



Dipinto di Lucan House c.1780. Particolare. Su gentile concessione di Timothy Gwyn-Jones. Pubblicazione di Desmond Guinness, Lucan House, giugno 2005.



Da sinistra: L'Ambasciatore Savoia, il Presidente d'Irlanda McAleese, il Dr. Martin McAleese, il Sig. Noel Treacy (Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs, Ireland), la Signora Savoia e il Consigliere Marco Lombardi.



Dublino, 2005. L'Ambasciatore Lucio Alberto Savoia durante la cerimonia della presentazione delle Lettere Credenziali alla Presidente d'Irlanda Mary Patricia McAleese.

ITALIA

Stampa

Irish President visits Lucan House

Cari Lettori,

Con questa bellissima edizione in della sua uscita nel 1983, Italia Stampa si ripresenta in un formato più facile di lettura. Al tempo stesso il giornale emerge con grande forza avanti riprendendo la sua circolazione.

Con questo il sottoscritto, traduttore, editore e direttore del periodico, intende ringraziare quanto più è stato possibile con tutto il Delfino un di quei grandi maestri dell'editoria. Sono stati proprio questi due rappresentanti italiani a Milano, Carlo Galvani, Lanerini, Wiedler e Molinari per la distribuzione del giornale a voler pensare al cliente e creare l'impaginato di Italia.

Il sottoscritto si dedica a Italia Stampa ormai da 23 anni e con la sua professionalità giornalistica, redazionale di validi collaboratori, e in grado di offrire al lettore un stile originale di informazione, al tempo stesso interessante nei contenuti.

L'Espresso

On April 26 last, President Mary McAleese visited Lucan House, the magnificent private residence of the Italian Ambassador, Dr Lucio Savoia. It was following an invitation by Dr Savoia and his wife Minnie that the President and her husband Dr Martin McAleese, graciously accepted the invitation on a very private basis. Only a limited number of guests were present, namely the staff of the Italian Embassy. Architect John Rodwell took the visit party on a guided tour of the Palladian mansion explaining its history and features.

Recently Lucan House was also visited by Nobel Laureate Amos Oz who found the house most congenial for literary gatherings.

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INTERVISTA ALLA PRESIDENTE D'IRLANDA MARY MCALEESE

AMBASCIATORE LUCIO ALBERTO SAVOIA

Mary Patricia McAleese è stata eletta ottava Presidente di Irlanda nel 1997. Primo Capo di Stato nata nell'Irlanda del Nord, il 1° ottobre 2004 fu dichiarata rieletta per un secondo periodo di sette anni, essendo una candidata di diritto e nessun candidato aveva corso contro di lei. Il suo mandato presidenziale è scaduto il 10 novembre 2011. Nata ad Ardoyne la maggiore di nove figli, la sua famiglia fu costretta ad abbandonare la propria casa durante il periodo detto *The Troubles*; ha frequentato la *Queen's University Belfast* e il *Trinity College Dublin*. Nel 1979 ha diretto un canale televisivo; ritornò alla *Queen's University* a Belfast nel 1981 e nel 1987 fu nominata capo dell'Istituto professionale di studi giuridici. Nel 1994 fu nominata Vice Cancelliere (Rettore) della stessa *Queen's University*.

La Presidente McAleese, praticante cattolico-romana, ha usato il suo tempo in carica per affrontare questioni riguardanti la giustizia, l'uguaglianza e l'inclusione sociale, l'antisettarismo e la riconciliazione. Ha manifestato opinioni liberali sull'omosessualità e sulle donne sacerdote. Ha descritto il tema della sua presidenza come "Building Bridges", costruzione di ponti che si materializzò, tra l'altro, nei suoi tentativi di raggiungere la comunità unionista nell'Irlanda del Nord. È membro del *Council of Women World Leaders* ed è stata classificata da Forbes come la 64° donna più potente del mondo.

Madam President,

You have described your Presidency's theme as "Building Bridges". As a matter of fact, you have used your time in office to address issues concerning justice, social equality, social inclusion, anti-sectarianism, and reconciliation.

