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The SDLP Election Campaign

February was a month in which nothing much happened. The only money from the Northern Bank robbery that has been recovered was found at a police social club in Belfast and was taken as proof positive that the police did *not* steal it. The police forces of two states, giving the matter top priority, have not succeeded in making any connection between the IRA and the robbery, and that is taken as proof positive that the IRA did it. The entire absence of evidence is the strongest evidence, because if the IRA had not done it, it would have had no reason to remove all traces of itself from the scene of the action.

Jeffrey Donaldson appeared on RTE's *Prime Time* to say that it makes absolutely no political sense for the Provos to have done the robbery, and that he just cannot understand it, but that there is no reason to doubt that they did. And, they did it just at the moment when the DUP was "*on the cusp*" of making a settlement with them. And his heart bleeds that he has therefore been deprived of the opportunity of sitting in government with Fenian terrorists—well, he didn't say it quite like that, but that was the spirit of it.

David Trimble, on BBC's *Question Time* from Belfast, said that he had only to look into his heart to know that the Provos did it. This must be an art he learned from De Valera. Only that Dev, taking himself to be a sample of the Irish people, applied the art to the broad political sphere where it was applicable, and he made good his insight by ousting the Treatyites once the British threat of immediate and terrible war receded and the people returned to themselves. He never applied it to criminology.

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Baulking At The *Bolkestein* Directive

How many have heard of this Directive? It is given extensive coverage in the European press but here it would probably elicit . . . "*The Bolkestein what?*"—and might be thought to be something to do with the Balkans or Balkanisation.

Those of us who are in the pathetic condition of having to rely on the Irish and British media for information on the world may not have heard of this Directive. Journalists in the UK and Ireland have minds that are so addled by Free Market ideology that they are incapable of seeing, never mind reporting, on anything that affects the lives of ordinary people.

The Bolkestein Directive is a directive liberalising services, including employment services, throughout the EU. The way it works is that a factory owner in Ireland, for example, can decide to use, for example, a Latvian employment agency to supply him with labour services (factory workers).

The Directive will make it almost impossible to apply Irish employment laws, pay, and conditions to workers registered with the Latvian company. The aim of the Directive is to reduce administrative "obstacles" (such as employment inspections) to services across the European Union. It also enshrines the principle that the laws applying to the service will be determined by the "*country of origin*" of the company supplying the services. There is a derogation of this principle for employees working in a different country to the country of origin of their company.

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The Taoiseach says that he knows that Adams and McGuinness were planning the bank robbery when they pretended to be negotiating a settlement with him. And yet he neglects to arrest them and charge them with the crime. It was said in defence of his negligence that he has no power of arrest, but surely he is allowed to give evidence to the Gardai! Sinn Feiners interviewed on RTE are invariably harassed on the question of urging people to give information to the police about the robbery. When they agree that people with information should give it to the police, the question is put to them again and they are asked to express their agreement in some other form of words. But compliance with that request only leads to a demand for a third form of words, *ad infinitum*. And, all the time, there is the Taoiseach with certain knowledge that Adams and McGuinness did it, and he neglects to give his information to the police. Of course, if he did so, he would only be returning to the Gardai the information that they gave him. So who is withholding information then?

The Taoiseach knows that Adams and McGuinness did it but, in reply to a question in the Dail, he said he did not know if they were members of the Army Council of the IRA. This raises the possibility that Adams and McGuinness did it as a private job, does it not? In which case, the robbery was a crime of the most vulgar kind, and it is a matter of urgency

that Adams and McGuinness should be arrested for it, so that the IRA can get on with the peace process!

On the other hand, the Taoiseach's Justice Minister says he knows that Adams and McGuinness are members of the Army Council. But he neglects to transmit his knowledge to the Taoiseach, and the Taoiseach doesn't bother to ask for it.

We have said all along that Bertie is an over-achiever. He has been over-promoted. He is the Adjutant whom an unfortunate turn of events made a General. And he is all bonhomie and petulance just now.

*

The Dublin establishment was greatly irritated when Adams, in response to the Taoiseach's statement that he had planned the robbery, demanded that he be arrested and charged.

On 18th February (the day of the money), Gay Mitchell, Fine Gael TD, said, indignantly, on Sky News: "*Last week Gerry Adams stood outside that gate and he said "Arrest me". And they'd been denying, you know, that they've any involvement with this.*"

Did Mitchell somehow miss the point and think that Adams, by offering himself for arrest, was confessing that he had done something to be arrested for? Quite possibly. The faculty of reason has been set aside entirely in Dail Eireann at this juncture. The improvements made by de

Valera have been sloughed off. The Free State is back in business. For the time being the Republican Dail is best understood as the subordinate Parliament of Southern Ireland, provided for by the 1920 Government of Ireland Act and the Treaty. And: Theirs not to reason why.

On the day when Adams demanded that the Taoiseach have him arrested he was interviewed on Radio Eireann by Rachel English. She put it to him that Brian Lenihan had said that the Taoiseach had no power of arrest. He replied that he knew that:

"Rachel English: Why then did you urge that he do that?"

Adams: I didn't urge that he do that. I said... that he should bring his information to the Guards... Because clearly he is saying that we're involved in criminality. Now, how do you deal with criminals?

English: Now, if on another occasion, the Taoiseach was seen to interfere with the Gardai, you'd probably be giving out about it.

Adams: I'm not asking him to interfere."

So there it is. The affable Bertie says he knows that Adams planned the Northern Bank robbery. Adams says he should do what Northern Catholics are continually berated for not doing: tell the police. But Radio Eireann says that giving the police information about a crime would be interfering with the police. It would be interesting to know who briefed Rachel English to that effect.

Adams then said that Bertie had accused him of committing a major crime and he demanded his day in Court to defend himself. Whereupon the interview went prissy:

"Rachel English: Well I would sue. I would sue if it was said about me. Why can't you sue?"

Adams: My legal advice at this point is that we cannot sue.

English: Why not?"

Adams: Because to be libelled you have to be able to prove that your peer group would disapprove of you if you were alleged to be involved in such and such activity. And my legal advice is that, in the peer group from which I generally come, it could be proved by others that they would not necessarily disapprove of these allegations."

Which took Rachel out of her depth.

If Rachel had done something substantial enough to cause the Taoiseach to slander her and foster a paranoid witch-hunt against her, she would not be eager to sue him for defamation, with people like

herself making a living by carrying out a policy of prejudicing public opinion against her.

Libel law has little to do with establishing the truth. The outcome of a libel action in the most favourable circumstances is as predictable as the toss of a coin. In the atmosphere of xenophobia deliberately worked up by the Taoiseach and his Justice Minister (xenophobia within the nation!), it would be madness for a Republican to risk anything on a civil action where no standard of proof at all is required and everything depends on bias. (Beverley Cooper-Flynn learned that the hard way. She had worked as a bank clerk on PAYE, but a perverse verdict was brought against her, influenced by a fashion of the moment, which had nothing to do with the North, and was ruined while those who were managing the Bank whose schemes she was promoting carried on virtually Scot free.)

And so the Taoiseach says he has information that Adams planned the robbery, but he does not institute criminal proceedings, where some degree of proof would be required. Instead he gets the media to ask Adams why he doesn't take a civil action, where bias would rule supreme.

The legal advice given to Adams is indisputable. Libel law is not about truth but about whether there has been defamation, and whether it was warranted. It might be shown that the Taoiseach told lies about Adams—and there can be little reasonable doubt that he did so in a fit of petulance—but that need not mean that he had defamed him, taken away his good name: either because it was judged that he had no good name to lose, or that he enhanced his reputation in his community rather than detracted from it. A Dublin jury might find against Adams on either ground—or on both: coherence is not a requirement of libel law, which is the most slippery branch of law.

Adams reputation in West Belfast would not be damaged by Bertie's lies. That is a fact that has been seeping into the media mind of the Republic, feeding the xenophobia which has been evident there for many years.

No politician, or academic, or journalist, has taken the trouble to understand the conditions of life of the Catholic community in 'the Northern Ireland state'. Hence the reflex of uncomprehending horror which is their only possible response to certain obvious facts.

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The following letter was denied publication in the *Irish Times*

“Bastards” And The *Irish Times*

I write in regard to the Kevin Myers Diary of ‘apology’ and your own editorial of ‘regret.’ While both are welcome, they do not address the root of the problem. His appalling verbal attack on children born out of marriage was not the first time that he has used such outrageous language to advance causes that he champions. For many years, however, Kevin Myers has used verbal abuse, with ever increasing intensity, to ridicule and to denigrate the individuals and the causes that he chooses to attack.

The founders of this state are regular victims of the venom flowing from his prolix pen. Michael Collins, for example, has been described as “an utter failure: a homicidal, dysfunctional buffoon who corrupted an entire generation of young men” (Diary, 16 Sept. 2003). Every mention of the name of Patrick Pearse provides an opportunity for a vitriolic polemic. The feelings of the descendants of these people are given no consideration. Even the daughter of Sean MacEntee was forced to see her father falsely accused by Kevin Myers of shooting two “unarmed captives ... in the back, quite casually and coldly in Castlebellingham in 1916” (Diary, 26 Aug. 1998).

In many ways it was entirely predictable that Myers, emboldened by an apparent licence to abuse, should adopt such provocative language in his attack on innocent children. The warning signs were recently noted by Conor Brady, editor emeritus of your paper, in a letter of 17 January. Writing of the emotive contents of a Kevin Myers Diary of 14 January, he responded by affirming that “these allegations are false” and by pointing out that the polemic of Myers was not helping the peace process. Clearly anyone, who could falsely and stridently attack his own colleagues, was capable of lashing out at any other victim. Indeed, such attacks have become the norm. “Despicable wretches like Chirac”, words used by Myers of President Chirac of France, the day after his outburst on children, have become acceptable language in his Diary.

The editorial board, by neglecting these warning signs and by failing to control the rantings of Myers, have become willing participants in the contents of his Diary. This is the root of the problem: the editorial board has condoned the actions of a serial verbal abuser. Indeed, the editorial board has done more. It has silenced those who have tried to expose the errors that have sustained the verbal abuse of Kevin Myers. My own experience, and I believe that of many others, is that letters, pointing out the factual errors of the Diary, are regularly rejected, despite the claim in the editorial of 10 February that the paper provides “a platform for divergent views”. I have no expectation that this attempt to set the record straight will see the light of day in your columns; but you might just publish it to show that I am wrong and to prove that you are “committed to free speech”, as claimed in your editorial.

Dr. Brian P. Murphy osb
Glenstal 11.2.2005

Public Meeting, Discussion & Book Launch

A Defence Of Cork Political Culture In The War Of Independence, 1919-1922

Talk by:

Dr. Brian P Murphy osb

Incorporating the launch of a new book

“*The Catholic Bulletin and Republican Ireland*”
by Dr. Murphy

Friday, 15th April 2005, 8pm
Imperial Hotel, South Mall, Cork.

All WELCOME Sponsored by Athol Books and the Aubane Historical Society

The Northern Catholics have lived outside the structures of democratic politics for more than 80 years, and for most of that period they lived under a system of order enforced on them by the Protestant community communally structured as a police force. What they are is a product of the perverse system in which they were required to live.

To be taken for an IRA man would be a mark of distinction rather than disgrace. And not the kind of distinction in which Mafia types are held in certain parts of England (the East End of London, for example), but the distinction that accrues to somebody who acts on his principles. There were hardly any IRA men in the North in 1969, and there had not been a great many during the two preceding generations. Most Catholics were reasonably obedient citizens, even though they were not citizens at all. And their obedience was not so much an act of reasonable compliance with *de jure* authority as an act of subordination to *de facto* power. The law was complied with, and authority was not rebelled against, even though neither was recognised as valid. Under those circumstances the man who was thought to be in the IRA could not but be held in esteem as a man of principle who had the daring to act against a powerful authority which nobody recognised as valid.

The pogrom of August 1969 shocked a great many people into becoming IRA men and women who would otherwise have drifted along in the old routine of resentful subordination to established power. And they had to construct a new IRA to be part of, because the established IRA of the late sixties (the Stickies) had gone lunatic.

Thus, while it might be the case that McDowell told a lie about Gerry Adams when he said he was a member of the Army Council of the Provo IRA, he did not defame him. And it was so obviously the case that Adams' reputation would not be damaged by his being a member of the IRA that his denial of membership must have been based on other grounds, e.g., that he was not a member. (Adams had been politically active in the Republicanism that became Stickie, and there is nothing improbable in his statement that he specialised from the start in the political side of the new Republicanism forged during the Winter of 1969-70.)

That new Republicanism was a movement of the Catholic community in

response to the wild actions of the state, rather than a conspiracy concealed by the community. It was so even while the SDLP monopolised the political representation in the 1970s and 1980s (the war decades), and it is certainly not less so today. It might be that there are still politicians and journalists in the South who do not understand this. If so, it is an achievement of wilful ignorance requiring as much application as the acquisition of knowledge has ever done.

The Northern Catholic community was never a political component of the state. The state arranged things in such a way that it was impossible for them to be so. At their most obedient they were never loyal. The preconditions of loyalty did not exist for them. They were only quiescent. When they demonstrated in support of a couple of very minor reform demands in 1968-9, and the state apparatus went on the rampage against them, they could no longer be quiescent. By resisting the rampage of the state they placed themselves in insurrection. Half a century of exclusion from the political democracy of the state had made them self-reliant in many ways, and when they found themselves in insurrection they added a military dimension to that self-reliance.

Our vantage point on this development was that we opposed it from the very start, and advocated a radically different course of action, while living in West Belfast. And the reality of the development was so clear that it is not conceivable to us that the Justice Minister of the Republic might think he is telling the truth when he describes Provisional Republicanism as a criminal conspiracy which imposed itself on the Catholic community by means of terror. If it was that, there would be little difficulty in imposing the cosmetically-enhanced RUC on it.

The policing problem has little or nothing to do with crime. It is a problem of combining an apparatus of state, which the Catholic community was driven to form for itself in 1969, with the other apparatus of state. This might have been accomplished already if the Patten proposals made under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement had not been vetoed by the Unionist Party.

The Justice Ministers misrepresentation of the situation is probably programmatic. He may be hoping to bring about the situation he describes as existing, and by the hysterical manipulation of emotive events to cause the Catholic community to acquire a false memory of itself—a

thing which has happened extensively in the South in recent times—and to begin seeing Provisional Republicanism as a conspiracy of criminals which imposed itself by terror. We do not say he will fail. Such things have been done under the sun. Look at the Soviet accomplishments in Eastern Europe after 1945. We only say that his description of the present situation is entirely false.

The incident on which everything is being hinged as we write is the MacCartney killing. The Short Strand is a small Catholic enclave in East Belfast, across the river from The Markets, which is another Catholic area adjacent to the Law Courts and the business area. It appears that a group from the Short Strand went across the river for a drinking session in a more fashionable pub in the The Markets. An argument occurred which developed into a brawl. Knives were brought out. There were stabbings. A number of people were wounded, including an IRA man, and one man was killed. Some cleaning up was done, including the removal of a tape from a CCTV camera. Whether this was something more than a reflex action engendered by what is probably the most self-reliant community in the North we cannot say. There are two ways of regarding such things. One is that, the damage being done, nothing will be gained by making things worse and that a measure of informal rough justice is best. The other is that eternal justice, through all the formalities of law, must be satisfied. But the law very often does not deliver justice. We know very well that it is not only in the lawless North that the first attitude is widespread.

Alistair MacDonnell, an SDLP Parliamentary candidate in the nearby South Belfast constituency, saw that political mileage could be got for his campaign from the incident. The sisters of the dead man wanted formal justice. The Justice Minister took it up. It was represented as an IRA killing in breach of ceasefire. The Chief Constable, not wanting his credibility shredded further in West Belfast, gave it as his opinion that it was not an IRA killing, and was entirely ignored by those who placed implicit confidence in his word in the matter of the bank robbery. The IRA took the matter in hand, since a couple of its members were involved, though in a personal capacity, and there were three expulsions. The SDLP said the incident had been witnessed by over seventy people, who were deterred by IRA terror from coming forward to the police about it. The IRA issued a statement

saying that people who had confidence in the RUC/PSNI should support the family in having the matter dealt with by them. And a man surrendered himself to the police on the issue, and was not held in custody. And the SDLP described all of this as a cynical exercise.

Kevin Connolly, reporting on BBC Radio 4 the IRA advice about doing what the family wanted with relation to the police, was asked if this signified a general shift in relations between the police and the Catholic community. He said he did not think it did, because the Catholic community could not, in an instant, “abandon hundreds of years of history” (26th Feb.). This “*hundreds of years*” must be taken as deliberate imprecision, conforming to the English stereotype of the Irish. He might have given an exact figure: 85 years. Alienation between the Catholic community and the police began with the War of Independence (the war against the Irish democracy) and the establishment of “the Northern Ireland state”. And relations of antagonism begin with the pogrom of 1969. Before 1969 the RUC went where they pleased, and conducted a very close, even informal, supervision over the lives of Catholics. And before 1920 the police force consisted chiefly of Catholics. But England doesn’t want to hear such things, and those who are paid to inform it do not tell it.

Questions & Answers (RTE) had an impressive line-up against Sinn Fein’s Conor Murphy in late February. It was six to one (John Bowman ceases to be Chairman on these occasions). Well, maybe five to one, because one of the sheep was a wolf in sheep’s clothing which he soon shrugged off. Apart from him, there was John O’Donoghue (FF Sports Minister), Brendan Howlin (a would-be Labour leader), Brian Feeney (Northern journalist and academic), Catherine Ghent of the SDLP, and Bowman: five upright citizens denouncing a scoundrel who was in denial. It put one in mind of the chorus of denouncers in Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*, with Brendan Howlin as the extraordinarily upright Don Ottavio—who became Ricky Ticky Tavy in Bernard Shaw’s adaptation in *Man & Superman*. Mozart reserved the good music for the scoundrel, and so must we. Murphy was denounced ritualistically, and could scarcely open his mouth without being interrupted and heckled, and under fire he demonstrated why Sinn Fein has become the force it is in the North.

