THE SUNDAY TIMES
ESTABLISHED 1822

It's the union in Europe that drove Britain away

When the original six members of the European Economic Community signed the treaty of Rome on March 25, 1957, Britain was absent from the proceedings. Well before the formalities 60 years ago, and a treaty committing Europe to "ever-closer union" as well as a common market, it was clear that it would not be participating at the outset.

Six decades on, the situation has come full circle. Theresa May was not present at this weekend's celebrations in Rome, for the good reason that Britain will soon be leaving the European Union. Article 50 will be triggered on Wednesday and, assuming the two-year timetable is met, Britain will cease to be an EU member in the spring of 2019, 46 years after eventually joining the Rome pioneers.

That it has come to this is in many ways both regrettable and inevitable. The EU has become less successful as it has got older. Early on, Britain envied the superior performance of continental economies. That began to change in the 1980s, when the Thatcher revolution in Britain contrasted with the EU becoming an overregulated, sclerotic grouping.

It changed even more with the adoption of the single currency in 1999, and the mistaken decision to open its membership to all-comers, including the unready countries of southern Europe. It is still possible to envy Germany, for whom the euro has been a gift that keeps on giving. But there is nothing to envy about the high-unemployment economies of much of the rest of Europe.

The euro and a migrant crisis exacerbated by Angela Merkel's open-door policy mean that the 60th anniversary is being marked by deeper divisions among EU members than at any time in its history. The scars of the eurozone crisis are raw, as are other tensions. The EU's pursuit of ever-closer union, via the euro and the Schengen agreement on open borders, has created its biggest problems.

It was one thing for member states to pay lip service to ever-closer union in summit communiqués, quite another when it became a painful reality. The contradiction between individual countries' desire for sovereignty and the use of closer economic integration as a springboard for political union remains.

That, fundamentally, is the reason Britain is leaving the EU, but it is also a reflection of a long-term British failure. Too often, British prime ministers have seen opt-outs and deals as victories which allowed them to put Europe to one side and get on with the challenges of domestic politics. When European politicians talked about ever-closer union, the British either did not listen or did not believe.

There was an alternative vision of the EU, as an open, flexible and co-operative grouping, which Britain could and should have pushed much more aggressively. There were allies in such an endeavour, who were there to be cultivated. There were times when the Franco-German axis was floundering.

Britain chose, however, not to lead in the EU but to accept a loss of influence, including in a Brussels bureaucracy once heavily influenced by senior British officials. That loss of influence was exemplified by David Cameron's failed renegotiation on the terms of membership, preceded by the former prime minister's failure to stop the appointment of Jean-Claude Juncker as European Commission president. Britain had become semi-detached from the EU long before last June's decision to leave.

That does not make Mrs May's task easier over the next two years, but it makes it clearer. In downplaying the importance of frictionless trade with Europe, the prime minister may have set her sights too low, prioritising immigration inflexibly. There may be more scope for revisiting free movement of people than this former home secretary has allowed for. Britain will continue to need the best and brightest talents from Europe and the world.

The priority is clear. Post-Brexit Britain must be open and enterprising and work with, rather than cut itself off from, the rest of Europe. A successful post-Brexit Britain should continue to have close economic, security and other ties with the EU. The country may not be a bridge between Europe and America but can speak a diplomatic language both parties understand. The United Kingdom may even have more influence on the EU than it has latterly as a member.

Garda changes must start at the very top

Nóirín O'Sullivan, the garda commissioner, is like a cat with nine lives. The force is mired in controversy but no blame ever seems to attach to Ms O'Sullivan. She is putting up a feisty defence to allegations of being involved in the smear campaign against whistle-blower Maurice McCabe, having already sidestepped a number of other controversies. But last week's revelations concerning wholesale fraud and incompetence within the force, and the self-serving, unsatisfactory statement she issued in response yesterday, mean Ms O'Sullivan has run out of road.

It is scarcely believable that errors by the gardai led to more than 14,000 drivers being incorrectly prosecuted for a range of motoring offences. Taxpayers are on the line for the massive costs that will arise when these cases go back to court to be overturned. Compensation will be paid to drivers who had to pay higher insurance premiums as a result of convictions, or who were wrongly put off the road or, in some cases, even lost their employment.

