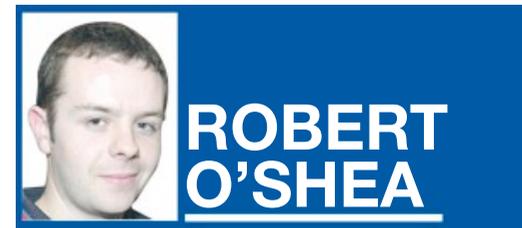


Flatley's bash

peek behind curtains at Castlehyde...



PARTY TIME: The happy couple watch the fun on the dance floor and (top right) Noel with Minister for Health Mary Harney and (right) Noel's wife Dolores with Flatley's best man, brother Patrick



PROBABLY the most intimidating thing to happen during the last week, other possibly than having Michael Flatley ask you for the next dance at his wedding, was the alleged nuclear detonation that occurred somewhere in North Korea.

Reacting to this purported nuclear test, the UN Security Council voted 15 to zip on Saturday in favour of a resolution which bars "the sale or transfer of missiles, warships, tanks, attack helicopters and combat aircraft, as well as missile- and nuclear-related goods to the North Korean government."

To which their UN ambassador Pak Gil Yon said: "HA! HA! Too late."

Well no, not exactly. Instead he stormed out of the council chamber for the second time in a week. But now that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has flexed its muscle in the nuclear armaments department, perhaps this reaction had more to do with other goods that would be included in the sanctions, like lobster, caviar and cognac, particular favourites of the country's leader, Kim Jong-il.

How worried should we be that North Korea might have a nuclear capability that is such that whatever they carried out last week measured 4.2 on the Richter Scale? And how much more worried should we be about Kim Jong-il using this capability if he doesn't receive the €500,000 bottles-worth of Hennessy VSOP he imports each year? It is a very relaxing drink, after all.

Today, the United States has approximately 4,500 strategic, offensive nuclear warheads. Russia has about 3,800. Britain, France, and China's stock is considerably smaller, with 200-400 nuclear weapons in each state's arsenal. Israel — which never signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty designed to prevent the global spread of nuclear weapons, so is not subject to inspections and the threat of sanctions by the United Nations nuclear watchdog — has an estimated 200.

The new nuclear states of Pakistan and India have fewer than 100 weapons each. North Korea, as we have noted, now claims to have developed nuclear weapons, and US intelligence agencies estimate that Pyongyang has enough fissile material for two to eight bombs.

Iran, who most of the focus regarding this issue has been on recently, will have enriched enough uranium to build a bomb by 2015, or next week, depending on whom you are listening to.

So, in all, there are 10,000 nuclear warheads pointing in various directions, dotted around the globe.

Unless there is some major shift in the human condition in the next 50 years, it is pretty certain that some of these will be fired as an act of war in my lifetime.

Sure, we survived the Cold War without them being used, but that was a close run thing and a less complex situation. Then, there were only two ideological superpowers involved in an Arms Race that resembled shadow-boxing as much as it did outright conflict.

It may not be a popular sentiment, but I think now is the time for America to act. I don't believe it should stand idly by as North Korea and Iran develop nuclear arsenals. It should give both countries a gift of some warheads.

Yes, I know it sounds crazy, and it may very well turn out to be crazy, but I think it would be an excellent idea. And I would go many steps further. Developing nuclear weaponry is an incredibly lengthy and costly endeavour and most nations will never have the chance to join the nuclear club. So the UN should insist that the 10,000 weapons of mass destruction already out there be divvied up between all its members. This would give each country around 50 weapons each.

Wouldn't this be highly dangerous and exacerbate highly volatile relationships between certain nations, you may ask?

Quite possibly! But to follow my idea to its conclusion, if any country decided to become a nuclear aggressor, its 10 nearest geographical neighbours (every country in the world would have to sign up to this deal) would fire 10 warheads each towards it, for every one that that country had fired itself. This would mean inevitable nuclear devastation for any deviant nation and act as an extreme deterrent to pulling the trigger.

I have the feeling that this is either a really stupid or really good idea (though I'd nudge toward the former).

However, I'd be interested if readers had any better ideas, other than just hoping and praying for intelligent US diplomacy.

Wait, did I say the UN should divide up the nuclear weapons? I meant to say the cognac.

“ On every sideboard along the long and narrow corridors of Castlehyde are framed photographs and even a replica of the Liam MacCarthy Cup.

long and narrow corridors of Castlehyde are framed photographs of Flatley, with his wife Niamh, his parents and with numerous awards he achieved throughout his dancing career. There is even a small replica of the All-Ireland Liam MacCarthy Cup.

Guests were entertained by up-and-coming UK group, The Peter Grant Band from Yorkshire, who performed lots of the old romantic favourites, from crooners such as Dean Martin, Frank Sinatra, and Tony Bennett. Later we were entertained by The Chieftains, and even Flatley himself joined in playing the flute. After all, he is a former All-Ireland flute champion.

It was expected that he might do an impromptu dance routine for his guests, but

this was left to one of his male leading dancers from *Lord Of The Dance*, Don McCarron from England.

Usually at Irish weddings, tea, coffee and sandwiches are laid on at the end of the night, but Flatley had a final treat in store for his guests as he had a pig roasting on a spit which was cut and served in burger buns with chips. A nice novelty from the man who never fails to surprise.

Michael and Niamh wanted their big day to be a traditional Irish wedding without any of the celebrity trappings and ignored tempting offers to sell their wedding album to *Hello* magazine. To the most part, they achieved that, so the lord and his lady of the dance can look back today and take a bow

for organising their special day in truly fine style and giving to the town of Fermoy fond memories that will live long in our memories.

The newly-married couple will spend a few days travelling around the country, including a quick visit to Kerry, before getting back into rehearsals for their European tour of *Celtic Tiger* which kicks off in Brussels next month and travels to the Point in Dublin for two sell-out shows in December.

They will head off on an extended honeymoon, still a closely-guarded secret, later in the year, and my guess is that it could well be to Tanzania, one of Flatley's favourite African countries.