

The Irish Free State/Éire/Republic of Ireland/ Ireland: “A Country by Any Other Name”?

Mary E. Daly

Ireland is the name of an island in the North Atlantic. Ireland is also the name of a state, comprising roughly three-quarters of that island, which secured independence from Britain in 1922. This article will explore the different names for the Irish state and their political implications. Article 4 of the Irish Constitution, adopted in 1937, says that the name of the state is “Éire, or in the English language Ireland.”¹ This was regarded in Britain and Northern Ireland (the part of the island that remained within the United Kingdom) as exercising a claim over the entire island. This interpretation was supported by Article 2 of the Irish Constitution, adopted in 1937, which stated that “the national territory consists of the whole island of Ireland, its islands and the territorial seas.” Article 3, however, qualified this claim: “Pending the re-integration of the national territory, and without prejudice to the right of the Parliament and Government established by this Constitution to exercise jurisdiction over the whole of that territory, the laws enacted by that parliament shall have the like area and extent of applications as the laws of Saorstát Éireann and the like extra-territorial effect.”

Britain did not use the term “Ireland” in any official document until the 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, which included an undertaking by the Irish government to delete Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution. The dispute over nomenclature was by no means a one-sided matter. The Irish government had similar qualms about referring to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland because this title was seen as conferring official recognition on

Mary E. Daly is professor of Irish history and principal of the College of Arts and Celtic Studies at University College Dublin. She would like to thank Anna Clark, editor of the *Journal of British Studies*, and the two anonymous readers for their comments. The quotation in the title comes from *Irish Independent*, 12 November 1934.

¹ My spelling of Éire with or without É is determined by the original document that I am citing in that section of the text. All British usage is Éire; in some instances the Irish usage is also Éire, but more commonly Éire.

Journal of British Studies 46 (January 2007): 72–90
© 2007 by The North American Conference on British Studies.
All rights reserved. 0021-9371/2007/4601-0006\$10.00

partition, and they preferred to describe Northern Ireland as the Six Counties or the North of Ireland.²

This is not the only instance where the name of a state has been contested in recent times. The People's Republic of China rejected the claims of the government in Taiwan to represent China and Taiwan's claim to be treated as a separate state. "One China, one Taiwan" was just as repugnant to Peking's leaders as "two Chinas."³ In 1993, Macedonia was admitted to the United Nations under the "temporary name of Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia," a compromise agreed to in the face of Greece's objections that the name Macedonia is part of Greek heritage and cannot be usurped by others.⁴

The issues at stake in the "word war" over the name Ireland are also related to sovereignty, identity, and territorial claims.⁵ There is an extensive historiography concerning two of the issues that divided Irish republicans at the time of the 1921 Treaty—the oath of allegiance to the monarch and Ireland's membership in the Commonwealth—and how these issues were resolved, culminating in Ireland becoming a republic and leaving the Commonwealth in 1949.⁶ But the significance of Britain's treatment of the official name chosen by the Irish state, and Ireland's corresponding treatment of such names as Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom, has not been examined.

Paul Arthur, a political scientist, has remarked that "our [for which read Irish] history is replete with conflict centring on the question of symbols."⁷ Britain's refusal to use the constitutional title of the state, which had formerly been part of the United Kingdom, and its efforts to persuade other nations to adopt a similar practice, can be interpreted as an effort to exercise a residual authority over independent Ireland. From the perspective of Dublin, the name of the state indicates a degree of confusion regarding its identity. Could Ireland be Ireland without six north-eastern counties? Did naming the state as Ireland constitute an acknowledgment of partition or a claim to the entire island?

THE IRISH FREE STATE

In 1914 the term "Ireland" was used to describe the island, and it applied irrespective of political aspirations: Ireland under the Union, a Home Rule Ireland,

² In the 1960s as part of his effort to establish better relations with the Northern Ireland government, the Taoiseach (Irish prime minister) Seán Lemass used the term "Northern Ireland" instead of "Six Counties," which had been the official practice during the 1950s; John Horgan, *Seán Lemass: The Enigmatic Patriot* (Dublin, 1997), 260–62.

³ Ralph Clough, "Taiwan under Nationalist Rule, 1949–1982," in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 15, *The People's Republic*, pt. 2, *Revolutions within the Chinese Revolution, 1966–1982*, ed. Roderick MacFarquhar and John K. Fairbank (Cambridge, 1991), 850.

⁴ Hugh Poulton, *Who Are the Macedonians?* 2nd ed. (Bloomington, IN, 2000), 177.

⁵ *Belfast Telegraph*, 10 April 1964, used the headline "Eire's Word War" for a story about the delay in exchanging ambassadors between Ireland and Australia. Details of this episode are given later in this article.

⁶ Paul Arthur, *Special Relationships: Britain, Ireland and the Northern Ireland Problem* (Belfast, 2000); Paul Canning, *British Policy towards Ireland, 1921–1941* (Oxford, 1985); Ronan Fanning, *The Four-Leaved Shamrock* (Dublin, 1983); David Harkness, *The Restless Dominion: The Irish Free State and the British Commonwealth of Nations, 1921–1931* (London, 1969); Deirdre McMahon, *Republicans and Imperialists: Anglo-Irish Relations in the 1930s* (New Haven, CT, 1984).

⁷ Arthur, *Special Relationships*, 82.

Ireland, an Irish Republic. The 1920 Government of Ireland Act created two distinct entities with two separate parliaments: Northern Ireland and Southern Ireland. The term “Southern Ireland” crops up regularly in British or Ulster Unionist references to independent Ireland, but the draft treaty taken by the Dáil Éireann (the Irish parliament) delegation to London in the autumn of 1921 used the term “Ireland” throughout the text; it referred to Northern Ireland as North-East Ulster, but it also frequently cited it as “Ulster.”⁸ It would appear that the term “free state” first emerged, however inadvertently, from the Sinn Féin delegation at the treaty talks in London. According to Joseph Curran, Sinn Féin’s proposals of 24 October 1921 “emphasized that Ireland was not a colony but ‘an ancient and spiritual nation.’ . . . It was to be recognized as a ‘free State’ with its freedom and integrity guaranteed by the British Commonwealth.”⁹ In an effort to resolve the impasse over Ireland’s status vis-à-vis Britain and the Commonwealth, Arthur Griffith, the leader of the Irish delegation, suggested in late November that if Britain wished to translate the official title of the republic, “*Saorstát na hÉireann* [Republic of Ireland] as ‘Free State’ (of Ireland),” he would not quarrel with that translation: “The title, Free State can go into the Treaty.”¹⁰

