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What price neutrality?

With the government's proposal in the White Paper on Foreign Policy to 'explore' participation in the NATO-sponsored 'Partnership for Peace', the debate on neutrality has now moved to centre stage in Irish politics.

Those opposed to neutrality argue that the end of the Cold War and European integration have made neutrality redundant. This state, they say, is not neutral and indeed never was, except in the military sense during the Second World War. They attack the history of neutrality as abstentionist and isolationist, claim that Irish military neutrality in the Second World War was opportunistic and immoral, and say that the current upholding of neutrality in the European context is an equally immoral evasion of responsibility. We take Euro money, involve ourselves in Euro joint decision-making, but refuse to defend another member state if attacked. The most radical anti-neutralists also argue that our non-participation in NATO is hypocritical because our national sovereignty in the ends depends on NATO's nuclear deterrent.

There is an antipathy in Ireland to militarism, inherited from the experience of World War One and the emergence of the state against the backdrop of the Versailles Conference. In addition to this, the popular suspicion of the state apparatus, endemic in the pre-Independence period, was carried over to the new state. The contract established between people and state remained conditional, and the new Free State only gradually established its legitimacy with the population. Part of this process was a de-militarisation of the state during the 1920s. With the exception of the wartime period, military conscription - the norm in most European states - has been inconceivable in Ireland. In this sense, the anti-neutralists' claims that neutrality was not policy but an 'accident of history' contains more truth than even they suspect.

But they fail to make a convincing case for abandoning neutrality. The Irish state has never been 'neutral' on world affairs. In the 1920s, it pursued a reformist policy in the British Empire, notably at the Westminster Conference of 1931, during the 1930s it supported collective security through the League of Nations and after World War Two it

sought admission to the UN. In that body, it has consistently supported UN solutions to world conflicts, UN peace keeping missions and targeted policies of international social development. It has signed up to most international agreements, the International Court, the World Bank and so forth, and has been among the most enthusiastic participants in the EEC and later the EU. In this context, a neutral foreign policy would be a major step backwards. But of course this is not what is meant by neutrality. Neutrality in Irish politics does not mean moral or political neutralism, but is the opposite of militarism.

The Irish state, with the support of a large majority of the population, is therefore deeply committed to internationalist solutions to world security problems. When Irish soldiers are killed on UN missions, there is never the whisper of a 'bring the boys home' campaign, but rather a certain pride in being involved in legitimate international actions. Integration into an increasingly federal Europe is also largely supported while suspicion of great power politics and militarism remain deeply rooted. On the defence of the island, the Irish, like most other nations, maintain a robust self-interest. Due to its geographical position, it was difficult to discern a threat to sovereignty even at the height of the Cold War. Arguments for joining NATO fell on deaf ears. Yet while the Irish - as the recent *Irish Times* poll showed - oppose NATO membership, they would generally support strictly legitimate European defence measures and largely endorse the PFP as it has been presented to them by a partisan press.

The public sees a huge difference between NATO involvement and common European defence. NATO is dominated by the US and other nuclear powers and no longer sees western interests as confined to the strict defence of Europe's territory from direct attack. In other words, defence now encompasses aggression. The US opposes reform of UN political arrangements but regularly refuses to meet its UN financial commitments - i.e. it is committed to weakening and down-grading the UN and hence also its regional organisations like the OSCE. Conversely, the US is determined on NATO expansion, to the extent that its eagerness to expand it through Eastern Europe has led to

worries in Germany and elsewhere that it could destabilise it altogether. The Russian threat has been replaced by a myriad of new threats. The US sees the major threat to world stability not coming from unequal distribution of wealth and development, but from 'rogue states', which it defines as 'anti-status quo states'. This is an agenda for freezing current world power configurations and stymieing the emergence of new local powers. Hence, India refused to sign the recent Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty as it contained no requirement on the Western Powers to any degree of disarmament. A 'status quo' world policy - to be enforced by western military might - is deeply antipathetic to world development.

Europe needs defensive arrangements to prevent military conflicts among its member states, to tackle organised crime, to operate internal conflict prevention and peace-keeping programmes in areas of conflict and to be available for legitimate UN missions outside Europe together with non-European states. The forces in Europe which want to maintain a militarist world power role want these functions exercised through NATO and absorbed into this greater framework with its extra agendas. Anti-militarists in Europe are, unfortunately, divided. Some left-wing forces oppose NATO and propose that their states minimise both their NATO commitment as well as their EU involvement. But this position only leads back to nationalist policies, including in the military area. The more radical position - which is embraced by the political left forces in Spain, Greece and - through Democratic Left - in Ireland, seeks to disentangle European defensive arrangements, conflict prevention and peace-keeping from NATO by basing these squarely in the UN, the OSCE and the EU. These structures, though under massive attack by NATO interests to the extent that their development has stagnated, are nevertheless well-developed and should be further developed.