Bowman could not find an entirely appropriate opportunity for directing a

prepared quip at him, but he used it anyway: “*You’re like a Madam in a brothel saying you’re surprised that the girls are committing sins against chastity*”. In fact there was nothing whatever of pious humbug about Murphy.

Rickey Ticky Tavy said: “*I believe the Taoiseach, the Garda Commissioner and the Intelligence services of this Republic. Have you no regard for any of those?*”

It was just about then that a Liberal Democrat at Westminster said he would feel better about taking the Government line on the bank robbery if the evidence was made known. He said it would satisfy him if the evidence was made known on Privy Council terms to his party leader and convinced him. He was immediately denounced as an apologist for terrorism by Dr. Paisley. But Paisley is an odd fish in these times: a believing Christian—“*Blessed are they who have not seen but have believed*”.

The pretence is now being made in Dublin that the DUP was on the brink (or the “*cusp*”) of a deal when the IRA engaged in wrecking it by robbing a bank. The interlude between Paisley collapsing the negotiations (with a demand which he said was designed to humiliate his negotiating partners) and the Bank robbery was so brief that the false memory (which is now second nature to top people in the Republic) can conjure it away, and can attribute the breakdown in negotiations to the robbery. But during that interval everybody knew that the deal was off. And the realistic understanding is that Paisley found a way of ending it so he would not be in a position of alliance with Sinn Fein when he faced Trimble at the forthcoming election.

For thirty years this was the only publication that was not hysterical on the subject of Dr. Paisley. And we now seem to be the only publication that has not veered from the one absurd extreme to the other.

The mindlessness of the Dublin establishment has now come up with the reflection that it was lucky for Paisley that the negotiations broke down in early December, otherwise he’d have had egg on his face when the Bank robbery was done. But, if one supposes that the Provos did the robbery, the reasonable supposition which follows is that they did the robbery because the negotiations were sabotaged by the DUP and they were being blamed for it. Brian Feeney (who underwent a *volte face* after the robbery) at least retains

sufficient power of reason to deduce his suppositions that way.

The wolf in sheep’s clothing was Eugene McGee, a writer on Gaelic sports for the *Irish Independent*. He was obviously sceptical of Minister O’Donoghue’s extravagant notion that, under the Separation of Powers, the Taoiseach could not cause Adams to be arrested for the bank robbery by giving information to the Gardai. And he went on to say:

“Sinn Fein politicians that I know, mainly at the local level, are as good or as bad as any other politicians. Some of them are excellent people. Nobody has any qualms about them. But as long as they’re going to be attached to this sort of thing, whether by innuendo or whatever from Michael McDowell or any other politician, then they don’t have a future, because the people will not stay with them at all. And that is a great pity. After all we got Sinn Fein the Workers’ Party to come in and they were absorbed into the system. It’s only a few months ago since Dermot Ahern was hinting that Sinn Fein could be part of a Coalition with Fianna Fail” (Sinn Fein the Workers’ Party, or The Stickies, or the Official Republicans, fought a short war in the early 1970s, but later used its media influence to remove it from the public memory. It split about fifteen years ago, one faction going into the Labour Party and taking it over. No requirement was made about prior disbandment of the Official IRA, which still exists as far as we know. There are rumours that Old Labour, to which Howlin belongs, is trying to organise itself for a heave against the Stickie leadership.)

Howlin reflected on how extraordinary it was that Foreign Minister Ahern should have been contemplating a Coalition with Sinn Fein only a few weeks ago. “*But if he had the knowledge that he is now expressing that Sinn Fein had a common leadership with the IRA—*”

McGee brushed this aside: “*The mistake that Sinn Fein made, one of them, was that they rebuffed Bertie Ahern at the last minute before Christmas. And there’s a lot of people, including politicians in my own county, have learned you don’t rebuff or cross Bertie Ahern because you’ll pay the price for it.*”

Feeney then expressed a similar view: “*The Irish Government in particular believed Sinn Fein was going to be stood down in December—that the IRA was going to be stood down—and to their horror they discovered that that was not going to be the case. And they simply turned on them and decided that all bets*

were off.” Which appears to say that Bertie was outraged when the Provos failed to implement their side of a deal that was not made.

The earlier part of this comment, in which Bertie is described as petulant, was written before we heard M’Gee’s comment about him. He is not generally regarded as vindictive and we are glad to see our impression that he is confirmed in this way.

If he expected the IRA to go ahead with disarmament after the deal of which it was part had been sabotaged, then he is a fool. And if foolish disappointment over this was at the source of his bizarre conduct during the following few weeks, then he is a knave as well. And, whatever turns out to be the case about the bank robbery, it is the case that he has done away with basic standards of objectivity in public life. He has reduced everything to emotion and belief tending towards hysteria.

This is not the first time we have seen an atmosphere verging on totalitarianism in public life in the South. FitzGerald did his best to generate it during the weeks following the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985. But in 1985 Haughey did what it is the business of an Opposition to do in order to keep democracy in a healthy condition. There is no Opposition in the South today, and therefore there is no thought.

*

Mark Durkan appeared on Radio 4’s *Westminster Hour* on 27th February and said he would form a Coalition with the Unionist Parties, with Sinn Fein excluded, as the Prime Minister asked him to do a couple of weeks ago, if he could be sure that Blair would not then subvert him by going behind his back to negotiate with Republicans.

The SDLP was founded in 1970 on a self-contradictory programme. Ever since 1971 it has always found a reason for not doing things which would have carried through the party’s formal rejection of Republican methods into political action. It was given its first opportunity to strike out on its own course, in opposition to the Republicans, by Brian Faulkner in 1971. It welcomed Faulkner’s proposal for a measure of power-sharing. Then, on reflection, it discovered that it lacked the will and the character to conduct its own policy in alliance with Unionists—and walked out of Stormont. And, so it has been, in one way or another, ever since.

Baulking At The Bolkestein Directive continued

However, this looks like a ‘fig leaf’. The inspectors in the above example can be from the country of origin (i.e. Latvia). Will Latvian inspectors apply Irish law rigorously?

But even this ‘fig leaf’ may be discarded if the EU Constitution becomes law. This Constitution enshrines Free Market principles and is likely to declare any ‘obstacle’ to the free market unconstitutional.

This means that a company in Ireland can use an agency in a country with inferior wages and conditions to import workers. These workers will be subject not to Irish law, but to the law of the country in which the Agency is based. Under the new dispensation it would be advantageous to an Irish company to use imported workers, who will not have Irish entitlements in terms of wages and conditions. Indeed, once the idea catches on, companies may be forced to import such workers in order to remain ‘competitive’.

Understandably, many Trade Unionists in Europe and others are going berserk over this. They see this, rightly, as a way of undermining social protection and leading to higher unemployment in ‘old’ Europe. The UK, of course, is in favour, therefore no doubt so are the Irish. Chirac is against, but most believe that he will change his mind after the French referendum on the EU Constitution. There is little said about it in Ireland and this is undoubtedly because of the looming referendum on the EU Constitution.

This Directive is an attempt to change Europe in the Anglo-American direction—one that at present seems quite acceptable to the “new Europe”—the new accession countries. At the moment this block is pro-USA in economics and foreign policy. The enlargement of the EU is threatening to undermine the way of life of “old Europe”. Perhaps politicians in this country don’t care. We wonder if the continental European political outlook of Fianna Fail under Haughey is a thing of the past.

This magazine was “pro Europe” up to and including the Maastricht treaty. But we cannot close our eyes to recent developments. The original Social/Christian democratic vision has been subverted by Anglo American Free Market values. We say vote “no” to the EU referendum and “yes” to the European social model and an independent EU Foreign policy.

Report

The Peace Process

The present impasse in the Northern peace process prompts me to write. Sadly I believe the turning point was the Taoiseach’s surrender to Paisley’s demand for IRA humiliation.

Since the Northern Bank raid there has been an avalanche of criticism of Sinn Féin. We are now living in very strange times, when organisations and individuals are found guilty without any evidence being tested in court. That is a very dangerous road to travel.

The Irish people owe a debt of gratitude to John Hume, Gerry Adams, Albert Reynolds, Martin McGuinness, Dr. Martin Mansergh, Father Alex Reid and many unsung heroes who helped to achieve the peace process. It is estimated that the lives of about a thousand people have been saved by the efforts of those good people.

For a considerable period before that breakthrough in 1994, they had to withstand a barrage of criticism from certain quarters.

This campaign was led by the *Sunday Independent*. Prominent among those critics was Michael McDowell.

I strongly hold the view that the collapse of the Reynolds Government was a catastrophe. Albert had drive and commitment.

I believe he would have achieved a comprehensive settlement years ago.

In recent times Mr. McDowell has appeared to have usurped the role of Taoiseach. As a Fianna Fáil supporter, I strongly urge the Taoiseach to either muzzle or dismiss him before he does irreparable damage to the peace process.

Michael O’Connor, Kilvoultra, Macroom, Co Cork. *Irish Times* 14.2.05

**As Easons in Botanic Avenue
has stopped stocking the
Irish Political Review
(for whatever reason)
some readers may be finding
difficulty in obtaining a copy.**

**They can contact
Joe Keenan
<joe@atholbooks.org>
for advice on how to get a copy.**

The Irish Times Trust Ltd And Its Pomposity and Hypocrisy

The Memorandum and Articles of Association of The Irish Times Trust Ltd exudes pomposity and hypocrisy from every page. It tries to pretend that it is something that it isn't and it is also extremely badly written. The latest controversy over the paper's description of children of unmarried people as "bastards" shows just what empty verbiage the high-flown rhetoric of the papers aims and objectives are.

An example of the long winded and tortuous mode of expression is the following extract from the Memorandum of Association. Readers with a nervous or sensitive disposition should skip over this part.

"To further the advancement of medical, surgical, and veterinary science and skill and research directed to discovery of the causes cure or relief of diseases of mankind or of animals useful to mankind, the prevention of cruelty to children or to animals, the maintenance and service of lifeboats and other means of saving life, by the provision of funds or other means of assistance to or for the purposes of any trust or body of persons corporate or not corporate having as the sole purposes or objects thereof the aforesaid purposes or any of them or other charitable purposes or objects and of which the capital, income and profits, if any, are applicable and applied to such purposes or objects only."

In plain language the Objects of the Company include:

- a) The advancement of education.
- b) The relief of poverty.
- c) The advancement of "medical, surgical, and veterinary science" [Does not the word "medical" cover the word "surgical"??]
- d) The advancement of research directed to the discovery of the "causes cure or relief of diseases of mankind or animals useful to mankind".
- e) The prevention of cruelty to children and animals.
- f) The maintenance and service of lifeboats and other means of saving life.

I was interested in the clause on education. Most people have a view on this topic. One view would be that children should be educated in a religious environment. Another view would be that all education should be non-denominational

so that children regardless of creed can be educated in the same institution. But The Irish Times Trust Ltd doesn't subscribe to any of these 'narrow' views. It believes in supporting education of "whatever nature in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland". As soon as I saw this I knew that its aspirations were not to be taken too seriously.

But let us pretend to take them seriously. How is The Irish Times Trust Ltd to achieve its lofty objectives? Clause 2 d gives five methods. I will spare the reader a lengthy quote. Life is too short. But a summary of the five is as follows:

1) Purchasing shares directly or indirectly in The Irish Times Ltd.

2) Ensuring that The Irish Times Ltd publishes The Irish Times according to various principles. Readers of the *Irish Political Review* will be familiar with these from the articles on the Oath. The phrases, "constitutional democracy through governments freely elected", "social justice between people", "instinct with Christian values", etc. reappear.

3) Ensuring *The Irish Times* is published as a national daily newspaper.

4) Ensuring that if The Irish Times Ltd. can no longer afford to publish the paper that either:

a. The shares are sold to someone who shares the objects of The Irish Times Trust Ltd. and this must be validated by the High Court.

or

b. The Irish Times Ltd is liquidated.

5) The redemption of Preference Shares in The Irish Times Ltd!

There is nothing about how its lofty objectives will be financed. Apparently, the mere publication of *The Irish Times* is enough to advance education, relieve poverty, maintain lifeboats and protect children and animals etc, etc!

The Irish Times Trust Ltd is on record as saying that it has never made any charitable donations (*Business and Finance*, 19.10.00). So the fine talk about lifeboats, children and animals is bullshit. The Irish Times Trust Ltd is a company which is limited by guarantee. The word "Trust" in its title is a deception which gives the impression that it is a charitable entity. Its real object is to exercise control over The Irish Times Ltd. But it is quite happy to perpetuate this deception through

Irish Times journalists (e.g. *Irish Times Trust Now Has To Confront Its Greatest Challenge* by Fintan O' Toole, 29.11.01).

It is difficult to know which is more contemptible: pomposity and hypocrisy in order to feign virtue or pomposity and hypocrisy for material gain. The Irish Times Trust Ltd claims in *Business and Finance* magazine that it has never availed of charitable tax exemptions, so we must conclude that its pomposity and hypocrisy is for the former reason.

Another example of its deception is Article 36 b which makes a person ineligible to be a Governor of The Irish Times Trust Ltd if he "is or has been an employee of The Irish Times Ltd." This clause is in line with best practice. A "charitable trust" supervising a newspaper should not have trustees with a material interest in that newspaper. But hold on! Major McDowell was an employee. He was Managing Director and then Chief Executive from 1962 to 1997. But there is a 'get out of gaol free card' in Article 37 (i) of the 1997 Articles:

"Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in Articles 36 or 38 to 48 or elsewhere in these Articles of Association, Thomas Bleakley McDowell shall be a Governor for life."

So never mind what is best practice for a "Trust", McDowell is Governor for life. The 1974 Articles of Association also allowed him to appoint other employees as Governors "notwithstanding" what other Articles might suggest.

THE POWER STRUCTURE OF THE IRISH TIMES TRUST LTD

The powers that The Irish Times Trust Ltd has over The Irish Times Ltd have already been described in the article, *The Irish Times and the British State (Irish Political Review, July 2004)*. Up until 2002 these included the appointment of the majority of directors of The Irish Times Ltd. as well as, at one stage giving them five votes each as opposed to the one vote given to non "Trust" directors. The powers that the directors have over the editor and editorial policy and the special position of Major McDowell were also described. But what about the power structure within The Irish Times Trust Ltd itself?

I don't know who appointed the original Governors of The Irish Times Trust Ltd in 1974 but I assume it was McDowell. Since then the Board of Governors has been self-perpetuating. New appointments need the approval of three quarters of the existing Governors.

The position that McDowell had within

the so called “Trust” was less dominant than his position within The Irish Times Ltd. One of the formal titles that he had within the so called “Trust” up until 1997 was Chairman of the Board of Governors. But of course since The Irish Times Trust Ltd is not a trading entity there wasn’t a managing director, chief executive or other such position that McDowell could hold. Article 52 of the 1974 articles indicates that as long as he remained as Governor he would also be Chairman. So, in effect, he was “*Chairman for Life*” as well.

The Chairman’s powers included a second vote if there was a tie at General Meetings and Board Meetings. His ruling on votes at the above meetings was final.

He was also an “A” member. This meant that in votes concerning his status as Governor and therefore Chairman he was entitled to “*one vote plus such number of votes conferred on all other members of the Company*”.

His “*permanent status*” within the Company also gave him an advantage. The rules regarding the retirement of Governors changed over the years. But the 1997 Articles indicate that new Governors had to prove themselves “*trustworthy*” (excuse the pun). Article 38 (i) indicates that the other Governors had to vote for the new Governor after one year for him to remain as a Governor. Other Governors could be forced to retire after five years unless McDowell waived his right of making a “*Retirement Declaration*”.

Directors appointed after 1993 had to retire when they reached the age of 70 unless McDowell gave written permission to postpone their retirement.

But probably the most significant advantage that McDowell had in relation to other members of the so called “Trust” was he was a ‘full timer’ among ‘part timers’. He was the only one of the Governors that held an executive position within The Irish Times Ltd.

As McDowell approached his mid seventies he gradually relinquished his powers. The financial problems The Irish Times experienced around 2001 also attracted public interest. Even a superficial glance showed what a peculiar institution it was. McDowell, of course, is no longer “Chairman for Life” of The Irish Times Ltd or The Irish Times Trust Ltd nor is he Chief Executive. But little else has changed. The pomposity and hypocrisy remain. The oath of secrecy in both institutions remains unchanged. The so called “Trust” has reduced its representation on The Irish Times Ltd board to three and they no longer have five

votes each. One might say that under public scrutiny there has been an orderly retreat. And all the evidence suggests that in the new situation the non Trust directors have been extremely well behaved.

But what can be conceded can also be

taken back. The so called “Trust” has control of the votes at General Meetings and therefore can still change the Memorandum and Articles of Association of The Irish Times Ltd at any time.

John Martin

Reviews

Part Two

I have been sent a document written by Patrick Maume but published I know not where. It appears under the heading, *Institute of Historical Research*, and was possibly published on the Internet, about which I know nothing. It is a review of an Oxford University Press book, *Ireland And Empire*, by Stephen Howe—which I believe I reviewed some years ago.

Maume writes that Howe “overlooks... defenders of Unionism... from Catholic/nationalist backgrounds”, including “many British and Irish Communist Organisation writers associated with the intellectually-eccentric Brendan Clifford ... who after advocating “two nations” theory and electoral integration reverted to a pro-republican viewpoint in the early 1990s”. A footnote says: “Clifford has always seen Northern Ireland as an unviable political entity; having failed to secure its full integration into the UK he advocated integration into a modernised Irish Republic. His earlier work influenced later universalist, as distinct from particularist, theorisations of Ulster Unionism”.

I have no notion of what that last sentence means. I am not aware of having influenced any Unionist writers, either particularist or universalist, and I do not know what that distinction means. I know that David Trimble spun Mary Kenny a yarn about my influence on him, and I am told that the same story appears in the big biography of him that was published last year just as he was being eclipsed by Paisley. But it is groundless.

