

LEGACY OF A WELSH MILITANT

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The last salute to Welsh nationalist Cayo Evans (Courtesy U.K. Independent on Sunday)

The passing of Julian Cayo Evans may well have gone unnoticed outside of his native Wales, although one broadsheet UK paper included a substantial obituary article.

Evans, the former leader of the now long defunct Free Wales Army, led a band of nationalists angry at what they saw as the exploitation of Wales by the English and who forswore the path of Constitutional politics and adopted the strategy of direct military action. In this latter regard, Evans, or Cayo as he was known throughout Wales, and the FWA were not auspiciously successful. Indeed, in Wales it was the much less overt organisation MAC (Mudiad Amddiffyn Cymru) which prosecuted an efficient direct-action campaign leading local police and the British Security Services a "merry dance" for several years.

Evans and the FWA could well be dismissed as an irrelevance when their record is measured by history's yardstick. However that would be a false perception for their influence was much greater than a minor aberration on the Welsh scene.

Tucked away at the foot of an obituary article, by Tony Heath, in the UK Independent newspaper was reference to Evans leading a contingent at the 1966 Dublin Easter Rising commemoration. Evans and others were in Dublin at that time on more pressing business than simply to honour the fallen Irish nationalists of 1916. Major policy changes in the old IRA had led to a policy of demilitarisation. What we now term the Official IRA were "dumping arms" and abandoning the road

of armed struggle. Evans through contacts was quick to appreciate the opportunity for the militant national movements in Wales and the other Celtic areas. He was, in effect, in Dublin on a shopping expedition and there were others present from across the Celtic movement.

In the years preceding the Irish initiative there had been meetings in Wales involving Evans and others of similar ilk from the pan Celtic movement. In succeeding years these individuals would establish organisations which functioned on the periphery of the mainstream and more moderate National movements.

Evans' home acted as a focus during this period for activists. Croats, Basques, Flemish, Manx, Scots, Quebecois even the PLO were visitors. A pan Celtic military element was established with actions planned or carried out in Brittany, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. In 1968 the UK Special Branch swooped, arrests were made and arms seized. Thereafter, he paid the price of militant notoriety and his influence waned.

The individuals he met and influenced however were to establish the forerunners of those organisations within the Celtic areas which to this day adopt a more aggressive National aspiration.

The majority of constitutional nationalists would disagree with Evans and all he stood for, however as they contemplate a British government which appears to have negotiated surrender terms behind the scenes with Irish republicans they must pause for thought?

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