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and Cultural Review

69 Middle Abbey Street
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Adams agonistes

At the time of writing, the IRA has not formally rejected the Downing Street declaration. But the Provisionals' response thus far has been singularly negative. Martin McGuinness dismissed the declaration as 'worthless', while Gerry Adams says that he does 'not have any political package with which to approach the IRA.'

The protracted consultation of Sinn Fein members (administered by the Orwellian-sounding 'Peace Commission') is an elaborate charade. Sinn Fein is an instrument of the IRA, and democratic debate is not part of conspiratorial politics. Likewise peace is not the first item on the IRA agenda

Rather, the diehards of the IRA are intent on victory. Having failed to achieve this through violence, they thought they had found the answer in the Hume/Adams initiative. The IRA viewed Hume/Adams not as a peace process, but as the foundation stone of a pan-nationalist front which would eventually involve the Irish government.

It has been a long-term strategy of the Provisionals to embroil the Republic in the Northern conflict. Hence the attempts to foment civil war in the Seventies, and the emotional blackmail of the hunger strikes in the Eighties. This time, with John Hume on board, the Provisionals thought they were home and dry.

The Hume/Adams scenario envisaged a nationalist solution being imposed on the unionists. The British government was to announce a date for withdrawal and 'persuade' the unionists to accept it, while the British Army was to put the loyalist paramilitaries out of business. The stage would then be set for 'a nation once again'.

So much for fairy tales and fantasies of 'peace in a week'. The Hume/Adams accord never had the potential to deliver peace but, instead, would have been the catalyst for another 20 years of violence. Thankfully, Dick Spring acted on some very good advice and advanced the six principles which effectively sidelined Hume/Adams, and put a democratic resolution of the conflict on the agenda. By stressing consent, the Spring principles committed the Irish government to a balanced agreement between nationalists and unionists. And, despite pressure from the Fianna Fail grass-roots, this commitment survived intact and was restated in the declaration.

The declaration put the Provisionals in a quandry. John Hume endorsed it, as did all the democratic parties in the Republic. In Northern Ireland, the Unionist and Alliance parties gave their approval, leaving only the DUP as the dog in the manger. The Provisionals faced the prospect of joining the party

of Paisley in a bizarre rejection front.

The Provisionals kicked to touch. They devised their 'consultation' process and immediately signalled those whom they were to consult that the declaration was unacceptable. Members of Sinn Fein carped and complained on the broadcast media, while IRA members derided the declaration in the press. Adams demanded 'clarification' from the British governments. Meanwhile, the IRA continues to murder and maim, and has flatly rejected any suggestion of a cessation of violence.

The much-vaunted 'new thinking' among the Provisionals has not been in evidence during this crucial period. While it is true that the Provisionals have modified their demands of 20 years ago, the old rejectionist mentality remains dominant. Nurtured in grievance and resentment, this is essentially a mentality of hatred and vengeance that does not encompass a vision of peace.

Yet the Provisionals know that they cannot win the 'war'. Notwithstanding the *braggadocio* of the IRA, the Provisionals are trapped in a blind alley of terrorism. Their political support is stagnant. And their campaign of violence has led to a steady erosion of Southern support for nationalism.

Those in the Provisionals who recognise the futility of their present campaign have a simple choice. They can lead their followers to an acceptance of the declaration, and enter the democratic political process on an equal footing with all other parties. Or they can follow the diehards to further violence, gradual isolation, and eventual oblivion. Clarification is not necessary; a straight answer is.

In the meantime, Provisional prevarication should not impede the search for a political settlement. The declaration enjoys the support of parties representing over 90 per cent of the people of this island, and provides the ideal basis for inter-party talks. The two governments should make clear their determination to arrive at a settlement with or without all of the parties. They should enlist the active support of the churches, trade unions, professional bodies, and community groups in this endeavour. Cross-border institutions should be established to underpin such a settlement, which should also formally acknowledge the equal rights of all identities and traditions in Northern Ireland.

A settlement of this kind will require nothing less than a historic compromise if it is to succeed. It will not give everybody everything they want. But it will provide the means whereby legitimate political objectives can be pursued in peace and democracy ■

Listen and learn

The decision not to renew the Order under Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act has made strange bedfellows of Sinn Fein, Fine Gael and the PD's - all three see the move as a 'concession' to Sinn Fein. In particular, the latter has argued over the years that the lack of support for Sinn Fein in the South can be blamed substantially on denial of access to the airwaves. Now we will see.

Politicians of all shades tend to have an obsessive interest in television - getting on to it rather than debating it - and grossly exaggerated perceptions of its power over the minds of audiences.

It's always easier to blame the messenger for not delivering the right message than the voter for not accepting it. And so political minions monitor news and current affairs with stop-watches in a desperate attempt to enforce a deeply dubious concept of balance based on mathematical equality rather than news values.

But the notion that Joe Public is likely to switch parties because Fianna Fail has received marginally more of its 'fair' share of sound bites is one that is deeply contemptuous and patronising of the citizen. It assumes a passivity on the part of the audience that is simply not supported by the evidence. Audiences are not sponges that absorb what they see and then become what they have seen. The truth is that the viewer interacts critically with television and assesses the extent to which it corresponds with his or her reality and myriad other sources of information.

It is no more true to say that "there was no sex in Ireland before television" than to suggest that a gullible public will have its fundamental values shaken by its occasional exposure to Gerry Adams on television. Despite over 20 years of violence in the North the citizens of the Republic have shown a deep, it could be said deepening, commitment to democratic values and peaceful settlement of the Northern conflict that will not be easily shaken.

The mistaken notion of the passive and gullible audience is far more central

PADDY SMYTH looks forward to a new era in broadcasting

to the argument about Section 31 than arguments about the civil rights of Sinn Fein supporters or journalistic rights.

Our political structures and culture have since the foundation of the state been based on the stifling paternalistic notion that the public must be protected from itself. Hence our obsessive official secrecy and our censorship of matters sexual and political.

But our willingness to accept that paternalism can no longer be taken for granted - we want to take those decisions, make those mistakes ourselves. That is the fundamental change that is taking place in our political culture. That is the reason for the Progressive Democrats as much as for the success of Labour in the last election, and the meaning of Mary Robinson's election victory.

Of course, the case against Section 31 is not one for an absolute right to free speech. No-one has the right to shout fire in a crowded room. But it is possible to move away from blanket bans without losing basic protection from incitement to violence. The existing Section 18 of the Act provides precisely that:

"The Authority is hereby prohibited from including in any of its broadcasts.... anything which may

reasonably be regarded as being likely to promote, or incite to, crime or as tending to undermine the authority of the state.

The non-renewal of the Order under Section 31 will mean that we move from a ban on classes of individuals to control of classes of speech. Instead of making martyrs of those excluded from the airwaves we force them to answer for their actions while still preventing them from making calls to arms.

The truth is that the status quo on Section 31 was no longer tenable. The recent report of the UN Human Rights Committee argues quite correctly that the actual threat to our state is not such as to justify either a state of emergency or the provisions of the broadcasting ban. The government is under an international obligation to repeal it.

And, just as crucially, the developments in the North - particularly the Hume-Adams talks, whether we like them or not - require, more than ever, analysis and informed debate on our television. In these talks all is nuance and shade. What does Sinn Fein really mean now by "self-determination", by its acceptance of a requirement of some form of unionist consent? We need to see Adams explaining these issues himself, or evading them himself, unmediated by clumsy and often unsubtle journalism.

The time has come to have confidence in the robust nature of our democracy ■



New life on the left

The victory of the Italian left in the mayoral elections, held under new voting regulations, over two rounds on 21 November and 5 December last year, has paved the way for the real possibility of political alternation in government when a general election is held in March.

The post-war governing parties, particularly the Christian Democrats (DC) and the Socialists (PSI) were decimated at the polls, voters punishing all those representatives of the massively corrupt erstwhile establishment. If this proves to herald the disappearance of these profoundly anti-democratic forces then clearly it is to be welcomed. However, this does not necessarily mean that the left is bound to ride a triumphant road to national power.

On one hand, the old elites are attempting to regroup, and even if the 'refounded' DC (likely to be known as the *Partito Popolare*) does not recapture its social bases of support, then it will leave a dangerous void within Italian political life. Progressive democratic forces, including the *Partito democratico della sinistra* (PDS), *Rifondazione comunista* (PRC), but also extending to the Greens, non-aligned left groups, the anti-mafia network, *La Rete*, now bear a huge responsibility, for Italian democracy has been clearly very badly destabilised, as revelation after revelation has undermined confidence with regard to all aspects of public life.

Second, not only has the operation of the Republic's political system been questioned by almost all Italians, but the fundamental basis of the Liberation constitution is threatened. Moreover, some voters have been persuaded that the geographical as well as the political parameters of the Republic should come under question. It is in this context that the rise of the Northern Leagues in recent years must be viewed. The challenge to the democratic forces is to present a viable alternative vision of a renewed political system. Such a vision must appeal not simply to the disparate,

STEPHEN HOPKINS looks at the prospects for the left in the forthcoming Italian general election.



Achille Occhetto vindicated

confused forces that have emerged out of the break-up of the traditional left (primarily the PCI), as well as the significant number of newer parties and radical citizens' movements, but also to Catholic democrats (ex-DC voters) and other ex-supporters of the traditional governing parties. This represents a very tall order, but the stakes are now at least as high as they were at the time of the failed 'historic compromise' in the late 1970's.

In the south, the phenomenon of the Leagues has, for obvious reasons, little chance of making any headway. It is in these circumstances that the unusually high vote for the neo-fascist *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (MSI) in

Rome and Naples must be examined. Although there has been a good deal of media speculation, much of it highly sensational, regarding the resurgence of fascist politics in Italy, it must be stressed that the MSI has always maintained a presence in the south. In the contemporary context, democrats must clearly view the performance of Gianfranco Fini (Rome) and Alessandra Mussolini (Naples) as dangerous signs of what could occur in the absence of a plausible strategy for renewal. It is indicative of the deep roots of Italian anti-communism that many right-of-centre voters (not necessarily nostalgics for the fascist era) faced with the collapse of the DC and a choice in the second run-off between the MSI and a PDS-backed candidate, chose the former. A significant example of this position is provided in the person of the powerful media mogul, Silvio Berlusconi, who has argued for the formation of a new party of the right.

If the right is in deep disarray, what are the prospects for the left? The PDS, which seems to have found a new sense of purpose, can certainly take satisfaction from the results. Occhetto and the leadership appeared last year to be directionless, and amidst prominent resignations (including the widely respected senior statesman of Italian communism, Pietro Ingrao) and general uncertainty regarding the strategy to be pursued, it looked like the post-communist project in Italy was in crisis. These elections, finally, seem to have given some substance to Occhetto's concept of an 'alliance of progressive forces', capable of charting a democratic course out of the malaise affecting Italian society. Whether this 'alliance', which owed a good deal to the new system's electoral logic, can be turned into a programme for government is a much more problematic question.

One interpretation of the results argued that at the second round of the ballot, voters were 'caught between two extremes', the far right and the far left.

However, although the PRC were active in supporting the progressive candidates against the MSI or the Leagues, the elections confirmed that the PRC would be in a minoritarian position on the left. The PDS/Green/Rete candidates (including Leoluca Orlando, voted mayor of Palermo on the first ballot with over 70 per cent of the vote) are best described as 'progressive'. This is deliberately ambivalent for Italian politics is currently entering uncharted territory.

Whilst the majority of voters

rejected extremism (of the regional or neo-fascist variety) it is clear that many still wait to be convinced that the PDS/'progressive alliance' can produce a coherent policy platform. For post-communists, 'refounded' communists, socialists without a party, this is the crucial task of the coming months. During the election campaign, co-operation and long-term strategy must win out over partisanship and mutual suspicions, whether deep-rooted (between socialists and communists, or more recent (between the erstwhile

comrades of the PDS and the PRC, or between the Green/Rete and the PDS or, particularly, PRC). The alternative is further destabilisation, and the subsequent increases alienation of citizens from the political process. This could only benefit the MSI and the Northern Leagues, not to mention the mafia or the shadowy forces within the security services, thought to be responsible for last year's bombings in Florence and Rome. The outcome is crucial not only for Italian democracy but the European left in general ■

STEPHEN HOPKINS reports on the conference of the New European Left Forum

Barcelona was the venue for a major conference of the European left in December, 'A New Europe for a New World'. Parties of the left from many countries attended including Britain, Denmark, France, Holland, Italy, and the host country, Spain. Ireland was represented by Democratic Left.

The conference was organised by the New European Left Forum and hosted by Izquierda Unida. The objective of the conference was to discuss several themes including 'the political situation in Europe', 'Nations, Nationalities, and Regions in today's Europe', and 'Europe's role in North-South Co-operation'. The conference also adopted a political declaration entitled 'A New Europe for a New World', as well as further declarations against racism and xenophobia, and a solidarity declaration with the people of the South.

The preamble suggests that the 'traditions of the left' and the 'green mobilisation' 'constitute components of a single will'. Diagnosis of the main global problems facing the progressive movement follows, and the declaration argues that 'the first task of the transformational, green and alternative left is still the protection and extension of political democracy'. There is an important stress placed upon environmental/ecological concerns, and the identification of the dangers of nationalism, xenophobia and the rise of racism in Europe. There are also several references to the positive benefits of pluralism and diversity within the progressive movement.

In the section entitled 'The Europe We Want', there is a commitment to a

'polycentric Europe, constructed starting from different transregional networks'. Although at the conference differences were expressed over the way forward for European Union, and concerning the question of membership (particularly important for some of the Scandinavian parties), there was general agreement with the basic principles laid down, both for those parties working within the framework of the EU, and more generally, within Europe as a whole, both East and West. It was a significant weakness, pointed out by the German PDS, that there were no East European parties/organisations represented at the conference.

The sections on citizen rights and gender equality were given little discussion. One area that did receive important consideration was that of security and peace. The declaration calls for an enhanced role for the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, acting as a 'regional security organisation acting under the aegis of the United Nations'. Also, there is a call for the replacement of both NATO and the Western European Union. The war in the former Yugoslavia was the subject of a separate draft declaration, 'For Peace in Bosnia'.