Even though the Northern Ireland ministers were not party to the agreement, the treaty was styled as the “Articles of Agreement for a Treaty between Great Britain and Ireland.” Article 1 stated that “Ireland shall have the same constitutional status . . . and shall be styled and known as the Irish Free State.” Throughout the debate in Dáil Éireann, opponents and supporters of the treaty alike used the term “Ireland,” as did Eamon de Valera’s alternative draft treaty, commonly known as Document no. 2, which referred to “that portion of Ulster which is defined as Northern Ireland” and at several points to “the Government of Northern Ireland.”¹¹ As the divisions between supporters and opponents of the treaty hardened, however, the antitreaty side increasingly referred to the Irish Republic. Their greatest objection to the treaty was to Clause 4, which required members of parliament to take an oath of allegiance to the crown; they regarded the oath as a betrayal of the Irish Republic that was proclaimed in 1916 and reaffirmed in 1919 by Dáil Éireann. On 1 February 1922, for example, Seán T. Ó Ceallaigh, an opponent of the treaty, described himself as the “diplomatic representative of the Irish Republic.”¹² In Britain, two rival papers emerged, whose political loyalties were indicated by their titles: “Republic of Ireland” and “Free State.”¹³

The name given to the state first became an issue between Britain and Ireland during the drafting of the 1922 Constitution. The opening articles of the constitution drafted by the Irish committee asserted that “Ireland is a free and sov-

⁸ Ronan Fanning, Dermot Keogh, and Eunan O’Halpin, eds., *Documents in Irish Foreign Policy* (hereafter *DIFP*; Dublin, 1998), 1:271–73. “Ulster” reflects the fact that three Ulster counties—Monaghan, Cavan, and Donegal—were not included in Northern Ireland.

⁹ Joseph M. Curran, *The Birth of the Irish Free State, 1921–1923* (Tuscaloosa, AL, 1980), 87–88.

¹⁰ Arthur Griffith, as quoted in *ibid.*, 113.

¹¹ *DIFP*, 1:362–67.

¹² *Ibid.*, 1:384.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 1:413.

oreign nation" and went on to refer to the "Government in Ireland."¹⁴ However, the British authorities insisted on major changes to the draft constitution to ensure that it took formal account of the Anglo-Irish Treaty. Clause 1 of the constitution that was actually adopted referred to the "Constitution of the Irish Free State"; Clause 3 stated that the act would be cited as the "Constitution of the Irish Free State (Saorstát Éireann) Act, 1922."¹⁵

During the early 1920s, the terms "Ireland" and "Irish Free State" appear to have been treated as interchangeable.¹⁶ The letter from the Irish Minister for External Affairs, Desmond FitzGerald, to Sir (James) Eric Drummond (secretary general of the League of Nations) seeking admission to the League of Nations referred to the "the Free State of Ireland" and "the Government of the Irish Free State."¹⁷ When Ireland was admitted as a member of the league in September 1923, the formal report referred to Ireland, the Delegates of Ireland, and the Irish Delegation but described W. T. Cosgrave as President of the Irish Free State and his ministers and officials in similar style.¹⁸ In December 1923, the Irish envoy to the League of Nations, Michael MacWhite, explained to Joseph Walshe, secretary of the Department of External Affairs, that "after the admission of the Saorstát to Membership of the League of Nations reference was usually made in League documents to 'Ireland' and not to the 'Irish Free State'. Recently, however this order of things has been changed, most probably at the request of the British Foreign Office." MacWhite reported that the International Labour Office, an affiliated organization also based in Geneva, "had a communication from the British Ministry of Labour protesting against the employment of the word 'Ireland' instead of 'Irish Free State' by the Chairman of the Governing Body of the Labour Office in his speech on the opening of the Fifth International Conference."¹⁹ While this indicates that Britain was trying to ensure that "Irish Free State" should be used rather than "Ireland," such incidents were limited.

What was the practice within Ireland? There does not appear to have been any official directive on how to refer to the state. Some contributors to the book *Saorstát Éireann: Irish Free State; Official Handbook* (published in 1932) used Ireland only when referring to the entire island, whereas others, including the author of the chapter on "The Constitution," used Ireland and Irish Free State interchangeably.²⁰ In November 1934, the *Irish Independent* published an article with the title "Ireland Disappears from the Map: A Country by Any Other Name.

¹⁴ Brian Farrell, "From First Dáil through Irish Free State," in his *De Valera's Constitution and Ours* (Dublin, 1988), 25.

¹⁵ Alan Ward, *The Irish Constitutional Tradition: Responsible Government and Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 1994), 179.

¹⁶ Report from Michael MacWhite, Geneva, 1 June 1922, in *DIFP*, 1:465–67; memorandum by George Gavan Duffy, "The position of Ireland's Foreign Affairs at date of general election, 1922," Dublin, 21 June 1922, in *DIFP*, 1:468–77; MacWhite to Cosgrave, 4 September 1922, in *DIFP*, 1:500.

¹⁷ Desmond FitzGerald to Sir Eric Drummond, 17 April 1923, in *DIFP*, 2:85.

¹⁸ Extracts from report of the Irish delegation to the Fourth Assembly of the League of Nations, September 1923, in *DIFP*, 2:174–81.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 2:240–41.

²⁰ E. M. Stephens, "The Constitution," in *Saorstát Éireann: Irish Free State Official Handbook* (Dublin, 1932), 72–79. This book was commissioned by the Cumann na nGaedheal government, which lost office following the general election in 1932.

By ‘A Lawyer.’” This article claimed that “the name Ireland seldom if ever appears now in an act or official document in Dublin.” The outburst appears to have been prompted by the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Bill, which was then making its way through the Dáil. The correspondent suggested that the term “Saorstát citizen” be dropped from the bill and replaced with the term “Irish citizen” and that this style should be used in all statutes, “having first defined Ireland legally as that portion of territory for the time being within the jurisdiction of the Oireachtas. There are a dozen ways of doing it known to every lawyer.” This article obviously struck a chord. It was clipped out and inserted into a government file. Michael MacDunphy (assistant secretary to the Executive Council) noted that “quite a number have commented on the article with approval and others independently of it have mentioned the same matter to me at different times.” Another official noted that it was “unfortunately true that the word ‘Ireland’ tends to be used much less and less even as a geographical term. That is an inevitable result of partition.” He disliked the suggested new definition of Ireland, however, because “its adoption would seem like a gesture of despair.”²¹

ÉIRE/IRELAND: THE 1937 CONSTITUTION

The 1937 Constitution changed the name of the state to “Éire, or in the English language, Ireland.” Article 5 reads, “Ireland is a sovereign, independent democratic state.” Yet the phrase “or in the English language, Ireland” was a very late insertion, adopted on the foot of an amendment tabled in Dáil Éireann by an independent T. D. (deputy). A handwritten draft of possible clauses for the new treaty, in Eamon de Valera’s papers, begins (1) “The name of the state shall be Eire”; (2) “Eire is a sovereign, independent democratic state”; (3) “The territory of Eire shall be such as from time to time may come within the jurisdiction of Eire”; (4) “In Eire the ultimate sovereign power shall rest with the people.” A typewritten preliminary draft of Heads of Constitution for Saorstát Éireann, dated 18 May 1936, by John Hearne, legal adviser in the Department of External Affairs, who played a key role in drafting the 1937 Constitution, gives Article 1 as “Saorstát Éireann is a sovereign, independent state,” but Saorstát Éireann was crossed out in pencil and replaced with Eire, and this was repeated throughout Hearne’s draft.²² In a version dated 14 October 1936, Article 1 used the term “The Irish Nation”; this draft referred to “the parliament of Eire” and “the laws of Eire.”²³

The distinction drawn between Ireland and Eire in these drafts might suggest that de Valera intended to change the name of the state from Saorstát Éireann to Eire, reserving Ireland for the entire island. When the constitution was being debated in Dáil Éireann, some opposition deputies suggested that this was so, and de Valera’s typically cryptic replies appear to confirm this: “There is, for instance, the territorial area which is called Eire in Irish, and there is the State. It is easy to distinguish between the two territories if you say Stát na hEireann or Oileán

²¹ Press cutting, “Ireland,” National Archives Ireland (NAI) Department of the Taoiseach files (DT) S10467A Ireland, 12–13 November 1934.