I met him twice. The first time when he was a student (1970 I imagine). I had a brief discussion with him. It left no impression on him because the next time I noticed him was as a militant in William Craig’s Vanguard movement—an Ulster nationalist movement which was the nearest thing to Fascism that I have ever seen at close quarters.

(In those days I edited the *Workers’ Weekly*, and I found it congenial to write

the editorials at a Black & White cafe across the street from what is now the Europa Hotel but was then the Railway Station. A Catholic waitress used to warn me when there were Tartan Gangs in the vicinity. She took it as self-evident that, because I was writing, I belonged to her side, and that a Tartan Gang would make the same assumption.)

About a dozen years after that, the Young Unionists at Queen’s University asked if they could serialise something of mine in their publication. It might be that Trimble had suggested it to them. I looked at their publication and said they couldn’t. I could never understand the Unionist inclination to sympathise with the apartheid regime in South Africa.

I met Trimble for a second time in connection with Mary McAleese’s libel action against me. He lectured at the Institute of Professional Legal Studies, and had at times been acting head of it. When that position was advertised he had not applied for it because he knew the strict criteria for the job. Applicants had to be barristers or solicitors in successful practice.

But no successful lawyer applied for the job this time. (The Institute was misconceived. A lawyer in successful practice would only take the job out of a sense of public obligation because it would involve a drop in salary, and this would not be compensated for by a sense of doing something useful, because practical experience cannot be transmitted in a classroom. The problem arose because the North was one of the most law-abiding regions on earth until 1969, and the decision to treat what happened then as a nuclear explosion of criminal activity required a parallel supply of lawyers. There were not enough law-firms to enable new lawyers to be produced in sufficient quantity by the apprenticeship method, so mass-production through the classroom was resorted to.)

When no practising lawyer applied for

the job, the authorities (Queen's University and the professional bodies of solicitors and barristers, the latter including the judges) changed the criteria, and solicited applications from two law lecturers, Trimble and McAleese—the one having worked within the jurisdiction, both in the University and the Institute, and the other having worked only in Dublin. And they appointed the one who had only worked in Dublin.

This was in clear breach of two basic 'Fair Employment' rules which were then being enforced on employers throughout the North. The job was not re-advertised when the criteria were changed, making it clear that they had been changed. And applications for the job were solicited. Apart from that, there remained the matter of whether the applicant who came closest to meeting the requirements as advertised had been appointed.

It was my opinion that the Fair Employment law was bad law. I discussed it with its author, Bob Cooper (perhaps he is now Lord Cooper?). He was convinced that all the trouble in the North was caused by sectarian discrimination in employment and that, if he could arrange things so that there was in every workplace Protestants and Catholics, in numbers proportionate to their size in the general population, peace would break out. And he took it to be axiomatic that any variation from that proportion in a workplace was proof of discrimination. I thought the conflict was due to other reasons, that his way of gauging discrimination was utterly unrealistic, that the degree of discrimination was exaggerated, and that his remedy would have the effect of aggravating community relations.

But he had his way. And complicated criteria governing employment procedures were drawn up and made law, and employers were made to jump through Fair Employment hoops on pain of prosecution. And the authorities themselves broke two of the basic rules in making a public legal appointment.

(If one wants to use the word 'sectarian', then the first systematic sectarian classification was done under the Fair Employment system, and the voting system under the Good Friday Agreement followed that pattern.)

In any case, that is the kind of thing I was engaged in. I spent no time at all theorising Unionism, either in universals or particulars.

I met Trimble to discuss how his

application had been solicited, and what his relationship with the Institute was. And he said he was willing to give evidence on these matters at the trial.

It had long been evident that he was discriminated against in his job at Queen's because he was a Loyalist. And now somebody with less experience than himself had been brought in from another jurisdiction to do the job which he had been asked to apply for. And he was willing to give evidence about these things in Court. Big deal! you might think. And yet so demoralised and intimidated had the Unionist community become that it was a big deal. Others refused to give evidence, even though it was obvious that it would have been entirely in the Unionist interest to have McAleese in court, prosecuting me and having these matters raked over in great detail.

Trimble got the nomination for a safe Unionist seat some weeks before the trial was due to be held. If he had not done so, I would not have considered a settlement, even though I did not want to win. (Though I doubt that there would actually have been a trial.) But Trimble, the politician, was a very different kettle of fish in my view from Trimble, the subject of discrimination and the victim of a gross breach of Fair Employment law. (He might have challenged the appointment legally as a breach by the law itself of the rules it was enforcing on others, and of discrimination against him. It took it that he did not do so, because it would have led to him being further discriminated against, and when I met him he indicated such was the case. And I could say, as an impartial observer at the base of society, who had nothing to gain or lose from the patronage system of the regime, that this was not paranoia.)

I had no interest in "*theorising Unionism*". That was the era of "*The theory of theoretical thought*", and I switched off from it, and deliberately proceeded with the most old-fashioned forms of understanding and means of expression. I took it from the outset that human existence is not a suitable subject for a science, as science had been constructed in modern times. There was no $E = MC^2$ of the human condition. I had read Aristotle, without guidance, around the age of 16, in a copy belonging to a small farmer, and I had grasped that "Man is a political animal". Since I had not read him under instruction, I had taken in that maxim with all its original force and complexity. And I saw that in Northern Ireland the unique structure of the state made it impossible for man to be a political

animal according to the modern norms.

One might prate about working-class unity. But a class is not an autonomous entity. It is a component part of a society. And a society in which there are classes is a component part of a state. And politics is the business of governing a state. And Northern Ireland was excluded from the politics of the state etc.

I did not proceed by deduction from Aristotle's axiom. I observed what was going on around me in Belfast, contrasted it with the goings-on in England and the Republic, and arrived back with Aristotle's axiom. If I had been educated, I'm sure Aristotle would have been sealed off from me, and I would have played the game of "*theorising Unionism*".

"A definition is the phrase which signifies that what-it-was-to-be (this or that)": Alexander of Aphrodisias, *On Aristotle's Topics*. And what it was to be Ulster Unionist, was to be extravagantly, exhibitionistically British, and yet be excluded from what it was that made Britain tick: the party-political life of the state. That is a highly particular explanation. I suppose it could be set out as a syllogism. But that would be a senseless exercise. The universal would be a proposition derived from a unique case. At least I could find nowhere else in the world that was governed as peculiarly as Northern Ireland. And I saw in the uniqueness of its mode of government sufficient reason for the persistence of what was called sectarianism.

It was obligatory under the all-pervasive patronage system operated by the Northern Ireland Office to avert one's mind from this obvious anomaly in Northern Ireland affairs, and to seek explanations of, and remedies for, 'sectarianism' on other grounds. Britain was not going to have responsibility for the persistence of 'sectarianism' attributed to the perverse mode of government which it imposed on the Six Counties. Patronage was therefore disbursed towards projects which traced it to other causes and applied other remedies. But sectarian alienation has got worse during the quarter of a century when remedies, such as the Fair Employment laws, were applied to those alleged causes. And I would say that the effect of those remedies was to worsen the alienation.

Maume writes: "Howe... appeals for transcendence of divisions through scholarly understanding and social democracy". And he says apparently in his own voice:

“Liberalism and social democracy may resolve the Northern Ireland problem; it is still necessary to explain why, despite benefits conferred by Liberal reforms, many 19th-century Irish nationalists specifically repudiated liberalism as a hypocritical mask for patronage and power, why labourism failed to overcome sectarianism under Stormont. Domination and exploitation may not be colonial and still rankle: one does not have to substitute myth for reason to respect and decipher the unfamiliar and sometimes unpalatable idioms in which the maimed tried to express their situation” (Are there echoes of Althusserian Marxism there? Theoretical theory for initiates: but populist ideology for the populace!)

What practical meaning is there in “*transcendence of divisions through scholarly understanding*”? Is it that those who become paid scholars can leave behind them the conflicting social entities out of which they emerge? That is certainly a possibility. I have noticed that money exerts a powerful intellectual influence. But most people cannot become hired academics. And many academics do not “*transcend*”.

And how might Liberalism, or any other *ism*, resolve the problem?

I recall from long ago the chatter about “*hypostatization*”—the taking of abstractions to be concrete entities. And that is what we have here. (The Althusserians condemned it as a theoretical error in others—not that there were many others during the high tide of Althusserian influence in the seventies—but it seemed to me that nobody hypostatized as much as the Althusserians.)

Liberalism was what the Liberal Party did. And the Liberal Party certainly brought into conjunction social elements which, left to their own devices, would have been sharply antagonistic. It combined them in the struggle to gain political power in the state. And Toryism did likewise on the other side of the party division. And the power of the state exercised a gravitational pull on the whole.

And likewise with Social Democracy. In the form of the Labour Party it drew into its ambit in Glasgow and Liverpool elements of the kind which were in total conflict with each other in Belfast. Or else the Orange elements entered the Tory Party, were restrained by it, and had much of their vigour diverted into the politics of the state.

And why did 19th century Irish nationalism repudiate liberalism? Because it was nationalism.

The abstraction called Liberalism had, in the concrete form it took in other countries, nationality as one of its ideals. But that was not the case with the British Liberal Party—at least not with regard to British affairs.

O’Connell was an English liberal who became an Irish nationalist. He was both for about 30 years. But, although he irritated the nationalists by refusing to cut the umbilical cord with the Liberal Party, it seems to me that he was chiefly responsible for bringing it about that 19th century Ireland was not incorporated into the Whig/Tory division of the state.

Maume hypostatizes. He takes an abstraction, Liberalism, to be a concrete political force. And yet he tries to reach out from this theoretical cocoon into the actual world.

It must be in hypostatic mode that he imagines that I “*reverted*” from “*two nations*” theory” to a “*pro-republican viewpoint*”. It cannot be anything that I have written that led him to suppose that I no longer consider that the two-nations view describes the situation. It is a factual observation which is neither Republican nor Unionist.

Thirty-six years ago I said that an all-Ireland state could only be brought about through an accommodation between nationalities—not through the political unification of an existent nationality. The two-nations approach was specifically and categorically rejected by all the political forces on the nationalist side—Jack Lynch, Conor Cruise O’Brien, Liam Cosgrave, Gerry Fitt. So what was to be done? Engage in appeals to moderation from the moral high ground! But I never saw moderation as a political force capable of bringing order out of chaos. It is only the force of inertia in a functional system. And, as far as real life goes, the moral high ground belongs in a philosophical farce by Aristophanes.

Early in 1972 the nationalist establishment in the South briefly threatened a mass national convergence on Newry, in response to bloody Sunday. So, I held my breath in the spirit of Nakanynye—*On the eve*. If it happened, it would set the problem in a different problematic, as the Althusserians used to say. It was the moment for Lynch and his followers to make good their rejection of the ‘two-nations’. But they backed off, and I set about my attempt to change “the Northern Ireland state” into Six Counties of the State which held them, and in which they were going to continue for a very long time.

It is not easy to devise a mode of agitation on something as big as that, and as far beyond the ordinary range of thought. And then I held off during the Sunningdale project. But, since May 1974, everything I have written on the ‘two nations’ has been interwoven with an insistence that the ‘sectarian’ antagonisms in Northern Ireland can only be overcome through practical accommodations through the party politics of the state. When the British State had to be ruled out, that left the Irish State. And I had long recognised that Sinn Fein was a party which orientated itself on a state, rather than on the pseudo-politics of a detached ‘province’.

Maume’s assumption that the two-nations is somehow only applicable within the British State leads him to a gross *non sequitur*, which is very surprising in a piece of writing which otherwise gives the appearance of being meticulous in its reasoning. Perhaps this has its source in a brief meeting we had in Belfast years ago.

It must be nearly ten years ago that Professor Bew ran into me near Shaftsbury Square and said he had a couple of students he would like me to see. I don’t know why, after cutting me for many years, Professor Bew has for the last 20 years been anxious to engage me in conversation. Being polite, I let him, but I would no longer discuss things freely with him as I used to do around 1970. He has not accounted for his years in the service of the Stickies, and, along with Ruth Dudley Edwards, he has been a literary collaborator of the celebrated murderer, and adviser of the state, Sean O’Callaghan. But I am a polite and sociable person, and am able on occasion to engage in inconsequential conversation.

Anyhow Professor Bew on this occasion, knowing from my pamphlet on Queen’s University what I thought of it, said he had two PhD students who would be out and about in the world doing things and he would like to show them off to me. And, as luck would have it, both of them turned up as we were standing there in the street, and Professor Bew took us all off for a coffee at a nearby hotel, where as I recall we spent about two hours. What I remember from the conversation is that they had discovered Arthur Lynch and thought him a significant figure. (He was a Home Rule MP, who fought with the Boers and was sentenced to death for treason, was reprieved, and ended his days recruiting cannonfodder for the Great War). The following day I ran into Maume in Great Victoria St. and stopped out of politeness to have a word with him. He made it clear on the instant that he did not want to have a word. That was entirely

understandable. I could be of not use to anybody with an academic career to make. He had to humour his Professor the previous day. But now, in the absence of that motive, he moved on. I did not see him again until Brian Murphy's meeting in Dublin last October at which Peter Hart's misuse of sources was taken apart. Maume did not dispute Murphy's dissection of Hart, though he asked a question which indicated support of Hart. (I did not recognise him even when he spoke, but I was told afterwards that it was him and I have no reason to doubt it.)

Perhaps he had Professor Bew in mind when he referred to my influence on "*theorisations of Ulster Unionism*". I have not read any of Bew's books since about 1980. In his publications of the 1970s he seemed to go out of his way to reject my conception of things.

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In the first part of this review of reviews I quoted a statement made by Jeremy Addis in a pretended review of my *Belfast Magazine* on the Casement diaries in his *Books Ireland*, that urged people "to support Sinn Fein (those well nown Marxist comrades), in their "efforts to harness the fire to peaceful uses" "

My understanding of a review is that, whether it approves or condemns, it should give the reader some accurate idea of what is in the publication being reviewed. Mr. Addis apparently has a different understanding of what a review is. He thinks it can be a ranting denunciation of the material reviewed in which an entirely false idea of it can be conveyed to his readers.

This 'review' was written for him by Professor McCormack, but Mr. Addis is entirely responsible for it. He puts a clause in his magazine saying that he is not responsible for opinion published in it. He is mistaken. Primary responsibility rests with the publisher. One may *write* what one pleases with impunity. Publishing it is a different matter. Until it is published, it is nobody's business but the writer's. If it is published it is everybody's business, and the responsibility lies with the publisher.

In 1969 and the early 1970s I went around Ireland trying to show people that they were fundamentally mistaken about the nature and character of the Ulster Protestant community, and to persuade them *not* to support the final push which would bring the Unionists into line with the Nationalist understanding of them. It is obvious that I failed. Jack Lynch denounced the two-nations view in the late Autumn of 1969 and only a handful of individuals took issue with him. A war

was launched with extensive popular approval. Some years later it became apparent that the war was not going to succeed, and many people who had been enthusiastically Republican in the early seventies cooled off to such an extent that they began to describe the Republicans as Fascists, often going into denial about their earlier views or claiming that somebody had misled them.

Their enthusiasm had contributed something to the war atmosphere of the early seventies, but their equally groundless denunciations in the later period were powerless to stop the war.

I lived on the battlefield (in West Belfast) the whole time, opposing the Republican policy and trying to devise alternative courses of action—and having some effect in individual cases.

About twenty years ago it was evident that military stalemate had set in. The Provos could not win, but neither could they be beaten. They had very substantial support in the Catholic community, for reasons which the chameleons in the South could not be bothered to understand. And the Unionist Party refused to take up a political orientation which would have enabled it to influence opinion in the Catholic community. The war might have continued with no end in prospect if a segment within the Republican movement had not embarked on what is now called the Peace Process and succeeded in drawing John Hume into it, and if Albert Reynolds had not seen the *realpolitik* of the situation and taken it in hand. And then, of course, some of those who had contributed to the war atmosphere in the early seventies began to harass the Republican leaders who had unexpectedly brought the war to an end in a way that was politically advantageous to Republicanism. And so I wrote

"It is a bit late in the day for Mc Cormack *et al* to prevent Enniskillens. The time for that was back in 1970. But what they did then was throw their little handfuls of faggots on the fire. That being so, integrity of conduct would require that they should now be assisting Sinn Fein in its efforts to harness the fire to peaceful uses, instead of denouncing it after the event—an event to which they made their own modest contribution."

I don't think anybody could have got that meaning from Mr. Addis's publication of isolated words from that paragraph.

And with regard to faggots and fires: I used to read *Books Ireland* when it began publication in the late seventies. A magazine which gave one some idea of

the contents of new publications, and perhaps even a critical assessment, would have been invaluable. But *Books Ireland* was not it. The Dublin coterie was prominent in it from the start, with the 'Stickies' to the fore. I recall, for example, Roy Johnston, Professor Bew, and Joy Rudd. I regarded the Stickies—the "Official" Republicans—as the greatest distorting influence on thought about Irish affairs, for reasons I shall give in a further article.

Two things in *Books Ireland* particularly struck me then: an editorial commendation of Padraig O Snodaigh's *Hidden Ireland*, and a review of Paddy Devlin's *Yes We Have No Bananas*. These two things summed up for me the self-deception indulged in by the Dublin middle class in those times. The thesis of *Hidden Ireland* was that the Ulster Plantation was Gaelic speaking, and was in that substantial respect similar to the native Irish society of the time, with the suggestion that it still contained residues of its origins which would be susceptible to a nationalist appeal for political unity.

O Snodaigh's book was published before the "one-nation theory" was put to the test—around 1971 I would guess. *Books Ireland* was not launched until the late 1970s, by which time the matter had been put to a very stern test. I suppose it was commenting on a reprint. It did so with a remarkable light-headedness.

Paddy Devlin's book was about the Outdoor Relief riots in Belfast in the mid-1930s. It contained the assertion that there were sectarian rates of Social Welfare benefits in the Northern Ireland social welfare system. There was no such thing.