In the section on economy and ecology, there was a commitment to shortening working time and work sharing, and the encouragement of socially useful work. Full employment remains a fundamental objective, but there is a recognition that development and growth must be sustainable. The document argues for a 'gradual restructuring of the taxation system, focusing away from employment and work, and on the taxation of energy consumption and pollution, respecting at

the same time the principle of the socially progressive tax'.

The section on Immigrants and Refugees rejected the 'Fortress Europe' model, proposing instead a 'policy of ordered and harmonious integration', as well as development policies towards the South and the East that will help to eliminate the causes of poverty, and hence migration.

Another section deals with the 'need for a new, democratic and decentralised international order, based on peace and shared security, sustainable development, the defence of human rights and the protection of minorities'. A priority objective of this new international environment is considered to be the 'overcoming of underdevelopment' necessary as a moral imperative, but also as a concept based upon rationality and survival. In the medium term, the democratisation of the United Nations organisation should proceed through the transformation of the Security Council. Criticism of the GATT accords, (and the secretive process leading to the eventual agreement), the operation of the IMF, the World bank and the G7 nations are included. The document examines the politics of development, and argues that the countries of the EU and EFTA should progressively increase their development aid from the present average of 0.36 per cent to one per cent by the end of the 1990s.

The conference discussed the question of future meetings and work. By general agreement, it was decided that the next meeting of the Forum would be held in Oslo, to be hosted by the Left Socialist Party ■

Business as usual

Much of the commentary on the unprecedented swing to Labour in the 1992 election, at the expense of the two larger parties, depicted it as a watershed event. Fintan O'Toole commented: 'What swung the electorate to the left was not illusions, but a sober and healthy disillusion'.¹ Yet, as he also noted, the real winner of the election, Dick Spring, had fought a campaign that was 'cute' and 'cautious'. As Spring put it in his address to the party's first national conference after the formation of the government: 'Change is what we campaigned for in the election and change is what we will have to bring about.'² How such a vague commitment, devoid of any coherent notion of what the sources of present discontents are, was compatible with the decision to enter a coalition with a party and a leader that Spring had excoriated throughout the campaign, is a subject that has not been seriously addressed then or since.

In his speech, Spring explained that it was the arrogance of Fine Gael and the PDs, particularly the leader of Fine Gael, in refusing to contemplate a coalition to include Democratic Left that ruled them out. While it was true that the move of Fine Gael away from its more 'social democratic' presentations of itself under FitzGerald inevitably reminded Spring of the conflicts with the more rightist ministers during the 1982-87 government and made a coalition with two right wing parties unattractive, this in itself provided no convincing argument for governing with Fianna Fail. Ultimately it was justified by the need to avoid another general election - an argument for stability not change.

In fact the only intellectually serious attempt to justify the coalition came from Brian Lenihan. This was an argument for a return to Fianna Fail's social republican period when it had initially governed with the support of the Labour Party. A coalition would therefore be one between two parties of the 'centre left' as Fianna Fail returned to its 'true' self after a period when it had been pulled to the

ELLEN HAZELKORN and HENRY PATTERSON analyse Labour's first year in partnership government with Fianna Fail

right in its coalition with the PDs.³ While at least this attempts a depiction of the coalition arrangement as a strategic representation of a broad social bloc, it is based on mystification of contemporary realities.

'Progressive' Fianna Fail championed a broadly corporatist approach to capital-labour relations as originally devised by Sean Lemass. In recent years, these developments have been significantly aided by the erosion in the power and prominence of the trade unions. The 1980 National Understanding had been the last centralised agreement until 1987 which transposed earlier experiences when it had been the employers, facilitated and encouraged by the state, who had been keenest to reach an

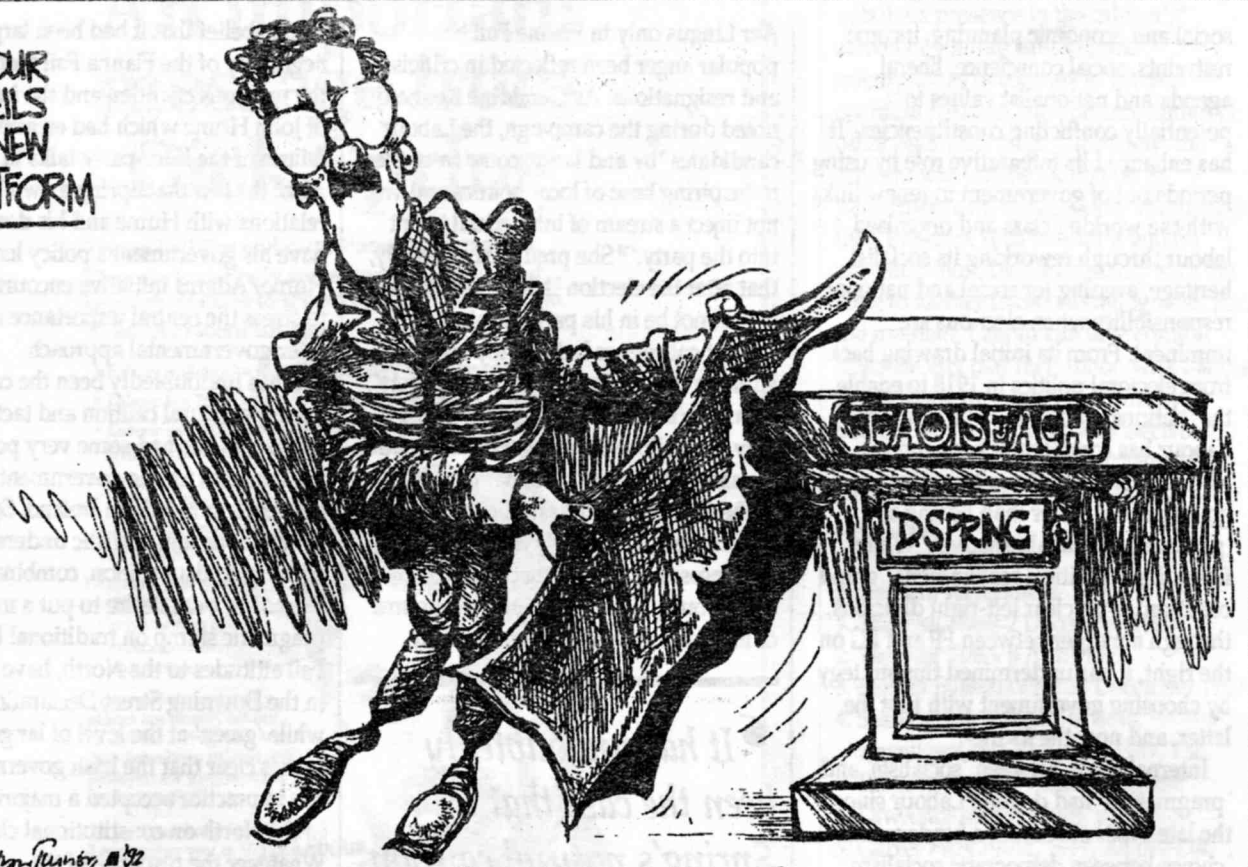
'The only intellectually serious attempt to justify the coalition came from Brian Lenihan'

accommodation on wages in return for industrial peace. In the intervening years, a massive decline in industrial production, dramatic rises in unemployment, sharp acceleration in employment in 'private' or 'traded services' - particularly in those sectors hostile to unionisation with high levels of part-time and casual employment - as well as uses of technology led to a rapid decline in union membership. This erosion was matched by a strategy aimed at assiduously cultivating close relations between union executives and government as signified in the

appointment of the populist Bertie Ahern as Minister of Labour in 1987, and by more hardline attitudes in a reorganised and enlarged employers organisation, IBEC, advocating tougher stances towards employees, new management strategies and an insistence on 'realism' in the face of a seriously escalating fiscal crisis of the state. Support for the latter was underpinned by a barrage of economic data from national and international sources, and an emerging national consensus favouring tighter control over public expenditure. The result was the Programme for National Recovery (PNR, 1987-1990) and Programme for Economic and Social Progress (PESP, 1990-1993); both were effectively incomes policies with industrial peace secured against promises of employment growth and increased social spending.

By 1993, there was little evidence of the job increases, the targeted spending or overhaul of the tax system; due to a number of anomalies, private and agricultural sector salaries had disimproved vis-a-vis the public sector while more low paid workers needed to avail of family income supplements. During the 1960s and 1970s, the unions had been in the ascendant; industrial militancy was led by skilled craftsmen living, in the main, in local authority housing. By the 1980s, the surge in public and private sector service workers with mortgages, changes in work practices, new streamlined industrial relations procedures confirmed in law and years of centralised bargaining had, however, left the unions with little industrial or political clout (or ability), even if they had sought it. Thus, despite misgivings by sections of the trade union movement and growing industrial militancy, the setting of preconditions for negotiations on a PESP-II were initially no more than a mock exercise; it was believed that the abolition of the one per cent levy and reversal of the 'Dirty-Dozen' had already been conceded. Not surprisingly, the decision to enter talks was endorsed by a

LABOUR
UNVEILS
ITS NEW
PLATFORM



large majority. The subsequent skirmishes tell a different tale, and suggest that Labour and FF are using their particular relationships with the unions to force push through conventional economic restructuring in the interests of capital.

Labour's ascent to power in 1992 is a key factor. While its relationship to the unions has often been fractious when in power, its 'partnership government' with Fianna Fail was actively nurtured; it rekindled fond memories of alliances in the 1920s and 1930s, and united two Irish parties with the strongest trade union and public sector pedigree. Their joint enthusiasm for consensus was exemplified by the myriad of social and economic fora set up within the first year. Established at Labour's initiative, these task forces confirmed FF's penchant for an integrated approach to 'the national economic and social enterprise'⁴ and obscured the absence of any (new) economic strategy by the junior partner, a point further illustrated by Spring's refusal to take any economic ministry himself. If PESP-II emerges it will be, however, because of FF's interventions. In contrast to Labour's endorsement of a liberal-democratic model of the state with a clear separation between economic and

political interest, and Fine Gael's suspicion of tripartite arrangements as weakening democratic structures, FF has long advocated corporatism. The experience of LP/FG coalitions (1973-1977, 1982-1987) has shown a deliberate weakening of centralised mechanisms⁵ while all major initiatives on pay and economic planning have emerged when Fianna Fail was in government: centralised bargaining (1947), national wage agreements (1970), national understandings (1979), the Programme for National Recovery (1987) and the Programme for Economic and Social Planning (1990).

Spring's 1993 conference speech makes it clear that despite the rhetoric of change, Labour continues to be a party better able to apply itself to the expansion of the state apparatus and the expenditure of European funds than at the really difficult questions of industrial and macro-economic policy. Still, even within the tired discourse of European social democracy, Spring's variant is particularly weak. In a state which has the second highest rate of unemployment in the EU, it should have been the cause of some alarm to be told that 'Education is the single greatest project of the State...the most important mechanism

available to us for the promotion of equality throughout society.' This distorted and massively exaggerated view of the significance of the education system was combined - in the same speech - with an unquestioning acceptance of the orthodoxy of the Department of Finance on the need for a budget that 'sends the right signals' to the European currency markets.

Despite the significantly higher Labour representation in the cabinet, the traditional problems for Labour as a minority partner are already apparent. In their chats with the media, Labour spin-doctors admitted that after the Budget their backbenchers were encountering 'a lot of anger' and were being told that the Budget was 'dull, boring and uncaring with no input from Labour.'⁶ Despite Spring's pronouncement at the conference that '...never again in Irish politics will Labour be seen as propping up others in government, or playing second fiddle to them in opposition', by the summer of 1993 polls clearly showed that most people saw Fianna Fail as the clearly predominant partner.

Essentially, Labour is in a no-win situation; more is expected but less can be delivered. It has survived by articulating various interpretations of

social and economic planning, income restraints, social conscience, liberal agenda and nationalist values to potentially conflicting constituencies. It has enhanced its integrative role by using periods out of government to renew links with the working class and organised labour through reworking its socialist heritage, arguing for social and national responsibility when elections are imminent. From its initial drawing back from electoral politics in 1918 to enable the 'national question' to be resolved, Labour has consistently been more 'comfortable' building alternative governments rather than posing as a 'genuine political alternative'. While favouring a political realignment, 'grand coalition', with clear left-right divisions, through a merger between FF and FG on the right, it has undermined this strategy by choosing government with first the latter, and now the former.

Internal feuds between 'socialists' and 'pragmatists' had dogged Labour since the late 1960s obscuring a fundamental 'choice between democratic socialism and being the political wing of the Saint Vincent de Paul'. Victory for the latter is best illustrated by noting that the author of the above quote is Emmet Stagg, previously depicted as being 'the left-wing' and now a defender of 'jobs for the boys' (including his own daughter and cousin) and critic of public sector workers, threatening privatisation. The message may be ideologically confusing or deliberately fudged, but by 1992 the strategy of presenting Labour under Spring as the party of 'the social democratic centre ground'⁸ - a deliberate attempt to emulate Clinton - neatly positioned it as the party of integrity and ethics in the face of mounting allegations of political corruption affecting FF and political bankruptcy in FG. Its election manifesto was so vague that Martyn Turner depicted 'Spring-for-Taioseach' on a plinth representing the party's single platform issue and version of change. As Labour seeks to electorally expand its base into the volatile middle-class (which proved fruitful for it in 1992), historic links with the unions will prove problematic.⁹

Perhaps one of the most dispiriting aspects of the Labour Party's period in office is the very lack of internal dissent and conflict. By effectively purging or co-opting the left, Spring has ensured that on such potentially explosive issues as

Aer Lingus only in Fianna Fail has popular anger been reflected in criticism and resignations. As Geraldine Kennedy noted during the campaign, the Labour candidates 'by and large, come from the uninspiring base of local politics and will not inject a stream of intellectual talent into the party.'¹⁰ She predicted, correctly, that after the election 'his strongest team' would not be in his parliamentary or cabinet colleagues but his 'top class advisers Fergus Finlay and John Rogers'.