²² Draft article, University College Dublin Archives (UCDA), de Valera Papers, P 150/2370.

²³ Draft article, UCDA, P 150/2373.

na hÉireann" (the state of Ireland or the island of Ireland).²⁴ On another occasion, de Valera claimed that he had used Éire in the English version of the constitution in order to get the Irish term into common usage, "on the same basis as we use 'Taoiseach', instead of prime minister, or 'Ceann Comhairle' instead of speaker."²⁵

During the committee stage of the bill on the constitution, when the preamble that states "We the people of Eire" was being debated, de Valera explained: "The reason I did not propose to use definitely the name 'Ireland' in the name of the State was to bring out the difference between the State and the national territory and the national home of the whole island. It is easy to make the distinction in Irish. In Irish you can take Stát na hÉireann or Oileán na hÉireann or Tír na hÉireann [the country of Ireland]. In the same way, in English, if you want to distinguish between 'State' and 'Island,' you could talk of the Island of Ireland and of the State of Ireland."²⁶ De Valera abandoned these complex distinctions between Éire and Ireland at a late stage in the parliamentary process when he responded to an amendment by Frank MacDermot, an opposition deputy, which proposed to substitute Ireland for Eire throughout the constitution, by agreeing to add "or in the English language Ireland" to Article 4, which gave the name of the state, to substitute Ireland for Eire in Article 5, and elsewhere to replace "Éire" with "The State."²⁷

The Irish government soon became aware of the political problems that might arise when Éire was used in documents or publications in English. In March 1938, three months after the constitution was ratified by referendum, a directive was issued to government departments that "generally we should try to have Ireland and Irish used so far as possible in the English language in preference to Éire and 'of Éire.'" Minister for Finance Seán MacEntee had already circulated a memorandum in which he described the use of Éire as an adjective (Eirean) as a barbarism.²⁸

The growing determination on the part of the Irish government to refer to the state as Ireland rather than Éire was probably a reaction to the Britain's decision to use Eire (without the accent) as the name of the independent Irish state. In December 1937 Britain agreed to accept the new title of Éire or Ireland (in place of the Irish Free State/Saorstát Éireann), although Deirdre McMahon reports that the Foreign Secretary Sir Samuel Hoare had some misgivings about this decision because of possible objections on the part of the government of Northern Ireland.²⁹ In a written answer to a parliamentary question, which asked how the title Eire had come to be adopted in place of the Irish Free State, the name given in the 1922 Constitution, the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, Malcolm MacDonald, cited a statement issued on behalf of His Majesty's Government on 30

²⁴ Printed debates Dáil Éireann (PDDE), vol. 67, 25 May 1937, col. 948.

²⁵ Ibid., 25 May 1937, col. 969.

²⁶ Ibid., 4 June 1937, cols. 1917–18.

²⁷ PDDE, vol. 68, 9 June 1937, cols. 116–17.

²⁸ NAI DT S10467A, 19 January 1938; 2 March 1938; 23 December 1937.

²⁹ McMahon, *Republicans and Imperialists: Anglo-Irish Relations in the 1930s*, 228; Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) Cab 4/389 (2), conclusions of Cabinet meeting held Tuesday, 7 December 1937, at 11 a.m.; report on a meeting between Lord Craigavon, Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, and the British Prime Minister, Home Secretary, and Secretary for the Dominions to discuss the new Irish Constitution. Some of the files in PRONI relating to this issue remain closed.

December 1937, in which they “take note of Articles 2, 3 and 4 of the new Constitution.” The statement noted that the government “therefore regard[s] the use of the name Eire or Ireland in this connection as relating only to that area, which has hitherto been known as the Irish Free State. . . . Since that time the term ‘Eire’ has generally been employed for the sake of convenience and in order to avoid misunderstanding, in documents issued by the Government of the United Kingdom, other than documents issued under Statutes in which the term ‘Irish Free State’ is used.”³⁰ A clause in the Eire (Confirmation of Agreements) Act of 1938, which resolved the dispute between Britain and Ireland over land annuities and provided for the return of three British naval bases (held under the 1921 Treaty) to Ireland, provided that the territory required under earlier legislation be styled and known as the Irish Free State (“shall be styled Eire”).³¹

Although Éire was translated by the British government as Ireland, it could also be employed to signify only a part of Ireland. Also, a number of international postal agreements used the term “Irlande.” In 1952, an official in the postal services department at the General Post Office in London claimed that to translate Irlande as Ireland “would be a literal mistranslation.” “Translation is a matter of ideas not words. In the English language as spoken and understood by the inhabitants of the United Kingdom the word ‘Ireland’ denotes the whole of an island situated to the west of Great Britain. Part of that island is in the United Kingdom and part is outside it. To use the word proper to the whole to describe merely a part is inaccurate and hence to render ‘Irlande’ in the present context by ‘Ireland’ is an abuse of the Queen’s English.”³² Reviewing the matter in 1949, the British Prime Minister’s Office noted that the government was unwilling “to recognise this assumption of the title ‘Ireland’ and decided to describe the South for all purposes as ‘Eire.’” It also claimed that “this decision was accepted by Mr De Valera in an Agreement which he signed ‘on behalf of the Government of Eire.’”³³ In 1949, the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, Sir Basil Brooke, asserted that “a sustained effort had been required in order to ensure a standard usage of ‘Eire’ for all United Kingdom purposes; this term was now in common use, not only by Government Departments but also by the B.B.C. and the Press.”³⁴ In the Westminster debate on the 1938 Eire (Confirmation of Agreements) Bill, most MPs soon adopted the term. The only significant exception was Sir Winston Churchill, a vocal opponent of the 1938 Anglo-Irish Agreement, who told the house that “it is not customary to quote a term in a foreign language, a capital town, a geographical place, when there exists a perfectly well-known English equiv-

³⁰ *Hansard Parliamentary Debates, Reign of George VI, Commons Debates*, Thirty-seventh Parliament, written answers, 4 May 1938, vol. 353, col. 899.