NATO won its greatest propaganda coup with the IFOR operation in Bosnia, which is continually hailed as a great success. But IFOR came three years - and countless deaths and destruction - after the sabotaging of UN/OSCE/EU peace initiatives in Bosnia by NATO interests. This was a major setback for the development of a democratic European security policy, and prepared the ground for the flurry of PFP activities since the subsequent triumphant enforcement of the Dayton Plan by IFOR in Bosnia. Where IFOR-type operations are justified, they should result from joint European democratic decisions through the EU and OSCE, and be implemented under such political control. And the present IFOR mission is partly that - it is not a NATO operation - but it is enforcing a US rather than an EU or

OSCE negotiated peace.

It is against this background of the nature and agenda of NATO that the Partnership for Peace must be judged. The PFP involves negotiating a mutual interest treaty with NATO, joint training and exercises with NATO forces, and 'discussing' with NATO any perceived threats to national sovereignty or security. Even without full NATO membership, PFP will draw every country into mutual treaties with a major military alliance which at the least will restrict opposition to future NATO actions. Most European states which joined PFP are Eastern European countries which want full membership of NATO and see PFP as 'associate membership' until western relations with Russia allow their full participation. The neutral states which joined include Austria, which was reluctantly neutral, for reasons to do with Russian occupation after World War Two. Finland,

again for local reasons, joined PFP after Russia signed a PFP agreement in the hope of maintaining some influence over its development and of preventing full NATO membership for East European countries. Reasons vary from state to state and are dictated by immediate self-interest.

From this perspective, no-one has yet shown Ireland's self-interest in joining these arrangements. Non-membership of PFP would not exclude us from peace-keeping, as the anti-neutralists allege. Ireland supports genuine European security through the EU and OSCE and is already involved in numerous UN, EU and OSCE missions - indeed, many of the forces involved in IFOR are non-NATO and non-PFP. There is no political demand from Europe that Ireland sign up, as Chancellor Kohl made quite clear in Dublin this year. But there is a growing belief that joining the PFP is some sort of a pay-off for US support for the Peace Process. Certainly the US military charm offensive in Ireland this year, from the USS JFK to the Navy Football Team, and the attempt to establish a Dublin campus for the University of Notre Dame on the back of the Peace Process, do give grounds for worry. US support for the Peace Process is welcome, but Irish participation in NATO should not be a *quid pro pro*.

Our foreign policy does not require that we join the PFP, our commitment to involvement in UN, EU and OSCE peace-keeping does not require it, our support for developing a joint democratic EU foreign policy does not require it, our interest in a non-militarist Europe dictates against it and, last but not least, Ireland's defence interests do not require it. In Ireland, as in Eastern Europe, it is those who are in favour of full NATO membership who wholeheartedly campaign for it ■

◉ Our foreign policy does not require that we join the PFP ◉

The challenge to the left

The economist John Kenneth Galbraith argues that current United States economic policy amounts to nothing less than a war against the poor. He claims that political power is now in the hands of what he terms 'the relatively fortunate' who have both numerical strength and financial wealth. They include the large managerial class that has mostly replaced the old capitalists, the vast professional class, and the many living comfortably in retirement.

They were no longer willing to carry the burden, as they see it, of a welfare system that rewarded laziness and taxed hard work. Hence, the welfare reforms introduced by Clinton with more enthusiasm from Republicans than from Democrats.

Unemployment and recession do not hurt the fortunate. On the contrary, low unemployment is seen as a serious threat both to price stability and to investor confidence. Idle men and women - along with central bankers - are regarded as the best defence against inflation. It is now openly acknowledged that financial markets respond positively to increased joblessness, a consequent weakening of the job market and thus again the threat of inflation. And it is considered far better to suffer recession than to do anything about it. State intervention to put people back to work is disapproved of. It has to be paid for and it is thought better to leave things alone or at most to reduce interest rates and taxes.

These attitudes are by no means confined to the United States. They are found throughout the western world. Politically, they are reflected by the increased blurring of distinctions between right and left. The centre is where it's at. In the United States, a Democrat is re-elected president on a platform which could just as easily be Republican. In Britain, New Labour holds the ground once occupied by one-nation Tories. Political militancy is increasingly the preserve of the far right.

The left, following the traumas of the late 1980s, is beginning to show signs of renewal. Yet the path to the future is not clearly charted.

Ralph Milliband, writing in 1989, asserted that: 'For many years to come, socialists will be something like a pressure group to the left of orthodox social democracy. It is social democracy which will for a long time constitute the alternative - such as it is - to conservative governments. In this perspective, one of the main tasks for socialists is surely

to turn themselves into the most resolute and persuasive defenders of the democratic gains which have been achieved in capitalist regimes, the most intransigent critics of the shortcomings of capitalist democracy, and the best advocates of a social order in which democracy is at long last liberated from the constrictions which capitalist domination imposes upon it.'

