

NUI Galway Public Lecture: “Making Peace in Secret”

Date TBC: NUI Galway’s Centre for Irish Studies will host a public lecture to be delivered by Dr Niall Ó Dochartaigh entitled: ‘ Making Peace in Secret: Evidence from the Brendan Duddy Papers at NUI Galway’, which focuses on the role Brendan Duddy played as a secret key intermediary between the British Government and the IRA during the height of the conflict in Northern Ireland. The lecture will take place on Wednesday, 10 November, at 8.00 pm in the Charles McMunn Lecture Theatre at the University and is free of charge.

This public lecture draws on the personal papers of Brendan Duddy, which were deposited at NUI Galway in 2009 as a result of a relationship between Dr Niall Ó Dochartaigh, Lecturer in Political Science and Sociology at NUI Galway, and Brendan Duddy himself. They include notes, documents and previously unseen diaries of negotiation. The papers are a large personal archive of great historical significance to all on the island of Ireland and beyond..

For twenty years a the secret channel of communication linked the British Government to the Army Council of the IRA. It was through this channel that both parties held intensive peace talks in the mid 1970s and attempted to reach a negotiated settlement of the hunger strike of 1981. It was though the same channel that they returned to dialogue again in the early 1990s in the approach to the IRA ceasefire of 1994 and the Good Friday Agreement. At the heart of this dialogue and negotiation was Brendan Duddy. Codenamed 'Contact', his identity was a closely guarded secret for three decades.

This channel provided a direct link between the Army Council of the Provisional IRA and successive British Prime Ministers from Harold Wilson through Margaret Thatcher to John Major and was so closely guarded that it was kept secret from other members of the British cabinet. Dr Ó Dochartaigh stresses the importance of the Duddy Papers in this period as ‘the negotiating relationship and the struggles for advantage and information that took place at this intersection are vital to understanding the process by which peace was finally made in Ireland.’ The Brendan Duddy Papers therefore provide the perspective of the individual who operated secretly at that intersection during some of the most crucial stages of the conflict in Northern Ireland.. [01]

ENDS

For further information contact: Dr Niall Ó Dochartaigh, School of Political Science and Sociology, 091 493594 or email niall.odochartaigh@nuigalway.ie.