

## Deal must not ruin peace in the North

ARLENE Foster's public position, as stated yesterday, is that talks with Theresa May's Conservative Party have yet to begin, and that therefore no deal with the DUP to keep the Tories in power in the UK has been reached. Yet the reality is that the deal is done.

DUP sources made it abundantly clear yesterday that the party would do whatever was necessary to ensure that Jeremy Corbyn would not stand a chance of becoming British prime minister – and that involves ensuring that the Conservatives can rely on the DUP, when required, to protect their Westminster majority.

Whatever initial promises were made were enough, let us not forget, to allow Mrs May to go to Buckingham Palace and tell the Queen that she had the required votes to form a viable administration.

The question, therefore, is not whether the DUP will back Mrs May: the question is what price they will exact in return.

It would be reasonable to expect that they would demand some straightforward domestic policy concessions, such as the restoration of the Winter Fuel Allowance, on which they had campaigned; and as the North's farmers would be hard hit by a post-Brexit end to CAP payments, it is hard to see them not demanding substantial future payments to ensure that their supporters do not lose out.

Yet the dominant feature of the DUP election campaign was not domestic policy; it was the protection of Northern Ireland's place in the United Kingdom, and by extension the preservation of unionist traditions in the North.

Having swept away the UUP with this mantra of 'saving unionism', and having been given a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to make demands of the British prime

minister, it is almost impossible to see the DUP not trying to leverage as many pro-unionist concessions out of Westminster as possible.

Indeed, DUP MP Jeffrey Donaldson last night listed 'strengthening and preserving the union' as the first policy objective for his party in the upcoming talks.

The danger, however, is clear: 'strengthening unionism' has the potential to damage relationships between nationalists and unionists in the North.

These relationships are already at a historic low; any sense that unionist causes will be championed in the North is likely to create further division. It is increasingly questionable whether the Stormont Assembly can be restored to normal functioning, given this latest turn in events: yet the Assembly is the cornerstone of the Good Friday Agreement.

Worse still, this growing polarisation on Northern politics comes at the same time as the elimination of the SDLP as a political force, in Westminster elections at any rate. It is a tragedy that, at a time when moderation will be required, the voices of moderate nationalism have been extinguished from the debate.

What is critical, therefore, is that cool heads prevail.

In seeking to strengthen the union, the DUP must resist trying to advance policies which could be seen as anti-nationalist.

The UK prime minister must not let her desire to stay in power in Britain trump the need to ensure fairness and balance when it comes to questions regarding the North.

And Sinn Féin must accept the electoral reality and seek to build bridges with the DUP, rather than taking the easy route of whipping up anti-unionist sentiment in an effort to further consolidate the party's power base.

Ultimately, everyone concerned needs to remember what can happen if the politics of the North is allowed to descend into a question of 'us versus them'.

Nobody, whatever their politics, could want a return to those dark days.

# WHY DO EVIL FEEL

For over a decade, our writer has warned that Islamic extremists are being given a free reign in Ireland. His life was threatened... but little else appeared to be done. Then, last week, his fears were borne out – in the most shocking possible way. So, now, he says, we need to accept the scale of the problem – and stop being afraid to tackle it

**I** WAS in a neighbour's house when my phone rang. It was February 2005 and my wife was heavily pregnant with our first child. I took the call presuming it had something to do with her pregnancy.

From the outset, the caller – who had a Middle Eastern accent – was aggressive and hostile. He demanded to know if I was the 'Mark Dooley who wrote about Islam in last Sunday's paper'. When I confirmed that I was, he launched a ferocious tirade.

'You must be an agent of the Jews!' he roared, before saying: 'If your article brings any police attention on us, I will hold you personally responsible'.

His sinister threat left me cold because I knew from his tone that he meant every word of it.

The following Friday I was scheduled to debate British journalist Robert Fisk on The Late Late Show. George W Bush had recently turned his ire on Iran, and we were to discuss this latest bout of American belligerence. Before we went on air, I noticed the studio was swarming with gardai.

At the end of the item, a detective asked me to accompany him off the set. He said a threat had been issued against me and that the Gardai would escort me home. Naturally, I told them of the phone threat I had received earlier that week.

The next day, we met with gardai who informed us that they would monitor our phones and keep surveillance on our home for at least six months. Thus began a period which tested me and my family to the limit.

Now, you might think by their hostile reaction that I had somehow insulted Irish Muslims or given offence to Islam. As a religious person, it is not in my nature to do so. I had simply highlighted how the Irish Muslim community was not free of fanaticism, and that if this were to be controlled, there had to be less multiculturalism and considerably more integration.