The historian Donald Sassoon recently wrote: 'I think the left is undergoing one of the most difficult periods in its history, one in which something like a defensive popular front strategy may be required, for it is vital that the left be able to preserve some of its values, its ideas, and its organisations. It is important to live to fight another day, onto a new terrain and, above all, with a new language.'

In a previous issue of *Times Change*, Helena Sheehan claimed that it 'is only within the Marxist tradition ... that we get the really bold and brave thinking that is needed to come to terms with the times.'

In this issue, Johan Lonroth takes the debate further with an open and challenging approach to redefining the left. He identifies Marx's theory of alienation as a valuable tool for understanding capitalism but is strongly critical of the labour theory of value. He emphasises the need to democratise international bodies like the International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organisation, and World Bank, and endorses novel proposals for a tax on international speculators and also for world eco-taxes.

Some socialists will strongly disagree with Lonroth's statement that 'the left is against capitalism, not against the market'. They will argue that while markets exist and are not about to disappear that does not mean that there is no room for state intervention, for regulation, for taxes, for planning, for labour laws and a range of measures that the left has traditionally advocated. And there are socialists who not only want to moderate the market but who also have a vision of an emerging alternative.

Socialism in the twentieth century was the catalyst for great social advances. But it also suffered major political defeats, not least in Eastern Europe. That dark chapter in the history of socialism is over, but the lessons must never be forgotten. The most important of these is that democracy is essential to a viable socialism.

Johan Lonroth has forcefully set out his views as to how socialism might be renewed. Responses are invited ■

Renewing the Constitution

The Constitution Review Group set up as part of the programme 'A government for renewal' in December 1994, submitted some observations in December 1995 and published its report in May 1996*. The report covers 701 pages, including 28 appendices, most of which are papers written by members of the Group on various matters relevant to the review. As with the Second Commission on the Status of Women, this Report will be a valuable reference source for many years to come. The Report itself reviews the entire Constitution, discusses it item by item and details the arguments made for and against many of its recommendations.

Of particular interest is the section covering Articles 40 to 44, those articles relating to fundamental rights. These articles are probably the most contentious in the Constitution and have been the subject of debate, litigation, referenda and amendments. This part of the Review contains some of the most interesting discussion and accompanying appendices in the entire volume. On the one hand, arguments are made for radical changes in our concept of society and its responsibilities; on the other hand these are opposed by arguments taking the classic liberal approach. The radical proposals are not, for the most part, translated into recommendations, but have put on the agenda ideas that socialists should be debating and developing and have an influence on the general tenor of the Report. It is difficult to imagine a similar body sitting a decade ago and even discussing some of the issues put forward in a serious way. Of course,

The Report of the Constitution Review Group should be read by all those interested in moving this society in a more egalitarian and inclusive direction, writes DEIRDRE O'CONNELL

such a body set up a decade ago would not be similar in terms of its composition; it would have been almost totally male and have a much higher average age for a start.

The introduction to the chapter on fundamental rights puts articles 40 to 44 in their historical context. Written before the major international human rights documents drafted in the wake of World War Two which were based on experience of the horrendous human rights violations of that time, the list of rights in our constitution is now clearly incomplete. Indeed, consideration was given by the Review Group to replacing the Constitution's fundamental rights provisions by the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Of course, the 1937 Constitution was also drafted in the light of current Catholic social thinking and one must place it in the context of the concept of the corporate state so strong in Europe at the time.

To illustrate how Irish fundamental rights provision has grown in an almost entirely random manner, take for example, the right to travel. Surely a fundamental right and not even considered to be in question by most of us, it was not protected until specifically added by referendum, a

course taken only because of the X case. While many unenumerated personal rights have been recognised by the courts, the Report points out that 'there does not appear to be any objective method of ascertaining what these personal rights are'. Amendments have been made in an ad hoc way, often as a result of the pressure exerted by either a crisis situation (the right to travel) or a small strongly motivated pressure group (the right to life). Incidentally, in discussing the latter, the Group criticises the use of the term 'unborn' as a noun, which, as they say, 'is at least odd' and favours 'the introduction of legislation covering such matters as definitions, protection for appropriate medical intervention, certification of "real and substantial risk to the life of the mother" and a time-limit on lawful termination of pregnancy'. Other amendments have been made in answer to a perceived social need (divorce) or popular demand (bail). The Report puts it on record that equality is 'more than the absence of discrimination' and that 'the attainment of equality is not solely a matter of individual effort'. An important and welcome recommendation is that 'the guarantee of equality should not be confined to citizens but should be extended to all individuals'. The group recommends jettisoning the references in 40.1 to 'differences of capacity, physical and moral, and of social function'. The express prohibition of direct and indirect discrimination on specified grounds is recommended, the grounds listed being sex, race, age, disability, sexual orientation, colour, language, culture, religion, political or other opinion, national, social or ethnic

origin, membership of the travelling community, property, birth or other status. A majority of the group decided against separate provision expressly guaranteeing equality between women and men.

