



INTERVENTION: US Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi has warned Boris Johnson that there would be 'absolutely no chance' of a US-UK trade deal getting Congressional approval if it undermined the Good Friday Agreement

Tory government's latest reckless act typical of 'perfidious Albion'

THE first known usage of the phrase perfidious Albion is often attributed to the Frenchman, Augustin Louis de Ximenes, in a poem written more than 225 years ago in relation to the political events in the last decade of the 18th century. Since then, the conduct of Great Britain and its empire on the international stage has given cause for peoples across many lands to recognise the relevance of its application in their own contexts.

During its imperial heyday, Britain waived the rules precisely because it ruled the waves and therefore had the power to act perfidiously with impunity.

Its treatment of the Chinese, when Britain successfully waged war for the right to profit from selling opium to a nation, still stains the collective memory of a billion strong people and is a shameful episode rarely mentioned back in Blighty, where most references to history in popular culture and media focus narrowly on Britain's role in the early 1940s conflict in Europe against Hitler's Nazi regime.

The plight of three million Indians who perished in the Bengal Famine during the course of that war in no small part due to the actions of the British prime minister and renowned racist, Winston Churchill, is another awkward truth rarely making it into the public discourse across the water.

A decade ago, then British leader, David Cameron, provoked anger on a visit to China when he and his ministerial colleagues brushed aside a request from their hosts to not wear poppies at an official gathering because the flower has come to represent national humiliation in China at the hands of western powers. Ignorance and arrogance have long been comfortable bedfellows.

The great irony of the Brexit saga has once again been highlighted by the Tory government's latest reckless act.

Chris DONNELLY



It is the European Union, and not Britain, which has seniority in the Brexit trade negotiations. Sending out Northern Ireland secretary of state, Brandon Lewis, to goad and antagonise the European Union with his brazen declaration that the British government was intent on breaking international law will not detract from the reality that the EU has the stronger hand to play as the more significant political and economic power.

The welcome intervention from US Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, warning Boris Johnson that there would be "absolutely no chance" of a US-UK trade deal getting Congressional approval if it undermined the

Good Friday Agreement, served as a reminder of the weakened place occupied by Britain on the global stage as we move into the third decade of the twenty first century, with Britain's glorious past now only faintly visible through history's rear view mirror.

Membership of the European Union and the legacy of Irish immigrants making America our greatest diaspora has gifted influence and leverage to Ireland throughout this critical phase, something that has more than irked Brexiters puzzled by Ireland's capacity to punch well above its weight at international diplomacy.

But there is another, more important lesson for those of us watching the spectacle unfolding from this side of the Irish Sea.

Only a matter of months ago, Dublin's coalition government pledged to establish a Shared Island unit in response to the growing demand across Ireland for a step change in the approach towards constitutional change. Up to this point, successive Irish governments have studiously avoided taking any credible steps to begin planning and actively working for Irish unity.

When de Ximenes first wrote of perfidious Albion in revolutionary France more than two centuries ago, Irish people of different faiths and backgrounds were being inspired to articulate the cause and vision of an independent Ireland forging its own way, no longer in the shadow of a neighbour for whom it is always destined to share a complicated relationship.

The real lesson we must take from Brexit, regardless of how the Northern Ireland protocol plays out in the weeks ahead, is that the time has come to take control of our own destinies and shape a future in the best interests of everyone who calls Ireland home. Dublin must ditch its manana principle on unity and finally take ownership of promoting and building our shared island.

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ON THIS DAY

SEPTEMBER 14 1920

Moves Towards Partition

The Press Association is officially informed that the Cabinet has decided to appoint an additional Assistant Under-Secretary for Ireland. His duty will be to deal with all problems that may arise in the Six Counties of Ulster. He will have an office in Belfast.

Also, an announcement will shortly be made in reference to the enrolment of well-disposed citizens to assist the authorities. The [Conservative] Morning Post says: A large quantity of rifles and revolvers has been landed in Belfast from a Government vessel. It is believed that these are intended for the use of the Loyalist forces. A deputation from the Ulster Unionist Labour Association (UULA) waited upon Mr Bonar Law [Conservative leader] and urged that a special police force should be formed on their ranks for the assistance of the military in the protection of life and property. It was emphasised that such a force would have to be armed. Mr Bonar Law was stated to have received the suggestion with sympathy and to have placed it before the [British] Cabinet.

The deputation was headed by Mr William Grant (chairman). The suggestion is to form a special police force which would be recruited from the Loyalists of the province and consist mainly of ex-servicemen.... At a meeting of Shipyard workers on September 2nd, Mr Alexander McKay, one of the orators at the shipyard meeting which preceded the expulsions [of Catholics in July], stated: 'We are convinced the time has come when the UVF must be mobilised and supplied with arms ...'

Mayor's Hunger Strike

A HUGE gathering of ex-RIC members resident in Cork met to discuss the incarceration of the Lord Mayor of Cork (Terence MacSwiney).

They urged the British government to 're-consider their decision with reference to the imprisonment of the Lord Mayor of Cork as well as all other political prisoners on hunger strike, and to order their immediate release before a catastrophe is precipitated.' (The appointment of Sir Ernest Clarke as an additional Under-secretary for Ireland with special responsibility for the six counties was a key move in the establishment of partition. On his arrival, the English official (who had already been vetted by James Craig) received a memo from the Unionist leaders warning him that he should act only in accordance with the views of the Unionist majority. 'The new government officials and all new appointments to the Constabulary, etc should all be those who are prepared to accept this new form of government.' The Ulster Specials should be a Protestant force. Craig showed no concern whatsoever about reconciling the Catholic minority to the new state.)

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