It was clear that the majority of Irish Muslims were law-abiding citizens who merely wished to bring up their families in peace. However, the more I dug, the more I realised that their community had been infiltrated by people who had no intention of integrating. Ireland, I discovered, was being used as a base by violent extremists to wage jihad, or holy war, elsewhere.

**F**OR example, in the months following my initial article, I revealed that a Libyan, Abu-Hafs Al-Libi, had successfully applied for asylum here in 1996. He obtained citizenship and lived in Dublin before travelling to post-war Iraq in 2004. From there, he sent emails boasting of his exploits, which included at least one beheading. Al-Libi subsequently died fighting the Americans in the Iraqi city of Fallujah.

At the time, one of my Muslim sources confirmed: 'There are others holding Irish passports who have used them to travel to the Middle East, especially Syria, where they can

SATURDAY  
ESSAY



by Dr Mark  
Dooley

cross the porous border with Iraq and commit acts of terrorism there.' Moreover, just as I was writing about Al-Libi, the US administration publicly expressed its annoyance at the fact that Jihad Jara, a Palestinian militant suspected of directing terrorism from Ireland, had evaded Garda surveillance and travelled to Spain in defiance of a UN-brokered agreement. The NBC TV network reported that there were at least ten Islamic extremists operating out of Ireland, and that President George Bush was becoming increasingly alarmed at the Irish government's failure to shut down the network.

That was in 2005 – a full 12 years before Rachid Redouane, who had openly lived and mar-

ried in Ireland, rampaged through London last weekend. The fact that I was twice threatened by extremists, and that I had revealed the disturbing details of jihadists such as Al-Libi, should have led to a nationwide crackdown on radical Islamists. It didn't. Indeed, the fact that we now seem so shocked that Redouane lived here only proves how lax we have been in dealing with this deadly threat.

In 2006, I revealed all that I knew about Islamism in Ireland to the then Justice Minister Michael McDowell. It appeared that he was totally in the dark. This was not true of the Americans, whose ambassador also invited me to brief him. There was virtually nothing he did not already know

about the Irish jihadi phenomenon, and his frustration with the Irish authorities for their apathetic approach was palpable.

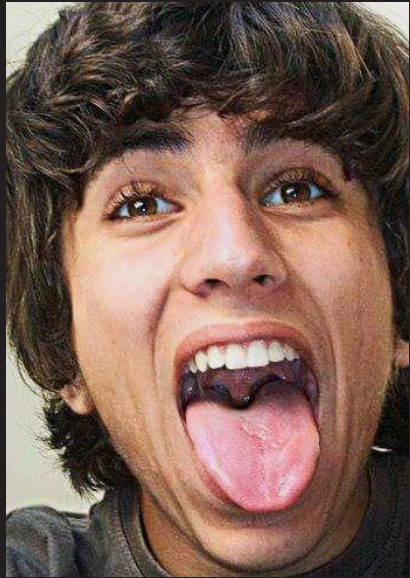
Why have the Irish authorities been so negligent in dealing with this festering problem? Quite simply, they do not understand Islam, nor have they taken the time to learn from the Muslim community. Indeed, it was the moderate Muslim community who first reached out to me because they felt under siege by the extremists in their midst.

When trying to understand fanatics such as Al-Libi or Rachid Redouane, people often ask: what is it that they want from us? If we can understand their grievances, then, perhaps, we might be able to reach an accommodation the way we did in Northern Ireland. This, however, is a mistake we cannot afford to make.

As I quickly learned from my brave Muslim sources, there are various strains of Islam in Ireland. Most Muslims, whether they be Sunni or Shia,



# WE LEFT THIS IRISH HERE?



Cold-blooded killers: Rachid Redouane, centre, Khuram Butt, left, and Youssef Zaghba



Victims of terror: Police leading people to safety after London attack

are devout but not fanatical. They long to live in peace with the surrounding culture and, while committed to their Islamic principles, are not seeking to subvert the State or its laws in favour of Sharia or holy law.

Others, however, are not so tolerant of Western values. When, for example, I interviewed the Sunni imam of Dublin's Clonskeagh Mosque, he refused to declare loyalty to the Irish Constitution over Sharia law. The spokesperson for that mosque, Dr Ali Selim, is on record as saying that, in the event of Muslims becoming a majority in Ireland, Sharia law should be imposed.

All of my Muslim sources were moderate Sunnis or Shia who had fled the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein or other repressive regimes. Week after week, they had to listen to fiery sermons in Dublin mosques denouncing Israel, the Jews and our secular culture. They were also increasingly alarmed by the intimidating presence of people like Jihad Jara, Al-Libi and, presumably from what we now know, Rachid Redouane.