The Report includes a particularly interesting discussion around the issues of whether there should be a right to freedom from poverty and social exclusion and whether there should be provision for specific economic rights as a counterweight to economic inequality. The Government's endorsement of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy is cited and the arguments for the inclusion of such rights include the observation that 'the tendency for relative poverty to rise suggests that some constitutional protection is necessary for the most vulnerable members of society'. Other arguments for include the commitment made by Proinsias de Rossa at the Copenhagen UN World Summit for Social Development in March 1995. Pointing out that 'greater economic equality would lead to greater political stability', the members of the Group in favour of the inclusion of economic rights, describe the sources of instability as including 'political alienation from the democratic process and the development of alternative "economies" based on crime or illegal trading'. Many of us don't have to look very far outside our own front doors to see the validity of this observation. The arguments for are backed up by Appendix 18, 'Equality before the law' by Kathleen Lynch and Alpha Connelly, worth reading especially for its concise analysis of the limits of liberalism as a principle for promoting equality in society. Liberalism promotes and accepts the idea of formal equality of opportunity (the removal of barriers to access and advancement in education, etc.), but does not concern itself with equality of participation or outcome. Lynch and Connelly say 'There is a myth at the heart of liberal

meritocratic theory and that is that everyone has an equal chance of succeeding when equal formal rights have been granted to specified disadvantaged groups and individuals; this cannot happen when the competition is between highly unequal partners'. The majority of the Group took the liberal line and did not recommend that these rights be included in the Constitution, but wished 'to reserve to the Government and the Oireachtas the discretion to deal with these and other aspects of inequality rather than transfer this discretion to the judiciary'. While this is disappointing, we must remember that the government is not bound by the recommendations of the Review Group and, indeed has already diverged from it on the question of bail. It is to be hoped that the Oireachtas Committee on the Constitution will examine the arguments and come up with different recommendations.

Article 42 deals with education, an issue extremely pertinent to equality. It is recommended that the right of every child to free primary education should be explicitly stated in the Constitution and that the Oireachtas should also seriously consider extending this right to second level education. However, the extension of the right to education to all persons advocated by some members of the Group, citing a general commitment to lifelong learning at national and European level, was not agreed. Another aspect of access to education is covered in Appendix 24, 'The multi-denominational experience' by Aine Hyland. This paper shows that rules for national schools as revised in 1965 enshrined denominationalism in the primary education system to a much greater degree than had been the case up to then, and, Hyland argues, interpreted the constitution in a new way. The new curriculum published in 1971 encouraged the integration of religious and secular instruction, thus making no provision for those children whose

parents did not wish them to receive denominational religious instruction.

The Review Group considered four new provisions and recommend giving constitutional recognition to the office of the Ombudsman, to local government (constitutionally recognised in most Western European countries), to the environment (conferring a duty on the State as far as practicable to protect the environment). The fourth provision discussed was constitutional provision for a Human Rights Commission. Human rights commissions exist in a number of countries, including, of course, the Northern Ireland Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights. The scope of their powers varies, the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission being given as an example of a body with extensive powers and functions. Some countries, including South Africa, have opted to give their commission constitutional status. Given the weaknesses in existing fundamental rights provisions of our constitution, a majority of the Group favoured the establishment of a Human Rights Commission; however the preferred view is that it should have legislative rather than constitutional status.

I have discussed the Report almost without reference to its purpose. Of course, that purpose is to inform the deliberations of the Oireachtas Committee. While to a degree the recommendations of the Review Group may be disappointingly bland, the information and the argument is there to enable a sharper and more radical outcome. Those of us interested in moving this society in a more egalitarian and inclusive direction should read this Report and use it as the basis for stimulating debate on constitutional provisions that will help to steer it in that direction ■

**Report of the Constitution Review Group
May 1996. Dublin: Stationery Office, 1996.*

Neutrality - an Irish tradition

The project of the European political elite is crystal clear. It is to establish the European Union as a nuclear-armed superstate. The President of the European Union Commission has called for the merger of the nuclear-armed Western European Union with the EU. Britain and France are modernising their nuclear weapons and increasing their military co-operation. The EU is to be, as Philip O'Connor puts it, 'a force in the world' (*Times Change* 7). After all, there is no point in having a Common Defence Policy in order to be 'a force in the world' if the force is not nuclear-armed.

The reason for the force is to ensure the European political elite competes successfully with the other imperial powers in the resource wars of the twenty-first century as predicted by Jacques Delors. This is not a problem for Belgium, Britain, France, Germany, Holland, Italy or Portugal as they are countries with long traditions of war and conquest. Ireland, however, has a problem, in that this country was the victim of imperial domination and therefore there is a well-rooted anti-imperial tradition and (thanks to organisations like CND) strong opposition to nuclear weapons. This has not stopped the majority party in government, Fine Gael, openly supporting the merger of the WEU and the EU, and it is supported in this objective by the PDs. This has of course

ROGER COLE argues that Irish neutrality is a tradition worth preserving

created problems for the Labour Party and Democratic Left as they are in coalition with Fine Gael and therefore cannot be seen to be too critical of that party even on such a major issue.

