

I gave the following talk today May 16th to the 2026 Roger Casement Summer School at Dun Laoghaire Co Dublin.

Neutrality, morality, war, peace, and the abuse of power.

Hello all, and thanks to the Roger Casement Summer School for inviting me to participate in this event.

In my preparation for this I read a newly published book by Rory Carroll. Its title is A REBEL AND A TRAITOR. In my view it is unduly critical towards Casement but it does paint an interesting historical picture. I grew up a few miles from Banna Strand, so I always had a keen interest in the story of Roger Casement.

I will begin with a couple of quotes:

Edmund Burke is credited with saying: "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing". I disagree with Burke. In my view good people don't stand idly by and do nothing while evil is being perpetrated. Whatever you do in the face of evil don't do nothing.

Holocaust Survivor Victor Frankl wrote in his book 'Man's search for meaning' that: "in reality there are only two races, namely the race of decent people and the race of people who are not decent ... and the race of decent people are always in the minority ...

Danger only threatens when a political system send those not-decent people ... to the top." In my opinion we and all of humanity are in serious danger because far too many not-decent people have been elected to powerful positions or have taken power by devious or evil means.

It is very appropriate to be discussing issues of neutrality at a Summer School dedicated to Roger Casement. He was a very dedicated British imperial civil servant and produced a very important report to the British Government on human rights abuses in the Congo Free State and also campaigned for human rights in South America. Casement wrote The Crime Against Europe before the outbreak of WW I to express his opposition to British Foreign Office machinations aimed at the destruction of Germany as a trade rival. The US and its allies are today provoking wars with Russia and China for similar reasons of trade. Casement was also appalled by British imperial abuses against the people of Ireland and he supported Irish neutrality. He had a lot in common with Wolfe Tone including his belief in the importance of neutrality, and Tone and Casement participated in rebellions against the British empire, and suffered execution as a result of their actions for Irish freedom.

Serious abuses of power, as we are seeing globally at present, have been common throughout the history of humanity. Where power exists within families, societies, nations or empires it will very often be abused unless there are effective rules and procedures to prevent such abuses. That is why the rule of law, or the destruction of the rule of law, at local, national and international levels is so important. Abuses of power, including especially wars, are never inevitable – there are always better ways of ordering human societies. The real reasons for such abuses include human greed and theft of resources by elite groups and powerful countries. Aggravating factors or spurious justifications for such abuses include, religious fanaticism, racism and fascism. Genocide and crimes against humanity were perpetrated by many European countries and by Israeli and others more recently, on the false basis of bringing European so-called superior civilisation to the primitive indigenous savages. Justifications such as American exceptionalism, or being a God-chosen people, were and still are used as a cover for settler colonialism and neo-colonialism. The Irish people having been colonised and exploited, should also be aware that as part of the British empire we were capable of being perpetrators as well as being humanitarians. It is vital in my view that we should be on the right side of history and not join the war mongers and abusers.

There has been an underlying European and Western culture of genocide against the indigenous peoples of Africa, the Americas, Australia and New Zealand, and elsewhere.

Western and Israeli perpetrated genocide is still ongoing against the Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank. European and Western abusive colonialism was always about the acquisition and theft of resources and continues with US/Nato resource wars of aggression against Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Yemen, and now against Iran, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria. Turkey and Russia are probably next in line for destruction and exploitation, and China is likely a longer-term target. Why does genocide keep happening? From my research the awful reality is that genocide in most cases has been successful, and there has been far too little accountability.

The Irish people should not be part of, or complicity in, such crimes against humanity. We are not a superior race or a divinely chosen people, and we have no capacity for waging military aggression. Irish participation in military alliances will only result in sacrificing our young men and women as cannon fodder. Fighting in every clime, for every cause but our own. Let's not forget the up to 50,000 Irish men who never came home from World War One.