But the advice from this pair whilst it may have allowed Spring to recover from the sharp decline in personal popularity in the first few months of the new government, has simply reinforced weaknesses of a party that has become dangerously dependent on the charisma of its leader. In a year when popular

*It has undoubtedly been the case that Spring's natural caution and tactical astuteness has had some very positive implications for the government's approach to Northern Ireland*⁹

dissatisfaction centred on a series of unpopular economic measures, it is not unsurprising that Spring and Reynolds have become increasingly immersed in the 'peace process'. The shift of terrain has produced a significant increase in the government's popularity around a soft national consensus on the supposedly 'historic' possibilities of a resolution of the Northern Ireland conflict.

Spring was certainly the central figure in persuading the British government that a possible deal could be struck. Leading a party that contains positions on Northern Ireland which range from the republican fundamentalist Declan Bree to the anti-nationalist Jim Kemmy, Spring was able to project an image of flexibility and appreciation of the unionist position which impressed Sir Patrick Mayhew and the Northern Ireland Office. This was in part due to the

British belief that it had been largely the negativity of the Fianna Fail members of the previous coalition and the inflexibility of John Hume which had ensured the failure of the inter-party talks in 1992. Also, the fact that Spring's own brittle relations with Hume and his desire not to have his government's policy led by the Hume/Adams initiative encouraged him to stress the central importance of the inter-governmental approach.

It has undoubtedly been the case that Spring's natural caution and tactical astuteness has had some very positive implications for the government's approach to Northern Ireland. Spring's sympathetic and realistic understanding of the unionist position, combined with Reynolds' own desire to put a more pragmatic stamp on traditional Fianna Fail attitudes to the North, have resulted in the Downing Street Declaration which, while 'green' at the level of language, makes clear that the Irish government has in practice accepted a majority veto in the North on constitutional change. Whatever the response of the Provisionals, the declaration has potentially major implications for politics in the Republic. It follows Fianna Fail's decision under Haughey to enter coalition for the first time, ending the possibility of that party ever re-creating its sense of itself as more than a mere political party. It could represent the first break between the 'Soldiers of Destiny' and the republican sub-culture of the Northern ghettos, and create the basis for a shift in politics and ideology of unprecedented significance, North and South. Whatever happens to Labour in coalition, Spring's role in such a shift deserves to be recognised.

While Labour has benefitted from the short-term effects of the media fixation on the peace process and will undoubtedly share in the positive aura of a positive outcome of the negotiations, the longer term picture is more uncertain. This is particularly evident in the area of economic policy, where the strategy of 'importing' innovation or 'off-the-peg' economic development, in place of the long-abandoned task of realising a national bourgeoisie and a self-reliant economy, has been reaffirmed in the unseemly political scramble for EU funds.¹¹ The National Development Plan, 1994-99, is essentially a £20b (£17.7b excluding 1993) spending programme financed through a combination of EU,

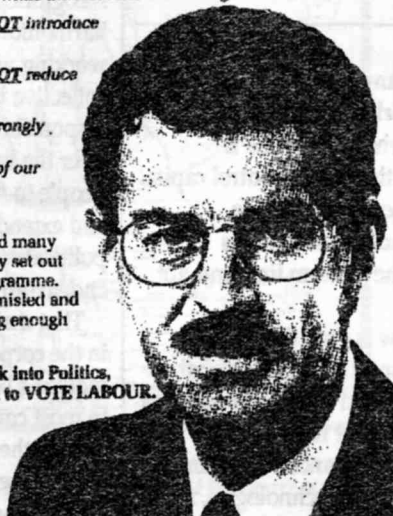
An important message from Dick Spring

Fianna Fáil lies and distortions are dangerous. They are knowingly spreading these lies about Labour's policies to scare you away from change. To set the record straight:

- Labour's plans aim for a **REDUCTION** in income tax.
- Labour has **NO** plans to introduce a new property or house tax.
- Labour will **NOT** reduce mortgage interest relief - in fact we will **INCREASE** it while interest rates remain high.
- Labour will **NOT** introduce a Wealth Tax.
- Labour will **NOT** reduce VHI tax relief.
- Labour will strongly **OPPOSE** the privatisation of our valuable state enterprises.

These points and many others are clearly set out in Labour's Programme. You have been misled and betrayed for long enough by Fianna Fáil.

To put trust back into Politics, I am urging you to **VOTE LABOUR.**



LABOUR



Labour advertisement attacks Fianna Fail

private and public sector funds. Job targets will only rise by 60,000 net over the entire period. But even this target is conditional; it assumes a return to emigration of the magnitude of the late 1980s, recalculations of unemployment, significant capital input from the private sector, and a European, if not global, upturn. Moreover, the plan to 'transform Ireland' is predicated on pay restraint or cuts, clandestinely piggy-backing on British rejection of the social charter; a current submission to the EU argues that a minimum wage or any regulation of the labour market would be detrimental to employment¹². Finally, by ignoring the fact that successful financial indicators are no longer translated into employment, it reasserts neo-classical assumptions linking pay and inflation to the achievement of a low budget deficit, positive balance of payments and competitiveness.

Labour's over-all contribution to economic policy has borne all the trade marks of 'populism at its interventionist worst'¹³; viewing capitalism as a fixed set of arbitrary powers which can be administered by policies of redistribution and administrative controls, it has favoured the proliferation of state agencies embellished by free-marketism. Its equivocal support for Aer Lingus, doublespeak on whether selling state assets equals privatisation (e.g. Greencore shares and Aer Lingus services), attacks and innuendoes against the public sector, approval for a wide-ranging tax amnesty while slapping a one per cent levy on wages, sanction of a hike in telephone charges, and a watered-down ethics bill are symptomatic of this political schizophrenia. The day the national plan was presented, over 1000 job losses were announced.

For Labour, whose minister for jobs

(unemployment?) has had the 'most nebulous presence in the cabinet',¹⁴ actively avoiding cameras and microphones in contrast to his pre-coalition persona, the portents cannot be other than worrying. Ultimately, the government will be judged on its performance on the economy and there is little evidence thus far that it will do anything more than marginally stop the slide to further mass unemployment. For the moment, Labour can take comfort from the fact that their union with Fianna Fail is likely to solidify, not simply because of the absence of an electable 'alternative' but because of their shared nationalist and social-democratic agendas ■

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Power to the people

'Joxer the whole world is in a terrible state o' chassis.' - (Captain Boyle in *Juno and the Paycock* by Sean O'Casey)

For workers deprived of any real control over their own economic circumstances, every change represents a threat and every crisis represents a catastrophe; Captain Boyle expressed vividly the perpetual state of apprehension and powerlessness familiar to many workers who are having increasing difficulty making sense of their own chaotic world. In the current economic 'state o' chassis' the world of work is constantly turned upside down by myriad pressures: the currency crisis, increasing competition, new technologies, liquidations and receiverships. Scapegoats are sought on all sides, and usually found in 'the management' - that dark and sinister lot who never know what they are doing - or, depending on where you sit in the pecking order, the 'workers'.

In the contemporary economic order shaped by right-wing triumphalism and the increased power of capital over labour, most people find it more and more difficult to make sense of their own economic situation. They also find, more and more often, that the tired and trusted responses to 'the management' are inadequate, as are the customary weapons of struggle which were fashioned in a previous era. They find themselves engaged in a proxy war, where the good and the bad guys are hard to identify.

What workers may not see is that 'the management', although better placed to know what is going on, are frequently just as bewildered and just as vulnerable. In some cases, they are also the victims of the worst form of pressure for improved production, increased competitiveness, and higher margins of return on capital investment.

Everyone in the world of work is now exposed to the ruthlessness of the market; the 'bottom line', the power of money that has no loyalty to any

DES GERAGHTY makes the case for the 'social enterprise' as a safeguard against free market chaos

particular company, plant or work location. In a world in which money makes money, where everyone is expendable and those who control capital have no attachment to any other consideration, individual value is determined by the 'bottom line' and not by sentiment.

The reality now is that the forces which dictate our economy are global, while our politics and our power systems are still local or at best regional or national. To this unbalanced equation have been added new technologies, new work organisation, and new concepts of management. While the whole world of work undergoes rapid change workers are obliged to find new ways of exercising some degree of local and personal autonomy, some element of control over their economic life, some new way of asserting ownership of, and responsibility for, their jobs. In most cases they are denied any shareholding influence, and little structural recognition of their personal investment of human intelligence or physical labour.

A new economic paradigm is now required, one which will integrate the economic, social and environmental realities of modern living and restore to people the capacity to shape the world they live in at the level of the individual company. We need a new, multi-stakeholder concept, that is, one that is fundamentally social in character, based on a healthier balance of power between the investors, workers, customers and society. This will require a radical change from the uni-dimensional investor - financial domination - to the emergence of the 'socialised enterprise', the alternative to the deregulated, privatised, dehumanised economy.

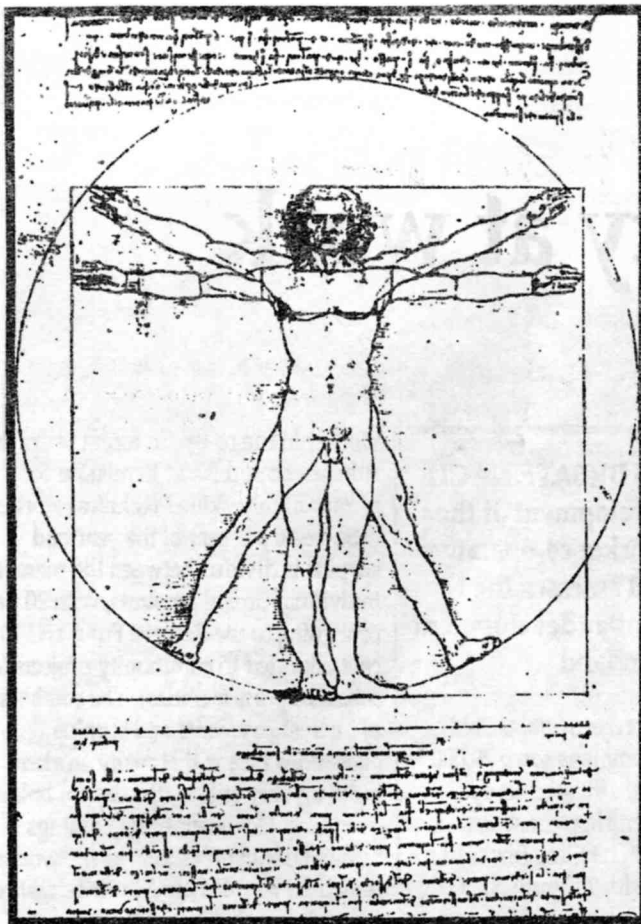
The global markets are setting the

agenda and we need to restore more direct power to individuals and groups in the areas where they live and work. Central to such a development must be internal workplace democracy, based on recognition that the best hope for a harmonious relationship between the working world we all live in lies in collective intelligence and collective responsibility. These two concepts also offer the best means of enabling more people to find fulfilment in their work, and extending democracy from the political sphere to the area of the daily endeavour.

That may or may not require 'shares' in the corporate organisation, but it does require a better power balance than exists in most companies. Only if we begin to change the power relationship within the work system can we hope to capitalise fully on the potential of new technologies, new communications systems, and new ways of working. Otherwise, all change will continue to be a dangerous threat to those at work.

Terms such as 'partnership' and 'consultation' have little meaning in a world of inequality. The latest technological revolution has virtually eliminated the need for unskilled labour in the industrial production system. It has also replaced many traditional skilled jobs, and created urgent new pressures in education and training. Skills are no longer something a worker acquires at the onset of working life; if industries are to survive, they must develop methods of providing continuous learning. Virtually everyone at work is forced to upgrade their skills continuously or find themselves becoming 'surplus to requirements', or a candidate for early retirement or a redundancy package.

Where these technologies are a weapon of economic dominance, constantly displacing labour rather than enhancing it, change itself becomes the enemy. Therefore for workers to embrace change they must become the owners and controllers of their own destiny, the proprietors of their own working life.



"We must place people, and human intelligence, at the centre of the new equation"

These very changes, however, have also created opportunities for labour that were unimaginable even a few decades ago. The decentralisation of the workplace which would allow people to work autonomously but in co-operation is now possible. For the first time, jobs can be reorganised on a wide scale to beat the tyranny of the clock; task orientation can eliminate the tyranny of time, and the traditional measurement of labour's value by the hourly rate.

But if any of the positive potential is to be realised, new and imaginative responses to the possibilities are required from both employers and trade unions. There is a convergence of interest and a new possibility for fundamental change; it is, however, being frustrated by an unequal power relationship.

Coinciding with these changes are the massive social changes which have created new demands from workers: the need for flexibility in working life to accommodate the greatly changed roles of men and women in the family, the need to care for children, and to care for the growing number of elderly people

and the disadvantaged in a just and economically feasible way.

Finally, a growing concern for the environment and the survival of the world itself has become a prime consideration in our decisions on how work must change. While that is part of the wider political agenda it is now something which can wait. It must be fought for in the here and now.

Ultimately we need a new economic order, one capable of creating harmony between people, work and the environment.

That means extending the ideal of democracy into all areas of economic activity. It also

means challenging the class structures and management/labour relationship methods of a previous era; acknowledging the shift in power from production and service to consumers in the market; facing the social and environmental challenge of industry and the community it serves, its impact on people's lives and the environment within which it must function.

New international, regional and national regulatory mechanisms are necessary to restore a proper balance of power between capital and society. Politics must be reasserted over economics, and democratic social forces - trade unions, consumer and environmental organisations must be strengthened. Increasingly governments will be forced to act in concert in order to control the tyranny of the money markets and the irresponsibility of the transnational industrial and financial corporations.

The key to all this is socialisation at enterprise level. We must create for our future and that of our children the social enterprise. The concept is no longer the

preserve of the public sector but a necessity for society itself. All enterprises must be socialised to respond to the economic, social, and environmental imperatives of the future.

We must recognise the necessity for regulated markets. The laissez-faire economics that held sway under Reagan, Bush, and Thatcher relied on outdated, inefficient systems. They continue to widen the gap between rich and poor on a vast scale, creating massive unemployment and a complex mesh of social problems. They are still undermining any hope of international co-operation and development, as they place almost total reliance on the newly emerging 'global market'.

