

Ireland #3

Ireland is under the radar. So the nation quietly approaches over our shoulders. Ireland never meant to set the world on fire, it meant only to expel interlopers. Ireland and the Irish people are content with what they have been dealt ... which has become quite a lot, actually.

This despite the probability that the Irish diaspora is among the largest in the world, *per capita* of the peak population in the native land — Wikipedia has said this:

[The diaspora] ... consists of Irish emigrants and their descendants in countries such as the United States (see Irish Americans), the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Argentina, South Africa, and nations of the Caribbean and continental Europe, where small but vibrant Irish communities continue to exist. The diaspora contains over 80 million people and it is the result of mass migration from Ireland, due to past famines (especially the Irish Potato Famine), poverty, and political oppression. The term first came widely into use in Ireland in the 1990s when the then-President of Ireland, Mary Robinson began using it to describe all those of Irish descent. Notable people of the global Irish diaspora are United States presidents John F. Kennedy, Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton ...

— I have heard that more than 40 million of the USA's population has some Irish ancestry. I count myself among that number, as my father was a Carigan and my mother was a Ryan. Half of me arises in the lost province of Ulster, from Protestant stock, and the other half comes from the Republic where the Catholic church is predominant.

Irish-Americans today outnumber the inhabitants of Ireland nearly 9-to-1, and the combined population of the Irish island (including UK territory, Northern Ireland) by more than 6-to-1. So, even though many had to leave Ireland because of a combination of illegitimate rule and famine (which in turn was likely caused by the illegitimate rulers), as many stayed to sue for freedom as could manage. Today, more than 4/5th of the island, politically, has both freedom and a native land. My point is that even though large portions of the native inhabitants had to leave, those who remained did not let their depopulation stand as an excuse for surrendering to the the invaders.

Nearly every place in the world has pockets of separatist or secessionist spirit, but the majority of Ireland itself has shown a tendency to resist invasion with low profile libertarianism. I used to write a blog at Nolanchart.com titled "The Easter Rising," and that name referred to the Easter occupation of the General Post Office (GPO), an arm of the British Empire, in Dublin in 1916. The English forces crushed that uprising but it was the forerunner to the founding of the Free Republic of Ireland in 1922. The interlopers from the UK maintained an extortion of territory, called Northern Ireland, in the aforesaid Ulster province.

I named my column after this signal event because the Irish seem to me to be the most libertarian culture, not country, but culture. When the Irish talk about nation, in my view, they talk about common birth and culture, certainly not territory or government. Here I use territory as the political jurisdiction of a government as opposed to the beautiful land that is coterminous with the state known as Ireland.

A recent entry at Wikipedia states that Ireland's government has about 300 thousand employees, at all levels. Meanwhile, the USA federal government alone has over 4 million. It would be interesting to see how many of the Irish bureaucrats are holdovers from the British bureaucracy that held sway for more than 800 years. As we know in this country, from the FDR era alone, once established government entities hardly ever go entirely away. It looks like there are 14 private sector Irish people for every Irish public sector employee. Comparable Figures between the USA and Ireland are difficult to find.

As time goes by, it seems to me, bureaucracies tend to embed themselves by hiding from popular scrutiny. They achieve this by ever refining the arcane know-how that is necessary to navigate their bailiwick. The number of government bureaucrats is hidden from the general constituency. By the same token, the general constituency finds workarounds to limit the effect of government. Bureaucracy and constituency become two ships passing silently in the night. I expect that the Irish culture has gone much farther along this road. Bureaucracies never go away, they just appear to be occupied by ever more picayune details, to the point that the minutia has a fineness that is overlooked by the most fussy.

The point is that the only place in Ireland where I even saw statist functionaries was in the confines of the American TSA at the Dublin Airfield (outgoing). Otherwise, the country was a grand retreat from the sense of constant officious herding that I get at home. As an interesting sidenote, I have seldom met a more agreeable genus of people in the street than in Ireland. But, though the USTSA employees were mostly Irish, they had been converted into mean-spirited wretches by the process of harassing would-be passengers to America.

Of course we were already being herded, since we were on an organized tour. But here is the difference, our tour was voluntary. Given the history of Ireland, I guess you could say

the same thing about the Irish. Once the technology of travel reached a certain tipping point, it was easier voluntarily to join the diaspora than to stick around and be treated like a dirty dog. Nowadays, there seems to be a nice balance of population and wealth and enjoyable living, so the Irish have no chip on their shoulders, except for those who toil as authoritarian minions for the American Transportation Safety Administration.