Bridge-building materialised also in your attempts to reach out to the unionist community in Northern Ireland.

I grew up in Belfast, Northern Ireland, the part of Ireland which remained in the United Kingdom after Ireland was partitioned a century ago. Northern Ireland was a sectarian Protestant statelet, neglected by Westminster, where Protestants (British Unionists) dominated politics, keeping Catholics (who were mostly Irish nationalists) out of jobs, housing and political power. Partition created ongoing political instability as well social and cultural segregation, characterised by religiously defined ghettoization and separate schooling. In some ways I was lucky because I grew up as that rare phenomenon, a Catholic living in a working-class Protestant area. Consequently many of my friends did not share my faith or political perspective but we were friends and loved them. Sectarian hatred never appealed to me. I saw it as innately stupid, wasteful and incapable of solving problems. I watched as young Protestant men, some of them friends of mine, became sucked into Loyalist anti-Catholic paramilitary organisations. I watched as young Catholic men were likewise sucked into Republican anti-British paramilitary organisations. They lived cheek by jowl, just metres from one another in bitter and dangerous ignorance of each other. The area in which I lived became a violent conflict zone with the highest number of sectarian

deaths during the period known as The Troubles, which was in effect a civil war. We were machine-gunned from our home by Loyalists. They attempted to kill my deaf brother, bombed my father's pub, killing the young mother of three children. The futility of it all was what made me a determined peace-maker and so when after many years involved in cross-community efforts at reconciliation, I became President of Ireland, my clear mission was to use the pastoral nature of the role to help the peace-building work of building bridges between the Catholics and Protestants, between North and South on the island of Ireland and between Ireland and our neighbours in Great Britain. All three sets of relationships had been appallingly damaged by the toxins of sectarianism, racism, colonialism, imperialism, one-sided political evangelism and the failure of successive generations of political leaders to focus on reconciliation. For the fourteen years I was in office, my husband and I worked to break down barriers of fear, resentment and resistance so that our Unionist, Protestant, British neighbours would come to know us as good neighbours. The deep longing for peace which we knew existed in every human heart revealed itself over those years and culminated in the State Visit of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in May of 2011. She had never set foot South of the partitioned border. No British monarch had. The success of her visit showcased the extent of the progress made towards reconciliation since the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 gave structure to a still ongoing peace process based on shared government and parity of esteem. It is still a wobbly journey, made all the more difficult by Brexit for when Ireland North and South as well as Great Britain were all members of the Single European Market, at a time when paramilitary activity had stopped, we experienced a golden and happy era of cross-border cooperation which pointed to a much better future. The instability wrought by Brexit, (which was voted against by the Northern electorate) has highlighted once again the fundamental embedded problem which is partition. The coming generations have bridges now they can walk across to meet one another, to stand in each other's shoes and hopefully end estrangement, by creating a reconciled island home for all.

During your term of Presidency, Ireland has seen historical events unfold. The first one has been "The Belfast Agreement", also known as "The Good Friday Agreement", reached on Good Friday, the 10th April 1998 by the Irish and British Governments. It put an end to most of the violence of 'The Troubles.' As a consequence, years of prosperity and well-being followed for the Country, whose economy was called the "Celtic Tiger."

The Good Friday Agreement of 1998 was and remains a triumph of politics over paramilitarism, of compromise over conflict. It took thirty years of war to bring the warring communities to their senses and to the realisation that ninety percent of something was worth more than one hundred percent of nothing. Gradually a willingness to compromise grew. A Peace Accord was painstakingly hammered out. We were fortunate to have great pragmatic leaders in Bertie Ahern (Irish Taoiseach-Prime Minister) and Tony Blair, British Prime Minister, and endless help from President Clinton and his special representative Senator George Mitchell. The Agreement was put to a referendum held on both sides of the border. It was overwhelmingly endorsed, becoming the people's peace agreement. As the culture of paramilitarism petered out leading to demilitarisation along the border, a new and easy normality was established thanks to the benefits of joint membership of the European and especially the Single European market. A new confidence grew. Prosperity grew. It became obvious that cross-border partnerships and collaboration were beneficial to all.