Economic warfare is undermining civilisation and making everyone a predator in a world of increasing alienation. The new model of social enterprise must repudiate both the social irresponsibility of the private sector and the inability of the state to directly manage modern enterprise effectively. It must respond to the demands of the emerging global economy, and above all, it must empower people to take more control, democratically, both of their work and of their lives.

This enterprise is the only way to combine technology, efficiency, workplace flexibility, market response, and competitiveness in the modern world economy. It requires not only changes in technology, or in the way we work, but also changes in the way we organise our economy. It requires co-operation rather than competition and relies on collective intelligence rather than individuals constantly vying for personal advancement.

Finally we must place people, and human intelligence, at the centre of the new equation. Employers as well as workers will have to accept that the days are gone when we could check in and leave our heads outside in the security hut. Human intelligence is now the most valuable commodity in the workplace and the ability of companies to use the collective intelligence of their employees is now the most critical factor in competitiveness, survival or success. The time when employers could afford to treat workers as second-class citizens has long passed.

In a world of continuing "chassis", we had better get our act together. And fast ■

Solidarity at work

The demand by Aer Lingus workers for a share in the company in return for restructuring concessions marks a significant new departure in the history of industrial relations in this country. Direct worker control of enterprises has never been part of the agenda of the labour movement, either in Ireland or in Great Britain. In Ireland, no more than a couple of hundred people work in worker co-ops, most of which are very small enterprises. The only large worker co-ops have arisen from worker take-overs of failed private enterprises, and have generally had a poor survival record.

In Britain, the weakness of the worker co-op sector (less than 10,000 workers) stands in sharp contrast to the strength of the consumer co-op movement, with a membership in excess of ten millions. This may be related to the lack of interest in - and, indeed, hostility to - the worker co-op idea within the growing socialist movement of the late 19th century, which was strongly influenced by Marx's conviction that the road to socialism lay in the working class seizing state power and using the state as the mechanism for advancing workers' interests.

The worker co-op movement is much more strongly embedded in continental Europe, with up to half a million members in Italy and a quarter of a million in Spain. Worker co-ops became established in many parts of Europe in the early part of the 19th century when there was a rapid growth of (pre-Marxist) socialist thought. In many countries, the movement received favourable government treatment (especially in the awarding of public supply contracts) which provided a very considerable boost to its development.

Undoubtedly the most celebrated West European case of worker co-op development relates to the network of associated co-ops which has grown up around the town of Mondragon, in the

PROINNSIAS BREATHNACH charts the development of the Mondragon worker co-operative system and assesses the prospects of similar development in Ireland

Basque region of northern Spain. This network currently employs some 20,000 people in almost 200 affiliated co-ops, embracing manufacturing, construction, housing, agriculture, retailing (including a consumer co-op with 225 outlets), education, and a number of other services. The bulk of employment in the group is in the manufacturing sector, in which 90 separate co-ops employ an average of 165 workers each.

The origins of the Mondragon worker co-ops may be traced to a local priest, Don Jose Maria Arizmendiarieta, who established a technical school in the town in 1943 to provide training for local young people. Five graduates of this school established a firm (ULGOR) to produce paraffin heaters in 1956. Strongly imbued with Don Jose's principles of mutual co-operation, ULGOR's founders worked out (in close consultation with Don Jose) a structure of worker ownership and control of the firm which was to become the subsequent model for the entire Mondragon network.

Under this structure, each worker member has to make a substantial initial capital contribution (currently about £10,000) to the co-op in order to become a member. Each member's capital contribution earns annual interest. Wages are paid in the guise of 'advance payments' from the year-end surplus, and are generally related to the going rate for the job in the region. There is, however, a basic rule that there should be no more than a three-to-one ratio between the highest and lowest paid

worker in the co-op (in recent years this rule has been relaxed in relation to certain highly-skilled technical workers).

Some 70 per cent of the year-end surplus is divided between the members' individual capital accounts, with 20 per cent going to the Reserve Fund and 10 per cent allocated to community projects (e.g. schools, sports facilities). The combination of interest payments and surplus allocations means that many workers build up very substantial capital holdings over time. However, these holdings cannot be sold off as long as the worker remains a member, and must be cashed in when the worker leaves the co-op (in order to prevent the build-up of external shareholdings). These substantial capital accounts give members a powerful incentive to ensure that the co-op remains profitable (which has been the case for the majority of co-ops).

The worker-members elect a General Council of directors, which has overall responsibility for managing the co-op. The directors in turn appoint the managerial staff who are responsible for day-to-day management, subject to general policy guidelines laid down by the General Council. The worker-members also elect, separately, a Social Council which handles what in other places would be considered trade union matters, such as conditions of work, problems arising in the workplace, health and safety, etc.

Following the initial success of ULGOR, a number of further worker co-ops were set up to supply components to ULGOR. From the outset, it was considered desirable that any product line capable of existing on its own should be encouraged to set up as a separate co-op, in order to maximise identification between workers and their products, and minimise the potential dangers of alienation which can arise in large enterprises. The possible consequent loss of economies of scale and scope has



Mondragon

largely been overcome through the creation of strong co-operative links between associated enterprises (below).

A vital element in the success of the Mondragon system was the creation of its own savings bank, the CAJA LABORAL POPULAR (CLP), in 1959. The CLP was itself launched successfully because of a little-known legal clause which allowed co-operatively-owned banks to pay interest on deposits at one half of one per cent higher than the commercial banks. The CLP is what is known as a second-level co-op (i.e. it is owned by the member co-ops of the Mondragon group). From a situation where, in 1960, it had a single branch and deposits of less than 100 million pesetas, by 1985 it had 160 branches and deposits of 150 billion pesetas.

The CLP, in turn, has played a central role in funding the development of its constituent co-ops, by providing loan capital not only directly to the co-ops as enterprises, but also to member-

workers to help finance their initial capital contributions. Apart from its role as financier, the CLP has played a major role in the success of the Mondragon group through the services provided by its Management Division. These include,

in particular, very detailed and strict assessment of new investment projects, whether from existing co-ops or proposed new co-ops, as well as management training for co-op directors and managers. Proposals for the establishment of a new co-op may endure up to two years of assessment and advance preparation before being given the go-ahead. This goes a long way towards explaining the excellent success rate of those co-ops which have been established.

During the difficult conditions experienced during the recessionary 1980s, the CLP found itself facing a growing internal conflict between its role as guardian of the monies lodged by depositors and its commitment to its constituent co-ops, many of which were experiencing financial pressures. As a result, the CLP has recently hived off its Management Division as a separate second-level co-op concerned exclusively with supervision and support for member co-ops. The CLP, therefore, now acts entirely as a banking and financial operation which deals with the Management Division and member co-ops strictly on an arm's-length commercial basis.

An important additional role which the CLP took on itself initially was to provide social insurance for the worker-members in the various co-ops in the group. This was because, as worker-owners, the co-op members could not be classified as employees and therefore did not qualify for the state social insurance system. However, the social insurance function was taken over by a separate second-level co-op (LAGUN ARO) in 1967. This also provides a comprehensive health service for all worker-members in the group.

Three other second-level co-ops play highly important roles in the functioning of the Mondragon system. The original technical school has since evolved into a large third-level college which provides both technical qualifications and training in co-operative working. The college operates an associated factory which makes electrical components and in which college students work on a half-time basis to get practical experience of working in a co-operative environment (as well as helping them to pay their way through college).

Since 1984 the Mondragon system has operated a separate management training college, in response to the growing

technological and organisational complexity of activities within the group. Finally, the group has its own industrial research laboratory, which helps the member co-ops to keep abreast of technological change and to develop new technology of its own. This reflects the fact that a large number of the member co-ops operate in advanced technology sectors, especially electrical, electronic and mechanical engineering. This is in stark contrast to most Irish worker co-ops, which struggle to survive in highly-competitive low-tech sectors.

A complex organisational structure has evolved over the years to provide co-ordination for an increasingly diverse and numerous set of member co-ops in the group. Co-ops are organised simultaneously into sectoral and regional groups. Sectoral groups embrace co-ops in similar lines of activity in order to co-ordinate research projects, market research, etc. and to eliminate unnecessary competition. Regional groups co-ordinate the activities of co-ops in particular districts (e.g. regarding the funding of community projects). The different groups nominate representatives to the Council of Groups, which acts as an executive agency for the overall co-op system, providing central co-ordination and organising central services (e.g. transport and marketing).

The overall governing body for the Mondragon system is the Co-op Congress, with about 350 members drawn from the various affiliated co-ops. This meets annually and lays down general policy guidelines for the overall group. It also elects a Standing Committee which meets more regularly to monitor compliance with these guidelines within the group.

The Mondragon system grew quite rapidly through the 1960s and 1970s. However, a mark of the strength of the system is the fact that, despite a brief bout of difficulty early in the decade, it has continued to grow through the 1980s, to a point that total sales in the group were of the order of £1,000 millions by the end of the decade.

The manner in which the group dealt with recession is particularly interesting. The resilience of the individual co-ops was reflected in how few of them actually failed altogether - a total of nine out of over one hundred. Most of the workers concerned were transferred to expanding co-ops. There were further transfers

(temporary and permanent) from contracting co-ops which remained in business. These transfers were organised mainly through the sectoral and regional groups. In all, about 2,000 members (about 10 per cent of the total) were transferred in this manner. Only 30 people out of almost 20,000 had to be let go - a remarkable performance given the scale of contraction elsewhere during the 1980s.

The Mondragon system has been highly successful in providing a high level of secure good-quality employment in relatively large-scale modern industries operating in very competitive environments. In terms of explaining this success, some observers have pointed to the unique qualities of Don Jose Arizmieniarreta, a strong tradition of engineering and metal-working in the Mondragon region, and an established culture of communal identity and self-reliance among the Basques. This suggests that the Mondragon experience derives essentially from special local factors, and therefore is not readily reproducible.

An alternative view points to the structural features of the Mondragon system and argues that these are, at least in principle, transferable to other contexts. Two key structural factors in particular may be identified as making crucial contributions to Mondragon's success. Firstly, at the level of the individual co-op, high levels of worker commitment, low supervisory costs and an almost complete absence of industrial relations problems have helped to produce superior cost and productivity levels compared to the private enterprise sector.

Secondly, the creation of co-operative structures between co-ops has facilitated the provision of a range of jointly-controlled support services which have combined to confer major advantages on the group as a whole. These include financial and management services, education and training, research and development, and transport and marketing. These have allowed even small co-ops to enjoy advantages of scale and scope economies which elsewhere are available only to very large enterprises.

Many traditional socialists will undoubtedly look upon worker co-ops of the Mondragon type with some scepticism. After all, they are engaged in

open competition with other enterprises in an environment of unbridled capitalism. However, there are some aspects of the Mondragon experience which can be instructive to those who are concerned with building viable paths to a socialist future from the current situation of actually existing capitalism.

In the first place, Mondragon has shown that products and services can be produced, under workers' control, in a manner which is as technologically advanced as, and technically more efficient than, the capitalist alternative. Secondly, this can be done in a way which generates high incomes for the workers concerned, while providing greater job security than the capitalist alternative. Thirdly, at least at local level, a degree of social regulation is possible, even in a competitive market environment, which can reduce wasteful competition, create co-operative relations between firms, and avoid or minimise throwing redundant workers on the scrapheap. A fourth feature of the Mondragon experience which will be of interest to many socialists is the strong links between economic enterprise and the local community which is a feature of the Mondragon system.

One can, then, in principle, visualise a situation where the Mondragon structure could be extended to the national scale. In such a situation, there would be a combination of co-operative competition, technological innovation, protection against summary redundancy, and answerability of economic activities to the community at both local and national level. One could also envisage the elimination of the short-term business cycles typical of capitalism; these cycles are essentially the outcome of fluctuations in business confidence arising from the anarchic nature of decision-making in the system. The Mondragon system offers the prospect of a planned approach to investment decisions.

What, then, are the prospects of recreating the Mondragon experience in the Irish context - especially as the worker co-operative movement is so weakly developed here as things stand? One major obstacle to co-operative development in Ireland is the absence of the type of co-operative bank which is common on the European continent. There would need to be a political commitment on the part of government



One of several Fagor plants

to establish and fund - at least for an initial period - such an institution.

Of course, it is a general feature of the Irish financial establishment that it has little developmental orientation. The Irish banking system is essentially an outgrowth from Britain where traditionally the financing of business investments was done through the stock market rather than through the banks. This was possible because of Britain's long history of capitalist development which meant that there was a plentitude of capitalists about to fund business ventures from their own resources. The British - and, by extension, the Irish - banking system therefore developed along very conservative lines, with a strong aversion to risky investments.

In many European countries, by contrast, capitalist development was force-fed, with state-backed banks playing a leading role not just in financing, but in directly promoting, new business ventures. There is a strong case for such an approach in Ireland, where entrepreneurial culture is so poorly developed. The proposed Third Banking Force, combining the ACC, ICC and the Post Office Savings Bank, would provide a ready-made vehicle for such an

approach and could include a special division to promote co-operative development.

This division would operate as a promotional unit, including project appraisal and training among its functions, as with the Mondragon Management Division. It would also act to promote co-ordination and co-operation among client co-ops, at least in the early stages of co-op development. However, the aim should be to encourage the co-op sector to become as self-reliant as possible as early as possible, in order to avoid the creation of the very dependent culture which co-op development is designed to eliminate.

The key question at this stage is: where would the political leadership emanate from to put this promotional structure in place? There has been an amount of token lip-service to the co-operative idea in Irish government circles in recent years, as reflected in the establishment of a Co-operative Development Unit and a Community Enterprise Programme in FAS. However, the results have been marginal, as befits the resources provided.

It might appear that the trade union movement could be a major source of

political pressure for the promotion of worker co-op formation (and, indeed, a key possible source of funding through the investment of a proportion of trade union members' dues). However, there is little evidence that the Irish trade union movement has any real commitment to a broader political agenda than maintenance of its own membership (and thereby, the maintenance of the prestige of the national trade union leadership). Indeed, the fact that workerco-ops tend not to require trade union membership (trade unions are non-existent in Mondragon) would probably preclude this possible source of support.