This incompetence is bad enough but the revelation that gardai routinely overstated the number of roadside breath tests carried out between 2012 and 2015 is quite alarming. Falsifying the number of tests led to falsification of the statistics upon which these non-tests were based. Or, in the parlance of the computing industry: garbage in, garbage out.

The Policing Authority, which carried out the inquiry that revealed this scandal, said it raises serious questions of integrity for An Garda Siochana and erodes confidence in garda data generally. That is putting it mildly. Even though the garda Pulse system recorded 1,995,369 breath tests carried out during the years in question, the Medical Bureau of Road Safety found that the real number was 1,058,157. The fraudulent inclusion of an additional 937,212 tests in the Pulse system was intended to show that the force is more vigilant and productive than it actually is. Little wonder the Policing Authority stated that this "raises concerns about management and supervision", adding that the scale of the discrepancy "is further evidence of deep cultural problems with the garda".

The government response to this debacle has been inadequate. Frances Fitzgerald, the justice minister, issued a statement on Friday in which she said she "made it clear to the commissioner that the practices that allowed this misreporting to happen within An Garda Siochana over many years needs to be addressed". Not good enough. Yesterday Enda Kenny, the taoiseach, said the revelations over penalty points and breath test discrepancies are "not acceptable", before reaffirming confidence in Ms O'Sullivan. Again, not good enough. An Garda Siochana needs a radical overhaul and that change needs to start at the top. Simply put, the force needs a new commissioner, preferably one from overseas. Ms O'Sullivan should stand down now so the badly-needed change process can begin.

The emperor has no clothes, or not in the Dail anyhow

In order to be banned from entering the Danish parliament, a member would need to arrive wearing bathing shorts, a slogan T-shirt and a pixie hat. However, if an Irish TD were to turn up in precisely that ensemble — a distinct possibility — it would hardly merit a raised eyebrow let alone a denial of speaking rights.

The late Tony Gregory refused to wear a tie in the Dail on the basis that his constituents didn't, arguably a condescending explanation which disparaged any aspiration those constituents had for white-collar employment.

However, Mick Wallace's insistence on gaudy casuals suggests less of an affinity with his constituents — who would surely show due respect if visiting the national parliament — than with a class of leisured property developers who are equally cavalier about their tax arrangements.

When Michael Healy-Rae can wear his "caubeen" into the Dail, while Mattie McGrath is banned from sporting a charity daffodil in his lapel, the need for some clarity in the Dail dress code is clearly overdue.

At present the only requirement on members is to dress in a manner which "reflects the dignity of the House". They certainly do that.

All those who refuse to forgive McGuinness must at least try to understand

JUSTINE McCARTHY

On the night of October 5, 1968, after the RUC had bludgeoned civil rights marchers with their truncheons in Derry earlier that day, Martin McGuinness, aged 18, listened to his father recounting how he had been lucky to get away uninjured. He would have been unaware, as he spoke, that the harm to the McGuinnesses was, there and then, starting to manifest itself. A pacifist Catholic and a welder in a local foundry, the father talked of neighbours fleeing from the swinging batons, and, as he listened, the teenager reached a decision: he would fight back.

Ten months later, Martin McGuinness was embroiled in the Battle of the Bogside, pelting police with petrol bombs and stones, side by side with a Belfast man who would become his closest comrade, Gerry Adams. In the Republic, the taoiseach Jack Lynch said he "could not stand by and watch innocent people injured and perhaps worse". He promised to send the Irish army to set up field hospitals on the border for those injured in the fighting. There were calls for a United Nations peacekeeping force to be drafted into Northern Ireland. Instead, the British Army came.

When internment was introduced in August 1971, McGuinness went on the run. In just two days, under Operation Demetrius, 342 people were arrested and jailed without trial. Every one of them was a nationalist and many had nothing to do with the IRA. No loyalist was picked up. By the advent of Bloody Sunday five months later, when British paratroopers fatally shot 13 innocent civilians as they protested peacefully against internment, McGuinness was regarded as the IRA's second-in-command.

On the day of the Bloody Sunday funerals, the Republic shut down in official mourning. That night, a crowd nearly 30,000 strong set fire to the British embassy in Dublin's Merrion Square. Nationalist Ireland, across the length and breadth of the island, was engulfed in rage. Even today, southern armchair-watchers of the Troubles who unequivocally castigate the IRA, Sinn Fein and their perceived fellow travellers recall with misty eyes how they were so angry they wanted to get a gun and go up there themselves.