The White Paper on foreign policy is therefore advocating a more sophisticated approach toward the project of the European elite. It could be called the 'quicksand strategy': the principle of the 'pooling of sovereignty' is accepted, but the process of our integration in a nuclear-armed superstate is to happen at a slower but inevitable pace. Steps like a change in the law to allow Irish troops to take part in peacemaking as distinct from peacekeeping are agreed. Ireland becomes an observer at the WEU, yet it turns out that observer does not mean that at all. (It means in fact that Irish Army officers participate in meetings etc.) The White Paper contains a proposal that Ireland co-operate with nuclear-armed states in the WEU and the NATO-sponsored Partnership for Peace, and a few short weeks later, just before the Democratic Left annual conference, it is declared government policy. However, Proinsias De Rossa, the leader of Democratic Left, has stated that the Partnership for Peace

has 'nothing to offer' Ireland, so it must be assumed that that party supports Irish neutrality and rejects the project of the elite.

We should not be defensive about issues of international peace. While there are many legitimate criticisms of Eamon de Valera and Fianna Fáil, we can take inspiration from de Valera's internationalism in his support for the League of Nations in the 1930s and support for the Non Proliferation Treaty in the United Nations. We can be proud of Ireland's foreign policy record.

Yet it is not enough to oppose the creation of a European nuclear superstate, we must advocate a new vision for Ireland, Europe and the world. Ireland should seek to develop a European Union which is an association of sovereign and democratic states, whose membership is the same as that of the OSCE, a regional group of the UN, and where common security is achieved through a process of negotiated demilitarisation. Thus, common security is perceived as a global and international issue, not simply a European issue. It is through a reformed UN that Ireland should seek moves towards common security. (A reformed UN properly financed by, for example, a tax on international currency transactions - currency speculators would undoubtedly feel much happier to know that their efforts were helping world peace.) Ireland should, in fact, lead the way for the EU

in this direction and away from that proposed by the elite.

The first steps in that direction would be to not only make it clear that Ireland would not join the WEU or the Partnership for Peace, but would also not agree to co-operate with these organisations. Ireland should end its observer status and repeal the legislation allowing participation in peacemaking while seeking the negotiated dismantling of the WEU and NATO. Ireland should also actively seek support for such policies throughout Europe. In Denmark, for example, there is probably a great deal of support for such a policy, and it might be the next state to end its observer status at the WEU. In short, Ireland would seek active support for its value system which is based on strong opposition to nuclear weapons and imperialism, the central values of the political/media elite that seeks to create a superstate. There can never be such a thing as a good nuclear-armed superstate, even if it is 'democratic' and its weapons 'defensive'.

The international context in which the Irish elite wishes to destroy neutrality is not that complicated. The United States won the Cold War against the Soviet Union and, as is common after a war, the allies of the defeated change sides. Most ex-Warsaw Pact countries are now seeking to join NATO and the WEU. Leaving one nuclear-armed alliance for another is no problem. States which were neutral like Austria and Finland only as a consequence of the European settlement following the Second World War also have no real problem in ditching their neutrality. In Ireland, the elite, having, they believe, successfully destroyed the anti-imperial tradition that inspired the 1916 Rising, so that the state no longer celebrates the Rising, and has moved on to seek to ensure that John Redmond now becomes a hero. Since Redmond played such a major role in supporting the imperial

tradition of the British Union, he is the just the kind of figure needed to remind us of the reality that apart from the Unionists there has, for most of our history, been many people in the 26-county area who collaborated with imperialism and for whom the project of a new imperial European state is a more natural continuation of their value system than a sovereign and democratic Irish State.

However, those of us who remain loyal to the Connolly tradition will not be satisfied with a new statue. The values of Irish neutrality are deeply rooted in the vast majority of Irish people. The Fianna Fáil party, Democratic Left, the Greens, the Workers

It is not enough to oppose the creation of a European nuclear superstate, we must advocate a new vision for Ireland, Europe and the world

Party and other groups have opposed the Fine Gael/Labour decision to move closer to the nuclear-armed WEU and NATO. Several have already come together in the broad-based group, the Peace and Neutrality Alliance. The Alliance has linked up with TEAM, the European Anti-Maastricht Movement, which is seeking to bring together all those throughout Europe who oppose the imperial ambitions of the elite. The massive cuts in social welfare proposed by the elite to meet the Maastricht EMU guidelines will further undermine any democratic support for their project, and PANA would be expressing the views of many people throughout Europe. We are not alone in advocating

a democratic and anti-imperial EU. We are the inheritors of a finer European tradition than the supporters of nuclear weapons.