One may conclude that, given the right institutional structures, worker co-ops have the potential to provide substantial numbers of well-paid and secure jobs in sophisticated modern economic sectors. They also can provide an important building block for the evolution of non-capitalist forms of socio-economic organisation. However, the prospects of getting a substantial worker co-op sector off the ground in Ireland at the moment do not appear to be particularly propitious ■

A future for Irish film

I believe the Irish film and audiovisual industry can regard 1993 with not a little satisfaction as the year when their efforts of sustained lobbying to Government has met with considerable success. I was pleased to occupy the Ministerial position which enabled me personally to secure significant changes in the legislative regime as it affects the industry and in establishing new, 'user-friendly', structures to enable the industry to develop, to create additional employment and significant value added for our economy.' Thus spoke Michael D. Higgins, Minister for Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht at the opening of the 38th Cork Film Festival last October.

'Yes, 1993 has been a very significant year for film in Ireland', agrees lawyer James Hickey, a leading industry figure and member of the Taoiseach's Committee on the Film Industry. The Report of this Committee, proposed a number of initiatives to be undertaken by Government. 'Michael D. Higgins was in the happy position of being able to announce that these reforms had already been put in place when he launched our Report,' says James Hickey. In summary, the four initiatives quoted by the Minister as having been implemented are as follows:

- the re-establishment of the Irish Film Board under Chairperson Lelia Doolan (herself a senior figure in the independent sector);
- the amendment of the Broadcasting legislation 'to ensure a close and binding link between our national broadcasting authority and the independent sector'. In practice, this will mean that RTE will be required to commission a greater proportion of its broadcast programmes from the independents;
- the reform of the tax regime as it affects film, including the raising of the limit for Section 35 relief from £200,000 to £350,000 per annum, or from a total of £600,000 to £1,050,000 over a three-year period;

RUTH RIDDICK looks at the prospects for the Irish film industry

the extension of Section 35 relief to individuals, who will now be able to invest up to £25,000 in a Section 35 film investment each year; and the waiving of the 75 per cent production test for qualifying films under Section 35, provided the film in question is a co-production with other countries and at least 10 per cent of the production work is carried out in the state; and

- the establishment of a new Irish language television service, *Telefís na Gaeilge*, a new market for independent Irish film.

It has been further reported that a committee comprising several semi-state and state bodies such as the IDA, Bord Trachtála, FAS, Bord Fáilte, the Arts Council and the Film Board has been established to market and distribute Irish-made films and to investigate initiatives, especially in training, a further recommendation of the Taoiseach's Committee Report.

Speaking at the Cork Film Festival, the Minister made it clear that the initiative now lies with film-makers. 'I believe,' he

'However, film is also an art form, capable of expressing our cultural reality and a vehicle for the communication of the multi-faceted nature of that cultural reality.'

said, 'it is now the responsibility of the industry to exploit these new possibilities to the full and to deliver on their long-held claims that the removal of the obstacles to the Industry's growth will result in a significant economic contribution - by way of employment and value added - to our economy. I have given the industry the essential tools for sustained development and I look forward with confidence to the creation of a vibrant and viable film industry in this country in the short to medium term,' he concluded.

Discussion of Irish film-making has traditionally referred to it as an 'industry'; the perception is of a commercial activity governed by appropriate industrial factors - financing, production, labour recruitment and relations, marketing, above all 'deals'. As John Kelleher of Strongbow Productions commented in early 1989, 'The question is whether the industry is to be market-led or product-led. We live in a Thatcherite economy and it isn't going to get any better. You must put the market first or you're going to be very lonely.' Such industrial activity also presupposes a predisposition towards profit-making as in the case of the Australian film industry which established an international reputation in the 1970s for quality product and a near monopoly in the market place, greatly assisted by state-level investment.

However, film is also an art form, capable of expressing our cultural reality and a vehicle for the communication of the multi-faceted nature of that cultural reality. This cultural project is implicit in the very different work of indigenous, contemporary, filmmakers like Pat Murphy (*Anne Devlin* was the first - and only - wholly Irish financed feature film), Thaddeus O'Sullivan (*December Bride* is the most popular Irish film of the 1980s) and Jim Sheridan/Neil Jordan who brought home the Oscar.

The RTE 'Tuesday File' report into Irish film raised many of these issues. Kevin Dawson was merciless with the

figures, comparing the financing of two key Irish films, Jim Sheridan's *My Left Foot* and Neil Jordan's *The Crying Game*. *My Left Foot* cost £1.7m, earned £2.0m, and produced a profit of 20 per cent. *The Crying Game*, on the other hand, cost £2.9m, and earned £55.0m, thus yielding a profit of 1,800 per cent.

Sheridan's producer Noel Pearson did raise some Irish investment for *My Left Foot* (although he's not a little weary with subsequent legal action concerning this production). However, Neil Jordan found it impossible to raise any Irish financing whatsoever for what has become the most financially successful 'Irish' film of all time. (To place these figures in context, only one in 10 European films annually shows a profit.) Bringing the story up to date, Jim Sheridan's latest film *In the Name of the Father* (again starring Daniel Day Lewis in the Gerry Conlon story) with a budget of £14.5m was wholly financed through Hollywood's Universal Studios.

Since its re-establishment, the Irish Film Board with its £3m kitty has provided initial development finance to twenty-four projects. This funding, which the Board emphasises is not a handout or grant, represents approximately 10 per cent of the Development Budget. An Irish producer securing a further 10 per cent each through Section 35-type investment and the Eurimages scheme has put together a package which James Mitchell of Little Bird, Ireland's most successful independent production company, considers plausible when entering negotiations with overseas investors. 'You have to trade internationally', he says. 'That's life!'

And what of the Minister's 'value-added'? Quite apart from its cultural value, film is highly labour-intensive and crude estimates suggest that each £1 m invested, whatever its source, represents fifty industry jobs. Meanwhile, Irish third-level colleges are producing over fifty graduates every year eager to participate in an industry which, at best, will probably support no more than five to ten quality films per annum.

Whatever the very real problems facing this and the next generation of Irish film-makers there is a rare and positive unanimity within the industry about the Minister and the recent initiatives. The mood of optimism and celebration so much in evidence at the Cork Film Festival will no doubt be



Paul Daly/Photocall

Daniel Day-Lewis as Gerard Conlon on the set of 'In the Name of the Father'

tempered by time. Nonetheless, for the first time ever, government has responded to the demands of the

industry itself. It's time for 'lights, camera, action . . .'

Imagining O'Faolain

All writers leave complicated legacies. The orthodoxies of literary history tell us that these pertain to aesthetic niceties, thematic novelty, or - increasingly of late - plain compilations of photos and gossip. Not that any such instructions should be dismissed as irrelevant or 'bourgeois', as the saying used to go. After all, it is as a result of such codes of cultural processing that the institutions of literature come into being, calling themselves 'The Irish Revival', 'The Great Tradition', 'The Pound Era' and so on. One manner of assuming we know who we are is by accepting what we are taught in school - though school is, of course, only the first crude, adolescent invitation to assent to these powerful codes, and to the norms of rationalisation and mastery which they enjoin.

But there is another way of thinking about writers, and that is to consider their failure. This approach would mean giving as much weight to what their work does not achieve as to what it does. To consider failure is to engage the imagination. It means supplementing the writer's work, reconstituting its signs and tendencies, failure being a synonym not for inadequacy but limitation and writing being more analogous to cartography than to the bevelling of glass for a mirror.

Take the case of Sean O'Faolain. His bequest is certainly complex enough to be going on with. A major writer but not a 'great' one (the language immediately becomes slippery, question-begging, virtually evasive). An important writer whose most satisfying work is to be found in two minor forms, the short story and biography. An intellectual who never had, or declined to have, the influence of an ideologue. A witness to the history of his times, who looked largely to the nineteenth century for models of Historical Man - O'Connell, Newman, Herzen (in whose honour *The Bell* was named). He became an internal exile, who wrote the most exciting study of the context from which he had withdrawn (*The Irish*). He was an editor whose journal seemed, in the years after it stopped appearing, to have had all the impact of water on sand. His own feelings about *The Bell's* contribution were

GEORGE O'BRIEN considers the literary legacy of Sean O'Faolain whose autobiography *Vive Moi!* has been re-published

at least on one occasion, mixed: 'when all is said and done, what I am mainly left with is a certain amount of regret that we were born into this thorny time when our task has been less that of cultivating our garden than of clearing away the brambles' (*Signing Off*, The Bell April 1946). And he was a failed novelist.

The failure is surprising, all the more so since this is what his three 1930's novels are about. Of course much Irish fiction is about failure, its plots breaking the theme into such familiar components as social inadequacy, psychic poverty, sexual desolation, cultural disenfranchisement. The Irish novel is the continuing story of the people of Ireland encountering their plainness. And this is particularly the case of novelists of O'Faolain's generation, which is one reason why their legacy is complicated. The thematic persistence can't be put down simply to that generation's political disillusionment. But the surprising feature of O'Faolain's failure is that it happened on two opposed levels. The novels fail largely because he could not find a way of distancing himself from his protagonists' defeats. Put another way, at the end of *A Nest of Simple Folk*, *Bird Alone* and *Come Back to Erin*, there's nowhere for his protagonists to go. (When he wrote a book about contemporary fiction, he called it *The Vanishing Hero*.) But this is the very thing that does not happen in the short stories. In them, it is the characters who fail. The minor form bespeaks the minor status of its people. Isolation, exposure, and loss take the place we might wish community, attachment, and achievement to occupy.

But man in society is what the novel traditionally maps, especially the nineteenth century novels on which O'Faolain cut his imaginative teeth. So that's where the interrogation and assimilation of O'Faolain's legacy has to begin. His performance as a novelist,

which revolves around the status of failure in his novels, is where his legacy becomes complicated. To ask what more O'Faolain the novelist might have done is to recuperate his work, rather than write it off. This activity prevents the reader, or critic, from being a passive juror and offers the possibility of his being an active counsellor. The possibility is worth thinking about because the latter role contains the rudiments of adequate citizenship inviting responsibility, attentiveness, commitment, and generosity.

When O'Faolain resigned his teaching position at Strawberry Hill Training College in London and came back to Ireland, he brought with him one perhaps intimidating expectation of his editor at Jonathan Cape, Edward Garnett. This was that O'Faolain might become the Irish Balzac. Telling this story in *Vive Moi!*, O'Faolain remarks on how inappropriate the expectation was. And fair enough, probably nobody should be expected to have Balzac's delusions of grandeur, -or his ambition and work-rate. But presumably Garnett meant to be encouraging. And if so, it brings back the question of what more we might expect O'Faolain the novelist to have done. Thinking about the kind of material Balzac dealt with helps us imagine. He was a great man for institutions. Banking, the law, and all the other arenas of public life are treated in his work like giant characters to be investigated and anatomised, to be brought to book. Not that O'Faolain should have done the same thing. To criticise him for not having done so is as futile as accusing him of never having written a novel about the Blueshirts. Nobody else did either. But what if?

That question not only provides a perspective on O'Faolain. It's a question that seems as current as ever. Who's writing novels now in Ireland about industry, agribusiness, property development, homelessness ...? Who thinks the novel can throw light on blind spots, charting lines of development, lines of inquiry, lines of resistance? Imagine for yourself, dear reader... ■

A new paradigm

A very long time ago (it was in fact 140 BC), a learned Egyptian mathematician called Ptolemy published a famous document entitled *The Almagest* in which he proposed a model by which the universe could be understood. And so it was that astronomy was born.

It was of course (for it is in the nature of such things), not an entirely original thesis but was based on the conclusions of a Greek philosopher called Hipparchus. But it was undoubtedly Ptolemy who brought the intellectual rigour and originality of mind to bear on the issue of how the universe functioned. And despite some opposition from more feeble intellects (for it was widely held at the time that the earth was flat) the scientific theories of Ptolemy quickly gained the support of thinking men and women.

For years after the only model of astronomy that was taught to students was that of Ptolemy and all astronomers in the Western hemisphere (for it should be remembered that there were alternative theories of astronomy being developed in China), drew their inspiration in whole or in part from the writings of the great Egyptian.

It is quite clear that there was a very sound basis for the confidence that was demonstrated by generations of astronomers in Ptolemy. His scientific theories could be applied to predict the occurrence of an equinox with particular accuracy, and there was in those times a great regard for scholars who could achieve this feat.

However, it has to be said that there were many astronomical phenomena that Ptolemy's theories could not predict and that he failed to explain. While this was

SEAN KELLY pays tribute to an astronomer 'who could not resist an old wine or a new idea'

disconcerting in the extreme it was generally put down to the fact that his theories were not fully understood or correctly applied. And as the centuries



passed the exceptions to Ptolemy's general theory grew large and were documented as exceptions. Indeed, by the Middle Ages it took students of astronomy most of their adult lives to absorb and learn all these exceptions. It was even suggested by some erstwhile loyal astronomers that there were gaps in Ptolemy's theories but these wretches were generally burnt as heretics.

It was finally an Italian astronomer called Galileo who challenged the old paradigm and had the temerity to suggest that the earth was not the centre of the universe. It should be added that Galileo arrived at this momentous conclusion only after reading the works

of a Polish monk called Copernicus. History has recorded that Copernicus was a man of uncommon good sense for he did not publish his suspicions until he was safely dead.

The reasons for the monk's reticence quickly became apparent to the hapless Galileo who was ordered by the Inquisition of the Holy Roman Catholic Church to withdraw his contentious and divisive resolution. There was no doubt in the mind of the Inquisition that the earth had to be at the centre of the universe and it was obvious to them that Galileo was being deluded by pernicious influences. Faced with the wrath of the centralists, Galileo dutifully recanted.

As time passed and Galileo waited for the obvious merits of his theories to be accepted he realised that the centralists were not amenable to change. And so, seized upon by a fit of reason he again proclaimed his vision of astronomy. The result was a sad, if predictable split among astronomers and the issues were widely debated among the

scholars of the day. There was a great deal of talk about heresy and schism, for such is the nature of those concerned with religion, and it was even said that Galileo was not a true astronomer at all but a charlatan.