I spent many days with these

people, learning who was who in the intricate maze that is Irish Islam. What I quickly came to realise was that the jihadists are no less threatening to their fellow-Muslims than to the rest of us. That is because they view 'moderate' Muslims as apostates from the true faith. Those who wish to integrate they denounce as 'infidels'.

For the Islamic zealot, whether he be in Isis or Al-Qaeda, the world is divided into the 'House of Islam' (Dar al-Islam) and the 'House of War' (Dar al-Harb). All those regions that are not Muslim are considered the House of War, and must, through jihad, be forced to submit to the Sharia. Interestingly, when translated, Islam means 'submission to God'.

The mistake we make is to think that the London or Manchester terrorists are politically minded, and that if we meet their territorial demands they will leave us alone. The error is to think that they want a political settlement, and that their violence is an expression of their frustration at their failure to achieve it. The truth is they don't want anything from us - except our complete submission to Allah.

Indeed, they believe it is preferable for people to die than to live as infidels - and that includes peaceful, law-abiding Muslims. That is why Islamist fanatics are so indiscriminate when causing death and devastation. As far as they are concerned, they are doing God's work and if moderate Muslims are killed in the process they are no less deserving of punishment.

**T**HERE will be no peace negotiations with Isis or their jihadi surrogates in Ireland or elsewhere. That is because there is nothing to negotiate except our unqualified conversion and submission. Understanding that is the first step towards dealing with an issue that demands a vastly different approach.

And what should our approach be? First, we should heed those like that courageous Muslim cleric Dr Umar Al-Qadri, founder of the Irish Muslim Peace & Integration Council. For years, Dr Al-Qadri has warned of the ever-growing threat of Islamic extremism in Ireland. As

far as I can determine, his warnings have fallen on deaf ears.

Dr Al-Qadri, who is imam of the Clonee mosque in Dublin, has tirelessly sought integration and peace. He is not afraid to highlight fanaticism in his own community, and persistently pinpoints what should be done to stop it. Most notably, in response to the online ravings of a fanatic revealed by this newspaper, and named as Abu Yusuf Al Irlandi, Dr Al-Qadri was the only Irish imam to denounce this individual - a man who condemns moderates as 'Uncle Tom Muslims', and who asks Allah to 'give them what they deserve'.

Dr Al-Qadri also criticised the imam of the Clonskeagh mosque for being 'friends' with Al Irlandi on Facebook, saying: 'When you are a friend with somebody like that on the internet you are giving them legitimacy.'

If the Irish authorities are to take this threat seriously, they must engage directly with this brave and principled imam. The only way to truly understand the complexities of Islam in Ireland, and the menacing elements therein, is to talk to the moderates. The Irish Muslim

community is full of brave people only too willing to share their experiences and expose the radicals. When I started writing on this issue, I could not believe just how many willingly came forward to shed light on the dark forces menacing their community.

I spoke to Iraqis, Libyans, Turks and many other Muslims from across the Middle East, all of whom felt under siege.

They were thrilled that, finally, someone was speaking out on their behalf. That we had to wait 12 years for their warnings to be taken seriously - 12 years of carnage culminating in last weekend's tragedy on the streets of London - is both morally reprehensible and terrifying.

**T**HAT is why the Irish authorities desperately need to reach out to the moderate Muslim community. For how else can we possibly know what is going on in that community if we don't have eyes and ears on the ground? The quickest way to detect a terrorist is, after all, by heeding the warnings of those who live and worship alongside him.

It is becoming increasingly clear that the British security services failed to heed warnings about the bizarre behaviour of the Manchester and London terrorists. But those are the warnings that count - warnings that emanate from people living in close proximity to the perpetrators. You can 'monitor' suspects all you like, but unless you get inside their communities and see them through the eyes of their neighbours and fellow worshippers, you won't see the real warning signs.

The first thing I learned from my Muslim sources is that they share our frustration with those who think that condemning extremism is somehow 'Islamophobic'. For far too long fanatics have evaded scrutiny due to our politically correct pieties. Not only has this led to our current embarrassment in relation to Rachid Redouane, but it has shamefully resulted in the concerns of honourable Muslims being repeatedly ignored.

If the incoming Taoiseach wishes to deal with what is a real and present danger, if he is to learn from the mistakes of the British security services, he ought to immediately establish confidential links with those moderate Muslims on the ground - those who are equally threatened by the fanatics and prepared to take a stand against them.

My own experience proves that this is the only way to prevent a terror attack on Ireland. For in the mind of those like Redouane, we are all worthy of sacrifice - Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

All of which means that our cause is also the cause of moderate Muslims, and nothing less than our united defiance can defeat our common enemy.