The Celtic Tiger years gave us a flavour of what we could achieve by working together but of course recession hit hard and though it was set back, the underpinning strength of the Irish economy saw it bounce back and offer hope once again for a great future.

Another historic event has been Queen Elizabeth II's State visit to Ireland in May 2011 which was the first State visit by a British Monarch since Ireland gained independence.

You have been the "stage director" of the visit, and the event was widely welcomed as a historic success and the achievement of a great Presidency.

I first discussed the idea of a State visit by HM Queen Elizabeth with her at a lunch in Buckingham Palace in 1995 two years before I became President. It was a matter of deep sorrow to her that the vanities of an unhappy imperial history had kept her from visiting the Republic of Ireland. When I became President we both resolved to do our best to make such a visit possible. It took the next fourteen years to create the circumstances which allowed her to come. She spent four utterly magical days in Ireland, showing in every way possible that she had come on a courageous, honest and inclusive pilgrimage of reconciliation. The stiff security of the first day gave way quickly to a warm welcome from the Irish people and she left saying it was the best State Visit of her years as Queen. I was thrilled when I received a letter from an elderly lady who had been completely hostile to the visit but whose views changed over those four special days, so much so that she believed the visit had been "choreographed by the angels". It certainly set the scene for leaving behind the difficult past and forging a reconciled future.

In the past I wrote an essay entitled "Between rhetoric and realism: the Irish concept of neutrality". Though a western Country for geography and culture, Ireland is not in NATO. European for her traditions, her history and culture, she is linked to United States like no other European country, and I think she is neutral in the soul rather than in the political action of her various governments.

Is it right, therefore, to consider neutrality as a central component of the material constitution of the Country and the common feelings of the population?

On one reading of Irish history we were a people always at war. Almost inevitably it was small cohorts of us, fighting unsuccessfully and nobly against the British colonisers and imperialists whose treatment of Ireland over centuries was appalling and more than justified resistance. Then came then Easter Rising in 1916, the cruel execution of the leaders of the rebellion against British rule and the contested Peace Treaty which not only partitioned the island but which provoked a dreadful civil war. Meanwhile tens of thousands of volunteers fought and died in British uniform during the First World War. By the end of that period of then unprecedented blood-letting the Irish people's detestation of war had forged in their deepest souls a determination to be a witness to the world of the value of peace. We became peace-makers, determined supporters of a military neutrality that never stopped us from standing in political solidarity with oppressed peoples across the world and which allowed us to be trusted neutrals in many conflicts where through our armed forces we supported the peace efforts of United Nations.

In June 2016, you urged the British to vote to remain in the European Union, and warned them that Britain's departure could result in the return of border controls on the island, and cause a "potential drift" in the peace process. You said that the "chances of customs controls being reconstituted are probably greater as they had been eliminated by EU laws, not Anglo-Irish efforts".

You added "I am heart sorry to see the UK go, to leave the EU, things will not be the same".

Sometimes you just have to say- "I told you so". In my view the best idea humanity has had ever is the European Union. Born out of the disaster of two world wars which devastated Europe it created a remarkable partnership which has more than justified its existence in terms of peace and prosperity. The referendum which led to Brexit was hastily and poorly presented to the United Kingdom electorate. It was fed by hubris, jingoism, racism and false promises none of which have been delivered. Worse still it took no account of the awful consequences which Brexit would impose on Northern Ireland, on cross-border trade and especially on the continued rolling out of the Good Friday Agreement. As a direct result, there is currently no functioning government in Northern Ireland, relationships between the Dublin and Westminster governments have soured, and much of the progress towards reconciliation made since 1998 seems to be slipping away. While the United Kingdom and Ireland were both members of the European Union, relationships at every level flourished, political contacts were regular and sustained, and officials on all sides grew comfortable in each other's orbit. We were close. All that has fallen away and the chasm between us is widening unfortunately. The UK economy is predictably worsening, the tide of emigration which Brexit promised to stem has never been higher, the money saved which was supposed to go into improving the National Health Service is a pittance compared to what is required to restore the NHS to its former glory. Already many former Brexiteers are wondering did they get it wrong. Well- yes they did and I look forward to seeing the UK restore its severed relationship with Europe, obviously not as a future full member but possibly as an associate member rather like Norway or Switzerland.