And so, as we all know in these modern times, the achievements of astronomy represent the highest scientific feats of mankind which now travels the universe in search of knowledge undreamt of by Galileo whose courage and humanity were encapsulated by the playwright Bertolt Brecht who described the great astronomer as a man 'who could not resist an old wine or a new idea' ■

Dissolvers of borders

It is almost impossible to imagine the full extent of the Irish Free State's cultural isolation during what was, in the South, known as 'the emergency' and rather less euphemistically as 'the war' everywhere else in Europe. October 1940 saw the publication of the first issue of the Bell, dedicated to providing Ireland with a much-needed modernising and outward-looking perspective across a broad range of social and political issues.

Although it has been persuasively argued by Terence Brown that 'the emergency' was no more a period of isolation and cultural protectionism for the majority of Irish people than the preceding years had been, the fact remains that, early in its life, the war was remarkably absent from the pages of the Bell, a magazine whose explicit purpose was to break down the country's cultural isolation.¹ In July 1941, a special Ulster issue opened with an editorial in which Sean O'Faolain argued that partition was not so much political as psychological, yet the magazine's readers might have been forgiven for not knowing that Ulster was at war, for nowhere in the magazine was the conflict even mentioned. The world war was written about in the Bell for the first time only in December 1941, more than a year after the founding of the magazine, in an editorial entitled 'Dare We Suppress that Irish Voice?', a cry for government assistance for Irish writers whose incomes had fallen catastrophically since the outbreak of war. In April 1942, a comparison was made between Ireland and the great industrial countries which placed the bombing of towns alongside slums and workhouses as the price to be paid for industrial development. The January 1943 issue saw the first unambiguous protest against the silence surrounding the war: 'One of the great omissions in this war is that our newspapers have no foreign correspondents ... This is lowering and undignified. It dwindles

In this extract from his book, Pleasant the Scholar's Life, MAURICE GOLDRING examines the role of The Bell at a time of cultural isolation

us. It means we are not learning by the experience of others.' In an effort to broaden the horizons of Irish readers, the July 1943 issue published a poem by Federico Garcia Lorca and another, in French, by Louis Aragon. In September 1943 the protest against war censorship became more forceful. In an editorial entitled 'Silent Ireland', radio news broadcasts were taken to task. The Battle of Sicily had begun and Mussolini had resigned, and the Irish public was waiting anxiously for the Sunday night news. The first news item was that ten thousand people had come together for the annual Croagh Patrick pilgrimage, the second the Cork conference of Muintir Na Tire (the People of the Land, a farmers' organisation). The news from Sicily ranked third. Irish radio's sense of priorities, the Bell argued, was completely wrong. The same issue published another poem by Aragon, a poet who had come to symbolise French resistance to the Nazis.

In January 1944, the editorial dealt with the question of Irish neutrality, defending the policy against British and American criticism. Neutrality, it argued, was a declaration of independence, but the price to be paid was silence. The great issues of the time, above all the competing ideologies of Communism and Nazism, were not discussed in Ireland, and it was feared that this silence threatened the quality of the nation's intellectual life. Finally, in February 1944, an explicit link was made between the war and modern Irish history in an editorial which compared the guerrilla campaign being waged by

Tito's partisans in Yugoslavia with the Anglo-Irish War of 1919.

The Bell's attitude to the war was, therefore, that neutrality had increased Ireland's cultural isolation, but that other countries should not draw the conclusion that neutrality was not a legitimate option and that the efforts needed to limit the resulting damage were the responsibility of the Irish people rather than the international community.

The Bell's editors chose the magazine's name precisely because it had no historical roots, no echo in Irish culture. The old symbols were as dead as Brian Boru, killed by the victory of their bearers and new symbols had to be created.² In its third issue, readers begged the journal to adopt a more militant tone. Collectively, the editorial board claimed that ancient controversies were deadlocked. The magazine was young, just as the nation was young; neither could be constructed on the basis of old shibboleths; the Bell, therefore, would be devoted to facts, but this did not mean a return to empiricism. Ireland's nineteenth-century struggles were conditioned by two great systems of thought - nationalism and religion - which had now become two great mystifications. The Bell was conscious of the blank left in people's minds and wanted to fill it with modern and simple ideas, above all by abandoning the legacy of hatred left by the Civil War and protecting and extending democracy. In other words, the intellectuals associated with the magazine wanted to create a secular society and the Bell can be seen as a modernising force in a country paralysed by the glitter of the past and hypnotised by the gleam of the future. Ireland had to face reality and rid itself of its obsession with the glorious past and imaginary future. The main obstacle to the modernisation of Ireland was the idea of a national culture based on linguistic homogeneity, and the Bell argued that

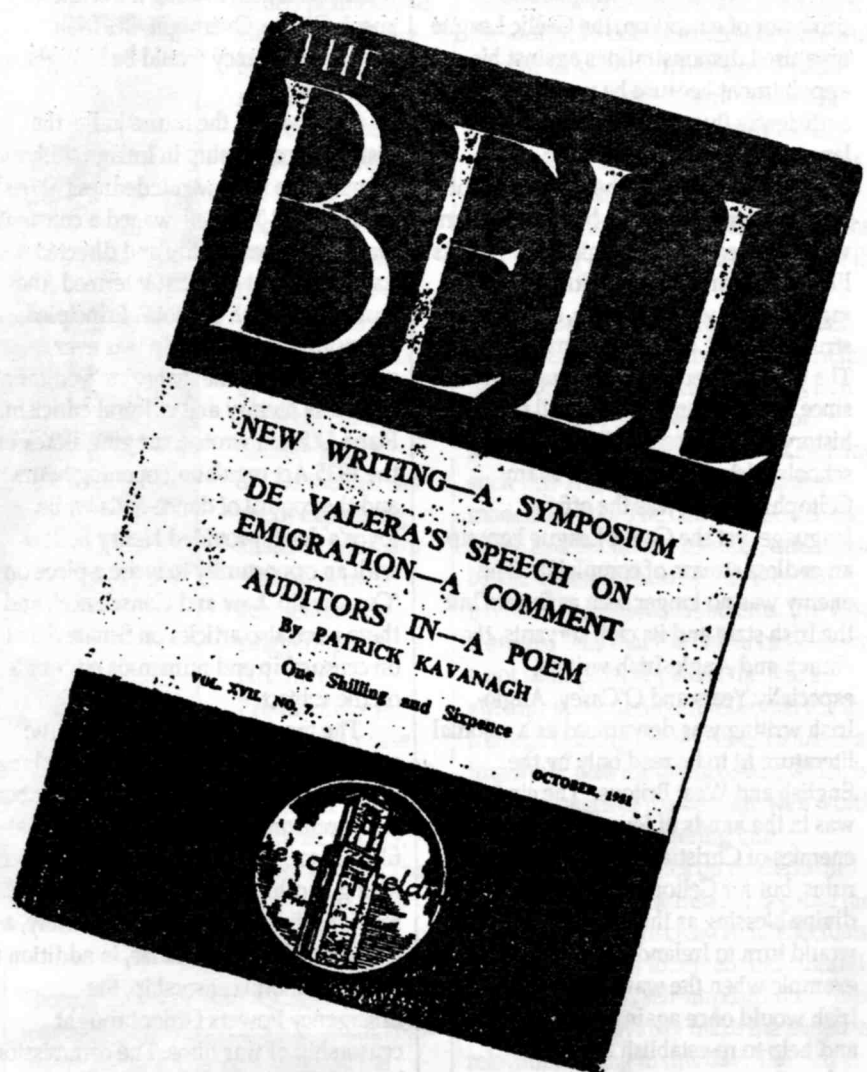
the Gaelic League and the modernisation of industry made strange bed-fellows.³ The rift with the past sometimes led to bitterly ironic conclusions—Sean O’Faolain’s article on the 25th anniversary of the Easter Rising, for example, glorified the Civil War as the best thing that could have happened to the Irish people because it had roused them from their romantic dreams.

Looking in bookshop windows, O’Faolain saw few books by Irish writers, while work by the country’s greatest contemporary authors, Joyce and O’Casey, was censored and banned. The Dail tried to ram Gaelic down young children’s throats, but all its discussion of the language issue was conducted in English. The country was dominated by hypocritical humbug, by a middle class swollen with religion, profits and ignorance, leaving it devoid of hope or inspiration.⁴ Celtic revivalism and religion had stifled literary life and led to a formidable censorship system, the aim of which was to leave people in ignorance. For how long, the Bell asked in June 1942, had its readers not read or heard an open, public and frank discussion of birth control, freemasonry, unmarried mothers, divorce, homosexuality, venereal disease or prostitution? Ireland was cut off from the rest of the world, its leaders were frightened because the world was so close, hammering at the nation’s gate. The world is wicked. We are good. The world will contaminate us. We must keep out of the world,’ the nation’s rulers seemed to be saying.⁵ Exile, however, was not seen by the magazine as providing a solution:

We who remain in Ireland and sometimes grow bitter and warped and silent — are we, also, a lost generation? And those of us who unwisely go ... are they, also, of a lost generation? Can you jump off your own shadow?⁶

The Bell had a political line, even though it was of often muted or concealed. Ireland was a young country and the ashes of a dead mythology stifled all generous and creative projects. Through patient and persevering intellectual work, the Irish people had to bring a dead culture back to life, but in Ireland intellectual work was difficult and intellectuals were constantly insulted:

‘pseudo-intellectuals’, literary cliques,



‘Looking in bookshop windows, O’Faolain saw few books by Irish writers, while work by the country’s greatest contemporary authors, Joyce and O’Casey, was censored and banned’

hackneyed journalists, or even worse, were being treated as harmless maniacs. Which is the worst situation for a political prisoner, and in that sense, all intellectuals in Ireland could be considered as political prisoners.⁷

For the Bell, political and artistic truth could not be confused with the views of

the nationalist and Catholic majority of the population. The journal would show that Ireland was more varied than it looked, and the editors’ aim was to reveal this variety by publishing literary work by Frank O’Connor, Flann O’Brien, Eric Cross, Brendan Behan, Elizabeth Mercier, Michael Farrell and others. Another of the Bell’s chosen tactics for revealing the full variety of Irish life and culture was to denounce Celtophilia, censorship and ignorance of the North, all of which it saw as stifling Irish culture.

What had happened to the enthusiasm of the Gaelic League’s early members? Those who had shared the excitement of the early days of the struggle for the revival of the national language would scarcely have believed possible what was happening half a century later with the disappearance of all colour and inspiration from the language movement. The deterioration of early Gaelic revivalism was, the Bell believed, appalling, and teachers wrote in despair at the way the language was being taught.⁸ When University College

Dublin appointed W.J. Williams as professor of education, the Gaelic League organised demonstrations against his appointment because he was not sufficiently fluent in the national language.⁹ The Gaelic Athletic Association called for the resignation of the Minister for Defence because soldiers were allowed to play Anglo-Saxon sports like hockey and soccer. With a war raging in the world outside, such views struck the Bell as complete madness.¹⁰ The younger generations brought up since independence had lost all sense of history because, as taught in Irish schools, history had become sham Celtophilia. Irish was the official language, yet the Gaelic League kept up an endless stream of complaints. The enemy was no longer seen as Britain but the Irish state and its civil servants, the church and Anglo-Irish writers, especially Yeats and O'Casey. Anglo-Irish writing was denounced as a colonial literature fit to be read only by the English and West Britons. The cinema was in the hands of Jews, those eternal enemies of Christianity. Europe was in ruins, but for Celtophiles this was a divine blessing as the old continent would turn to Ireland as her guide and example when the war was over and the Irish would once again redeem the world and help to re-establish Christian values.¹¹

Under the appropriately ironic title 'Twenty Years a-Withering', Naosc A'Ghleanna gave three main reasons for the difficulties confronting Gaelic. Enthusiasm for the language had been broken by the Civil War, while compulsory teaching of Gaelic had created a hatred of the subject by pupils and parents alike. Finally, the anointed wardens of the Gaelic temple were spiteful personalities; the nation's leading cultural institutions—the Gaelic League, the Gaelic Athletic Association, the Catholic Truth Society and the Irish Academy of Letters — had all been engulfed by the bourgeois tide, and he characterised the Irish revolution as a middle-class 'putsch'.¹² Naosc O'Ghleanna's sardonic proposals for the revival of Gaelic were even more devastating than his criticisms. He suggested publishing a Gaelic newspaper with horse-racing news, making Gaelic compulsory in all official functions, publishing in Gaelic all books banned by the censor and, finally, if all other

measures failed, making it a crime to speak Gaelic. Overnight, the Irish people's militancy would be brought back to life.

How would the future judge the history of censorship in Ireland without blaming the narrow-mindedness of Irish nationalists? The Bell waged a constant war against censorship and directed a harsh spotlight on what it termed 'the stupidity of Irish patriots'. Principled opposition to censorship was ever present, both in the magazine's editorials and in its literary and cultural criticism. Flann O'Brien wrote a stinging attack on the 1935 Act regulating opening hours and the control of dance-halls while Joyce's death provided Henry Bellew with an opportunity to write a piece on 'Censorship, Law and Conscience', and there were also articles on Senate debates on censorship and numerous editorials on the subject.

The most fascinating piece on the subject of censorship is, however, a long interview with Doctor Hayes, a member of the censorship board and the official film censor. A doctor, hero of the Easter Rising and historian of Franco-Irish relations, he watched two films a day, a load made heavier because, in addition to the usual moral censorship, the Emergency Powers Order brought censorship of war films. The commission banned Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* as gross propaganda from beginning to end which was likely to cause riots and bloodshed. Censorship, according to Doctor Hayes, should operate on a very simple moral code: there are principles on which civilisation and family life are grounded, and anything which insulted or threatened those principles was to be banned. Scenes of 'lascivious' dances were cut from films. *Gone with the Wind* was banned because the cuts suggested by the commission were not acceptable to the film's distributors. Two of the most important taboos were, of course, divorce and abortion, and distributors who wished their films to be shown in Ireland had to be extremely careful to suppress any frivolous depiction of the holy state of matrimony. When a film script included a divorce, the criterion according to which the board decided was a simple one: did the film show divorce in a positive or negative light? If a divorced wife was shown to end up leading a wretched existence, the film

might be passed, but nothing which depicted happy or contented divorcees could be shown in the Free State. Occasionally, Doctor Hayes almost allowed aesthetic and other considerations to get the better of him; watching a French film, he was appalled by the adultery and other ungodly activity it depicted, but the actors all played their parts so well that he claimed it almost broke his heart to ban the film from Irish screens.