³¹ For details of the 1938 agreement, see J. J. Lee, *Ireland 1912–1985: Politics and Society* (Cambridge, 1989), 214.

³² The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA): Public Record Office (PRO) Dominions Office (DO) 35/3949, 17 December 1952.

³³ TNA: PRO Prime Minister’s Office, PREM 8/1464 Ireland, report of working party of officials, GEN 262/13, 1 January 1949.

³⁴ TNA: PRO, PREM 8/1464 Ireland; GEN 262 (M), minutes of a meeting held at 10 Downing St., 18 January 1949.

alent." Throughout the debate, Churchill referred to "the Government of the Irish Republic" and to "Southern Ireland."³⁵

When Ireland launched a major antipartition campaign in the late 1940s, the titles used by the British and Irish governments to refer to each other assumed a greater political significance, because a key component of this campaign was to use international organizations to highlight "Ireland's claim to complete freedom of her entire territory."³⁶ In 1947 Ireland's Department of External Affairs drafted a letter to the heads of all government departments, which was designed "to prevent the use—not only at International Conferences, but in ordinary Departmental files and correspondence here at home—of expressions which are not in accordance with our external position and may prove embarrassing to us on policy grounds." These included the use of the term "Dominion—to describe this country; the use of Eire for Ireland, the use of the term British Isles to describe Ireland and Great Britain, of Northern Ireland to describe the six north-eastern counties, and of Government of the United Kingdom where the British Government is meant." The expression "British Isles" was "a complete misnomer and its use should be thoroughly discouraged"; it should be replaced "where necessary by Ireland and Great Britain." It was "part of our general policy and attitude about Partition to use the term 'the Six Counties' and 'Great Britain' in preference to the terms Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom. The use of the term Dominion to describe this country has no justification whatever, historically or otherwise. It should never be used."³⁷

Britain appears to have gone to considerable lengths to prevent international organizations from using the name Ireland to denote the twenty-six-county state, often in response to pressure from the government of Northern Ireland. In 1946 Ireland applied for membership to the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), and the application was debated and granted under that name.³⁸ However, when the record of proceedings of the 1946 plenary session was published, it referred throughout to Eire. A file of the British Dominions Office notes, rather disingenuously, that "it is understood that, probably owing to the objections privately voiced by the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland representatives, the Conference secretariat decided to draft the record in that form."³⁹ This is confirmed by Northern Ireland Cabinet minutes, which record that the Northern Ireland minister for agriculture pressed for the conference record to include a declaration that would make it clear that the term "Ireland" denoted the area formerly known as the Irish Free State, at which point the Irish representatives pressed for the addition of a further declaration quoting the 1937 Constitution. Sir Basil Brooke

³⁵ *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, 5 May 1938, vol. 353, cols. 1098, 1101.

³⁶ This quotation comes from a speech by William Norton, Minister for Industry and Commerce, to the Council of Europe on 16 August 1949, as cited by David McCullough, *A Makeshift Majority: The First Inter-Party Government, 1948–1951* (Dublin, 1998), 130. On the postwar antipartition campaign, see *ibid.*, 128–31; and Donald H. Akenson, *Conor: A Biography of Conor Cruise O'Brien* (Montreal, 1994), 117–34.

³⁷ NAI DT S10467A, draft of semiofficial letter that the Department of External Affairs thought of writing to heads of other government departments, 5 June 1947.

³⁸ NAI DT S13875A, application to the UN Food and Agricultural Organization.

³⁹ TNA: PRO DO 35/3949, nomenclature of "Eire" in conferences and agreements. Record of meeting in the Dominions Office, 24 September 1946.

(Northern Ireland's prime minister) noted that the Home Office had informed him that this was only one in a series of cases where the "Government of Eire" was making a similar claim; he had asked the attorney general to examine the question.⁴⁰

Northern Ireland's ministers were obviously keeping a close eye on this issue, because in September 1946 the Northern Ireland Minister for Labour and National Insurance, W. B. Maginess, protested to the British Ministry of Labour and National Service that the International Labor Organization (ILO) had used the name "Ireland"; he wanted this changed to Eire. However, the Whitehall Ministry reported that the ILO had taken the line that they must accept "Eire's view as to the English name."⁴¹ Sir Guildhaume Myrddin Evans dissented: "I am not at all happy regarding this, largely because quite frankly my sympathies are entirely with Northern Ireland. It seems to me that too much weight is given to law and constitution and not sufficient weight to fact. The same fact is that Ireland in English means a great deal more than Eire."

In his opinion, it would have been better if Britain had insisted on Eire being used as the name of the state in 1937.⁴² Although many senior British civil servants undoubtedly sympathized with Northern Ireland, not least because Northern Ireland contributed to Britain's defense during World War II, whereas Ireland remained neutral, they were also conscious that these squabbles over titles at international gatherings were probably counterproductive. "It would be unfortunate, if on every occasion where the term 'Ireland' was used for 'Eire' in international discussions, United Kingdom and Eire representatives had to go to the length of formally recording their respective points of view. Quite apart from such international airing of what is a more or less domestic dispute it could give the Eire authorities constant opportunities for public propaganda on the Partition question."⁴³ In February 1947, Sir Eric Machtig of the Dominions Office reported that a general agreement had been reached "that we should not contest Eire's use of the term Ireland in the conferences or records of international bodies."⁴⁴ To resolve confusion, UK delegates should insist on using the full title "United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland" in any formal agreement. The Home Office issued a circular to this effect some months later.

With regard to bilateral agreements between Britain and Ireland, the circular indicated that there should be two separate documents: the document to be published or promulgated by the United Kingdom would refer to "Eire"; the document published in Dublin would refer to "Ireland."⁴⁵ Britain had obtained the "oral agreement of the Eire authorities" to this arrangement.⁴⁶ The practice of two agreements, using different titles, continued until 1998.

⁴⁰ PRONI, Cab 4/684, Cabinet Conclusions, 3 October 1946, item 10.

⁴¹ TNA: PRO DO 35/3949, 21 January 1947.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, minutes of a meeting, 21 January 1947. This meeting was attended by representatives of the Foreign Office, the Dominions Office, and the Home Office, including the Home Office Northern Ireland liaison officer.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 1 February 1947.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, issued by the Home Office to all government departments, March 1947.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 21 January 1947.

THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND ACT

In 1949 Ireland became a republic and left the Commonwealth. The decision to declare a republic, which was made by a government consisting of all political parties except Fianna Fáil, was an attempt to end Ireland's ambiguous constitutional status and to outflank Eamon de Valera. After the enactment of the 1936 External Relations Act and the 1937 Constitution, Ireland's only remaining link with the crown had been the accreditation of diplomats. The president of Ireland was the head of state. When opposition deputies asked de Valera whether Ireland was a republic—a favorite pastime in the mid-1940s—he tended to resort to dictionary definitions showing that Ireland had all the attributes of a republic. But he also retained a residual link to the crown, because he believed that it might somehow ease the transition to a united Ireland. Although it was no longer impossible by 1949 to be a republic and a member of the Commonwealth—India had blazed this trail—Ireland had not participated in Commonwealth affairs for many years. In July 1948, several months before the Republic of Ireland Bill was introduced, the Minister for External Affairs, Seán MacBride, told the Dáil that Ireland was “certainly not a member of the British Commonwealth of Nations.” The Taoiseach John A. Costello explained that Ireland's exit from the Commonwealth had been “a gradual development.”⁴⁷

The 1948 Republic of Ireland Act led to further confusion over the name of the state. Section 2 declared “that the description of the State shall be the Republic of Ireland.” Introducing the bill in Dáil Éireann, Costello emphasized that it did not purport to amend the constitution: “There is the name of the State and there is the description of the State. The name of the State is Ireland and the description of the State is the Republic of Ireland. That is the description of its constitutional and international status.” He went on to refer to the confusion that had been caused by the use of the term “Éire” in Article 4: “By a misuse by malicious people of that word, ‘Éire’, they have identified it with the Twenty-Six Counties and not with the State that was set up under this Constitution of 1937.”⁴⁸

In 1959, Aindreas Ó Caoimh, attorney general in de Valera's last cabinet, indicated that the term “Republic of Ireland” had been a feature of the bill from an early stage, although some officials had been of the opinion that it might present constitutional difficulties. A note by the parliamentary draftsman, before the bill came before the Dáil, had stated that “the use of the term Republic of Ireland is permissive; if mandatory it would be an attempt to amend Article 4 of the Constitution.” Nevertheless, Ó Caoimh concluded that “what it (the Act) really attempted to do was not to attach a description to the State, but to alter the name of the State,” and he went on to note that the act was “unconstitutional in so far as under the guise of declaring it a description . . . it attempted to change the name of the State from Ireland to the Republic of Ireland.”⁴⁹

Ó Caoimh's assessment is supported by evidence that at least some members

⁴⁷ For a detailed account of these matters, see Ian McCabe, *A Diplomatic History of Ireland, 1948–1949* (Dublin, 1991). Quotations from MacBride and Costello are on 34.

⁴⁸ PDDE, 24 November 1948, vol. 113, cols. 394–98.

⁴⁹ UCDA, P 150/2970, 2 June 1959. This is a review of the Republic of Ireland Act in June 1959, written only fifteen days before de Valera was elected president and left active politics.

of the Inter-Party government of 1948–51 (a coalition of all parties represented in Dáil Éireann except Fianna Fáil) preferred the designation Republic of Ireland to Ireland/Éire. Many opposition deputies had been extremely skeptical about the change in name during the debate on the 1937 Constitution. The clarification over the status of the state, which Costello and other members of his government sought to achieve by declaring a republic, would also favor using the Republic of Ireland as the name of the state. Indeed, Republic of Ireland/Poblacht na hÉireann could be seen as the logical successor to the Irish Free State/Saorstát Éireann, the state born under the 1922 Constitution and Costello's political predecessors.

When a series of official agreements between Ireland and other countries, signed after 18 April 1949, was examined in March 1950, it turned out that all except one gave “the Government of the Republic of Ireland” on the title page. It also emerged that the Minister for External Affairs, Seán MacBride, had altered the request page on all Irish passports from “the Minister for External Affairs of Ireland” to “the Minister for External Affairs of the Republic of Ireland.”⁵⁰ During the term in office of the first Inter-Party government all letters of credence issued to foreign diplomats being accredited to Ireland were addressed to the President of the Republic of Ireland, and all except one (Spain) gave the name of the state as the Republic of Ireland.⁵¹

A directive issued to the staff of the Department of External Affairs on 12 September 1949 stated that “the policy of the Department is primarily to ensure that the term Irish Republic or Republic of Ireland shall not become synonymous with the 26-county area. For this reason the terms Ireland, Irish Republic and Republic of Ireland should be used alternatively, giving at all times preference to the term Ireland. At international conferences or where the country is being referred to (as distinct from the Government) the term Ireland should always be used.” However, it is not clear whether this was a statement of government policy. There is no record of any formal decision to this effect. Maurice Moynihan, secretary of the Department of the Taoiseach, informed the Department of External Affairs that the expression “Irish Republic” has no constitutional or statutory basis whatever, adding that “since evidence of the British desire to bring this expression into use came first to our notice, this Department has held quite definitely to the view that, far from being encouraged to use the expression themselves, Irish officials should oppose its use in any circumstances by others.”⁵² But a handwritten note records that when Moynihan raised the matter with the Taoiseach, John A. Costello, Moynihan had “received the impression that he [Costello] would be somewhat reluctant to pursue the matter with the Minister for External Affairs.”⁵³

When Fianna Fáil returned to office in 1951, they insisted on reestablishing Ireland as the only officially acceptable name for the state, arguing that Ireland was the title specified in the constitution. The fact that the Republic of Ireland had been declared by a government consisting of other political parties undoubtedly led Fianna Fáil to distance itself from this title. Furthermore, Britain's decision to use “Republic of Ireland” rather than “Ireland” probably strengthened their

⁵⁰ NAI DT S9550, 6 July 1951, Department of External Affairs to N. Ó Nualláin.

⁵¹ NAI DT S13834B, Australian representation in Ireland, 5 November 1953.

⁵² NAI DT10467B, 23 September 1949.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 14 December 1949.

resolve, as had happened in the late 1930s when Britain began to use the title Eire. When the ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany arrived in July 1951 with letters of credence to the Republic of Ireland, he was asked to have new ones issued accrediting him to Ireland, and this was duly done.⁵⁴

In 1953 the Government Information Bureau issued a directive, which began by noting that Article 4 of the 1937 Constitution gave the name as "Éire" or, in the English language, "Ireland"; whenever the name of the state was mentioned in an English language document, Ireland should be used. If it was necessary to make it clear that the reference was to the area of the twenty-six counties, for example, in statistical returns, then either "Ireland (exclusive of the Six Counties)" or "Ireland," with the word followed by an explanatory asterisk or footnote should be used. "Care should be taken," the directive stated, "to avoid the use of the expression Republic of Ireland or Irish Republic in such a context or in such a manner as might suggest that it is a geographical term applicable to the area of the Twenty-Six counties." Although the expression "Northern Ireland" was unavoidable in certain legal contexts, "the Six Counties should be used as far as possible instead"; the expression "Southern Ireland," frequently used in Britain, had no constitutional or statutory sanction in Irish law.⁵⁵ This directive remained in use for many years; a copy was sent to Bord Fáilte, the Irish tourist board, in 1959, with a reminder not to use the expression "the Republic of Ireland" on their promotional literature.⁵⁶ In advance of an international meeting in 1963 to revise geography textbooks, held under the auspices of the Council of Europe, the Irish Department of Education issued guidelines to delegates on politically correct geographic terminology: "British Isles" and "United Kingdom" were deemed objectionable; delegates should insist on "Ireland" and "Great Britain"; "Republic of Ireland" should be avoided. However, delegates were no longer to insist on "the Six Counties" in place of "Northern Ireland." Taoiseach Seán Lemass, who succeeded de Valera, wanted to improve relations with Northern Ireland and so, as a gesture, insisted that all state agencies refer to Northern Ireland, the official title of that state.⁵⁷

