

## UPF Carlingford, Ireland's program: New western frontier of European and the UK

Colm Ó Cionnaith  
September 9, 2018



Carlingford, Ireland -- The border region of Ireland, which soon could become a new western frontier between the European Union and the United Kingdom, played host to an important new initiative from UPF-Ireland: the Peace Road Forum.

Although UPF-Ireland has held two Peace Road events previously, this year it added an inaugural "forum" to boost its profile and give a "kick start" to future development and expansion.

The September 9, 2018, program started in the morning with a Peace Road walk around the famous site of the Battle of the Boyne, in which forces of the deposed King James II of England and those of the Dutch Prince William of Orange fought in 1690. Heaven smiled on the "peace walkers" as the sun shone on the beautiful Oldbridge Estate in County Meath, the site of the battle. The restored stately home hosts a historical center in which visitors are reminded of the origins of much of the Irish "troubles."

The second part of the day's events, the Peace Road Forum, kicked off after lunch in the Four Seasons Hotel in Carlingford, County Louth, near the border with Northern Ireland. Two sessions of three speakers each gave their perspectives on Brexit and what effect it is likely to have on the United Kingdom, Ireland and Europe. Acting as moderator, Colm Ó'Cionnaith, the secretary general of UPF-Ireland, introduced the speakers.

Mark Brann, a British solicitor for almost 40 years and former UPF-Europe vice president, stated his opinion that the United Kingdom was acting in its short-term, selfish interests. He said it saddened him that the U.K. was departing from its proud history of being an outward-looking and important world player. He said he feared the U.K.'s significance would diminish as it withdrew from the European Union to concern itself with more domestic affairs.

Linda Ervine, an Irish-language officer of the Methodist Mission in Belfast, Northern Ireland, reminded the audience of the support given by the European Union for the Peace Process in Northern Ireland. She bemoaned the undertones of racism that she said were present in the run-up to the Brexit vote.

Ms. Ervine outlined the contribution of the immigrant community to Northern Ireland and the wealth of diversity they have brought. Immigrants' contributions to the health services, the economy and society in general needed to be valued and appreciated, she said.

Ms. Ervine said she was concerned that Brexit would threaten the Irish peace of the last 25 years, and predicted that it certainly would not be of any help. Although Brexit was not the will of the people of Northern Ireland, she said, they were bound by the UK-wide vote nevertheless.

Pierrot Ngadi, who has been working in Ireland as a mental health professional for nearly two decades, spoke about his passion for the work of Roger Casement, the Irish patriot and former British establishment figure, hanged for treason, who exposed the abuses of the 19th century King Leopold II of Belgium in the area of Africa that is now the Democratic Republic of Congo. Mr. Ngadi said he is very eager that the UPF be used as a force for ensuring justice in the developing world and emphasized that while he is not an expert on Brexit, he felt that Roger Casement would have been skeptical of the motives of those who were motivated by empire, exclusion and separatism.

Mr. Ngadi told the forum that DR Congo is a country with many natural resources, including cobalt. It could be a very wealthy country, he said, capable of creating a high standard of living for its people, if it were governed well.

He urged UPF to assist the developing world. He told the forum that he is determined to continue in the spirit of Roger Casement to ensure justice for all in the developed and developing world, but that to achieve that, freedom is a prerequisite.



Following a short break, the next session was led by Diadeen Ahmed, an expert on Arab affairs and the struggle for democracy and freedom in Sudan, his home country. Mr. Ahmed is reaching out to the immigrant community in Galway, his city of residence, and is working to facilitate cultural understanding between Islam and the West. Immigrants in Ireland should feel part of the host nation and should contribute to the security and peace of the nation, he said.

He said he hoped that UPF can be a force for stabilization in conflict zones such as his home country and wished that he could be reunited with his family soon. He invited participants to join him in a future UPF-Ireland project in Galway, with the working theme of "Art for Peace," in which UPF is promoting intercultural and interfaith cooperation and understanding.

Humphrey Hawksley, a renowned British journalist, author and commentator, told the forum that the Irish border issue should not be insurmountable. In many parts of the world, he said, people coexist peacefully and prosper despite borders. He said he was inspired by the Peace Road ideal. Connecting North America and Russia through the Bering Strait would be a step in the right direction, at least in theory, he said, and would be a massive achievement for humanity.

Mr. Hawksley told the forum that in our new technological age of instant communication, a more important issue than fearing physical borders, perhaps, was that data roaming restrictions or cost barriers to the social and economic developments facilitated by information technology were not reintroduced by phenomena such as Brexit.

Keith Best, a former member of the British Parliament and a barrister, described the work he has been doing for many years as a Welsh language activist. He also spoke of his connections to Ireland and the tragedies he witnessed in the past relating to the conflict in the North. Mr. Best, who served for many years on the Northern Ireland committee in government, told the forum that he feels Brexit is a mistake. Not only will it not be helpful to Ireland, he said, but also it won't be advantageous to the United Kingdom. Mr. Best told the participants that devolution in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland had made the UK more united and that Brexit could undermine that.

As a key leader and longtime member of the World Federalist Movement, Mr. Best said he was passionate about "subsidiarity" -- the theory that power should flow from the bottom up and that decision-making should happen at the lowest democratic level possible.

Robin Marsh, the secretary general of UPF in the United Kingdom, moderated a question-and-answer session. This was followed by the awarding of Ambassador for Peace certificates by Ely Loew, the chair of UPF-Ireland, to several prominent individuals.

Maryam Temile, a Nigerian lawyer and mediator and organizer of intercultural events in County Cavan, was made an Ambassador for Peace, as was Zeinab El Moustafa, also from Cavan, a Sudanese member of the Arab International Federation for Arbitration, who is experienced in UN conflict resolution in Afghanistan and Iraq. Three of the forum's speakers -- Ms. Linda Ervine, Mr. Pierrot Ngadi and Mr. Diadeen Ahmed -- also became Ambassadors for Peace.

Following a performance by singer Róisín McManus, the final event of the day was convened. Cyclists assembled at the bicycle rental shop in Carlingford to complete the "triathlon" of the day's events with a bicycle ride to the border with Northern Ireland.