Throughout, the Bell waged a relentless campaign to prove that 'moral principles' were nothing but a smokescreen concealing a desire to muzzle intellectual and creative life, stifle all public debate and inhibit the exchange of ideas. Such objectives had nothing to do with the church, morality or Christianity. The debate about Kate O'Brien's *Without my Cloak* was very clear in this respect. A Catholic journal in Britain had greeted the book as a notable contribution to Catholic literature, while an Irish magazine had replied that a novel which dealt with the most attractive features of sexual sin could not be deemed a Catholic book: Catholic literature had to be of the sort that could be read aloud in the family. The Bell responded that such attitudes had nothing to do with literature or the beliefs of the Catholic church, but were directly inspired by puritanism, which was, of course, an English rather than an Irish system of belief. After all, was it not puritanical Victorians at Trinity College who had denounced the bawdiness of Gaelic literature?¹⁴

Censorship, the Bell argued, was not moral but political, and aimed at protecting Ireland from all foreign influences. It was the climax of a patriotism gone berserk. Bishop Lyons exposed the dangers of the radio and the cinema: young people ran the risk of absorbing ideas hostile to their national culture. For Daniel Corkery, the only patriotic artists were painters, not writers, because only they had really cut the link with Britain. For Senator Kehoe, in a debate on censorship, 'famous writers' were famous from an international point of view, according to criteria alien to Irish culture. The effect of such views on intellectual life was disastrous. Anyone who wanted to succeed in Ireland had to pay tribute to Catholicism and nationalism. The most pernicious effect was that writers ended



Patrick Kavanagh and Flann O'Brien both contributed to *The Bell*

up practising self-censorship if they wished to have their work published.¹⁵

The amount of space devoted to Ulster in the *Bell* was impressive for a Dublin-based magazine of limited resources. Two numbers of the magazine were given over to special issues on the North, one in 1941, the other in 1942, both of them published in July to coincide with the most important date in the Ulster calendar. Belfast Protestants, Orange spokesmen, Unionists, church leaders and others were all given a voice in the *Bell*, and there were numerous articles by Ulster authors in addition to the two special issues.¹⁶

If one bears in mind the magazine's avowed objective, which was to present Ireland in all its diversity rather than as a homogeneous Gaelic-speaking, Catholic nation, the reasons for Ulster's central role in the *Bell*'s editorial project are obvious. People living in the North were called Irish, and yet in their majority they did not share the manners, the morals, the religion or the politics of their Southern brethren, and neither did they accept the essential pillars of Irishness as defined in the Free State—nationalism and Catholicism. The dominant values

Thomas Carnduff insisted on the working-class origins of Orangeism, showing that it was sometimes in the name of their 'Orange values' that Belfast's workers had rebelled and organised in trade unions. The second angle of attack was more obvious: the *Bell* presented Northern Protestants' fears about the South in a sympathetic way. When Northern Protestants objected to the priest-ridden nature of Southern Ireland, what sensible person could disagree, the magazine asked. When a Northern Protestant complained that he had previously enjoyed an Irish jig, but now, as soon as a fox-trot was heard, the Gaelic Leaguers immediately withdrew in protest, the result was that Protestants in their turn refused to dance to traditional Gaelic tunes. In a more obviously political vein, Sean O'Faolain wrote that partition had been a catastrophe above all for the South, as it served to reinforce the country's homogeneity and defensiveness against the outside world. He claimed that the manuscripts he received from Dublin were self-centred and lacking poetry and humour, whereas those sent from Belfast revealed that the six counties were

stified political and cultural life in the South, and the magazine believed that one of the best ways of lifting the lid was to write about Irish people who did not share those values but nevertheless lived in an area claimed by its constitution to be part of the Southern state.

So the *Bell* set about explaining Ulster to Southern readers, who were advised to stop sniggering at Northern Protestants, even though their case was often so poorly presented by their Unionist leaders, whom it called the chief 'whiners of Europe'. Peadar O'Donnell and

related to a vast empire, and through it to the world, so that Northerners were truly 'twentieth-century Irishmen'. Peadar O'Donnell was even more vehement: Dublin was a dead and paralysed city and the only true capital of Ireland was Belfast, which had to speak out for the whole country as it was the only city that was closely connected with the rest of the world.

The *Bell*'s contributors sometimes overstated their case about Southern fear of the Protestant North, of course, as if the six-county state was devoid of sectarianism and discrimination and any such fear was simply of progressive modernisation. The denunciation of the South as a backward country, dominated by the Catholic church, was part and parcel of their own shibboleths. But what mattered was that the North came to play a not unimportant part in the *Bell*'s attempt to modernise intellectual life in Ireland. Making the invisible visible is an important task for intellectuals, which is why the pages of the *Bell* are well worth re-reading before entering into contemporary debates on modernism and post-nationalist Ireland. Because the *Bell*'s writers were creative intellectuals who had no wish to replace old cultural fetters with new, self-imposed ones, their vigour and buoyancy make the magazine relevant reading to this day. The *Bell*'s writers and editors were great dissolvers of borders.

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A Family Affair

Before I met Solly I dreamed of being a writer, but his revealing paper on the pitfalls of 'confessional realism' raised such ghoulish possibilities in my mind, I almost lost my nerve.

We arrived home late on the night of what was to be his publishing-swansong. He sated, me enraged as always, but without words. 'Just relax my love,' he whispered to my back in bed. 'You don't need to purge your little frustrations with hack writing. Your mother is right you know. People will think you're jealous, that you're trying to better my work. Huh?' I remained silent. 'Come on, just talk to me instead,' he wheedled. and stuck his tongue into my ear.

'Don't do that,' I snapped. 'You know I loathe it.'

'But you're so beautiful,' he insisted dragging me around to face him. You know how much I need you with me. How can the memoirs of Solly Christian ever really happen if I don't have you there' - he paused, groping for the right expression - 'rooting for me?'

'Oh yes Solly, I root for you all right,' I thought, smiling at a faded lovebite on his neck. 'It's such a lonely business,' he complained, at once bruised and provocative in his welling self-pity. 'A man like me needs a sexy woman to make him feel.' And gazing at me open faced, he added, 'Your mother says you should be proud.' Even at this I refused to rise to his bait and instead watched innocence spread across his features like a familiar stain. Then, taking my silence for complicity he relaxed, gently sucking on my earlobe until he fell asleep. Such was the scene on that night as on so many others.

But I didn't stop writing. Instead I closeted my tales in daily journals hiding them in different places around the house. Everything was fine until Mother came to stay. Somehow she made poor Solly so nervous he kept poking into things normally he wouldn't touch, so it was inevitable he would unearth some dark secret. It was taped under the lid of the piano, one of my better attempts I thought and Solly, finding truth in fiction handed himself from a branch of the cherry blossom tree growing in next door's garden. I would never have

Fiction by Jill Siddall

thought it strong enough to hold the weight. But then, life is full of surprises.

There was an inquest of course. Tongues and the finger of suspicion wagged and pointed in my direction and I was surprised, unnerved in fact, when my journals were produced for inspection by the jury. But happy fate! Instead of finding myself charged with murder I was approached by a young court reporter with publishing aspirations. He said that his one wish was to reveal my true colour to the world, that I had the gift. It was wonderful, all doubts vanished, buried in Solly's grave

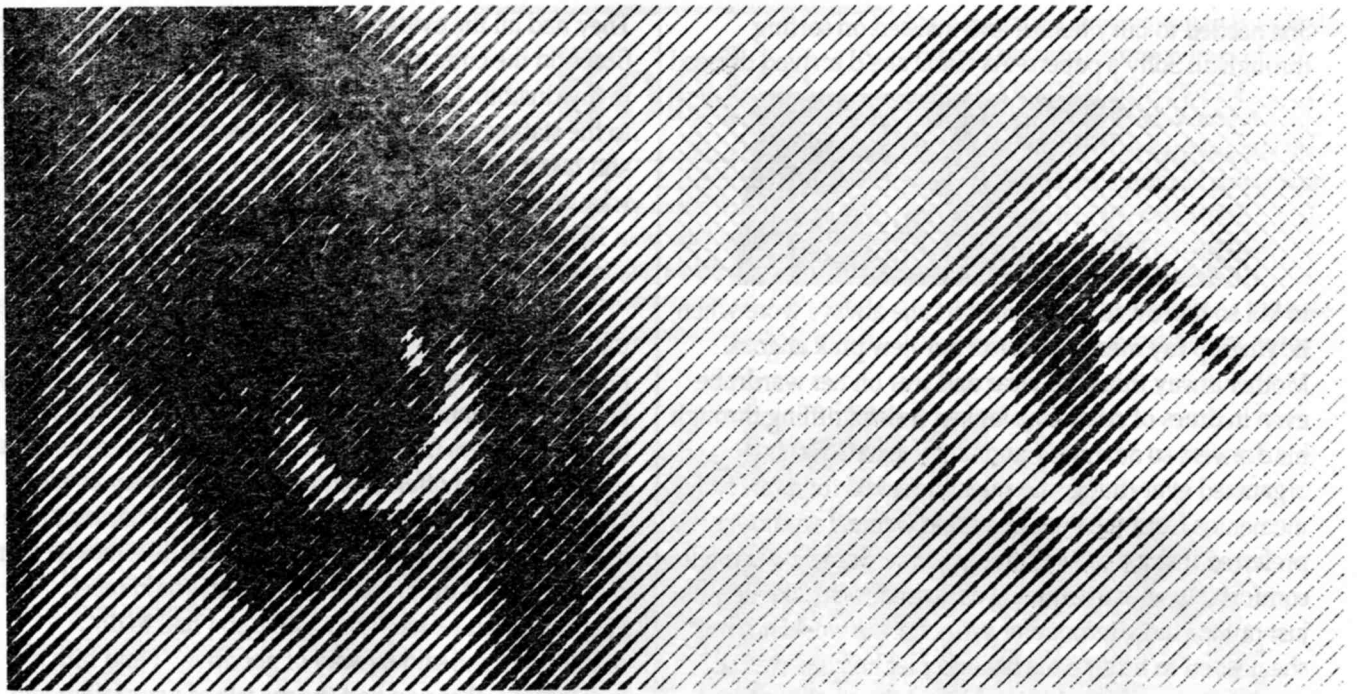
you might say, and I, without need for further seduction, prepared my literary pose for all to see.

It was quite difficult to get the journals back. The courts were stubborn, their stately wheels grinding slow, while justice cried out for itself and I, of course, cried for fame. We each stood our ground asserting our righteousness while truth lurked somewhere in between. For weeks the starving media had hounded me on the courthouse steps and camped outside my house at night. Mine seemed such a little

“I tried to put him at ease but he sat alone in my extra large armchair, comfortable for two, refusing the wine I had bought in his honour”

crime, only the expression of some minor longings, when compared to the huge atrocities creeping through this world in the name of justice. But this was a quiet time between corruptions when a hint of domestic-murder might just save the day, so I tolerated them, knowing that silence was my only weapon I had a hunch that intrigue was of the essence. Confessions written in the shadow of death would add the necessary spice to make bestsellers. Oh twists of fate! I couldn't have planned it better myself. At last I was free to grab my destiny. His name was John.

'Dear John', I wrote nine days after the last newspaper report, 'maybe this tragic loss of a great man can still somehow nurture growth in its wake. Perhaps even in death my Solly might spark the birth of genius and together you and I will create immortals. Expose me, no, reveal me to the world - do what you must - I am in your



hands now.' And I sealed the envelope with a languorous sweep of the tongue.

I was excited, expectant, when he came to the house next day but sadly he was a little distant I thought. I tried to put him at ease but he sat alone in my extra large armchair, comfortable for two, refusing the wine I had bought in his honour. I sat on the floor near his enormous feet, my box of journals beside me, waiting for the move I wouldn't make because -well - I love a chase as much as any hunter. Then just when I thought we were getting somewhere he announced that he had to be in court first thing and asked for the journals promising to return to me in a week. Then he was gone, my fantasies in a box under his arm. From an upstairs window I watched him get into his car and throw the box onto the back seat where it balanced for a moment before slipping to the floor. He ignored it and reached for his car phone with an energetic intent he never displayed in my company. I was surprised that junior reporters could afford such tyrannous luxuries and his carelessness with my future irritated me but I forced myself to dismiss it. I become so easily irritated, but it's best to stay silent I always think.

That week passed quite busily. My family, who so admired my Solly's intellect, needed all the comfort I could muster believing I must crave support. Their horror over his death demanded a show of love which is always hard to simulate. So I didn't have much time to dwell on John. Except in bed - so peaceful there now. I was reluctant to get up at all but the phone kept ringing and I had to keep writing. If I didn't who knows what might become the truth and which life would I be punished for living then? Jade, (Mother's favourite), vulnerable daughter, failed author, murderess? The possibilities were exquisite and at the same time revolting in their sameness. Isn't it always so?

Poor mother. I think she loved him more than I did and it was she who kept ringing. I had expected the scales of justice but it was just Mother. 'If you'd only had a child you would feel safe,' she said, stumbling through her sadness, trying I suppose to find the only comfort she could cling to. 'It's all right,' I assured her, 'I'll be fine even so,' thanking fate for making me a barren woman. The fertility of barrenness was the paradox I loved above all in this world not believing in the substance of its hollowness. I made babies out of words, until Solly thought he saw my children laughing at him on every street. Wasn't that proof enough of my gift?

I found it almost impossible to write anything that week, feeling that I was in limbo, not really knowing what was expected of me. For myself I knew exactly what I wanted, but it's never a good idea to spring surprises on reluctant prey. And that John was reluctant I knew; I had experience of these men in my dreams. Perhaps this was what drove Solly mad, these stories of cold-eyed gods eating up my heart and laughing as they licked their lips and turned away. John said that he was fascinated by my insight into 'the tortured psyche' as he called it. I thought it was all fairly obvious but opting for silence again wondered what else he might uncover, excited by the prospect of - some messages hidden even from myself.