The values of neo-liberalism which triumphed in the victory of the Cold War and provide the ideology of the elite need to be resolutely opposed. It was the ideology of liberalism which provided the intellectual justification for the Irish famine, so there is little support among the Irish people for the rise of neo-liberalism. Ireland should not only seek to strengthen the Social Chapter in the EU but link social and civil rights directly to trade and introduce sanctions against countries that use cheap labour and repressive legislation to destroy the jobs of Irish workers in the name of the 'Free Market'.

Helena Sheehan's excellent article (*Times Change* 7) argued that Marxism would provide the inspiration for a revival of an alternative vision for the future. It was Irish socialists like Skeffington and Connolly who founded the Irish Neutrality League at the start of the century. A revival of interest in the writings of Connolly could provide the inspiration for an alternative vision for Ireland and the world. The elite that wrote the White Paper has Irish neutrality commencing with the Second World War and ignores Connolly, the 1916 Rising, and the Anti-Conscription campaign of 1918 which consolidated our tradition of neutrality. But White Papers cannot re-write history. Our history has made our people opposed to imperialism and its most horrific modern variety, the nuclear armed version. We will find allies for our values in Europe and throughout the world.

Those of us who seek to develop a policy of positive Irish neutrality are not backward isolationists Irish peasants, but stand in the tradition of Connolly, the tradition of international socialism ■

From Maastricht to social solidarity

There can be little doubt that the European integration project is currently undergoing a crisis of confidence. This should not be a surprise since the Union and its member states are so obviously failing to respond to the real needs of so many of our citizens. Nor, for the most part, is there a clear vision of how the EU is going to do so effectively in the near future.

We on the left, however, must also be concerned that increasingly the forces which are doing most to undermine the single currency and the wider integration project come from the right of the political spectrum - politicians, central bankers, international financiers and financial commentators.

Clearly, their concerns are not our concerns. Some of them see the single currency as a threat to the lucrative orbit of the currency markets and the ease with which governments can be forced to do their bidding. Others fear the creation of a democratic Union with the capacity and inclination to counter the neo-liberal dogma which has dominated global politics since the mid-seventies. From a left perspective, such a democratic Union is essential - but how can we make it a reality?

The Maastricht Treaty represented a wasted opportunity that produced an inadequate and in many respects wrongheaded response to, on the one hand, the challenges of the post cold war era, and, on the other hand, the accelerating internationalisation of financial and production systems.

The criticisms of Maastricht's neo-liberal ethos voiced in 1992, by and

Creating employment and ending social exclusion should be central goals for the left in Europe, argues PROINSIAS DE ROSSA.

large, remain valid. But the question for the left now is not how do we stop Maastricht in its tracks but how do we modify it to reflect our objective of a democratic citizens' Europe based on solidarity.

From the perspective of 1996, I cannot envisage how the collapse of EMU - and with it the stagnation and likely reversal of the integration process - can lead to its replacement by the sort of social Europe based on sustainable growth, employment and solidarity which the left would like to see. Certainly that outcome is not the motivation of James Goldsmith, Gianfranco Fini, Jorg Haider, Michael Portillo, Margaret Thatcher and their disciples. Indeed, given the nature of much of the Eurosceptic right's campaign of late, a more likely outcome is a retreat behind national boundaries in a vain attempt to find national solutions to global problems. It is anybody's guess where that will lead, but the odds are against it yielding a prosperous, peaceful and *solidaire* Europe.

For the left, the future must be rooted in a vision of society where human values are given precedence over market values, particularly when the two conflict (as they very frequently do), and where market forces are

restrained in the interests of society as a whole. At the core of this vision is the concept of social solidarity which embraces the right of the individual to benefit from the support of family and community and the concomitant responsibility of the individual to contribute to providing those social supports.

I believe this concept of social solidarity should also permeate all the policies of the left in relation to Europe: on the economy, on tax and welfare reform, on the environment, on equality between the sexes, on industrial relations, on health care, education and other issues.

The Intergovernmental Conference which opened in Turin and which continues under the Irish Presidency, offers us an opportunity to redress the shortcomings of Maastricht and to begin to reassert the primacy of politics over the market.

We must learn the lesson from earlier in this decade when, for example, during the creation of the Single Market the progressive majority, which then existed in the European Parliament failed - largely through disunity - to secure the social dimension which was there to be won.

We must, I believe, now work to secure the widest possible left and progressive alliance committed to reshaping Europe; to creating a Europe based on solidarity - and equipped with the means to deliver it - internally to our own citizens, to our closest neighbours in the East and South, and to the developing world.