Official directives suggest that "Republic of Ireland" was being used in some quarters to describe the twenty-six-county state. For example, in 1955 Dennis McCarthy, who described himself as a citizen of the Irish Republic, wrote to the Taoiseach (John A. Costello) from Worksop in the English Midlands, protesting a travel questionnaire issued to him in Dun Laoghaire by the Central Statistics Office that used the phrase "Ireland* (*26 counties)." McCarthy claimed that "this to my mind can only be interpreted as a definite statement that Ireland consists of 26 Counties." He believed that "such a document can do much more damage than more blatant anti-national propaganda" and that it undermined the arguments against partition that he and other Irish emigrants made to English acquaintances.⁵⁸ Supporters of Sinn Féin generally referred to the "twenty-six

⁵⁴ NAI DT S13834B.

⁵⁵ NAI DT S10467C, directive issued by the Government Information Bureau, 17 June 1953.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 8 August 1959.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, note for Ministers, 2 October 1963; Horgan, *Seán Lemass: The Enigmatic Patriot*, 260–62.

⁵⁸ NAI DT S10467C.

county state,” or the “Free State,” reserving both “Ireland” and “Republic of Ireland” for an as-yet unrealized thirty-two-county state.⁵⁹

IRELAND/REPUBLIC OF IRELAND/IRISH REPUBLIC: BRITAIN, NORTHERN IRELAND, THE COMMONWEALTH, AND THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND ACT

Sinn Féin’s view that “Ireland” and “Republic of Ireland” denoted an all-Ireland state was shared, though from a radically different perspective, by the government of Northern Ireland. Britain hoped that “Republic of Ireland” would supplant “Éire/Ireland” as the official name of the twenty-six-county state and provide an end to the embarrassing impasse over Éire/Ireland, but their efforts to drop Eire as the officially agreed designation in the United Kingdom aroused strong opposition from the government of Northern Ireland, who regarded the title “Republic of Ireland” as yet another stratagem in the antipartition campaign.

A working party of senior civil servants appointed by the UK cabinet in November 1948 to consider what action should be taken as a result of Ireland’s decision to declare a republic and leave the Commonwealth concluded that Britain had failed to achieve the international use of Eire as the title for the twenty-six counties. Britain would have to accept that the twenty-six counties would in the future be known as the Republic of Ireland. They suggested that there would be “some debating advantage from the point of view of argument on Partition, in describing the south as ‘the Republic of Ireland’ or ‘the Irish Republic’ reserving ‘Ireland’ as a geographical description of the island as a whole; and dropping the term Eire.”⁶⁰ British Prime Minister Clement Attlee accepted this recommendation, but Sir Basil Brooke, Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, objected to the title “Republic of Ireland,” because he claimed, it “was intended to repeat Eire’s claim to jurisdiction over the whole island.” If that title was recognized by the Westminster Parliament, the North would regard this as an implication that partition was only temporary. If the use of Eire was not possible, Northern Ireland would prefer the title “Irish Republic.”⁶¹ Attlee informed Sir Basil Brooke that “nothing could prevent the south from becoming known as ‘the Republic of Ireland’ for all international purposes; and he was anxious to avoid the indignities arising (e.g. in connection with joint agreements, etc.) from a position in which representatives of the United Kingdom Government were not at liberty to call the South by the name which it described itself.”⁶² However, he agreed to consider Sir Basil Brooke’s suggestion that the forthcoming bill should include one reference to the Republic of Ireland but otherwise use the term “the Irish Republic.”⁶³ A

⁵⁹ Mary E. Daly, “Easter 1966: A Tale of Multiple Commemorations,” in *’16 in ’66: The Golden Jubilee of the Easter Rising*, ed. Mary E. Daly and Margaret O’Callaghan (London, 2007), forthcoming.

⁶⁰ TNA: PRO PREM 8/1464 Ireland, report of working party of officials, 1 January 1949, pars. 17–19.

⁶¹ TNA: PRO PREM 8/1464, Norman Brook to prime minister, 13 January 1949.

⁶² TNA: PRO PREM 8/1464 GEN 262 Cabinet, minutes of a meeting held at 10 Downing St., 18 January 1949.

⁶³ The Ireland Act covered a wide range of issues consequent on the Republic of Ireland Act. For details, see McCabe, *A Diplomatic History of Ireland, 1948–49*, 117–33; TNA: PRO PREM 8/1464 Ireland, GEN 262 Cabinet, 1946–51.

committee chaired by the Cabinet Secretary Sir Norman Brook, which examined this proposal, concluded that there were only two options: to leave the bill substantially unchanged—and refer throughout to the Republic of Ireland—or to grant Sir Basil Brooke's request in full, "and the grounds on which that choice must be made seem to us to be wholly political," they noted, though "Sir Basil Brooke frankly admitted that his request was put forward on 'political and psychological grounds.'"⁶⁴ Attlee brought this debate to a close on 4 March 1949 when he recommended that the bill "should formally recognise the title 'Republic of Ireland' as a description of the twenty-six counties" and the title that the "Eire government" have themselves chosen. As a concession to the views of the Northern Ireland government, an undertaking should be given to also employ the description "the Irish Republic" in official usage and amendments to the bill.⁶⁵

When the Ireland Act had passed through parliament, Attlee issued a document setting out the protocol for future relations with a country, which though no longer a member of the Commonwealth, was not to be treated as a foreign state, "in view of the bonds of history and blood between the Commonwealth countries and the people of Southern Ireland." On the question of title, it read: "The Ireland Bill formally recognises the title 'Republic of Ireland.'" But it went on to suggest that the use of this formal title should be reserved for occasions such as joint declarations between the two governments, "where it would be embarrassing to take any other course." However, as the frequent use of Republic of Ireland would give offense to Northern Ireland, it was important that government departments should, wherever possible, use "Irish Republic." "Ireland" and "Irish" should only be used when the context referred to the entire island. United Kingdom delegates at international conferences were instructed "specially to avoid referring to 'Ireland'" and to make it clear that they represented His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. "The use of the term 'Eire' should be discontinued. As a geographical description of the South, 'southern Ireland' may be used as an alternative to 'the Irish Republic.'"⁶⁶ Some officials regarded these proposals as too moderate. The Home Office pressed "that the use of the term 'Irish' as well as 'Ireland' should be banned."⁶⁷ Another official wanted to insist on Ireland being styled Eire on all international insurance documents (despite Attlee's memo of May 1949), but a colleague pointed out that "we cannot I am afraid take exception to the Irish Republican authorities' argument that the name of the country should, following general practice, appear only in the language in which the card is printed—English."⁶⁸

By 1950, the UK Minister in Dublin, Sir Gilbert Laithwaite, was advising colleagues in Britain "to be a little less uncompromising" in their use of Irish Republic

⁶⁴ TNA: PRO PREM 8/1464, Ireland: Title of Eire, report of committee signed by Norman Brook, 25 January 1949.