McGuinness's death, at 66, has thrown into stark relief a curious new Irish border divide. The fragile working concord between nationalists and unionists established by the Good Friday agreement is the obverse of the gulf that has emerged in Irish nationalism on either side of the border. On Thursday, the former US president Bill Clinton told the funeral congregation, including Democratic Unionists Peter Robinson and Arlene Foster, that McGuinness had enlarged the word "us" and reduced the word "them".

It may have felt that way in St Columba's church where the most compelling eulogy was delivered by a Presbyterian minister, David Latimer, but most days it feels as if there are two distinct and separate all-Irelander Irelands. One was cut adrift by partition nearly 100 years ago and left to fend for itself in a nakedly sectarian majority dictatorship. The other refused to put itself in their shoes.

All week, the voice of Official Ireland has wavered on a tightrope of not wishing to speak ill of the dead while simultaneously maintaining its own righteousness. The compromise was to remember McGuinness as two bizarrely unconnected identities: the latter-day peacemaker and the incomprehensibly violent young gunman. His IRA identity was devoid of justification, went the popular refrain. There could be no possible reason why he did not follow a fellow Derryman, John Hume, down the peaceful road to democracy. Were not both men products of the institutional prejudice that deprived their community of the right to vote, housing, jobs and freedom from discrimination?

This argument wilfully ignores the faultlines of human nature. Most blinding is that McGuinness was 13 years younger than Hume. He was a hot-headed teenager who came of age with the Troubles. Besides, he and Hume were exposed to significantly different influences. Hume had a third-level education in the peaceful environs of Maynooth in Co Kildare. McGuinness left school at 15 and went to work in a butcher's shop in Derry.

These are not excuses for McGuinness. They are, however, clues to understanding why he chose to join the IRA and act as judge, jury and assassin. The late Dungannon priest and civil rights campaigner Denis Faul called McGuinness a moral contortionist. It is a description that is hard to better, even in a week when the thesaurus has been wrung dry of adjectives for him.

McGuinness was a daily communicant and a dealer of death. The murders were vile, such as that of Joanne Mathers, a young census collecter in Derry, when McGuinness led the IRA, and that in 1990 of Patsy Gillespie, whom the IRA used twice as a human bomb; fatally the second time. McGuinness was a teetotaller and a non-smoker. He proposed marriage to his wife, Bernie, via an intermediary while he was on the run and she was in jail. It was a life that was unimaginable to most people in the Republic who never witnessed neighbours being taken, en masse, from their homes in the middle of the night by the arms of the state.

PEOPLE IN THE REPUBLIC NEVER SAW NEIGHBOURS BEING TAKEN IN THE NIGHT BY ARMS OF THE STATE

In 1994, the Belfast journalist Eamonn Mallie told McGuinness he could not understand, coming from a Northern Irish Catholic background himself, how anyone could justify taking a human life in any circumstances. McGuinness replied: "How do you think I feel?"

I interviewed McGuinness in the Bogside in September 1986, the year he persuaded delegates at the Sinn Fein ard fheis to abandon the party's Dail abstentionist policy. He was courteous and full of angry words. He called Margaret Thatcher "granite face" and said that if the British prime minister had died in the 1984 Brighton bombing, it would have made the UK government "less intransigent".

He said as a child returning each summer from holidays with his granny in Buncrana he could not understand how, when you crossed "this line down through the map, you were supposed to be in a different country" and how going back to Derry "was always like coming back under a big black cloud".

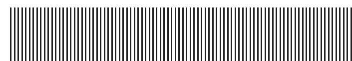
Last week Jo Berry, whose father, Sir Anthony Berry MP, was one of five people who died in Brighton, tweeted: "I value Martin McGuinness as an inspiring example of peace and reconciliation."

Victims of IRA violence have different ways of reacting to the horrors they experienced. It is unfair to presume they all find it impossible to forgive and, then, to use that as an excuse for this Republic's refusal to forgive. To forgive, first you must try to understand.

justine.mccarthy@sunday-times.ie

The mad and bad will ever rise up as long as there are alienated minorities

CONOR BRADY



Only someone insane could do that sort of thing," exclaimed a shocked English friend as details of Khalid Masood's murderous attack at Westminster emerged on Wednesday afternoon. We were just a mile upriver on the Thames, attending a funeral service for a family member, around the time the attack began.