Based on our history, geography, and active neutrality, as a country we have exercised real soft power influence internationally since we joined the UN in 1955. There is nothing cowardly about positive active neutrality. 86 Irish soldiers died on UN peacekeeping missions. I knew several of them well. That is a huge casualty rate for such a small army. We are accused, even by some of our own politicians, of freeloading under the protective umbrella of NATO. Throughout the Cold War, and even more so in the meantime, NATO and the other nuclear armed states have been terrorising humanity including Ireland. It's not a protective umbrella they are providing, but nuclear terrorism and nuclear mushroom clouds, and the prospects of a nuclear holocaust. The peoples of Hiroshima and Nagasaki suffered the reality of what is now euphemistically called double tap explosions.

However, our FF/FG dominated Irish governments in recent decades have been killing off Irish neutrality and joining so-called coalitions of the willing thereby being actively complicit in crimes against humanity and guilty of reckless endangerment of the Irish people and humanity as a whole. A neutral country threatening to send the Irish Army Ranger wing to board Russian oil tankers is dangerously stupid and reckless.

When we talk about Ireland and the Irish people and issues of defence and neutrality it is the best interests of the Irish people we should be prioritising, not just the interests of the elite, or the economy and our questionable responsibilities to defend the European Union. We must also include all the people living on the island of Ireland. We should all be working towards a long overdue United Ireland. It is vital that the United Ireland must be a genuinely Neutral United Ireland, and not an Ireland re-united with Britain within Nato. We also need to defend the interests of our Irish Diaspora scattered around the world. We need to work on and defend the best interests of all of humanity. Humanity must learn to live together peacefully and cooperatively, to avoid being exterminated together by wars and by environmental destruction. Our proverbial Four Green Fields that comprise the territory of Ireland are incapable of being defended by modern conventional military means, as many countries from Afghanistan to Iraq and Libya have discovered to their cost.

If I am sounding very pessimistic, it is because I live with my eyes and my mind wide open. I am an optimist by nature, otherwise I would not keep on doing what I have been doing. There are many problems facing the Irish people at home and our scattered diaspora, many of whom were forced out of Ireland not only by famine and colonial abuses but also by economic under-development in the early decades of our partial independence. It is not enough to be identifying the problems. We also need to be proposing how best to deal with these problems.

What are the dangers that we and all of humanity are facing and are experiencing at present? And what can we do about these crises?

All of humanity are experiencing an unprecedented cohort of interconnected and existential crises that have the potential of exterminating all of us and most living things on this Planet Earth. While we in Ireland do get concerned about severe weather events, too many fail to appreciate the seriousness and interconnectedness of these global crises. These multiple Interconnected existential crises include, self-inflicted environmental destruction, militarisation and conventional wars, real risk of nuclear war, food crises causing starvation, medical pandemics, migration crises, and most importantly, the destruction of the system of international law and humanitarian laws. The US, supported by its western and other allies, are operating the equivalent of a global criminal protection racket, with NATO as its criminal enforcer. Trumps tariffs are just one example of such extortion. The wars of aggression that are the enforcement enablers are far more serious and have cost the lives of millions of people, most of whom were civilians, especially children.

Instead of taking actions to alleviate and deal with these existential crises our government and too many other governments are doing the opposite or doing far too little.

Our government are the European laggards environmentally, getting derogations from the EU for our farmers, planning to import fracking gas from the US. It has been far too late in developing environmentally friendly energy alternatives, and is now recklessly considering the nuclear power option. The UN is being undermined by abandoning the Triple Lock, and abandoning neutrality, and joining NATO and EU bogus peace operations. Nuclear armed UK and France have been asked to defend Ireland, because our government failed to make adequate security arrangements. They have joined the war mongers and failed to promote international peace and global justice and abandoned the rescue missions for drowning migrants in the Mediterranean. Ireland has failed to condemn gross breaches of international laws by the US, NATO and others. Our government is complicit in genocide and war crimes by allowing US military to use Shannon airport for wars of aggression. We are failing to support the UN as the foundation of international law and acting in breach of international laws. Irish neutrality is suffering death by a thousand cuts. Our Irish Government is no longer practicing neutrality or obeying laws on neutrality. If Wolfe Tone, Roger Casement, James Connolly, Eamon de Valera, and Frank Aiken were alive today they would be appalled by actions and inactions of our successive Irish Governments. While de Valera comes in for criticism in different areas, his legacy on Irish neutrality lives on. By wisely negotiating the return of the 3 ports before WW 2, this enabled Ireland to successfully remain neutral throughout WW2 and afterwards.