And there are many potential allies

who can be enlisted to help to ensure that we have a better Europe. I believe that we should make common cause with political groupings such as the Social Democrats, the Greens and Left Radicals. The Irish Government has proposals on Employment and Social Exclusion chapters in the Treaty which the left could support; the Commission's position on the IGC and the Santer Pact each have elements which represent an advance on the Maastricht model as regards social Europe; various NGO groupings such as the European Anti-Poverty Network, the NGO Platform, the Civil Forum and the trades unions have all developed positions and with whom we must engage if we are to influence the IGC rather than helplessly resigning ourselves to rejecting the outcome.

We know the European Union as it stands has a serious lack of balance between the strong legal and financial instruments available for economic policy and those for dealing with poverty, unemployment and the labour market. We know an active social policy has been effectively blocked.

We have made it quite clear that it is not acceptable to the left that in the drive towards a single market, the pressure should be on social standards as the main factor of adjustment; that it is not acceptable to the left that the great god of competition should be used as a means to diminish social protection - as if it was in the interest of the citizens of Europe to have more choice between a range of worse services.

If the people of Europe are to remain loyal and committed to the European Union, then Treaty revisions will have to deal with issues of real relevance: jobs, a good standard of living, an adequate level of social protection and real equality of opportunities. These as well as the battle against organised crime are their immediate concerns. But if the left does not develop beyond our traditional approach to social solidarity

and insist on its incorporation at European as well as national level, all we will get is a European Union framework of government which accommodates itself to the unchecked demands and priorities of business, whatever they may be at any given time.

For instance, it is not good enough for the left to react negatively to proposals for change in social protection when the evidence is that in some cases it traps people in poverty rather than lifts them out of it. The left must ensure that our social protection systems contribute positively to the fight against unemployment and poverty, by making it easier to take a job or to make a job. Earlier this year, as President of the Social Affairs Council I hosted a meeting of EU Ministers in Dublin on how to ensure that social protection systems play a more dynamic role in the prevention of unemployment and the reintegration of unemployed people as workers in mainstream society. I was heartened by the consensus across the political spectrum that the European social model was a valuable inheritance, which never-the-less, needed to be radically reformed. There will be a follow through to that Council at the 2 December Social Affairs Council, where I will be tabling a resolution on the issues raised.

We fully recognise the issues of employment and unemployment as critical questions facing the Union, and there are a number of Member States seeking to amend Maastricht to enable us to deal with them.

But interacting with these issues is the related problem of poverty and of social exclusion, and marginalisation from social and economic life.

There will be little progress, in reducing the numbers of people who are long-term unemployed if the issue of social exclusion is not addressed in conjunction with employment policies. That is why I have proposed - and my

Government has accepted - the need to amend Maastricht, by including a chapter on social inclusion.

This chapter will set out a concern that should contribute to the development of policies to combat social exclusion by encouraging co-operation between member states and by supporting and supplementing their action while fully respecting the primary responsibility of member states in this area.

The Union should also take the objective of combating social exclusion into account in its action under other provision of the Treaty.

In the context of the current debate about employment I have found the contributions of Director-General Larsson (of DG V) to be consistently stimulating and forward-looking. Specifically, he refutes in very convincing terms the notion that the best or only way forward lies in a low wage, low social protection model. I am particularly taken by his view that social protection system, far from being a burden, must be regarded as a productive factor, offering security for the individual and making changes in the economy both socially and politically possible.

Even in purely economic terms, an integrated European market of 350 million people would be highly inefficient if nearly 50 million (15 per cent) of them remain too poor to consume the goods and services offered in that market. Equally, the pressures on public expenditure to support a large number of elderly, unemployed, and poor people could be an unbearable burden on the Union, whose working-age labour force of 133 million is already less than half the total population. Fundamental issues such as these pose major economic, social and moral questions not only for the emerging European market and community, but for the political forces of the left. Reaching backwards for the comfort of national protectionism, is no



comfort at all. It is more likely to condemn us and those we would lead, to a replay of the first 50 bloody years of this century.

If we wish to avoid that we must engage all the citizens of Europe in constructing a democratic Union and to do that it is essential that we rescue social policy from its Cinderella status and integrate it with economic policy. We need the twin objectives of sustainable growth and full employment to become actual core policy at both European and domestic level.

We must set out to convince European enthusiasts that a one-dimensional European agenda, whose main or only drive is towards the creation of a single market and monetary union, itself contains the potential to create and exacerbate inequality and is self destructive. Already the idea that there can be winners and losers among the different regions of the community, is accepted and has given rise to major programmes such as the Structural Funds. But in the absence of a strengthened social dimension, with

measures specifically focused on combating unemployment and social exclusion and offsetting the negative effects of the single market, the numbers of those who lose out will grow.

• We need the twin objectives of sustainable growth and full employment to become actual core policy at both European and domestic level. •

Failure to advance and develop the Community's social dimension will undermine social solidarity as a core value of the Union; we will then have 'creeping deregulation', as the greater mobility of capital, labour and goods

within the single market places downwards pressure on labour and welfare standards.