"Imagine driving a car at a group of innocent people," my friend continued. "Just tourists and kids. And the devilishness of it. He knew those poor people had nowhere to go, except 30 feet down into the river."

The paradox was that a little earlier, albeit in qualified terms, my friend had been praising Martin McGuinness, picking up on the tributes paid to the former IRA leader, latterly elevated to statesman, from across the political establishment.

It's difficult, frankly, to see much difference between what Khalid Masood did on Wednesday at Westminster, and some of the things done by McGuinness's affiliates during the years of terrorism in Northern Ireland. Except, perhaps, that McGuinness's operatives were more efficient. In October 1990, they tied Patsy Gillespie, a 42-year-old husband and father, into a van, loaded it with a 200lb bomb and forced him to drive to a British Army checkpoint at Coshquin, near Derry, where it was detonated, killing the unfortunate man along with five soldiers. Lest one be accused of skewing the moral calculus, it should be noted that Gillespie was guilty of the heinous offence of working as a civilian cook at the local army barracks in order to support his family.

McGuinness denied any involvement in Gillespie's death, a claim that has always been rejected by the dead man's widow, Kathleen, who, with her children, had been held at gunpoint in their home while her husband was forced to drive to his death.

IT'S DIFFICULT TO SEE MUCH DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WHAT KHALID MASOOD DID AND SOME THINGS DONE BY McGUINNESS'S AFFILIATES

It is even more difficult to see any difference between what happened on Westminster Bridge last Wednesday and the 1993 attacks in Warrington when the IRA placed bombs in a shopping street, detonating them at lunchtime on a Saturday when the town centre was at its busiest. The blasts took the lives of Jonathan Ball, 3, and Tim Parry, 12. There can have been only one intention in bombing an English high street; to maximise civilian casualties.

Thirty-five years or so later, McGuinness is not branded as either mad or bad even though he did — or ordered the doing of — bad things, or acquiesced in them. Tributes have come from old rivals and present-day office holders, including the British prime minister Theresa May. As he moved into middle age, McGuinness eschewed the violence in which he had shown himself so skilled. He channelled his leadership capacities into the quest for peace, and worked successfully in government with those who were once his enemies.

Some of the extreme Islamists who commit terrorist outrages may be mad, or bad, or both. But the evidence is that mostly they are alienated, angry individuals with a deep sense of grievance, as was McGuinness when he chose the path of violence. They are mostly rational individuals, not mentally ill, but often conditioned to extremism by older, manipulative people. Massoud, perhaps out of pattern, was 52. Steve Taylor, a psychology professor at Leeds Metropolitan University, says that "belonging to a religion and to a terrorist group within that religion provides a like-minded community, supporting beliefs and possibly a family-like structure". He said it also "provides status for people who may have little or none in a normal context".

There can be no fully effective security solution to the threat presented by the presence of a significant subset of alienated and radicalised people within the general population. Surveillance can be stepped up. Additional police and soldiers can be deployed with ever more sophisticated weaponry. Potential targets can be "hardened" and made more secure. But absolute security cannot be assured.

In fairness to those who shape and apply public policy in Britain — including politicians, educationalists and community leaders — there is a growing acceptance of this reality and a recognition that countering the radicalisation of minority groups must be a multi-faceted process of winning hearts and minds. Many urban areas now have sophisticated community-based programmes aimed at countering extremists' propaganda. Some successes are reported, but other sources suggest it is proving a tough, uphill struggle.

As popular opinion in predominantly white, post-Christian Britain — England in particular — turns in upon itself, harking back to a more insular, homogeneous society, closing itself against what it sees as threatening, alien influences, it becomes more difficult to persuade minorities they are respected or even wanted. That makes it more likely extremist messages of hate and intolerance will gain traction.

McGuinness was moved from terror to peaceful methods because he was persuaded that parity of esteem was possible for his people, the nationalist minority in Northern Ireland, after almost 80 years of discrimination. Similar processes are necessary in urban Britain if minority alienation is to be successfully countered. But it is less than certain that members of the current Westminster political establishment, vying with each other to prove their nationalist credentials, can rise to that considerable challenge.

conor.brady@sunday-times.ie