One of these books fostered a groundless hope, and the other encouraged a baseless grievance. These matters will be dealt with next month, along with Mr. Addis's remarkable news that France did not attack Germany in 1870.

A final note about Dr. Maume. I have not read his books. But I have glanced at one of them. He seems to aim for a detached style—I suppose scholarly is the word for it—which does not reveal a political orientation. But then he makes these utterly crude political interjections which put one in mind of the Stickies. And his comment on Desmond Fennell (see *Irish Political Review* Jan. 2005) might even be described as childish. It is very curious.

Brendan Clifford

Correction: In last month's issue, p23, col 1, line 20: "Professor David Fitzpatrick" should have read "Professor McCormack".

Conservative Communism

The recent observation by Jack Lane (*Irish Political Review* November 2003) that Communism is a conservative philosophy needs to be revisited. In his article he makes the point that the English Marxist Hyndman, after translating *Das Kapital*, wished to convince the nineteenth century Tory leader Disraeli that communism was the most appropriate philosophy for the British Conservative party. Apparently Disraeli took Hyndman's approach seriously but decided it was not a practical proposition because he reckoned the ladies of the Primrose League would never take to free love. (Disraeli and the ladies of the Primrose League need not have worried. Free love is not mentioned at all in Marx's masterpiece *Das Kapital*).

The idea seems ludicrous now but in the days of early rampant Liberal Imperialism it was logical. And now that imperialism is rampant again since the collapse of the Soviet Union the idea that communism is a conservative philosophy seems relevant again.

Marx was fascinated by the Capitalist system. He recognised that it was a revolutionary system which disrupted pre-capitalist systems of production and also revolutionised the means of production within the system itself. Although, Marx can be criticised for drawing general conclusions from the English version of capitalism, the dominance of Anglo-American Imperialism in the world today makes his writings appear remarkably prescient.

The idea that communism is a conservative philosophy only seems ludicrous because of the Soviet development. Marx envisaged that communism would develop out of capitalist forms and therefore was only possible in mature capitalist societies. However, in Russia in 1917, communists found themselves in control of a country which was very far from being a mature capitalist society. The initial hope of the Bolsheviks was for a revolution in Germany but when this did not materialise they found themselves on their own. One strand of Bolshevism was in favour of abandoning the project. Trotsky's position was to spread world revolution as a means

of preserving the Soviet Union. But the position that won out was that of the Stalinists who favoured "socialism in one country".

The implication of Stalin's position was that the Communist Party had to use the State to develop the preconditions for communism in the Soviet Union. It had to revolutionise the forces of production, a task that was the historic role of the capitalist system. This had to be achieved in a much shorter time than England had managed to do, so as to be able to defend the country from hostile external forces. In short, the Soviet development was a deviation arising from specific Russian conditions. This is in no way to denigrate the great achievements of the Soviet Union, but only to state the obvious: the particular experience of the Soviet Union does not have a general application.

It was never the view of Marx that Communism itself would revolutionise the means of production (although he was of the opinion that the contradiction within the capitalism system of private ownership of the means of production and socialised production might act as a "fetter" or brake on productive forces). The demand for Social ownership of the means of production is nothing more than that human control should be exercised over the production process. Since the historic task of capitalism has been to socialise production or organise production on a society-wide and international basis, the only way of controlling it is for people (workers) to organise themselves on the same (i.e. social) basis.

Communism is a conservative philosophy because it seeks to reform the system on the basis of what already exists. But it seeks to control the system by ensuring that reform is on a human basis.

Communism is the polar opposite to what is now called "free market conservatism" or "neo conservatism". The latter is not "conservative" in any normal sense of the word. The so called "conservatives" believe in change—and change is not just constant but "exponential". Change is something good in itself regardless of the human consequences of that change. Under no circumstances

should human preferences or desires prevent change. How can this be called a conservative philosophy? On the contrary it is revolutionary in its orientation.

Another variation on the "neo conservative" theme is the demand that we should be competitive. Competitive-ness, according to this view, is a good thing in itself even if we (or at least workers) have to work longer hours for less pay to achieve this sacred goal. We must compete with the low wage economies of Eastern Europe and Asia even if the competition involves a downward spiral of low pay and unemployment. Labour markets must be "flexible". But since "flexibility" involves elimination of such things as the minimum wage and social protection the flexibility is all in a downward direction.

Since change is not merely constant but exponential, it is impossible to plan for the future. The individual is kept in permanent state of insecurity and anxiety. Such an environment is ideal for the feverish production and consumption necessary to sustain the system. It is also conducive for the manipulation of the individual's thoughts and desires by corporations.

All forms of collective activity are discouraged. In particular collective memory or history must be erased because it is an obstacle to "going forward". It is deemed that history has no "narrative structure". Therefore history is not history at all, but merely a collection of facts in the past.

Nowhere is this dichotomy between conservative communism on the one hand and radical free market economics on the other, more evident than in France. It is more noticeable in France because in other countries the free market ideology has won out and therefore is not the subject of debate.

The two dominant political ideologies in France since the Second World War have been Gaullism and Communism. De Gaulle was much too independent for the liking of Roosevelt and Churchill. The French leader was shocked to learn that D-Day had been planned without his knowledge. Recent documentaries on French Television have indicated that the Allies had no intention of liberating Paris. They were quite happy to let the Fascists and Communists fight it out in the streets. It was De Gaulle's decision to authorise General LeClerc's army to liberate Paris. This reinforced his status as leader of the French nation.

Gaullism aims to preserve the French way of life in the face of Anglo-American imperialism. It has done this by taking into account the strength of the Communist Party. The strong social protection, public transport system and the Common Agricultural Policy are legacies of Gaullism.

However, the Gaullist edifice is under pressure, not least because its conservative opponent Communism has been in decline. Also, since the end of the Cold War, Anglo-American Imperialism has been rampant. Globalisation has put pressure on the Gaullists to introduce minor free market reforms. However, these have proved unpopular and the Government has had to pull back, but they remain on the agenda.

The conservative social consensus is also under threat by the rise of Nicholas Sarkozy, who was recently elected leader of the UMP (the Gaullist party). The employers' organisation, the MEDEF, has also been more strident in urging "liberal" (the French use that word interchangeably with "free market" and "Anglo Saxon") reforms. Another Sarkozy family member is prominent in this organisation.

From a French perspective, Sarkozy represents a radical change in French politics. The communist newspaper *L'Humanite* has suggested that his elevation to the leadership of the UMP signals the end of Gaullism. This might be unduly pessimistic. While he is the leader of the largest party in the government, he holds no State position. He resigned as Finance Minister recently before he stood for the leadership of his party. There is no doubt that Chirac holds the reins of power within the Government. When asked about his differences with Sarkozy, Chirac famously replied that there was no disagreement. "*I decide and he executes*".

But it is obvious that now that Sarkozy is out of government he represents a threat to Chirac and is a possible Presidential candidate.

L'Humanite's article on Gaullism had an interesting comparison between the two politicians. The fundamental difference is that Chirac believes in achieving social consensus for his reforms whereas Sarkozy believes that by advancing policies on the basis of "social consensus" you are fighting your policies on the political ground defined by the socialists.

Sarkozy does not dare disagree with Chirac's foreign policy, but has hinted that there is a danger of being isolated

from the USA. On s recent visit to that country, he was feted by Condoleeza Rice, the person who had said that "*Germany must be censured and France punished*" following the disagreement over Iraq.

Sarkozy's foreign policy orientation is towards the UK and the USA, whereas Chirac seeks closer co-operation with Germany. Recently the French Government has tried to encourage more students to learn German.

In my view the most interesting disagreement is over the question of religion in society. The debate about the wearing of the Muslim veil and other religious signs in public schools dominated French politics for most of last year. The French attitude reflects a fundamental philosophical view of society. Its political establishment have noticed with horror that in recent years while many people in remote islands off the coast of Africa regard themselves as French, a significant number in the suburbs of Paris, Lyon and Marseille regard themselves as Algerian, Moroccan etc. Worse still some of these people have contempt for French values.

In some countries this would not represent a problem, but the French do not believe in multiculturalism. They believe that there is such a thing as a "society". Sarkozy, on the other hand, believes that the principle of separation of church and state should be weakened and that the state should finance the building of Mosques. *L'Humanite* has taken an orthodox communist position in relation to this policy. It thinks that religion will be used as a consolation to the masses following the devastation wrought by liberal reforms. While this may be true, in my view it misses the essential point of the Sarkozy project. In order for the liberal reforms to be implemented, French society must be broken down into component parts. Ultimately, a process of atomisation must take place.

Another policy Sarkozy has proposed is positive discrimination in favour of ethnic minorities. This policy of radical individualism is completely alien to the Gaullist conception of a unified society based on social consensus.

French society has had a taste of Globalisation and it doesn't like it. Its high labour costs have made it vulnerable to "delocalisation" or the transfer of production to low wage economies. But it is not just the Communist Party which is opposed to the liberal economic policies.

Other conservative forces in the society have rallied against Chirac's tentative reforms. Recently the Archbishop of Marseille, Bernard Panafieu, issued a strong denunciation of free market policies and their devastating effect on human dignity and family life.

This year will be a crucial year in determining the future of French society. Among the battles to be fought are the defence of the 35-hour week and the ratification of the Free Market European Constitution. The outcome of these battles will have profound consequences for the European labour movement.

John Martin

Editorial Note: It is hoped to publish Part 12—the concluding part of John Martin's review of *Das Kapital*—in next month's magazine. Publication has been delayed because of pressure of space.

Letters to Editor

Ameranglia v. Amerope?

Because I was away from base, I was late seeing Jack Lane's letter on this subject (*Irish Political Review* January). Jack questions the reality of the concept 'Amerope' which I used in my historical essay *The Birth of Amerope* (*Irish Political Review* December).

To my surprise, moreover, he also sees 'Amerope' as somehow opposed to the term 'Ameranglian' which is regularly used in this journal. There is some misunderstanding here. I regard 'Ameranglia(n)' as an apt way to refer to the essential unity of mind and purpose of the USA and England. I see it as a reality contained within, not clashing with, Amerope.

At the beginning of my article I defined Amerope as the geopolitical and cultural entity formed by the USA and Canada with western Europe (later European Union) in the wake of World War II. I made clear that I regard the US as preponderant in this 'geopolitical' (including military) and cultural entity. American culture is the only shared culture of the European Union. Obviously, then, I am including the UK in this Ameropean entity. Amerope contains within itself the particular 'Ameranglian' reality, which is a much older story.

Jack also refers to my treatment of the origin and development of the USA. In my book *The Revision of European History* and elsewhere, I have been experimenting with a more realistic re-telling of European history. Taking a hint from the old naming of the ancient Greek colonies in southern Italy and Sicily as Magna Graecia or Greater Greece, I call the areas of European settlement overseas since 1500 'Europe Overseas'. I am pointing out that, just as those colonial Greeks remained Greeks and are called Greeks, those overseas Europeans remained Europeans—and I am calling them (historically) Europeans. In their actions up to the present day, they have drawn on their European inheritance.

The USA became the most important part of Europe Overseas, as Carthage became the most important part, the superpower, of overseas Phoenician settlement. True, as Jack says, the USA in its foundation aimed to break with its European past and make all things new. But so, too, did France in the French Revolution, with its Year I of a new calendar and its Goddess of Reason. Neither country succeeded in this aim of a radical new beginning. Both remained substantially continuations of Europe, or more precisely, of different strains of Europe. The US has been, as Jack says, essentially a continuation of England.

So much for the historical background of the new phenomenon 'Amerope', which took shape only during the past half century.

Desmond Fennell

Holocausts

I have to disagree with Brendan Clifford in his article *Reviews* (Feb 2005 issue of *Irish Political Review*) when he states "that the Holocaust is officially held to be unique, comparable to nothing else..." I began to read Holocaust literature as soon as it was being published. Primo Levi's account of surviving the death camps comes to mind. *Auschwitz* by Dr. Miklos Nyiszli is another. *The Diary Of Anne Frank* yet another and many other memoirs of the survivors. I've been to see the Belsen death camp in the 1960s and I've been to Poland to look at the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp. When the hotel receptionist in Warsaw heard I was going there I was asked to remember the three million Catholic Poles who also died. That was an uncomfortable and embarrassing moment for me. I hadn't even thought of that. Such people as this receptionist has been termed anti-Semitic.

We fumble awkwardly and think maybe the whole subject shouldn't maybe be examined until the next century. Am I qualified to even comment on the matter of the Holocaust. Then I think maybe—I've been married to two Jewish women and Hitler may not have liked my five children. I have lived within the Jewish community in Sydney, Australia. I've been to Israel twice, back in the 1970s when most socialists supported that country. Though I will say I didn't unreservedly. I stayed with Israeli friends—members of a permanent army reserve who had been all wounded in the Yom Kippur war of 1974. I also learnt that most people were struggling to survive economically and that the clothes-lines seemed to bear mostly khaki shirts and trousers.

Five years ago I went to Amsterdam and visited the *Secret Annexe* in the Prinsengracht and listened to the chimes coming from the distant clock-tower as Anne Frank describes in her diary.

Personally, I need no reminders of the Holocaust anymore. It has repeated itself in the killing of thousands of Muslims by conveyer-belt means. Huge mass graves, rape as a weapon of war. I'm not interested by the fact that people call themselves socialist when doing so, as the Serbs did under the guise of being the Yugoslav government. That smacks too much of national socialism.

Leopold, King of the Belgians, killed ten million natives of what was once his private demesne, the Congo. Of the fifty million dead in WW2 half came from the Soviet Union. I am aware that the Israeli leadership uses the Holocaust *lesson* to batter down what amounts to a Third World people. With Anne Frank must also go the image of Iman Ihab al-Hams, the thirteen year old Palestinian schoolgirl lying in her coffin in a hospital in the Gaza Strip . . . gunned down in November 2004 by an Israeli army officer and then when dying having her body pumped with a further thirty shots. Or think of the ten year old Palestinian schoolgirl who is shot dead at her desk in a UN school in Gaza by an Israeli sniper during January, 2005. How many died during the days of British, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch colonisation plus Japan's assault on China during the 1930s and its dastardly behaviour during its occupation of Korea. *The Guardian* recently re-published the picture from 1952 Malaya of a pleased and smug-looking British Royal Marine holding up the severed heads of a Chinese teenage girl and boy. The girl has had her teeth bashed out first before being killed.

I remember that particular photograph well, back then, along with many others. We had copies of the negatives during my time in the CPNI and they had to be hidden from the RUC. I was reading Holocaust material at the time. I didn't think to myself then that this incident didn't really matter as much as what happened during WW2. or that it bears no relation to the death camps. General Templar at the time went in for imprisonment camps which he called fortified villages. Much like that which was operated by the British during the Boer War. Such camps also came into being during the occupation of Kenya. You may have had an Irma Grise of Auschwitz or a Blond girl Beast of Belsen but you also had Ms English Home Counties battering Kenya women prisoners in the camps with a walking stick.

And how many died in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos at the hands of the U.S. and before that the U.S. massacre of thousands of Muslims by machine-gun in the Southern Philippines during 1898–1900.

And then there is Ireland, last but not least. The famines that could have been prevented or at least relieved. And what about the North which is still not quite understood by those south of the border. The daily badgering of the Catholic population . . . the remarks about being sub-human, dirty, shiftless, not-to-be-trusted, death threats by the thousands holding gun licences, name-calling . . . the relentless wounding of self-esteem, leading to the Shankill Road Butchers and Loyalist death squads and the killing of three civil rights lawyers with no one going down for it. This sort of behaviour marks people for life and sometimes destroys their lives. Who howled the loudest at the remarks of Mary McAleese—the DUP of course, the most rabidly anti-Catholic party in the North. It is a joy for them to have Sinn Fein to attack. It is a predominately Catholic party and the DUP can hide their distaste of Catholics under the cloak of politics.

Are we to forget all that because the major powers decide to specifically hold a Holocaust Day which will neatly exclude their own crimes. Britain will put Germany on the spot once more while Britain helps to occupy Afghanistan and Iraq and interfere in their former colonies of Sudan, Zimbabwe, Burma and many others in the mode of neo-colonialism.

Reviews first of all started off with Mary McAleese, President of Ireland, and her spat with Brendan Clifford, when she was about to become head of the Institute of Professional Legal Studies at Queens

University during 1988. Should David Trimble have got the job under the Fair Employment rules? The same David Trimble who was to later do the dance of death with Ian Paisley along the Garvathy Road in a no-nothing British statelet that see the Catholic population as mere crop-pies whom the Brits and their allies were trying to make lie down again during that 30-year war and whom the securocrats in Whitehall want to attempt to down again.

Of course thinking during that time by those who contribute and edit the admirable *Irish Political Review* was a very different matter during the Two-Nations theory. I don't think it is a theory that should be defended anymore. I will admit that it was an exciting idea at the time, much in the same way that the pamphlet *Partition—The Uneven Development of Capitalism* published then by the B&ICO caused an entirely different view of partition. The border seemed to be a fait accompli and I myself thought it was an end to sterile nationalist sloganising. Thinking has certainly advanced in the *IPR* in excellent articles...

Unfortunately there were plenty of reasons for those supporting the Two Nation theory (myself included) to be castigated as *Fenian Orangies*. Many times at meetings I listened to some imported Protestant militant belabouring the Catholic population in what could only be described as racist terms — Catholic areas looked run-down compared to the Protestant areas, *their* school system taught too much *Roman Catholicism*. I expected some of the speakers to make the claim that Catholic women only had to endure six months pregnancy unlike the Protestant woman's nine months, that if a Catholic women didn't have enough children the priest would come along and impregnate her. This all sounds crude but it was said out of maliciousness by the Dr. Goebbels section of the population. The loyalist death squad hate pamphlets also bordered on the psychotic. What sections of the loyalist militants had been yearning to do during the 50 years of Stormont one-party rule was coming to fruition. So the Protestant leaders took all the Two-Nations theory people could give and gave back nothing in return. The *Belfast Magazine*, as I remember, even gave out an alarm about the Arts Council of Northern Ireland coming under too much influence from the nationalists.