We Italians love your Country very, very much and, after having been there, we return to Italy with "il mal d' Irlanda". The Irish, too, love Italy, as there is undoubtedly an instinctive reciprocal liking between the two peoples.

You and your spouse Dr Martin come very often to Italy, and have also spent a few years there for your academic research.

Can you comment on the reasons for this great friendship between our two Countries?

We are quite simply the most compatible people on the planet- the Irish and the Italians. We love life, love friendship, love conversation and draw from such communal religious wells that we can easily enter each others humour and mindset.

I first travelled to Italy in my twenties, visiting Assisi, Perugia, Pisa and Venice. It was a typical tourist holiday and yet the sheer bustling buzz of Italy caught my heart off-guard and captured it-permanently. I started to come back regularly visiting Assisi and Rome over and over again because in both I felt completely at home, more at home than anywhere I had ever been. Impossible to fully know why but the Italian people, their culture, poetry, language, food, magnificent landscapes, history, sense of community, sense of family, passion for debates on politics and religion, their decency and graciousness, all meld into a happy sigh the minute my feet touch the tarmac at Ciampino or Fiumicino or the minute I see again Monte Subasio. When I am home in Ireland which I also love intensely a part of me is already longing for my return to Italy and to my great friends in Assisi and Rome.

My eldest daughter chose to get married in Rome so much part of her life had it become. For over forty years now we have spent part of each year on the Celio, an area of Rome overwhelmed

by tourists and yet where we have always felt part of the local community. No doubt the nearby presence of the Pontifical Irish College and the Basilica San Clemente run by the Irish Dominicans as well as the Generalate of the Passionist Order (I grew up in a Passionist parish in Belfast), helped anchor us in that magnificent part of Rome. I was so privileged to live there for several years as a student at the Pontifical Gregorian University, a minute from the Trevi Fountain. My walk to college took me past the vast Roman forums, and the Coliseum; on my walk home I passed the Basilicas of Santa Maria Maggiore and the Lateran though I most often called into the Redemptorist Church on the Via Merulana with its icon of the Virgin and Child- the Mother of Perpetual Help whose novena run by the Redemptorists I attended religiously when I lived in Belfast as did my parents all their lives. A favourite haunt is still the rather forbidding basilica of Sant' Andrea della Valle which hosted, over three days in 1847, the enormous funeral of my great hero, the Irish Liberator Daniel O'Connell, the man who introduced the British Parliament to then alien notions of democracy and equality and human rights. Rome holds so much Irish history; it is where Fr Luke Wadding came up with the idea of St Patrick as the patron Saint of Ireland with a special feast day, now famous all over the world, 17th March. The home of the Irish Embassy to Italy is the Villa Spada, so closely linked to the great Italian hero Garibaldi. Everywhere I look, every nook and cranny, holds something intriguing – part of our global patrimony. We have walked the Via Francigena, eaten in farm kitchens on the way, thrown ourselves into the sea after vertiginous hikes across the Cinque Terre, spent days exploring Antica Ostia, skied on Christmas Days in Champoluc and Cervinia, rambled over Capri, sat drinking prosecco in the sun in Sorrento, listened to a choir in the Church of St Nicolas in Bari, met a thousand friends over unhurried coffees, lunches and dinners and never ever tired of the wonder that is Italy. We are not overly keen on the warm, humid summer months there but Spring and especially autumn will find us in the Café SanGiò for breakfast, Naumachia for lunch and Li Rioni for dinner. And we will be greeted in all three with “How great that you are back”. Home.



La Presidente d'Irlanda Mary Patricia McAleese con l'Ambasciatore Lucio Alberto Savoia e consorte.