Mother came to stay again ashamed of the publicity but ill-prepared to face mothering a killer. She couldn't hide her belief that I'd murdered him, though how I was supposed to have done it I can't imagine. I know nothing about knots and according to the coroner's evidence it was perfection itself, causing instant death. But I couldn't say that to her.

We've always talked in circles and by then it had become a way of life. So we skirted and I dried her tears.

She needed to busy herself and insisted on sorting through all Solly's papers- As usual she'd arrived dressed



to kill so borrowed the sweatshirt she always wore when tidying up my mess, to protect her new pink angora. Mother always thinks of wear and tear on her wardrobe even in times of crisis. She looked forlorn riffling through his drawers so anxiously and all for what? Having organized everything into piles she asked for a few little mementos from the desk of a great writer. I would have preferred if she'd just left things alone. Somehow I'd felt comfortable with everything as it used to be, like he was just out for the afternoon or away for the weekend, but she needed to tidy up his life and I let her. She was so upset and there was nothing I could do. Nothing I could say to bring him back. Poor mother. I can read her like a book, so I made some tea to try and cheer her up but when I started to talk about John she became furious and upset her tea all over my sweatshirt. She ripped it off and stormed out trophies in hand. I was shocked I must admit but dismissed it knowing how much importance she attached to loyalty, or the appearance of at least. She never could accept my love of men and the only one she had been even civil to was Solly. She said he had lovely skin. Now he was dead she was bereft. But Mother's always had an eye for younger men.

John phoned as promised the following week. This time I took the armchair for two while he stood by the fireplace his huge feet planted far apart. I tried to draw him out with a few concocted anecdotes but he wouldn't budge. So I made tea - the great icebreaker.

It seemed to be the right thing to do. Sipping and pouring over my scripts he began to warm to particular themes, those which I felt were of little importance, but I said nothing. His close exploration of my dreams was almost sexual; well to be honest I was in a frenzy. Of desire one moment and as his intention slowly became clear, of disbelief. Having cheerfully played the passive role all my life, suddenly passivity seemed the only option before this Sherlock Holmes with balls fiddling with my dreams. My words found new meaning on his lips, my motives new chilling life. And it was all there, what he chose to believe. It was just a matter of interpretation.

'I must ask you to come with me,' he said, a rural lilt colouring his words. 'Anything you say may and will be taken down and used in evidence,' he continued by rote, his waving hand revealing a raw redness I hadn't noticed before.

It was as simple as that. Needless to say I said nothing.

They had all the evidence they needed, even down to rope fibres on the cuffs of the tea-stained sweatshirt they found in my dustbin. One of the women who came to escort me to the station rooted it out and it was carefully bagged and taken off. It didn't seem to occur to anyone to wonder why its fleecy interior was coated in delicate pink wool.

Mother came to see me today. She was happy, coquettish.

'You were always one for the cloistered life,' she assured me, 'so you'll survive. Your problem is you just never know when to speak out and now it's too late. Poor Solly just couldn't handle you, you know,' she said drawing a bundle of letters from her handbag. He wrote to me about you, but when I offered advise he became very abusive. You know how I hate disrespect, don't you darling?' she asked, examining her perfect fingernails. She looked at me calmly and got up to leave. 'I told him you'd rebel eventually but he wouldn't listen, so I had to do something,' she said by way of goodbye. 'I told him to lock you up, that you had the morals of your father and he said I was a fool. You know I'm not a fool - don't you darling? How fortunate I was there when he died. My explanations of what happened helped the police so much with their enquiries.' And she reached up to straighten my collar.

Then she left, a tiny woman tripping lightly by the side of a red-handed detective with enormous feet. At the door she put her wrinkled old hand on his bare arm and smiled back at me. 'John is a good man,' she said gleefully. 'He has such lovely skin.' ■

'CROATS DESTROY MOSTAR'S HISTORIC BRIDGE'

Sand, mortared with white of egg, spun a trick
On space. Ottomans captured a rainbow
To mke a bridge for sacks of flour and gold.
Shells were pounded with maize and shards of
brick

To feed the hens, and all the garrison
Ripened on Mostar yolks. The soldiers stayed
Lovers leaned on the parapet and made
Their wish, and the river took their sovereign.

Day. 'Pitted by sniper and mortar fire,
Its steep arch was festooned with old car tyres'
But as shelling increased, the struts collapsed
Hung with rubber holes, no words can stop gaps.
'Broken bridge' is no thing in name, but there.
An absence, dropped from light, spans the river.

Selina Guinness

Saving the earth

Conference Papers on Capitalism, Nature, Socialism; James O'Connor; Guilford Publications; NPG

JAMES O'CONNOR is best known as the author of *The Fiscal Crisis of the State* written twenty years ago. In this collection of essays he develops his earlier analysis of the capitalist state, and attempts an examination of the environmental crisis within a reformed marxist framework.

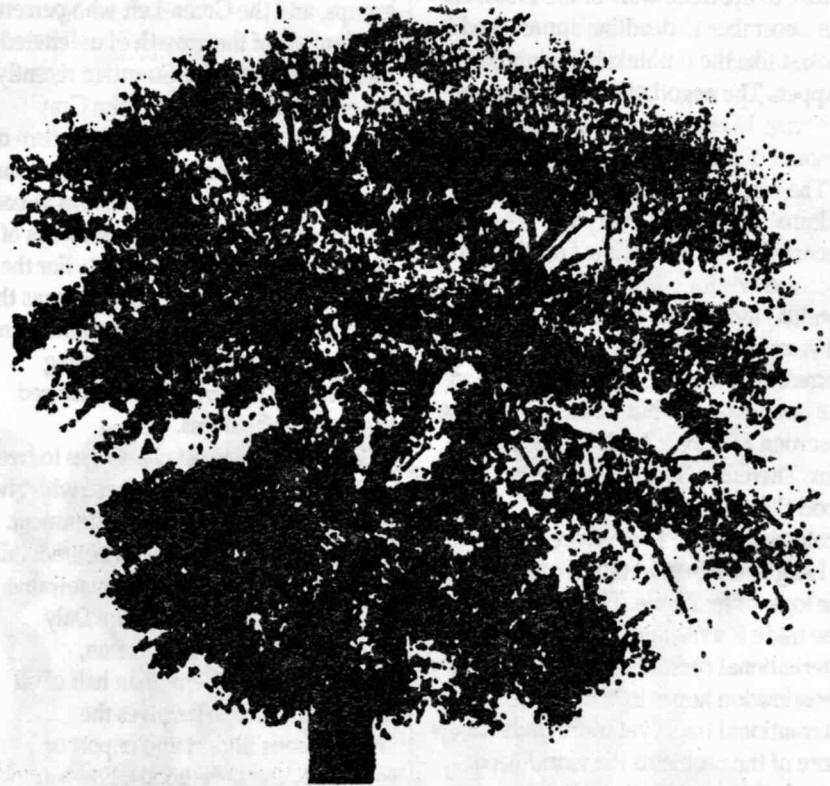
O'Connor views the current environmental crisis as the 'second contradiction of capitalism'. He argues that there is a two-fold link between the ecological and economic crises. On the one hand, capitalist industry uses the environment as a source of raw materials, and on the other, uses it as a waste sink for pollution. 'Nature as a tap has more or less been capitalised; nature as a sink is more or less undercapitalised'.

The environmental crisis and its effects on the accumulation process are however indeterminate according to O'Connor. In certain circumstances the crisis forces businesses to employ cleaner technology, pay pollution taxes, or fit expensive pollution devices. This of course increases costs. Meanwhile the cost of raw materials increase due to the depletion of non-renewable resources, upon which our modern productive processes are overly dependent. As costs rise, profits shrink, investment declines, and the accumulation process slows down. The system is in crisis because it isn't growing. (O'Connor doesn't seek to reduce all of capitalism's crises to environmental considerations; the system's inherent inability to self-regulate and the anarchy of the market are also acknowledged.)

In contrast to ecological writing on the depletion of natural resources, O'Connor makes the important point that shortages of resources of resources do not at this stage manifest themselves as 'absolute' as green theorists claim. Rather they express themselves as price increases as outlined above. O'Connor does not pursue the contradictory role of the state in this economic crisis faced by capitalism. If we look at the actual behaviour of states in the face of environmental deterioration we find that they enforce environmental regulations

Books

to make industry more 'eco-friendly'. Therefore the state itself imposes costs on capital, something which O'Connor doesn't fully take account of. The state's role as capital's productive conditions is



not as unproblematic as he seems to presume. The state itself is problematic, not just the capitalist economy.

Capitalism's response to the ecological crisis, according to O'Connor, amounts to 'green consumerism'; sustainable capitalism is not possible. 'How can capitalism sustain itself given its self-expanding nature, or its basic definition as "money in search of itself", when the conditions of production in general and environmental conditions in particular are basically self-limiting?' The limits of capitalist economic growth are determined by the finite nature of the earth.

The logic of O'Connor's argument leads to the conclusion that the working class no longer has a monopoly on legitimate struggle against the state. There are of course many areas of agreement and overlap between all social forces. For example, extending the

concept of the environment to include the immediate urban surroundings of people's everyday lives means a green/left overlap to some extent. O'Connor's argument suggests that the labour movement's political power is on a par with that of the new social movements whereas it remains the strongest and most powerful.

O'Connor's essays outline a valuable and much needed marxist examination of

the environmental crisis, but he fails to indicate how this might be given political expression. He

does however point to a solution that has much in common with the much sought-after but elusive 'third way' between social democracy and revolutionary socialism. He suggests that 'Strategic...unity between movements thus needs to be orientated around the theme of democratising the state'.

O'Connor's analysis obliges socialists to review socialism in the light of the natural conditions of life on this planet. After all, where else would materialists begin? We need to reassess Marx so that the natural is on an equal footing with the social. For O'Connor the modern environmental crisis created by capitalism has necessitated this revision and points the way to a possible socialist ecology ■

John Barry

Costing the earth

The New Protectionism; Tim Lang and Colin Hines; Earthscan Publications; £10.95 Stg

Until recently any mention of GATT was likely to elicit a yawn. There was a general consensus to the effect that GATT is a terrible bore but we all go down if it fails. Failure was unthinkable because it might herald a return to the trade wars of the 1930s. As the December 15 deadline approached it looked like the unthinkable might just happen. The negotiations went right to the wire. In the end, with a certain amount of fudging, a deal was struck.

The merits of free trade are treated as axiomatic by almost everyone. It has become an article of faith. According to received wisdom, free trade brings wealth - indeed it is the motor behind the 45 years or so of post-war prosperity. Some of this wealth can trickle down to the poor. And it is but a small step to the assertion that more trade means more jobs. Therefore GATT is thought to be a good thing. The authors of *The New Protectionism* are much more sceptical.

Lang and Hines want to argue against the logic of free trade. They argue that free trade is a misnomer for deregulated international commerce. Trade liberalisation hopes to bring more international trade, yet more trade brings more of the problems the world needs less of; threats to the environment, uneven spread of employment, and widening gaps between rich and poor, both within societies and between them.

Today, the key free trade ideologues are the transnational corporations that bestride the globe for cheap labour and markets. The World Bank says they control 70 per cent of world trade. Further deregulation may promise them an easier life, but the removal of trade barriers can also lead to a haemorrhage of jobs - such as Digital's removal of production from Galway to Ayrshire and the threatened switch of Neodata jobs from the midwest to Boulder, Colorado.

Free trade theory sells a social and moral vision which argues that responsibility is atomised and individualised. This is nothing particularly new, but, as the authors point out, the sad thing is that rich historical traditions of rejecting it have temporarily been forgotten. The case for

intervention in the market is once again having to be made. Markets are not miracle mechanisms that somehow act on their own, or lead inevitably to the general good, which is why in the past correction controls, regulations and institutions have been put in place.

GATT is designed to create a global free market in all goods and services, including agricultural products. It is not only the fringe pundits of the environmental movements, Third World groups, and the Green-Left who perceive the dangers of the growth of unfettered trade. Writing in *The Guardian* recently the erstwhile Thatcherite John Gray referred to the 'destructive radicalism of market institutions'. He argued that the globalisation of market forces has already undermined local and regional ways of life in many parts of the world. For the Third World, global free trade means the destruction of agrarian communities and peasant traditions, as local farming practices are undercut by mechanised Western agribusiness.

Some of the fiercest challenges to free trade dogma comes from those who give priority to protecting the environment. More trade means more environmentally damaging traffic, using non renewable fuels. In any case, as Herman Daly points out (*Scientific American*, November 1993) more than half of all international trade involves the simultaneous import and export of essentially the same goods. For example, Americans import Danish sugar biscuits and Danes import American sugar cookies. Would it not be more efficient to exchange recipes? This would certainly be more in accord with John Maynard Keynes's dictum that knowledge should be international and goods homespun (or in this case, homebaked).

Standards are another area of widespread concern. In theory they can be 'harmonized' up but in practice the new GATT will lower them in many areas. The GATT's proposals for a multilateral trade organisation would create an unaccountable, unelected body with immense powers.

So, is there an alternative to free trade? The mere mention of protectionism sends economists reaching for the cross and garlic, but for environmentalists, public health specialists and some consumer advocates, the notion of protection is their *raison d'être*.

But the debate between free traders

and Thirties-style protectionists is sterile and out of date. Lang and Hines claim that rising consciousness about the implications of the Uruguay round is forging a popular agenda that could be described as the New Protectionism.

Further trade liberalization would take us in the wrong direction, they say. It encourages the big players to seek cheap labour, undermine public demands for tougher environmental and consumer protection, and widen the gap between rich and poor, while removing hard-won welfare safety nets in the interests of international competitiveness.

The authors are not arguing for a Pol Pot-type autarky. They say that if people want to protect their futures, they must press for more local trade and diversified economies. Consumers should be encouraged to buy, first, locally produced goods and services, second, regionally produced ones, and globally produced ones only as a last resort. For this to happen the GATT would have to be transformed into a General Agreement on Sustainable Trade.

Lang and Hines have produced a stimulating, important, and well presented book. They have achieved the impossible by making free trade and GATT an interesting topic! ■

Gerard O'Quigley

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