Having said all that those concerned with the *Irish Political Review* have had the courage to put forward new ideas, invaluable ideas. Now they can afford to stop defending the Two-Nations theory. But

can the defence of it be stopped when it is part and parcel of a vendetta that started some time back in the 1980s.

Wilson John Haire

London, 10th February.2005

Jack Lane comments as follows on this letter:

I think Wilson John Haire is under some misapprehensions on the issues he raises. He interprets Brendan Clifford's reference to the Holocaust being "*officially held to be unique, comparable to nothing else...*" as a fact that Clifford accepts. I doubt that this is the case.

To counter this he proceeds to refute the idea by quoting several other examples of genocide, though he misses out a few—including that of the natives of North America, Australia and Tasmania. He is pushing at an open door in this argument. He rightly shows the Holocaust was one of many genocides. Every genocide is unique in its methodology. It is usually effective with state of art technology and organisation though the methods are seen as banal when they prove very successful. But the end result is always the same—mass death. So it was with the Holocaust.

He suggests that we give up on the two nations theory because "the Protestant leaders took all the Two-nations people could give them and gave back nothing in return". I am surprised that he reckons nations can be declared in and out of existence according to attitudes of its political leaders. Nations would be very ephemeral things indeed if that was the case. Nations are bit like elephants, they may be hard to define exactly, and they may not be able to define themselves exactly, but there is no doubting their existence especially if they occasionally charge at you. And neither do their existence depend on how they behave—good, bad or indifferent.

I agree with the 'two nations theory' because it makes sense of Irish history over the past two centuries. I had no great interest in what Protestant leaders thought of it. I was much more concerned with what Nationalist leaders thought of it and how they dealt with it. There is no doubt that the latter have taken much more notice of it than the former, and acted on it. But unfortunately they have lost they bearings in the process. Many of them seem to have interpreted Two Nations as meaning *no nation*—or post-national as they sometimes put it. What else can explain the connivance of the Southern state in disparaging its own origins? What else can explain the craven, unnecessary

apologising by its Taoiseach and President to Paisley Inc.? When the representatives of the nation genuflect to Paisley, it means they accept he is represents a similar force to them. If not a nation, what else does he represent that explains him rather than explains him away? Is he really just a Southern Nationalist who has lost his way?

Mr. Haire says that now we "can afford to stop defending the two-nations theory. But can the defence of it be stopped when it is part and parcel of a vendetta that started some time back in the 1980s." I don't know what vendetta he refers to, but whatever it was in the 1980s it could have had nothing to do with the start of the 'Two Nations theory', as that was developed in the aftermath of the August 1969 pogrom. It did not then take long to realise that the people on one side of the barricades were not exactly part of those on the other side. And the realisation was aided enormously by being behind one set of barricades. The reality of the Two Nations was there long before the theory and it was almost old hat by the 1980s.

Short Cuts

THE ECONOMIST

Someone has handed us a copy of the *Economist's* recent review of the Irish economy. The review begins with a small helping of humble pie: admitting that in its 1988 review it believed that the Irish economy was a basket case and also that it did not anticipate the Celtic Tiger. But then it claims that no one else predicted it either. We think David McWilliams might quibble with the latter point.

However, there are some interesting statistics in the review such as:

- Ireland accounts for 25% of all foreign direct investment into the European Union.
- One third of all computers sold in the EU are manufactured in Ireland.
- Abortions (mostly performed in the UK) in the 1980s amounted to 4.5% of all pregnancies, now the figure is 10%.
- In the same period births out of "wedlock" have increased from 5% to 31%.

We were going to wade through the *Economist's* right wing analysis, but then

we saw that Michael McDowell was being represented as “*thoughtful*” and Mary Harney was “*tough*”, as if the Progressive Democrats was responsible for the economic success. We sort of lost interest when the review said that the vote for divorce in the 1990s was “*decisive*”.

PUBLIC PRIVATE FINANCE

Noel Dempsey is a man with ideas: one idea yesterday and a different idea today. Some of his ideas are good but some are very bad. An example of a bad idea is the Public Private Partnership Scheme.

This is an idea imported from Britain. The ideological justification for it seems to be that sharing the finance of public projects with the private sector is a good thing. But a child of five could tell you, even if a right wing economist could not, that adding a middle man into the provision of public services is bound to increase costs. The private company will want its “cut” of public money. Also borrowing for private sector companies is more expensive because of the risk premium (the debt going “bad”). This premium doesn’t apply to public borrowing.

It seems that what common sense would tell you is confirmed by reality. Five schools built under a pilot Public Private Partnership (PPP) scheme have cost between 8% and 13% more than the same projects would have cost the State according to the Comptroller and Auditor General (The Irish Times, 29/9/04). They were supposed to save 6%.

British company Jarvis PLC was the private partner in the above scheme. It doesn’t do any of the building work but subcontracts it out to construction firms. It then operates the accommodation and facilities at the schools. In Britain ownership is vested with the private company. The experience in Britain has not been a happy one and has also resulted in massive cost overruns. There, the system is perceived as an accounting sleight of hand. It is a way of taking borrowing out of the public sector. But surely there is no need for such practices in this country where the Public Debt continues to decline as a percentage of GNP?

The Public Private Partnership Schemes should be ended before any more tax payers’ money is wasted.

SUNDAY INDEPENDENT SUPPORTS VANDALISM!

In a radical break from its “law and order” editorial line the *Sunday Independent* opened the New Year with support for vandalism. At least what other conclusion can be drawn from its edition

of 2nd January 2005?

Jim Cusack reported on the vandalism of a statue of former IRA Chief of Staff Sean Russell in Fairview Park, except he didn’t call it vandalism. The headline says *Anti Fascists Behead Statue Of Russell*. Later on the report says the head and right arm were “*removed*”.

Cusack describes Russell as a “*Nazi collaborator*”. The report then includes a 300 word statement from the un-named group responsible for the vandalism. A similar report appeared in the *Observer*.

Also in the *Sunday Independent* Ruth Dudley Edwards began her column on the Editorial page by wishing “*A Happy New Year to the patriots who last week de-commissioned the statue of Sean Russell*”.

Not bad publicity for an anonymous group!

But what are the implications of this new “*anti fascist*” line from the *Sunday Independent*? Should the inventors of concentration camps also be targeted? Can readers expect similar support for private initiatives to “*remove*” monuments with British Imperial associations?

SUNDAY TIMES ALMOST REMEMBERS

BLOODY SUNDAY

The *Sunday Times Magazine* (2/1/05) had a piece on the killing of the Cairo Gang.

The article says that the gang consisted of a group of British Intelligence Officers who received their name as a result of a previous mission in Egypt. It goes on to say that they were in Dublin in 1920 to “infiltrate the IRA and to capture or kill the Irish republican revolutionary Michael Collins”.

Unfortunately for them Collins’s men

got to them first. They were wiped out on 21st November 1920 and “*the day became known as Bloody Sunday*”!

Is that all?!

Even allowing for the *Sunday Times* being an English paper, it could have given just a little bit more information. Like, for instance, following the death of the fourteen members of the Crown forces (12 members of the Cairo gang and two Auxiliaries) the Auxiliaries went to Croke Park and shot fourteen civilians including a footballer, Michael Hogan. (The Hogan Stand is named in his memory).

Finally, in the evening two high ranking IRA officers, Brigadier Dick McKee and Vice Brigadier Peadar Clancy were arrested and then killed (no mention of a false surrender!). This took the death toll to thirty in the space of fifteen hours.

And that’s why “*the day became known as Bloody Sunday*”.

Incidentally, fourteen civilians were also killed by the Parachute regiment in January 1972 in Derry in another act of state terrorism.

And that’s why that day also “*became known as Bloody Sunday*”.

ABBEY THEATRE

The State subsidised Abbey Theatre has a production of Sean O’ Casey’s *Plough and the Stars* in the Barbican Centre in London. The preview of the production includes the following sentence:

“Despite being on the bread line and fighting for survival, the characters ignite the play with their banter, humour and rancour until tragedy strikes and the full horror and waste of the fight for freedom is realised.”

So the struggle to set up the State which subsidises the Abbey was a waste of time!

Ireland’s Intelligentsia BITE The Air

A barbican is a section of a mediæval fortress; The Barbican is a (very) large Arts Centre in the City of London, which seems to be based on the labyrinth principle, it is very easy to get lost in it. Sitting through aspects of its *BITE* ‘05 season one rather wished one had got lost. (*BITE* stands for Barbican International Theatre Events.) *The Abbey* (Ireland’s National Theatre) is celebrating its centenary, and it brought to London a new production of Seán O’Casey’s *The Plough And The Stars*. (The title refers to the flag of the Irish Citizen Army and of the

IT&GWU, the Irish Transport & General Workers’ Union.) There were also discussions of the effects of *The Plough* and *The Abbey* on Irish life and culture, and politics. (It is interesting that in England ‘politics’, ‘culture’, and even ‘life’, are regarded as discrete matters, and not essentially the same thing.)

The three discussions were a ‘Pre-show talk’ by Ben Barnes, the Director (of the Abbey and of this particular play), given on 20th January; the next night was *The Political Resonance Of O’Casey’s*

The Plough And The Stars, while on 27th January there was another ‘Panel Discussion’—billed in most of the handouts as the *Cultural Life Of Contemporary Ireland*, but announced by the Chair on the night, Alistair Nevin, as *Would There Still Be Riots In The Streets?*—though elsewhere this was given as the title of the January 21 discussion. This may account for the element of confusion at the sessions, but I would not bet on it. Intellectual Ireland is in a state of confusion bordering on dissolution (into a province of England). Modern Scottish culture has more substance to it. The week before this Irish ‘invasion’ the Barbican (with the BBC) celebrated the ‘shamelessly’ (the only word for it), leftist and Catholic composer James MacMillan. This ‘Composer Weekend’ included music inspired by unambiguously [Roman] Catholic ideas, class politics—and a Ceilidh!

The papers on the production need to be dealt with. There were three (four, if the sheet advertising the actual *Plough* is counted): the Barbican handout about events in January 2005; one about the BITE events; the programme for the production; and the single sheet (an A4 fold-over) mentioned above.

In the Barbican Events handout (p7) there was a screed, *A new ‘Plough’ for a new century*, by Martin Drury (“...a freelance theatre director in Dublin”). Mr. Drury is under the impression that there was such a body as “the Irish Citizens’ Army”, which undermines any confidence the reader might be inclined to repose in him.

The element of incoherence is evident in his 500-word article, mentioning “a working class community distracted from self-determination by the false gods of Irish republicanism”—a phrase so vague as to constitute a riddle. In fact the ICA (Irish Citizen Army) was a wing of the Irish Transport & General Workers’ Union, a—if not *the*—major vehicle by which working class communities throughout the island of Ireland attained ‘self-determination’. Assuming the latter phrase means a decent standard of living, opening up entrance to ‘culture’ (in the narrow sense in which the various discussions used the term), though the Irish working class had, and to an extent still has, a culture, even cultures, of its own.

We get a disquisition on the children in the play, including “...the child of a would-be Republican hero—who, tellingly, is still-born”, yet another ambiguous (or

nonsensical) phrase. The Irish Republic is as solid a fact of political life as, just for instance, the Argentine Republic. With the difference that the former has held a remarkably steady democratic course through all its travails—which have included hostility from powerful States, the UK mostly, but also the USSR, which kept Ireland out of the UN for ten years. It is conceivable that Martin Drury is not writing about political matters, but the *Plough* has always been regarded as a political play, and he gives no indication that he is discussing some other matter.

There is another write-up about the play (p19), the most remarkable aspect of which is the ‘disappearance’ of the Great War (an omission which provides a *leitmotif* of this series of events). It is possible that, under the influence of the ‘historical revisionists’, this terrible series of blood-lettings in Europe, Asia, and Africa, is simply taken to be an unremarkable fact of life, almost a natural phenomenon. It is not regarded as something in which England and its Empire was deeply implicated, in the sense of turning a limited, European, war into one spreading out to the ends of the earth (in particular those bits of the earth sitting atop oil reserves).

It seems that the play “*is set at the time of the bloody Easter Rising*”—but there was a major offensive by the British Army on the Somme at the same time as the “bloody” Rising. Whole armies marched towards machine-gun emplacements, in a collective act of mindless ‘following of orders’; the casualties amounted to hundreds of thousands, including Irishmen in the 36th (the Ulster—meaning the 1912 UVF) and the 16th (largely Redmond-recruited, Irish) Divisions.

Further on we are told, “*tragedy strikes and the full horror and waste of the fight for freedom is realised*”: a quite stunning assertion. Does the writer mean that the fight for Irish freedom was not worth the bother? If not, what was the alternative? The fantasy-alternative is that ‘England [would] keep faith’, and Ireland be granted her freedom as a consequence of helping to fight the Great (imperialist) War. The briskly barbarous response to the setting up of Dáil Éireann punctures such a notion for all but the most hardened recidivist revisionists. (A further aspect of this assertion is whether it applies to every ‘fight for freedom’. Ought the 13 Colonies have remained under the Crown? EOKA and Mau-Mau were mentioned in the course of some of the discussions, ought

they to have behaved themselves and waited until they were allowed to make their own way in the world? Even raising such matters tends, for most adults to show the sheer absurdity of such notions.)

The BITE brochure repeats this assertion, and applies the dilemma of “the conflicting needs of living and dying for one’s country” to the two central figures of the play, Nora and Jack Clitheroe (the latter an ICA officer). Surely Jack Clitheroe was fighting for something other than ‘his country’? Connolly told the Citizen Army volunteers to hold onto their weapons, as they might have to fight elements in the Volunteers in a class war. But, judging from the play and discussions, the only difference between the ICA and the Irish Volunteers was that the latter had nicer uniforms. Connolly said on Easter Monday, “*We are going out to our deaths*”, but he had probably been quite sanguine about the Rising being successful until the news came that the German arms had not been landed.

The Rising then became a ‘protest in arms’, but it could quite easily have become something more—militarily—substantial. Thomas Ashe and Liam Mellows kept the garrison forces busy in north County Dublin and in county Galway—Terence MacSwiney bitterly regretted not seizing the initiative in Cork, as did MacCurtain in Limerick. Even with the arms they had to hand, the Volunteers might have made a severe dent in Dublin Castle’s prestige, had it not been for MacNeill’s countermanding order telling the Volunteers not to go on ‘manœuvres’.

Can anyone imagine American or French intellectuals having similar vague, impressionistic, notions about the founding of their own Republics?

This little blurb mentions Francis O Connor’s “evocative set”, “strewn with the debris of shattered lives”, presumably the latter is a reference to a moraine of household items in front of the stage. They are all a dull gray colour, the only bright spot being a Plough and the Stars flag. Presumably the latter is part of the ‘debris’ of the ‘shattered lives’ of the people living in the same tenement as Nora and Jack. But who shattered their lives in the first place? It certainly wasn’t the IT&GWU (or its Citizen Army), of which the Plough and the Stars is the symbol: rather like a sentence without a subject, this is essentially meaningless.

The programme itself is in the same

format as the Barbican's publications, and bears its logo, though presumably the Abbey sanctioned the material in it. It contains the usual information about the play and players—the Abbey does not have an ensemble of performers, a point emphasised by Ben Barne—and about the staff and designers and so on. (Paddy Cunneen produced a very good score—I have a suspicion that the Barbican, and the rest of 'cultural' England, does not believe there is such a thing as an Irish composer, though a Composer Weekend given over to, say, Tom Kinsella probably would not be a bad idea.) It also contained two essays by academics at UCD (University College, Dublin).

Mary Daly, Professor of History (and a specialist in Dublin working class history) contributes *Tenement Life*. It is pretty straightforward, though some assertions may be questionable. In 1914-18 "Dublin, unlike Belfast, attracted very little war-related work", work for women was also available in Belfast. (This is simply stated as if this work was unproblematic, and not unhealthy and dangerous). However, John Lynch's 1997 study, *A Tale of Three Cities* suggests Dublin did get a fair amount of 'war-work'.

There are some other suggestions which are rather odd: Bessie Burgess (the Protestant Loyalist figure in the play—whose death by shooting by a British 'squaddie' must surely have been meant as the bitterest of ironies—has her only son in the Army. He "may have enlisted because he was a Unionist and a supporter of the British monarchy... but the majority joined the forces because they offered regular employment and money for their families". Prior to this she writes, "Dubliners had a long tradition of service in the British army", an assertion been disputed in "*An Irish Empire?*" edited by Jeffrey Richards. The steady money came in handy, of course, but the reason why very many working class (and middle class) Dubliners, and others from the south and west of the island were in British uniform, was because the Home Rule Party (the United Irish League) led by John Redmond, recruited them. And they recruited them in their tens of thousands, it is difficult to understand why that is not stated in so many words.

Presumably such matters would not leave the Rising exposed as a comparatively freakish event, given that scores of thousands of Irishmen were dying for somebody else's country. (Or more

precisely, dying so that England's Empire become bloated with the booty of other people's countries and their natural resources, from 1918 onward. This happened about the time that those who had managed not to be shot in 1916 were told that their Dáil Éireann was not going to be tolerated, and that winning a General Election hand's down was of no consequence 'amidst the bulks of actual things', in Pearse's phrase. There may be other reasons for this refusal to state the obvious, but 'revisionist' academic consensus on the Rising seems to cover most eventualities. Some facts simply are not going to be put before the reading public, no matter how flabbily inconsistent, or lop-sided, it leaves an argument.

The other essay was *The Plough's the Thing* is by Christopher Murray, Associate Professor of English, the fact that the title is essentially meaningless stands as a warning to any innocent reader: the essay is genuine gibberish. Professor Murray clearly can't get himself to write what Ruth Dudley Edwards said, on Thursday, January, 21: "*1916 was bad*" (meaning, needless to say, the Rising, and not the easily-prevented massacre on the Somme). He clearly does think 1916, the Rising, was bad, but is either too cowardly to say so, or recoils from the implications of his own (or more precisely, Roy Foster's, or Francis Shaw SJ's) thinking. He quotes O'Casey writing about a New York revival of the play in 1960, unfortunately the quotation is sentimental twaddle with no analytical (meaning political) element in it whatsoever.