Now NATO war ships are regular visitors to our ports, and our government has invited the nuclear armed navies and air forces of Britain and France to protect Ireland during the EU Presidency, because they failed to make property security precautions in a timely manner. Our World War 2 neutrality could be described as justifiably pragmatic. Once we joined the UN our neutrality became more positive in the sense that it benefited humanity as a whole, by promoting global justice.

Irish neutrality does not belong to the Irish Government. We must emphasise that it belongs to the Irish people for solid historical reasons, and that we the Irish people will not abandon neutrality even if our government does. We must find creative ways of forcing our government to restore proper neutrality. Actions speak louder than words, as demonstrated by the courageous actions by Palestine Action individuals and groups in the UK and Ireland.

This brings us to Shannon airport in Co Clare, where thirteen peace activists are before the courts for Palestine Action protests against US military use of Shannon. Other peace activists have also been before the courts for peace actions in Cork and Dublin. What is happening at Shannon is not just occasional refuelling of a few aircraft associated with

the US military. Since the First Gulf War in 1991, tens of thousands of US military aircraft flights have been refuelled at Shannon on their way to and from providing essential logistical support to US led wars of aggression in clear breach of international laws on neutrality as defined by the Hague Convention V on Neutrality 1907 Article. 2. of which states that: "Belligerents are forbidden to move troops or convoys of either munitions of war or supplies across the territory of a neutral Power." In the High Court case Horgan v Ireland in April 2003 Judge Kearns ruled that the Irish Government was in breach of international laws on neutrality by allowing US military to transit through Irish territory. However, the High Court then reneged on its duties under the separation of powers by failing to hold the Irish Government to account for its breaches of international laws.

Since the 7 October 2023 when the Israeli genocide against the Palestinian people accelerated in its brutality, up to 1,000 aircraft flights associated with the US military have been refuelled at Shannon or flew through Irish airspace. Since the US/Israeli war against Iran began on 28 February dozens of aircraft associated with US military refuelled at Shannon or flew through Irish airspace. Three US military aircraft were at Shannon airport on 28 March when the US fired Tomahawk missiles at the Minab school, killing 180 people, including 168 children. This is not neutrality of any sort, military or otherwise. It amounts to complicity in war crimes and genocide. Israel is now waging another war against the people of Lebanon and is occupying and destroying southern Lebanon up to and beyond the Litani river, with the intention of annexing it. It is also occupying the Syrian Golan Heights and has advanced further into south-west Syria as part of Netanyahu's Greater Israel plans. There is no peace to keep in Lebanon, and Israel and Hizbollah have been misusing the UNIFIL mission to avoid making peace over the past 48 years. During that period 47 Irish peacekeeping soldiers have lost their lives. While it is important that Irish soldiers should only serve overseas on UN approved peace missions, it is equally important that they should not be sent on UN missions that put them in undue or unjustified danger, on missions that are not achieving peace. I do not have all the solutions towards fixing all the wrongs that afflict humanity and all life on Planet Earth. Going to the Moon or Mars or another planet like Planet Earth is not an option. If we destroy Planet Earth, we do not deserve a reprieve on a non-existent Planet B. The reality is that the US intends to use the Moon for military purposes and have set up a special dedicated US Space Force in 2019. China and Russia have similar space forces that in time will be capable of launching missiles back on to Planet Earth.

We the people live in a beautiful country, and our Planet Earth was a beautiful planet before we began to destroy it. All decent people need to work together peacefully as one global community to undo the damage already caused to our globalised society and to our planet. We need to take back genuine democratic control at all levels.

I will finish with a few questions and hopefully you folks might come up with a few answers in our discussions:

What must our Irish government do, or not do, as a country, and as a member of the United Nations?

What must we do, or not do, collectively as a society?

What must each of us do, or not do, as individuals?

It is never too late to do what is right. The Irish people have shown great support not only for the Palestinian people but also for broader global justice. We have one of the best democratic systems in the world, but we don't use it nearly enough to hold our government to account. Its time to insist that we have a government of the people, by the people and for the people.

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