⁶⁵ TNA: PRO PREM 8/1464, Ireland Bill, memorandum by the Prime Minister, C. P. (49) 47, 4 March 1949.

⁶⁶ TNA: PRO PREM 8/1464, pt. 3, Cabinet, the Irish Republic memorandum by the Prime Minister, C. P. (49) 111, May 1949.

⁶⁷ TNA: PRO DO 35/3977, political and constitutional relations, Republic of Ireland, status and nomenclature, 5 April 1949.

⁶⁸ TNA: PRO DO 35/3949, use of term Irish Republic in records of international bodies, 1 October 1952.

in place of Republic of Ireland, because he believed that “if we try to use it exclusively we shall produce a comeback and we shall not be on good ground.” It was his practice to use “Republic of Ireland” predominantly.⁶⁹

The underlying background to these squabbles was partition. In 1951 the Dominions Office guidelines added a section headed “Irish Republican propaganda against the partition of Ireland,” which stated that “if an Irish Republican spokesman in the conference proceedings puts forward pretensions to speak in any way for Northern Ireland, the United Kingdom delegation should make some suitable statement to recall that Northern Ireland is an integral part of the United Kingdom, e.g. by reference to the full title of the United Kingdom delegation.”⁷⁰ Yet pragmatism coexisted with this grandstanding, even with respect to joint agreements between the Dublin and Belfast governments.⁷¹ With regard to joint agreements between Britain and Ireland, Valentine Iremonger, of the Irish Department of External Affairs, informed the Dominions Office in March 1951 that it remained the Irish policy that it should be left to each individual state to describe itself in the manner that it considered correct.⁷²

This compromise also applied to diplomatic credentials, though the formality associated with these documents added to the complexity. When Ireland was a member of the Commonwealth, the Irish Minister in London had the title of High Commissioner; the senior UK diplomat in Dublin was described as United Kingdom Representative in Dublin; the Canadian Minister in Dublin carried the title of High Commissioner. Once Ireland had left the Commonwealth, the question of exchanging ambassadors came under consideration. Ambassadors had precedence over High Commissioners, so the UK representative in Dublin would rank below the Indian ambassador.⁷³

Ambassadors were required to present letters of credence, signed by their head of state, giving the title of the head of state to which they were being accredited and the name of the state. When Dublin and London exchanged ambassadors in 1950, they followed the precedent of bilateral agreements between the two governments: each country used the wording that they “believed correct.”⁷⁴ Thus the letters of credence presented by the Irish ambassador Frederick Boland to the court of King George VI were headed “Seán T Ó Ceallaigh, President of Ireland to His Majesty King George VI.” The country was described as Great Britain and Boland’s country as Ireland. The corresponding documents appointing Sir Gilbert Laithwaite as British ambassador began “George the Sixth, by the Grace of God, of Great Britain, Ireland and the British Dominions beyond the Seas King, De-

⁶⁹ TNA: PRO DO 35/3977, 18 January 1950.

⁷⁰ TNA: PRO DO 35/3802, correct mode of reference to the Irish Republic at international conferences.

⁷¹ For example, in the Great Northern Railway Act 1953 (passed by Dáil Éireann)—an act relating to a railway company that operated in both jurisdictions—the preamble explained that “‘the Minister’ means the Minister for Industry and Commerce” and “‘the Minister of Commerce’ means the Minister of Commerce for Northern Ireland” (Acts of the Oireachtas, 1953/17; NAI DT S 10467C).

⁷² TNA: PRO DO 35/3897, 7 March 1951.

⁷³ TNA: PRO DO 35/1980 JG L, extract from note of a conversation with the Minister for External Affairs, 30 November 1949.

⁷⁴ TNA: PRO PREM 11/4618, form of credentials of Australian ambassador to Irish Republic, Letters of credence of Commonwealth ambassadors in Dublin, memorandum prepared for Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO), July 1959.

fender of the Faith . . . to the President of the Republic of Ireland." In this case, the respective countries were described as the "United Kingdom" and "the Republic of Ireland." A file in the Department of the Taoiseach noted that the Irish authorities had "agreed exceptionally" to this form of address.⁷⁵

This exchange of diplomats took place under the first Inter-Party government, when, as we have seen, there was some ambiguity over the use of Republic of Ireland rather than Ireland. When Fianna Fáil returned to office in June 1951, the appointment of a new British ambassador was imminent, and de Valera instructed Frederick Boland to ask the Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO) whether the British government could consider describing the country as "Ireland" instead of "the Republic of Ireland" in his letter of credence. If Britain agreed to this, de Valera might be prepared not to use the title President of Ireland in the letters of credence issued to the Irish Ambassador to the United Kingdom but to simply refer to the president by name, just as the king was referred to by his name without the full constitutional title. According to the CRO minutes, Boland broached the matter with some diffidence; he informed them that "Mr. de Valera greatly disliked the title President of the Republic of Ireland, even more in fact that he disliked the description of the country itself as the Republic of Ireland." The CRO informed Boland that they could see no way of meeting de Valera's wishes "without appearing to admit by implication the claim, embodied in Article 2 of the Constitution of the Irish Republic [*sic*]." They suggested that both parties revert to the pre-1949 compromise where Whitehall used Eire and Dublin used Ireland, but Boland said "that the use of the word Eire had never been at all popular with Mr. de Valera or with his countrymen generally," to which an official in the CRO responded, "I thought that in this country we had developed almost an affection for the term." Boland broached the matter again some days later, which would appear to indicate that it loomed large in de Valera's mind. On this occasion the CRO expressed the hope that Dublin would agree to continue the existing compromise arrangement.⁷⁶ This is what happened: Sir Walter Hankinson's letter of credence from Queen Elizabeth was addressed to President Seán T. O'Ceallaigh, without specifying his title; the text referred to the Republic of Ireland; the Queen's title was given in full, including "United Kingdom and Northern Ireland."⁷⁷

This compromise reflected a pragmatic realization that Dublin and London needed to do business with one another. But the Irish government was unwilling to extend these compromises to include the Commonwealth. In April 1950 the Canadian governor-general accepted a letter of credence from the president of Ireland simply addressed to "His Majesty, King George the Sixth," without any geographical titles. The Irish ambassador to Australia presented his letters of credence to the governor-general in Canberra on 10 November 1950, using the same formula. When the time came for Canada to appoint an ambassador to Ireland, the Canadian authorities believed that the Irish government might object to re-

⁷⁵ NAI DT S10467C, 29 October 1953.