Murray seems to be claiming that O'Casey would have preferred Larkin to be the Figure in the Window, instead of Pearse—meaning, presumably that he aspired to a 'pure' plebeian Rising—but the Citizen Army could hardly have occupied a floor of the GPO, quite apart from the fact that they had pitifully few arms. (The Citizen Army and Volunteers had to purchase their own uniforms and weapons, and the latter were rather scarce in Ireland at the best of times, and with DORA, the Defence of the Realm Act, in operation acquiring arms was next to impossible. Presumably, the tailors of Ireland were in no rush to make uniforms for illegal armies.)

"*The real and invented interact here to question and deconstruct the whole direction and purpose of the 1916 Rising.*" That sentence is interesting in that it uses 'deconstruct' as a synonym for 'destroy', which must surely be its nearest actual

meaning, especially in cases like this one. There is also the question of the 'purpose' of the Easter Rising. If the weapons had been safely landed on Good Friday, and distributed around the island, then a situation of dual-power could have been created, Cork and Limerick, and other towns could have been seized, MacNeill would not have issued a countermanding order. The railway workers would have supported the insurgents, especially with Connolly leading the Citizen Army into alliance with the Volunteers.

(This is not quite 'counter-factual' history, as MacNeill claimed after the Rising that he would not have issued the countermand if he had thought a Rising could succeed. And the Dáil was accused of being Bolshevik because, like the Soviet Government, it had the loyalty of the rail workers, the Red Army was terrifyingly mobile because it was often carried to far distant points by rail, rather than having to slog its way by forced marches. In Ireland, apart from carrying personnel and the very few available weapons about the place the IT&G workers engaged mostly in sabotage, strikes and intelligence-gathering.)

By Easter day the 'purpose' of the Rising was a 'protest in arms' simply to keep the flame of Irish Republicanism alive, otherwise the tradition might have died of terminal derision. The Volunteers, and to an extent the ICA, would have been regarded as toy soldiers (Pearse and Plunkett wore swords on the first day of the Rising). And, as for the endlessly recycled whinging about 'blood sacrifice', who exactly demanded blood? Some of the soldiers manning the Courts Martial suggested a form of POW status for the 'rebels', 'Dublin Castle' for somewhat different reasons wanted them handled carefully. It was the politicians—sorry, British Statesmen—who demanded the blood of, among others, Willie Pearse who was shot to kill-off the Pearse name. He and the other people sentenced to be shot and hanged sacrificed their blood, because the House of Commons demanded it. During Easter Week itself, the Volunteers and Citizen Army men did not shell themselves, that was done by Royal Navy ships (though not, despite the song, by 'big guns'—meaning Dreadnoughts the 'all big-gun ships').

The next section of this article will deal with the talks and discussions, and to an extent, with the production.

Seán McGouran

Ladislav Novomesky: *Poetry And The 20th Century*

When my selection of Ladislav Novomesky's poems and essays, *Slovak Spring*, was launched in Dublin last October, the question came up in discussion: isn't it ruinous for a poet to get involved in politics? Shouldn't he stay well clear? In reply, people pointed to some of the major English poets who were active politically—and sometimes in atrocious ways!—: Spenser, Milton, Dryden, etc., not to mention examples from the Continent. Whether or not it is good for them, for some poets this seems to be their nature or their destiny. And the politics isn't necessarily fatal to the poetry. Or if it does ruin the worst of the poetry, maybe in some way it also perfects the best.

In an interview given when he was in his mid-60s, Novomesky expressed a low opinion of his own political talents. He might have been right about that. According to his friend Ilja Ehrenburg, a Russian literary man of a tougher type, his personality seemed in sharp contrast to the politics he was involved in.

"Tall, slim, with bright abstracted eyes", Ehrenburg remembered him at the end of the 1920s, "throwing in unexpected, quiet responses here and there, he struck me as the living embodiment of the traditional 'poet' who is separated from everyday life by a transparent but impenetrable curtain of art. My first impression was both accurate and misleading. In the young Novomesky there lived side by side (and often by no means peaceably) an artist and a political militant."

Ehrenburg thought he was political from a sense of duty. On a Russian editor's statement that "*journalism became Novomesky's calling*", he commented dryly,

"An architect may find himself during a war in a sappers' unit, blowing up bridges; that is not, however, his calling, that is his duty. Art was Novomesky burning passion his whole life long".

Novomesky, anyhow, besides being an outstanding Slovak poet, was a full-time communist newspaperman based in Prague in the 1920s and 30s; afterwards in wartime Slovakia, where the Communist Party was illegal, he was a newspaperman in the bourgeois press and a political

conspirator; in 1944 he was an anti-Nazi rebel, then a diplomat for the rebels in London; in 1945 he became Slovak Minister for Education and Culture in the restored Czechoslovak Government; in 1951 he was accused of treason, confessed to his fictional crimes and was convicted, and spent the next few years in prison; and finally, in the 1960s, he was an impassioned political reformer. At that time he made a major contribution to the culture of the so-called Prague Spring.

The Prague Spring is all too easy to laugh at—when it ended in August 1968 with the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Union and its four allies, the Government didn't even have to be overthrown: they were simply kidnapped, lectured, informed that at the Conference of Yalta the Soviet Union and Anglo-America had divided up Europe for all time (Brezhnev to Dubcek: "*Do you think the Italian Communist Party can take power in Italy? Well, they can't! And you can't restore capitalism in Czechoslovakia!*")—and then, properly chastened, that very same Government was sent back to work! And nevertheless the Prague Spring is interesting. It was an attempt to reform the 20th century's major new form of politics—in many ways its central form of politics: Marxism-Leninist socialism. If mankind is to continue its modern experiment of living overwhelmingly in cities, then it seems that a reformed socialism which leaves scope for personal development would have much to recommend it. The Prague Spring was aiming at this, however ineptly, therefore it is interesting. And Novomesky's poems are, in my view, the finest product of 'Prague Spring' culture; and that's with all the Kunderas, Klimas, Skvorvecys, Holubs etc. etc. duly taken into account.

Novomesky, in fact, is a valuable witness of the twentieth century. He was born in 1904 in Budapest, which was then the city with the largest population of Slovaks. His parents were Lutheran Slovak migrants, both of them from families of master craftsmen; his father was a master tailor. In Ladislav's early teens the following events occurred in quick succession: the Russian Revolution,

the ending of World War I with the defeat of Austria-Hungary, the foundation of Czechoslovakia, and the communist revolution in Budapest led by Bela Kun. This last event caused his mother to move the family to Czechoslovakia. Young Ladislav was fluent in Slovak, which was the language of his home, but all his education so far had been in Hungarian, and the books he was reading for himself were Hungarian also. However, he adapted so well that within three years he was writing passable Slovak poetry.

At the age of 22 he wrote:

Time flies / like indistinguishable birds.

1904— / I've forgotten that year, I like my black umbrella / in the Cafe Union.

I know only, in that year I a radiant star from Bethlehem / scarcely filled the sky, / one woman just / bore a boy in pain. (*Poem*)

Looking back now at the 1920s—in Central Europe, not in Ireland!—it seems that that was when time was flying at its fastest, faster than ever before or since. The speed of time was amazing, and appalling. In the wake of World War I, "*a path was freed for all the submerged currents of mankind in spiritual turmoil*", as the Slovak critic Milan Pisut put it. A feeling was diffusing itself through Europe like a poisonous gas: the sense that the foundations of everything were collapsing. Or simply disappearing. You did not need to be very old to have the impression that the ground was vanishing under your feet. 22 might be quite old enough.

A wild, reckless, desperate fury; a boundless feeling of loss . . . those are the spiritual extremes of the 1920s, and both of them are well represented in Slovak literature. *The Living Whip* (1927), a novel of war and plebeian vengeance written by the 23-year-old Milo Urban, is absolutely white-hot furious. It is mainly about the effect of the World War on a village community near the Polish border. It ends with a mighty explosion of popular fury, which climaxes when the novel's cool-headed hero, Adam Hlavaj, in the midst of a drunken mob looting the stock of the local Jewish publican, quite soberly sets fire to the premises because "that hole was where all our misery began". A German translation, published by one of the left-wing houses, was afterwards banned by the Nazis. Milo Urban, however, later became one of the most radical National Socialists in the pro-German Slovak State of 1939-45; but

having done a “*decade of penance*” after the War, he came back into literature in 1956, and in Communist Czechoslovakia he published three more novels . . . with the same hero, Adam Hlavaj, continuing the same series which he had begun in the 1920s! His strange career, and his outstanding talent, make one think of the Irish novelist Francis Stuart.

The Living Whip, anyhow, will match anything for fury. And the feeling of loss is in Novomesky’s *Sunday* (1927) and *Romboid* (1932), in the bleak cityscapes, in the menace of movement in time and space:

The train loses its gleaming rails. /
The rails’ gleaming is lost on the sunlit
track. / And who will bring them back?
(*Journey*)

The young Novomesky even became convinced that the artist in him was lost, or redundant. His poetry could be nothing but a futile self-indulgence, “*broken bits of childish games*”. Poetry was an ancient art, and the fast-changing world was getting rid of ancient things. Equally, poetry was not useful, and the world was obsessed with usefulness and crying out for useful people to give their devoted service.

That song of the boy *I* did not change
the shape of the world. (*Poem*)

It followed that one of his two selves, the poet, would have to be sacrificed to the other, the politician. Sometimes Novomesky treats this sacrifice as an accomplished fact. *Poem*, quoted above, is the best example. His life was a quest, and his poetry lived in relation to that quest, however precariously. In April 1930 the suicide of Vladimir Majakovskij convinced him that poetry truly was finished—here was the one genuine poet who had known how to ride the tiger of revolution, and now he could do it no longer!

But in 1934, after hearing the visionary speech of Nikolai Bukharin to the First Congress of Soviet Writers in Moscow, Novomesky drastically changed his opinion about poetry in the modern world. Poetry now was a prophecy of human potential. It was a vision of the beauty that lay trapped in an ugly and suffering world, a world under a curse.

Bukharin, in his role as utopian visionary, had a powerfully liberating influence on Novomesky as a poet. The effect can already be seen in some poems of his third collection, *Open Windows* (1935). *Meetings* is an ambitious treatment

of “*the village question*”. Struck by the portrait of a beautiful woman on a gallery wall, and obsessed with the feeling of having met her somewhere before, the poet realises she is actually an image of the Slovak village.

But in everyday reality the village is an ugly place, interested only in mean continuity, superstitious, wearied and ageing. Its vigorous young men have emigrated or gone off to the wars. Its artwork is the statue of the patron saint, typically placed not in the village itself but at some distance beyond. The ‘Saint beyond the Village’ appears in some beautiful lines:

A certain simple saint was told the
story, / how the wind over that country
wailed in grief. / He took with him his
miracle-works only, / and went, a
pilgrim, to bestow relief...

The ‘Saint beyond the Village’ is a figure of Christian idealism: uncorrupted and willing to serve, but impotent. The poet, on the other hand, is in touch with a power. He has this much at least in common with the saint, that he suffers:

On through the labyrinth of pain we
wander / for all the beauties of the world
bewitched.

To redeem accursed beauty: that was the special task of the poet. It was a task for titans . . . a Promethean task. And the poet, like Prometheus, would suffer! The ‘accursed poets’ of France, Majakovskij, Yesenin—they had all paid dearly. Nonetheless,

Let cowardly fate threaten to peck us
to the bone, / like eagles to inflict
Promethean agony; / we from our settled
purpose never shall be thrown: / to
plough the fields (though hard) of
possibility. (*If You Need an Epilogue*)

In lines like these Novomesky appears to foresee something like martyrdom. One must remember that Hitler been a couple of years in power. The Furies were loose in Europe, and the Slovak poet felt them. And the woes that he dimly felt ahead of him were indeed going to strike him but as all the Greek myths might have warned him, from an unexpected quarter.

In the next few years he wrote some marvellous things. Novomesky is sometimes presented as one of the lesser ‘poetists’, Viteslav Nezval’s Slovak follower. But his 1939 collection *The Saint Beyond The Village* is far above the level of Prague poetism or surrealism. One can see influences, but he’s much too serious to belong in a club like that.

The collapse of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1938-39 caused an upheaval in Novomesky’s life, forcing him to move from German-occupied Prague to Bratislava. For about a year and a half he continued to write some poetry. After that he stopped writing poetry altogether. The reason is not clear, but I assume that the German attack on the Soviet Union in July 1941 was crucial. For the rest of the 1940s I know of Novomesky only as a conspirator, a diplomat of the 1944 anti-German Uprising (he was one of three delegates sent to London to the Czechoslovak government-in-exile), and the Slovak Minister of Education and Culture in a restored Czechoslovakia.

“*You, the author of Sunday, have chosen the hardest fate: the continual working day*”, Ja’n Smrek, an uncomplacably professional poet, wrote to him in 1948. But the poet was saved after all, and by the most astonishing means.

In 1950 he was dismissed from his Ministry for bourgeois nationalist errors. A year later he was accused of espionage, treason and sabotage, charges which he soon confessed to. At the major Czechoslovak political trial of December 1952 he gave testimony against his life-long friend, Vladimir Clementis, who was afterwards executed. In April 1954 Novomesky himself was sentenced to ten years’ imprisonment.

The Czechoslovak trials were the last in a series of East European trials of alleged traitors, Titoists and bourgeois nationalists. From Stalin’s point of view, there was a danger of Anglo-American subversion, which went together with the danger of a national-communist fragmentation. Tito’s Yugoslavia provided a model for that. Stalin demanded, and got, a resolute purging at the highest levels of all the East European ruling parties without exception. These purges did not make the new revolutionary states less solid or stable. On the contrary, everywhere the socialist state’s building campaigns reached a peak of intensity, the social power of the Communist Party was consolidated, and the individual Communist Parties were steeled as units of a political army with its High Command in Moscow.

But the particular charges were false, and even absurd—at any rate in Czechoslovakia. I have read the trial transcript, and it just isn’t possible to believe that this trial is real. Novomesky and others who (like Eugen Löbl) confessed, or (like Gustav Husak) did not confess, have clarified much about its background,

preparation and conduct. The question remains: how was it possible for such a thing to happen? How was it possible to plan and successfully conduct the public political trial that took place in Prague in December 1952, the so-called Slansky trial? How could it happen that leading communists, who had faced imprisonment and exile and hardship of every kind and had risked their lives for their cause, were prepared to confess, falsely, that they were traitors who had conspired with the enemy to subvert the socialist state, in Czechoslovakia's case to break it up along national lines, and to restore capitalism?

If Novomesky were important for no other reason, I think he would be important for this: when he was able to return to literature he explored this experience in his poetry, and he did it unflinchingly. In his long reflective poem *30 Minutes to Town* (1963), and especially in the prison poems of *From Over There and other things* (1964), he gave a unique literary testimony. I have devoted a good deal of space to this in my introduction to *Slovak Spring*. Here I will only say this much. What Novomesky reveals is a fatal aspect of Leninist (he would have called it Stalinist) socialism: the tendency to turn all of politics, and the life and culture of the committed communist politician, and prospectively the life and culture of the whole of society, into an essentially military experience, where the High Command in the end has absolute rights.

Novomesky, in a 'thawing' atmosphere, was released conditionally in December 1955. However, he remained on a blacklist. His poems could not be published, and he was not permitted to reside in Slovakia, until 1963.

But, when he again became visible in Slovak literature, his new work proved to be immensely ambitious. His poetry was now didactic, which it had not been before. He was aiming at nothing less than a humanistic reformation of communist culture. But behind his didactic purpose there was deep conviction and bitter experience. And he still had the lyric inspiration to keep him airborne.

His most valuable contribution to the reform movement was his poetry. However, after 1964 his poetry became more episodic and less directly political, while his public political activities were increasing. Until 1968 he was associated with the radical wing of the movement. For example, in 1967 he produced a discussion statement for the Czechoslovak Writers' Union Conference, calling for

the complete abolition of censorship.

The Prague Spring reformers had no Plan B. It was peaceful reform or nothing. Even in order to get started, the Czechoslovak reform movement needed a Russian initiative: Nikita Khrushchev's abortive reformist campaign of 1962.

The high point of this was the publication of Solzhenitsyn's *One Day In The Life Of Ivan Denisovich*. But in 1963 there was a powerful counter-attack on 'the literary front', always an important area. Khrushchev himself was soon back-tracking, and he was overthrown by Leonid Brezhnev's more conservative faction in 1964. (The first Russian edition of Novomesky's poems might be seen, in fact, as the Russian socialist reformers' last initiative. It was published in 1966, with a vigorous introduction by Ilya Ehrenburg.)

Novomesky and the others had to hope for Russian sympathy, or at least toleration. For all of them, 'Budapest 1956', when Russian tanks crushed a major Hungarian rebellion, was a symbol of futility. They staked everything on one single card: that the rulers of the Soviet Union were capable of seeing that this experiment should be, must be tried. Was there no one in the Soviet Politburo who could understand that Stalinist socialism could not be, as Novomesky put it, "*an idea that can unite the majority of mankind in progressive efforts*"—and that their own socialism, if it wasn't reformed, could actually atrophy? Would they not have the political daring to let Czechoslovakia take its course?

(In less than 20 years' time the rulers of the Soviet Union were bitterly regretting that they hadn't. With the Soviet system at the end of its tether, Gorbachev was trying to produce a Prague Spring of his own—much too late.)

In March 1968 Novomesky, annoyed by the frivolous radical wing of the reform movement, defected to the conservative wing, led by Gustav Husak. "*I wish to be involved in any act of healing, any reform and renewal of socialism*", he explained. "*But I do not wish to be involved in its liquidation.*" But he never believed that the way to save socialism from liquidation was to prevent its reform. For Novomesky the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the five Warsaw Pact armies on August 20, 1968 was a personal catastrophe. A Slovak TV documentary shows him watching the tanks go by, tearing his hair and weeping distractedly.

