here: their importance in framing Ireland's diplomatic identity, and the relationship between the state's missionary heritage and the appeal of NGOs and development assistance more broadly. The story of the IAAM to its dissolution in 1994 and the role played by other foreign policy pressure groups are also deserving of further attention, especially in the context of recent studies of the British AAM and comparable movements in the Nordic states which have revealed much about the interaction between public attitudes and foreign policy.<sup>28</sup> Of equal importance and visibility in this study is the role of the media, both Irish and British, from missionary journals, scholarly periodicals and daily, weekly and monthly newspapers, to the increasing influence of radio and television, whose message and role in shaping an Irish agenda on sub-Saharan Africa certainly deserves closer investigation. Scope also exists to broaden the time period of this study to ask similar questions of Ireland's relationship with the developing world and the construction of its diplomatic identity prior to its membership of the United Nations and as a member of the EC. In the same vein, additional country or regional studies along the lines attempted here, extending to an examination of the policies of other Western states or members of the Non-Aligned Movement, would help to further understand the relationships linking the West and the developing world.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Fieldhouse, *Anti-Apartheid*; Eriksen (ed.), *Norway and southern Africa*; Morgenstierne, *Denmark and southern Africa*; Sellström, *Sweden and southern Africa*: Vol. I; Sellström, *Sweden and southern Africa*: Vol. II; and Soiri and Peltola, *Finland and southern Africa*.

It is not an easy task to untangle the changes in Irish foreign policy that occurred between 1955 and 1975. To do so, as most analysts have until now, by explaining them in terms of the EC application process imposes too simplistic a model on a complex set of influences from both inside and outside the state. It also ignores the extent of Ireland's contributions to international affairs in this period. The decolonisation process of the 1950s may have been a high-water mark in Ireland's standing at the United Nations, but its continued commitment to support the world organisation alongside its moderate counterparts was important in maintaining its role in international affairs. The United Nations gave Ireland an identity on the world stage that it had largely lost after its impressive contribution to the League of Nations ended. The EC offered the opportunity to extend that voice in new and equally important ways. In between, the moves to establish diplomatic links with sub-Saharan Africa by opening an Irish Embassy in Nigeria in 1960 and later in establishing development offices in the priority states, were important steps in widening the scope of Irish foreign policy. Though Ireland's role at the United Nations may have diminished and its attitudes have been overly cautious at times, Irish governments found new and not insignificant ways in which to express diplomatic independence, to pursue national interests, and to develop the principles important to its citizens in international affairs.

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Tom Arnold, Dublin, 2 April 2007 Prof Kader Asmal, Cape Town, 19 April 2006, and 2 July 2006 (interviews conducted by Thomas Alberts using a set of questions supplied by author) Joan Burton, Dublin, 3 November 2005 Fr Tony Byrne, Dublin, 21 February 2007 Pat Carroll, Dublin, 27 October 2005 Fr Christopher Connolly, Killarney, 23 January 2004. Fr Sean Coughlan, Dublin, 27 February 2004 and 5 March 2004. Noel Dorr, Dublin, 24 February 2005 and 12 April 2005 Fr Aengus Finucane, Dublin, 27 Februrary 2007 Dr Garret FitzGerald, Dublin, 6 July 2005 Fr Austin Flannery, Dublin, 26 July 2005 Michael Flynn, Galway, 11 April 2005 Tony Ffrench, Dublin, 1 December 2005 and 2 February 2006 Gearóid Kilgallen, Dublin, 9 November 2005 Rev Dr Terence McCaughey, Dublin, 30 August 2005 Prof T.B.H. McMurry, Dublin, 6 March 2007 Rafique Mottiar, Dublin, 15 February 2007 Ronan Murphy, Dublin, 28 July 2006 John O'Loughlin Kennedy, Dublin, 16 January 2006 Eamon Ó Tuathail, Dublin, 24 January 2006

Fr Thomas Russell, Galway, 28 January 2004

Joseph Small, Dublin, 26 May 2006

Rev Raymond Smith and Mrs Audrey Smith, Delgany, 5 March 2007

Alan Titley, Dublin, 28 April 2005 and 24 May 2005

**Note:** In addition to the above list of interviewees, former personnel from Córas Tráchtála, the Department of Foreign Affairs, and the Irish Defence Forces were interviewed but asked to remain anonymous.

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