⁷⁶ TNA: PRO PREM 8/1464, pt. 4, record of conversation between Sir Pericavle Liesching and Mr. Boland, 22 June 1950.

⁷⁷ TNA: PRO PREM 11/4618, letters of credence of Commonwealth ambassadors in Dublin, memorandum prepared in the CRO, July 1959, annex A.

ceiving letters of credence giving the full royal title, which included “King of Ireland.”⁷⁸ Therefore, they came up with two alternative titles that might be acceptable to Ireland: King of Canada or His Majesty King George VI, without any geographical designation.⁷⁹ All letters of credence presented by Commonwealth ambassadors had to be signed by the monarch, and Sir Alan Lascalles, private secretary to King George VI, rejected both titles; an official in the Dominion’s Office reported that the Canadian High Commissioner, L. Dana Wilgress, was “considerably shaken” by his conversation with Lascalles.⁸⁰ Canada duly came into line with the wishes of Buckingham Palace and the Dominion Office. The Canadian ambassador presented identical letters of credence to those presented by the British ambassador.⁸¹ Australia does not appear to have considered upgrading its representation in Ireland to ambassador until 1953, and by then the Fianna Fáil government was insistent that all credentials (with the possible exception of the British ambassador) should be addressed to the President of Ireland. Australia would only agree to letters giving accreditation to the Republic of Ireland or Dublin.⁸² This position was adopted on the advice of the British government, who emphasized that any reference to “Ireland” or the “President of Ireland” would be embarrassing to the British government and to Her Majesty.⁸³ Consequently, although an Australian ambassador to Ireland was named, he never took up the position; in 1954 the Irish ambassador to Australia returned home on extended leave, and despite numerous attempts to reach a compromise, diplomatic representation between Ireland and Australia was left to *chargés d’affaires* for more than a decade.⁸⁴ Britain tried to persuade Canada to adopt a similar position without success. The only compromise to British wishes that Canada was prepared to make was to give the president’s title in Irish. So in 1955 the incoming Canadian ambassador presented letters of credence addressed to “His Excellency Sean T. O’Ceallaigh Uachtaran na h’Eireann [President of Ireland].”⁸⁵

In February 1964, somewhat to the surprise of the Australian government, the Irish government indicated that it wished to appoint an ambassador to Canberra. This decision was prompted by a wish to increase trade with Australia and to improve Ireland’s image in that country. The fact that Ireland and Australia had established a close working relationship at the United Nations was also a consideration. The timing of the Irish initiative may have been prompted by a circular, issued to all diplomatic missions by the Australian authorities in October 1963, informing them that the correct style and title for the queen was that given in the 1953 (Australian) Royal Style and Titles Act. One of the issues that blocked the exchange of ambassadors had been Australia’s insistence that the letters carried by the Irish ambassador should give the royal title as “Queen Elizabeth the Second of the United Kingdom, Greater Britain and Northern Ireland, Australia” despite

⁷⁸ TNA: PRO DO 35/3980, 15 June 1950.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, conversation between Secretary of State for Commonwealth relations and his Excellency Mr. L. Dana Wilgress, 22 June 1950.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, P. L. (Sir Percivale Liesching) to secretary of state, 22 June 1950.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, minutes by Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations to the Lord Chancellor.

⁸² NAI DT S10467C; *Evening Herald*, 18 August 1953.

⁸³ TNA: PRO PREM 11/4618, 14 November 1957.

⁸⁴ NAI DT S13834 C, memorandum, January 1958.

⁸⁵ TNA: PRO PREM 11/4618, letters of credence, July 1959.

the fact that the Royal Style and Titles Act did not mention Northern Ireland.⁸⁶ In November 1964, shortly after Eoin MacWhite had presented his credentials as Irish ambassador to Australia, a circular was issued to all Australian government departments instructing them to use the word "Ireland" rather than "the Irish Republic." In 1965 Hugh Stevenson Robertson became the first Australian ambassador to Ireland.⁸⁷

By the mid 1960s, Britain was the only country not to refer to the state as Ireland. In his memoirs, Sir John Peck, British ambassador to Ireland 1970–74, who presented letters of credence addressed to President de Valera, noted that "even the title was significant, for if we called him the President of Ireland we recognized the Irish claim to the Six Counties whereas if we called him the President of the Irish Republic it was unacceptable to him as he would thereby be admitting our claim to the Six Counties. 'President de Valera' left the issue wide open."⁸⁸ British command papers described the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement—commonly known as the Hillsborough Agreement—as an "agreement between the government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the government of the Republic of Ireland,"⁸⁹ whereas Irish official papers described it as an "agreement between the government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the government of Ireland." This position did not change until the signing of the 1998 Belfast Agreement, which included a commitment by the Irish government to amend the constitution by deleting Articles 2 and 3, which they would replace with clauses affirming the entitlement of everyone on the island of Ireland to be part of the Irish nation. This recognized that a united Ireland would only be achieved by majority consent in both jurisdictions.⁹⁰ Up to and including the year 1999, the Diplomatic List issued by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office referred to the Republic of Ireland. Since 2000 it has referred to Ireland, and the credentials presented by the British ambassador, Stewart Eldon, in 2003, were addressed to the President of Ireland. The Irish Diplomatic List continued to refer to Great Britain until 2001; since then it has referred to the United Kingdom. However, the credentials presented by the Irish ambassador, Daithí Ó Ceallaigh, in June 2001 follow the practice adopted in the 1950s of referring to "Your Majesty" and "your country" rather than "Great Britain" or "United Kingdom."⁹¹ The use of Ireland to refer to the state is not universal. The national soccer team competes in international events as the "Republic of Ireland," and Sinn Féin refers to the "26 County State" and the "Six County State," reserving "Ireland" for the entire island. In the United Kingdom at least, "Ireland" could only become Ireland if it abandoned any sense

⁸⁶ NAI DFA Secretary's Office, P257 VIII (1), appointment of Australian ambassador, 1959–64; memorandum for the government, 5 February 1964. The schedule to the Royal Style and Titles Act 1953 reads, "Queen Elizabeth the Second, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom, Australia and Her other Realms and Territories, Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith."

⁸⁷ NAI DFA Secretary's Office, P257 VIII (2), 5 January 1965.

⁸⁸ John Peck, *Dublin from Downing Street* (Dublin, 1978), 34.

⁸⁹ Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the Republic of Ireland, Cmnd. 9690 (1985), 15 November 1985.

⁹⁰ Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of Ireland: Belfast, HMSO 1998, cm. 4292., annex B, Irish government draft legislation to amend the constitution, 10 April 1998.

⁹¹ Miriam Tiernan, archivist, Department of Foreign Affairs, letter to author, October 2005.

of claim to the six north-eastern counties. Yet Britain's recognition of "Ireland," far from being "a gesture of despair," as officials feared in 1934, now reflects a new confidence, a new level of involvement in the affairs of the entire island, and a more equal relationship with the United Kingdom.