Afterwards he hoped that, by political negotiation with the Russians, it would prove possible to salvage the reform movement. When his friend Husak took over from Dubcek, these hopes still existed. "*May God bless his steps*", the well-known atheist Novomesky was heard to say publicly, and somewhat ominously. Still, he accepted a place in the Slovak Party's Central Committee and Politburo. For a while he tried to reassure the writers and artists: no, it won't be so bad, there will be no 'return to the 1950s! But in June 1970, as the mass purges escalated, he took the unheard-of step of resigning his Politburo place in protest. Under intense pressure to back down, he insisted that his decision was final. This was his last political act, because shortly afterwards he was incapacitated by a stroke.

The poet, always capable of surprises, had the last word: *Tearing in Two* (April 1971). This enigmatic poem proves that, even despite so many disasters, his life's quest went on. Two lines come to mind from Boris Pasternak, whose poetry he translated beautifully: "*But your defeats from your victories / you yourself must not separate*". One feels that his own last poem came out of his culminating defeat. And only a hard judge would refuse to call it a victory.

Let us but tell the truth, though it be ever so harsh: / if the earth indeed is fruitful, or only a puddled marsh? / A fragile butterfly, as from a cocoon, will rise / behind the line, to lay a full stop . . . by surprise.

One reader of *Slovak Spring* wrote to me that he found Novomesky's life story depressing. I see it differently. I think his tenacious humanism is encouraging, and his complete lack of cynicism right to the end. He made a good effort at a task that was difficult, verging on impossible—being a Central European humanist communist poet in the 20th century. He was weak but resilient. Even in the frightful years of 1951-54 he had 'Galileo's wisdom' not the best kind, as he admits in his poem *Wisdom*, but better than nothing: in an impossible situation he collapsed, hoping there would be a future when he could straighten up again. And there was, and he did. In his fight with the 20th century he may not quite have salvaged a draw, but I think he managed an honourable defeat. And that's just the life. "*The intellect of man is forced to choose / perfection of the life or of the work*", according to Yeats; and in Novomesky's case, if the life has to be called an honourable defeat, I would put the poems

down as a victory.

As an example of his work I have chosen here *Prague Spring 1956*. This poem is, to tell the truth, a lot better than the reform movement which afterwards took the name.

It was February or March 1956. Novomesky was watching the drifting pieces of melting ice on the river Vltava, which runs through Prague. A couple of months previously he had been released from prison. And now he had just heard about Nikita Khrushchev's "Secret Speech" (which was known to everyone in Eastern Europe within a month), denouncing Stalin.

"At that time the mighty statue of Stalin still stood out over Prague like a

watchman, while round its feet the seagulls circled over the Vltava, piercingly screeching." The conservative Stalinists were still making their motions, but not Stalin; Stalin, as it were, was watching his own age passing and another arriving. Spring was coming. . . . Against the forces of renewal, it seemed that the ossified *Stalinists* could have little more to say than the gulls.

The particular hope which inspired these verses was premature, and afterwards it was dashed. But I don't think the poem is diminished by that. It's in touch with the perennial human hopes. One has to believe in Spring. In Belfast, or wherever, in Spring 2005, I hope this helps.

PRAGUE SPRING 1956

Against the wretched snow, ach, that old smudgy snow,
the irises unsheath sharp swords today, and the ice-pieces go
and the ice-pieces go

on Vltava they drift away.

How hastily they vanish,

linger not nor waver,

before Spring's smiling face;
time is flowing like this muddy river,
time flows like that, with its glory and disgrace.
Only the gulls circle in troubled mood,
the giggling crazy gulls jostling for rank,
and comrade Stalin with his multitude
on the river's other bank

gazes like us on the departing ice,
the hurly-burly of the birds,
the coming Spring that in its time arrives,
the new current, the new waves coming towards.

John Minahane

Editorial Note: John Minahane introduced and translated his selection of Novomesky's poems, *Slovak Spring*, in 2004. The book is published by the Belfast Historical & Educational Society and costs £9.99 (12 Euros).

Subhas Chandra Bose

Editorial Note: There was considerable interest in Seán McGouran's reference to **Subhas Chandra Bose** in last month's magazine. We were sent the following pieces of information about the Indian nationalist, and Pat Muldowney was inspired to compose a letter on the subject which was widely published.

Regarding Seán McGouran's recent article on *Sean Russell, Frank Ryan and Subhas Chandra Bose*: Calcutta International Airport (in the state of West Bengal, which has a Communist government) is called the *Subhas Chandra Bose Airport*—and certainly not considered controversial. Short biography below, **Pat Muldowney**

<http://www.bhagatsingh.com/Netaji.htm>

Amar Shaheed Netaji : Subhas Chandra Bose's Biography, *Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose*

Known as Netaji (leader), Mr. Bose was a fierce and popular leader in the political scene in pre-independence India. He was the President of the Indian National Congress in 1937 and 1939, and founded a nationalist force called the Indian National Army. He was acclaimed as a semigod, akin to the many mythological heroes like Rama or Krishna, and continues

as a legend in the Indian mind. Subhas Chandra was born on January 23rd 1897 in Cuttack as the ninth child among fourteen, of Janakinath Bose, an advocate, and Prabhavati Devi, a pious and God-fearing lady. A brilliant student, he topped the matriculation examination of Calcutta province and passed his BA in Philosophy from the Presidency College in Calcutta. He was strongly influenced by Swami Vivekananda's teachings and was known for his patriotic zeal as a student. His parents' wishes kept him away from the Indian freedom struggle and led him into studies for the Indian Civil Service in England. Although he finished those examinations also at the top of his class (4th), he could not complete his apprenticeship and returned to India, being deeply disturbed by the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre. He came under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi and joined the Indian National Congress (a.k.a. Congress). Gandhiji directed him to work with Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, the Bengali leader whom Bose acknowledged as his political guru.

Bose was outspoken in his anti-British stance and was jailed 11 (eleven) times between 1920 and 1941 for periods varying between six months and three years. He was the leader of the youth wing of the Congress Party, in the forefront of the Trade Union movement in India and organized Service League, another wing of Congress. He was admired for his great skills in organization development.

The Influence of Bose

Bose advocated complete freedom for India at the earliest, whereas the Congress Committee wanted it in phases, through Dominion status. Other younger leaders, including Jawaharlal Nehru, supported Bose and finally at the historic Lahore Congress convention, the Congress had to adopt Poorna Swaraj (complete freedom) as its motto. Bhagat Singh's martyrdom and the inability of the Congress leaders to save his life infuriated Bose and he started a movement opposing the Gandhi-Irvin Peace Pact. He was imprisoned and expelled from India. But, defying the ban, he came back to India and was imprisoned again! Clouds of World War II were gathering fast and Bose warned the Indian people and the British against dragging India into the war and the material losses she could incur. He was elected President of the Indian National Congress twice in 1937 and in 1939, the second time defeating Gandhiji's nominee. He brought a resolution to give the British six months to hand India over to the Indians, failing

which there would be a revolt. There was much opposition to his rigid stand, and he resigned from the post of President and formed a progressive group known as the *Forward Block* (1939). The second World War broke out in September of 1939, and just as predicted by Bose, India was declared as a warring state (on behalf of the British) by the Governor General, without consulting Indian leaders. The Congress Party was in power in seven major States and all State governments resigned in protest.

Subhas Chandra Bose now started a mass movement against utilizing Indian resources and men for the great war. To him, it made no sense to further bleed poor Indians for the sake of colonial and imperial nations. There was a tremendous response to his call and the British promptly imprisoned him. He took to a hunger-strike, and after his health deteriorated on the 11th day of fasting, he was freed and was placed under house arrest. The British were afraid of violent reactions in India, should something happen to Bose in prison. Bose suddenly disappeared in the beginning of 1941 and it was not until many days that authorities realized Bose was not inside the house they were guarding! He travelled by foot, car and train and resurfaced in Kabul (now in Afghanistan), only to disappear once again. In November 1941, his broadcast from German radio sent shock waves among the British and electrified the Indian masses who realized that their leader was working on a master plan to free their motherland. It also gave fresh confidence to the revolutionaries in India who were challenging the British in many ways. The Axis powers (mainly Germany) assured Bose military and other help to fight the British. Japan by this time had grown into another strong world power, occupying key colonies of Dutch, French, and British colonies in Asia.

Bose had struck an alliance with Germany and Japan. He rightly felt that his presence in the East would help his countrymen in their freedom struggle and second phase of his saga began. It is told that he was last seen on land near Kiel Canal in Germany, in the beginning of 1943. A most hazardous journey was undertaken by him under water, covering thousands of miles, crossing enemy territories. He was in the Atlantic, the Middle East, Madagascar and the Indian ocean. Battles were being fought over land, in the air and there were mines in the sea. At one stage he travelled 400 miles in a rubber dingy to reach a Japanese

submarine, which took him to Tokyo. He was warmly received in Japan and was declared the head of the Indian army, which consisted of about 40,000 soldiers from Singapore and other eastern regions. Bose called it the Indian National Army (INA) and a Government by the name "Azad Hind Government" was declared on the 21st of October 1943. INA freed the Andaman and Nicobar islands from the British and were renamed as Swaraj and Shaheed islands. The Government started functioning. Bose wanted to free India from the Eastern front. He had taken care that Japanese interference was not present from any angle. Army leadership, administration and communications were managed by Indians only. Subhash Brigade, Azad Brigade and Gandhi Brigade were formed. The INA marched through Burma and occupied Coxtown on the Indian Border. A touching scene ensued when the soldiers entered their 'free' motherland. Some lay down and kissed, some placed pieces of mother earth on their heads, others wept. They were now inside of India and were determined to drive out the British! Delhi Chalo (Let's march to Delhi) was the war cry.

The bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki changed the history of mankind. Japan had to surrender. Bose was in Singapore at that time and decided to go to Tokyo for his next course of action. Unfortunately, there is no trace of him from that point. He was just 48 and his death or disappearance is still a mystery. The Indian people were so much enamored of Bose's oratory and leadership qualities, fearlessness and mysterious adventures, that he had become a legend. They refused to believe that he died in the plane crash. The famous Red Fort trial wherein Bose's generals and the INA officers were tried, became landmark events. Initially, the British Government thought of a court-martial, but there was a countrywide protest against any kind of punishment. For common Indians, Axis and Allied powers hardly mattered, but they could not tolerate punishment of fellow countrymen who were fighting for freedom. The British Government was in no position to face open rebellion or mutiny and a general amnesty for INA soldiers was declared.

While Bose's approach to Indian freedom continues to generate heated debate in Indian society today, there is no denying of his burning patriotism, his tireless efforts to free India from inside and outside and his reckless adventures in trying to reach his goals. His exploits later

became a legend due to the many stories carried by the disbanded INA soldiers who came from every nook and corner of our great country. Had he been around, Subhas Chandra Bose could have given a new turn to Independent India's political history. But he lives on eternally in the Indian mind.

Another correspondent drew our attention to an Irish angle to the Subhas story:

<http://www.netguruindia.com/features/netaji/>

After returning to India Subhas met Gandhiji became a supporter of his Satyagraha program (non-violent civil disobedience). Subhas soon came into the limelight—his book was banned, he spent time in prison and was exiled to Switzerland. While in Europe, Subhas struck upon the idea that India's freedom could be won by developing relations with anti-British forces worldwide. With this in mind he met the Irish nationalist leader De Valera in Dublin. Bose later modelled his own activities on the Irish Sinn Fein Organization. In 1938 he was elected President of the Congress Party. Netaji's policy of industrialization did not harmonize with Gandhian economic thought. Bose's second victory came in 1939, when he defeated a Gandhian rival for re-election. Nonetheless the "rebel president" felt bound to resign because of the lack of Gandhi's support. He founded the Forward Bloc, hoping to rally immoderate party-men. Today almost all the major political groups in India—communists, socialists, free-enterprise capitalists, Gandhian socialists—trace their ancestry to the Congress; only the right-wing Hindu Jan Sangh can claim a different parentage.

The following letter from Pat Muldowney was published in the press:

A secret, underground political organisation destroyed a public monument in Dublin recently. Curiously, many commentators applauded this illegal act of politically motivated violence. It is interesting to compare Sean Russell with the Indian leader Subhas Chandra Bose, after whom Kolkata (formerly Calcutta) International Airport is named.

In 1941 Bose attempted to assemble a military alliance against a power which sought and achieved world domination by brutal military conquest, by the extermination of whole populations of innocent people around the globe, by the use of concentration death-camps, terror bombing, gassing and weapons of mass

destruction.

Like Michael Collins, Bose trained as a civil servant in England but was induced to take up arms because of the slaughter of millions of Indians by famine and brutal military oppression. When he approached Hitler for military assistance in 1941, he discovered that Hitler profoundly admired the British Empire and its methods; in particular Hitler regarded British rule in India as a template, guide and model, as his many approving comments in *Mein Kampf* and elsewhere demonstrate.

We now know that Hitler subsequently went further than mere admiration, that he

tried unsuccessfully to accomplish in Eastern Europe what Britain had actually achieved in the rest of the world, but was defeated by his intended victims in Eastern Europe.

Bose successfully raised an Indian National Army and occupied Coxtown on the Indian border with Burma. While there are differences of opinion about his resistance strategy, he is held in highest esteem in India, where he is revered and honoured by numerous public memorials.

(*Southern Star*, 24.2.05; *Daily Ireland* and *Irish Independent* Feb. 2005)

who did not worship as the majority of them did; which was also true of 'Éire'. Despite the tidal wave of abuse poured out over the reputation of 'De Valera's Ireland', a few distasteful incidents, the Clare County Librarian and Fethard on Sea incidents, do not constitute a State policy. Nor did they constitute a fixed opinion among the Catholic people of Ireland (compare and contrast, as they put it in examination papers, the treatment Ruth Kelly is getting *today* from the intellectual classes in Great Britain, because she is a Roman Catholic in charge of the Education Ministry). Fear Faire takes every opportunity that arises to point up official England's hypocrisy not only in reference to the Partition of Ireland (the Partition of India was only a gleam in the eyes of a few members of the 'Indian Civil Service' at these dates), but also of other matters. These included the aerial bombing of Indian villages and the starvation of the civilian population of Germany in 1918–19 by refusing to lift the Royal Navy's blockade of the country's ports, for nearly a year after the signing of the Armistice.

BOOK REVIEW: THE CATHOLIC BULLETIN On Peace, War and Neutrality, 1937-1939, Introduced by Pat Walsh. A Belfast Magazine £4, Euro 5

A Free Mind in a Free State?

This edition of *A Belfast Magazine* (No. 24) also has a further set of sub-titles, *The Politics Of Pre-War Europe, An Irish View*, and has an Introduction by Pat Walsh. In it he writes that any socialist would find an awful lot to disagree with in the *Catholic Bulletin*, but it is politically incisive and interesting, (and it might be said, usually correct, and sometimes spookily prescient—on the actual effects of aerial warfare for example. The writer, *Fear Faire*, (Sean Toibin, a schoolmaster) felt that it would be a matter of “prolonged aerial struggle, involving terrible misery... but not yielding a decision”, rather than the “swift, terrific holocaust” which had been prognosticated by the ‘experts’. This was the appliance of common sense to the increasing equality of forces as between Germany and the rest, it is from a long article dated October 1939, page 73 of this magazine / pamphlet.)

The *Catholic Bulletin* is frequently accused of anti-Semitism by academics who have not bothered to read it. Some of the language used would raise eyebrows today—but that is about the height of it. “Black troops policed the Ruhr. Jews walked the German cities laden with riches, while ill-clothed, hungry German scholars, wives and children, shivered in fireless rooms,—a state of affairs which explains, *if it does not excuse*, the violent revenge against Jews which has been taken in recent years” (my emphasis SMG). In January 1939, in a subsection of his monthly *From The Hill Tops* column, *The*

Fall of Austria, he mentions that most Austrians welcomed being incorporated into the Reich, “despite the hardships that it was to entail to the faithful Catholic population and to the Jews...”. The mention of the Jews in that sentence is an example of human decency, it adds nothing to what the writer has to say, and is more than possibly there to underline the dangers of racist Nazism, Fear Faire can only have regarded the Jews as a religious body, and not an *ethnos*. Academics never mention the slighting attitude to the French African troops, though they may well have been used to rub their defeat in to the Germans. But the Germans had used African troops, especially in German East Africa (Tanganyika) where largely ‘native’ troops had kept a large number of (white) troops from the British Empire busy from the beginning of the Great War to the very end.

Some of the writing in these selections read almost quaint today, like the veneration for the Pope and the assertion that Ireland, under English domination lost contact with a Europe-wide (Catholic) Christian Commonwealth. (The assertion that there was such a Commonwealth has a certain amount of veracity—the EU may owe its origins to such an idea—but Ireland was dragged into that Commonwealth by England, until England decided to leave it. Then persecuted the Irish for not deserting it, even though the Irish, when left to their own devices tended not to feel the need to persecute people

It is this sort of thing (apart from the writer's vigorous style with its great clarity and concreteness, so unlike the boneless drivel which is characteristic of modern Irish journalism) which makes these selections such an invigorating read. No item of London-originated nonsense is left unexamined, and while as a good Catholic Fear Faire is not in the least supportive of, or convinced by, Nazi ideology, or propaganda, he is clear-headed enough to see what is under his nose. Nazi Germany was vigorous, vital, united and “Germany is proportionately more mighty in 1938 than she was in 1914”. This was after the Anschluss and the absorption of the Sudetenland, with the independence of Slovakia and the (later) setting up of a Protectorate over the actual Czech lands, Bohemia and Moravia.

He was alarmed by the effects of the German invasion of Poland, while pointing out that the Poles ought to have made some sort of arrangement with the Germans rather than relying on the empty promises of London. He also writes that Poland, under Pilsudski (of whom he disapproves, probably because he was a sort of socialist) was imperialist, and that the Soviet Union in moving into the east of ‘Versailles Poland’ was only absorbing areas that should have been parts of White Russia (today's Belarus) and ‘Ukrainia’. Though he is somewhat alarmed at the enthusiasm for ‘sovietising’ in the western

part of Ukraine. The latter is the sort of thing a British publicist would not have put before the public to be thought about, and discussed—meaning the *Catholic Bulletin*, and Fear Faire, could be described as naïve—as opposed to honest. And they will be when this chunky, (92 page) pamphlet, (and the soon to be published Brian Murphy book mentioned in the Introduction) act as burrs under the collective West British / historical ‘revisionist’ blanket. But the point of the *Catholic Bulletin*, and Fear Faire’s specific contribution to it was to stimulate thought and not kill it off in the manner of the British tabloid (and even ‘compact’) press.

There is much else in this selection than I have not mentioned; the end of the ‘Economic War’ by England on Ireland and the subsequent handing over of the Treaty Ports is discussed. The discussion of the lead up to the War and the disposition of the various forces, especially, but not

entirely in Europe is gone into thoroughly, and intelligently (a further spooky piece of prescience is his aside on what America was doing in late 1939). Japan and its adventures in China and other parts of Asia is also mentioned, not quite in passing, but not as thoroughly as other matters.

If you were the sort of person inclined to chauvinism you might be inclined to express pride in such an independent and tough-minded person having written journalism of this quality in Ireland (of any time, really). Toibin / Fear Faire sets out the reasons why Ireland should remain neutral in the great (he frequently uses the word ‘titanic’) struggle that Europe is embarking on in the period covered in this selection. You ought to read this publication if only for the pleasure to be gained from good writing and untrammelled judgment by a person who, clearly, could not be bought, even if the attempt had been made.

Seán McGouran

The Gentle Black And Tan

Come all you staunch revisionists
and listen to my song,
Its short and its unusual
and it won't detain you long;
its all about a soldier
who has carried history's can,
who dodged Tom Barry and Dan Breen—
'the gentle Black and Tan'.
The Gentle Black And Tan

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'Twas the curse of unemployment
That drove him to our shore.
His jacket black and trousers tan
Like a badge of shame he wore.
"Subdue the rebel Irish
And shoot them when you can!"
"May God forgive me if I do
Prayed the gentle Black and Tan.

The burning of Cork city
Was indeed a mighty blaze.
The jewellers' shops were gutted
Not before the spoils were shared.
Gold and silver ornaments,

Rings and watches for each man,
"But I only struck the matches",
Said the gentle Black and Tan.

Croke Park on Bloody Sunday
Was our hero's greatest test.
The spectators on the terraces
Nigh impossible to miss.
With salt tears his eyes were blinded
And down his cheeks they ran,
So he only shot Mick Hogan
The gentle Black and Tan.

So take heed you blinkered Nationalists
Fair warning take from me.
If you want to live in safety
And keep this land at sea.
Take heed of our three heroes
Murphy, Edwards and Yer Man,
Who will sing the fame and clear the name
Of the gentle Black and Tan.

(Apologies to: *The Begrudger's Guide to Irish Politics*, Breandan O hEithir. Poolbeg 1986)

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AMERICA continued

on the constant stoking of a persecution complex. Everywhere, liberals are out to get them.

While they keep winning elections, they claim to be stymied by the liberal media and the establishment intellectuals and Washington insiders. Some of their followers genuinely believe that the Biblical rapture is at hand. They are the audience of Rush Limbaugh and an army of other hate radio and travelling anti-abortion raiders. They style themselves as the new abolitionists but it is the worker volunteers who lie down in front of traffic and get arrested. The judges are always part of a liberal conspiracy.

In what is an engaging read. Frank accurately charts how the Democratic Party betrayed its working class base and is now embarrassed by these people and by its own party history. With so many enthusiastic patriotic young men, it is a very convenient time to send as many of them as possible off to war so they will not slack in their efforts. The so-called mod, extremely comfortable, Republicans are actually afraid of them.

This book is a tribute to Kansas people who will eventually wake up to this delusion and have to bear the brunt of this global corporate deception of ordinary people. It is a good addition to American books exposing the hypocrisy of the liberal politically correct class—it is a genuine study of a community wronged.

John Ryan

RAY BURKE

The celebrations over the jailing of Ray Burke are unseemly. Like most of us Burke had his good and bad points. He was a competent minister in the portfolios that he held. He helped pave the way towards reforms of our laws on homosexuality as Minister for Justice. He was also a progressive Minister for Foreign Affairs in the best traditions of Fianna Fail.

As the Tribunals have so far found no examples of corruption amongst politicians, a blood sacrifice, in the form of a prison sentence for tax evasion was required. Ray Burke was no better or worse than others who remain free. His imprisonment will not improve anything, nor will it deter others lured by the temptation to avoid paying their social dues.

opposition Parties is to be overcome it can only be achieved by presenting the electorate with an agreed Programme as the basis for a tight voting pact well in advance of the Election itself.

But there is an even more important consideration than the arithmetic, for it is not only a case of what might capture the imagination of votes on that one day at the hustings.

A serious Programme for Government, designed to remove power from the forces of reaction and neo-liberalism in Irish society, will face such formidable resistance from all of those vested interests that it can only be implemented if it represents the convictions of the majority of the electorate itself.

The forces arraigned against us would crush any attempt by a new Government to promote an agenda that was only rashly cobbled together in the heady aftermath of an election. Ultimately in a democracy the only guarantee of a successful programme for change is that which is derived from a mandate given by the people themselves, and to which they themselves have had both the time and opportunity to reflect upon before endorsing it.

But I want to make it clear that our support for any such Programme would be conditional on a number of clear commitments with a specific timetable for implementation, including the following:

- * Resourcing and development of a universally accessible public Health Service of the highest standard based on the principle of need rather than ability to pay.

- * Development of a comprehensive affordable Housing Policy, which would also include tackling the scandal of land speculation.

- * Establishing a child-centred learning based childcare infrastructure comparable with those in place in advanced European countries.

- * Creation of a new Department of Labour and Social Affairs to promote radical improvements in the quality of the working environment through a series of measures including a statutory scheme for in-service training and education, dramatically increasing the resources and powers of the Labour Inspectorate to combat the growing exploitation of workers, legislative measures to protect existing occupational pension entitlements and promote universal pension cover and legislate to provide an

entitlement for workers to engage in collective bargaining through legal support for Trade Union recognition, (which incidentally is enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights incorporated in Part II of the proposed EU Constitution)

If, however, it ultimately proves impossible to construct such a Programme with Fine Gael, we in SIPTU would then argue that the Labour Party must boldly face the alternative but longer and more

difficult task of developing alliances with like-minded independents in pursuit of common objectives. Such an approach might ultimately extend to Sinn Fein, but only after that Organisation had convincingly transformed itself into an exclusively democratic Party. For our whole purpose as a Labour Party must be to compete in both the most effective and principled way to win the support of the population for our alternative vision of a fair society.

Book Review: *What's The Matter With America?* by Thomas Frank. Secker & Warburg, 2004. London. 251pp £12 sterling

America's Neo-Mod-Con Class

In Thomas Frank's treatise, the author wastes no time: as early as Chapter Two he outlines what is out of control namely capitalism itself. Using an example of 'Western Resources' which was a local Enron-style fiasco in Kansas, he unveils the Chief Executive Officer class for the schemers they are—indulging and insulating themselves:

"You know the routine: socialize the risk, privatise the profits" (p39).

The first part of the book is entitled 'Mysteries of the Great Plains'. Kansas is the case study for the contemporary US paradox. The state had a historical role in leading the drive against slavery. In the early twentieth century, it was the centre of the 'populists' who campaigned radically against profiteering train interests and for small-holding farmers' rights. Today, low taxes on the rich and corporate agricultural methods are impoverishing many. In the meat plants of Garden City, immigrant non-unionised workers now toil in poor conditions.

The book is well referenced and makes sensible use of statistics. Included, is the account of Todd Tiaht in the Boeing plane manufacturing plant. Wichita has been the home of Boeing for decades and for most of that time, highly unionised workers could depend on good wages. Now the blue collar men have new extortionate targets set for them and pay freezes. Thomas Frank contrasts the writings of a long-lost centre left historian from the early decades of the last century, Vernon Parrington, with the up-to-date new 'Con' [Conservative, ed] leader in Kansas, Vernon Smith, who is a kind of

Kansas Kevin Myers. Yet the poorest and hardest working people in Kansas to-day go out to vote in droves for the most right-wing of Republican candidates. How does this process sustain itself: where the super rich peoples' choice is supported and can go on and exploit further the citizens at the bottom?

Frank wants to understand his fellow staters as people. Since the Seventies they have tired of elite liberal East coasters calling them names and the selling out of the blue collar values. They see Liberals as Late drinkers constantly taking class law suits. Yet, the new 'Con' leaders in Kansas City's Johnson County also drive foreign cars, many of them are lawyers or graduates; they hike up utility bills, push citizens' deregulation and favour minimising taxes from big corporations. Frank outlines this weird alliance of the privileged and workers, and concludes it is ultimately self-defeating for the good citizens.

The second part of the book is called, *The fury which passeth all understanding*. Frank himself is from a mod con middle-class family, and as a boy, hero worshipped Ronald Reagan. He introduces some of the hardest working organisers of the grass roots pro-life movement, many of whom are low-paid people. The neo con media tell them to forget economics—that cultural issues are what matters. Mostly, the politicians on the right make an appearance at rallies at election time and then disappear, as they will be busy serving the Bushites—whose Think Tanks are funded from the same source as the pro-life lobby. The neo con leadership relies

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increased by 25 percent.

* Payment of Social Welfare equal treatment arrears to thousands of married women denied their entitlement over the previous decade.

* The abolition of Third Level fees, thereby removing one of the many obstacles facing working-class families in accessing such educational opportunities.

* It was under the Rainbow Government that the brief space of two years between 1995 and 1997 saw Ireland's GDP per capita shoot up from 89 percent of the EU-15 average to reach 103 percent. In the subsequent six years it further increased to 122 percent, and now stands in fact at 133 percent of average GDP per capita for the whole of the enlarged EU-25.

It is indeed a sad commentary on a Government presiding over an unprecedented level of wealth generation, that so much private affluence is paralleled by the public squalor of disintegrating health services and a housing crisis that is pushing affordable accommodation more and more beyond the reaches of our children.

For all the talk about the success of the Irish economy the real challenge presenting is that of converting it into sustained social progress. And this is clearly what must be at the heart of any debate on electoral strategy within the Labour Movement.

We should not under-estimate how formidable a challenge this represents.

I cannot envisage my Union supporting any coalition formula cobbled together for the sole purpose of replacing Fianna Fail in Government as an end in itself. Indeed, if it comes to a choice to be made I believe that most of our members would prefer to deal with Fianna Fail under Bertie Ahern than with Enda Kenny, who we have no experience of dealing with and who so far, at least, has made no effort to build any relationship with the Trade Union Movement.

Nor do I go along with the argument that every Government should have a natural life-span, which would require it to be replaced just for that one reason alone. If our own Labour Party were ever to achieve power in its own right we would hardly agree that it should be ousted for the mere sake of rotation.

We see the issue exclusively in terms of the development of a strategy that seeks

to achieve office for one purpose and one purpose only, to advance and implement Labour's own objectives of a fair society, where inequalities are dramatically reduced and every citizen is afforded respect and dignity and the opportunity to reap the benefits of the social and economic progress of society as a whole.

As I have already highlighted, Ireland's GDP per capita is now a third greater than the average for the enlarged EU. Never before have we had such opportunities to convert economic success into social progress. But the tragedy is that the rampant neo-liberal ideology that drives the PD-dominated economic strategy of this Government has reduced the State's resources to the tune of over 3 billion Euros through totally unwarranted and inappropriate handouts to the corporate sector.

So yes, this society does need a change of political direction. Of course we would all love to see Labour Government elected in its own right but the reality is that the leap required to achieve it is not going to happen before the next Election.

Some members of the Party strongly hold the view that we should go before the people and achieve maximum possible support for Labour's own programme and then hopefully negotiate with other Parties to form a Government from a balance of power position. The result of that strategy was painfully demonstrated in the last General Election, when the absence of a pact on transfers eliminated any possibility of an alternative Government and consolidated a double period of power for the economic neo-liberal PDs. The outcome was that we retained our identity and they retained and even strengthened their grasp on the levers of power—presiding with gusto over the ongoing decline of our public Health Service, continuing to redistribute wealth upwards and setting about transferring control of our aviation infrastructure to their friends in Ryanair while simultaneously planning the privatisation of the Ports in our island country.

The momentum of their assault may have been temporarily checked by the intelligence of the voters in last year's Local Elections, but make no mistake about it the agenda remains the same.

Our responsibility to working people in this country extends beyond merely preserving our identity. As a Trade Unionist I am acutely aware that Union

members expect us to exercise every degree of influence available to us to assert their interests before unfettered free marketeerism becomes so consolidated in the economy that its negative impact is irreversible.

But, some members will argue, we should remain open to the possibility of a coalition with Fianna Fail. This fails to recognise that Fianna Fail are firmly wedded to the PDs and it is hardly credible to expect the Taoiseach to offer the proposition of an alternative scenario this side of an Election. If such a development were to occur we should be open to considering it very seriously. However, I believe the only possibility of it occurring would be if the post-Election Fianna Fail/PD numbers don't add up, and the reality is that that will not happen in the absence of a very tight voting pact between the opposition Parties.

So, if Labour can't make it on its own, and Fianna Fail is not available as a potential partner, the question arises as to whether Labour, the Green Party and Fine Gael together can agree a Programme with a view to overcoming the 19 seat gap currently existing.

I must emphasise once again that I cannot see my Union supporting any electoral strategy that merely aims to replace Tweedledum with Tweedledee. Indeed, I would expect that we would actively oppose any electoral alliance that is solely based on changing the Government for its own sake. The challenge is whether Labour can purposefully and successfully negotiate with Fine Gael and perhaps the Green Party a pre-Election Programme for Government that embodies sufficient of Labour's own core values and objectives, without compromising others that are no less valuable.

That indeed is a formidable task—far more difficult than many in our Party seem to realise. We have only to look at Fine Gael's stance in relation to Public Service Benchmarking, and listen to its spokespersons on economic policy call for still further cuts in public expenditure in the aftermath of the Budget, to realise the strength of neo-liberal thinking that thrives in that party as well.

But, if we are to have any sense of political purpose at all, we must at least be resolved to explore what is possible and to do so in good time. If the margin of difference in terms of seats between the Government and a combination of

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LABOUR

Comment

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Power For Its Own Sake?

The Next Election: *Address by Jack O'Connor, President of SIPTU*

It is a very long time since I addressed a Labour Party meeting in Lusk. I want to thank the Officers of the Division for the invitation to speak here, and I hope you will permit me to avail of the opportunity to clarify the attitude that the SIPTU delegation is likely to take in the developing debate within the Labour Party on political strategy, and in that regard on the options presenting for the next General Election.

Perhaps I should make it clear that in our Union we see our affiliation to the Labour Party as a means by which we can advance the objective of creating a fair and equitable society which affords working people their proper share of the benefits of our economic prosperity and a reasonable quality of life. It is as much a part of our strategy as other aspects of our activity such as organising workers and negotiating with employers, and negotiating with the Government through the Social Partnership process.

As far as we are concerned there is no point in Labour being in Government or in the trappings of public office for its own sake. Holding office is worse than counter-productive if it does not result in the implementation of the policy priorities we have set out as the very reason for our existence as a distinct Party.

This branch of the Labour Party was formed back in 1976 against the broad social advances of the 1973-77 Coalition. The qualification age for the old age pension was reduced from seventy to sixty-six, more than 7,000 Local Authority houses were built each year, the Unfair Dismissals Act was enacted, and the Joint Labour Committee for Agricultural workers was established. A number of other radically progressive social measures, in their day, were introduced,

such as what is now known as the Lone Parents Allowance, in the face of the most reactionary and vicious prejudices that unhappily have not yet disappeared.

I imagine there are those who would suggest that given the prosperity we now enjoy, the level of employment in the country, and the performance of the economy, that the objectives we aspired to then have been largely met and that there is little point in continuing with the endless and difficult task of trying to build the Labour Party.

I think the reverse is true because despite all the economic success:

- * Our Health Service is probably worse now than it was then.
- * Young people must mortgage their entire lives to put a roof over their heads, and 48,000 families are considered homeless, while speculators amass fortunes at their expense with the full approval of our legislature.
- * Our childcare infrastructure is among the least developed in Europe.
- * Only one-third of private sector workers have occupational pensions and there is widespread and irrefutable

evidence of a growing culture of worker exploitation as Union density declines and the 'race to the bottom' develops in whole sectors of our economy.

* The lives of most people are now highly pressurised, stressful battles to balance family life, commuting ever-longer distances to increasingly stressful workplaces.

This is all despite a nominal GNP equivalent to treble what it was when Labour was last in Government in 1997 and a current Budget which is actually double what it was then. The reality is that phenomenal levels of economic growth are not being converted into sustainable social infrastructure to improve the quality of life. Increasingly our society is living to serve the market rather than employing it as a tool for social advancement.

Incidentally, I think it's worth remembering that it was the Trade Union Movement as far back as 1986, which first called for a series of agreed Programmes for national economic recovery and expansion as a basis for social progress. The so-called Celtic Tiger take-off of the Irish economy owes nothing to the neo-liberal policies trumpeted by the likes of the PDs, and it is worth remembering as well that it was in the Rainbow Coalition year of 1996 with Ruairi Quinn as Minister for Finance that a nominal net employment increase of 50,000 was first recorded, with a corresponding inflation rate of only 1.6 percent as a direct consequence of that Social Partnership approach.

I think it is worth remembering as well that those early economic successes were converted by that Government into key improvements in social infrastructure such as:

* The pioneering breakthrough in the 1995 Budget when Child Benefit was continued on page 27

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