It is essential that there is a focus on both employment and social exclusion in the Inter-Governmental Conference and that these should be, I believe, central goals for the Left in Europe. It is critically important that the left gives strategic and determined support to proposals which would help restore equilibrium between economic and social policy. I see these goals as complementing other provisions in the sphere of social policy/citizens' rights, such as stronger non-discrimination policies and principles and fundamental rights components of the Treaty.

We of the New Left must reach out to a wider coalition - of socialists, and ecologists, NGOs and trades unions - if we are to have a real impact on social policy, on the outcome of the IGC and the shape of the community we live in ■

This is the edited version of a paper delivered to a conference, Social Europe and the Left, held in Barcelona and organised by Iniciativa per Catalunya

The Trimble enigma

On the day that the Apprentice Boys paraded along Derry's walls, Ulster Unionist Party leader, David Trimble won loud applause at his annual party conference in Ballymena for stating that 'some sort of compromise between unionism and nationalism is not possible, or desirable'.

And the formal conference proceedings highlighted the party's unity and priorities - cutting electricity prices, the right to parade, increased education funding, ending blockades and boycotts, the BSE crisis and continued opposition to the Anglo-Irish 'diktat'. But appearances can be deceptive.

Trimble himself is an enigma to many inside and outside the party. Elected after Drumcree 1 in 1995 (remember him walking hand-in-hand with Ian Paisley), Trimble won hard-line votes. His period in the 1970s as deputy leader of the hard-line Vanguard party fuelled such expectations. One liberal Unionist says that 'inside David Trimble is a good guy trying to get out'.

Yet, Trimble's main initiative has been the painful effort to 'redefine' his party's constitutional link with the Orange Order. This almost umbilical tie allows the Orange Order delegates at the party's annual meeting. It symbolises the party's overwhelming Protestant ethos.

Trimble's speech didn't confirm what he called 'a retreat into a sectarian

Where, asks GARY KENT, is David Trimble leading the Ulster Unionists?

laager'. When he says (perhaps clumsily) that unionist-nationalist compromise is not possible, he means that which country Northern Ireland

• A sure sign that 'new Unionism' had arrived would be an accelerated attempt to break the constitutional link with the Orange Order. •

belongs to is an either-or question while the way it is governed internally is another matter altogether.

The most surprising aspect of Trimble's speech was when he singled out Norman Porter's new book, *Redefining Unionism*. Trimble argued that the author's 'vision of civic unionism' (a bill of rights - 'real civil rights' - an assembly based on proportional-ity, north-south bodies

and the involvement of local politicians in British-Irish relations) is what Unionists have been saying for years. Given that some people thought the author might be expelled for his apparently heretical book, this roundabout embrace of some of the themes surprised some. Trimble also went out of his way to praise Catholic Unionists like John Gorman - the Unionist Chairman of the elected Forum in the North - and Patricia Campbell - the manager of the Unionist Information Office in London. He offered 'a genuine partnership to all the people of Northern Ireland'.

But can Trimble deliver? He leads a party that isn't actually a party but a collection of largely autonomous constituency organisations. There isn't a central membership list, for example. It is a broad coalition of left, right and centre defending the union - and not much else.

None of Trimble's parliamentary colleagues voted for him to be leader. The party's cohesiveness is stretched to breaking point by the conflicting priorities of work in Parliament, local constituencies, the talks, the forum and at party headquarters.

In Ballymena, Trimble highlighted some of the successes of his first year of modernisation. There is increasing political debate and improved public relations as reflected in the existence of a glossy *Ulster Review* magazine and the establishment of Unionist information offices in Washington and London.

But there is what one senior participant told me was 'a battle for the soul of the party'. One MP is convinced that activists want to replace all the current MPs - 'except Trimble and (John) Taylor'. The most visible sign of this was the attempt to deselect North Belfast MP, 71 year old Cecil Walker. The MP attended the conference and the mood music indicated that he might survive as indeed he has.

In many of the record conversations people described a network of 'young

Turks', who are seen as the driving force in unionist modernisation and behind attempts 'to cull the party's geriatric deadwood'.

Some Unionists think the 'Trimblistas' are dyed-in-the-wool right-wingers who just detest Catholics. Others describe an alliance of younger members from right and left united by their criticisms of some MPs' failure to achieve high media and Parliamentary profiles.

Their main meeting place appears to be the Young Unionist group - one veteran MP said how surprised he was to see so many balding 30 and 40 year olds in that organisation.

I also bumped into 'Bob Jordan' - a pseudonym for dissident liberal members who have written a critique of unionist right-wingers in *Fortnight*. Jordan maintains that they are 'pushing the UUP towards a hard-right ideology of the Thatcherite type,' although Trimble votes twice as often with Labour as the Tories. Some think that high-profile liberals like the McGimpseys and Ken Maginnis have been 'marginalised'.

The party seems riven by venomous divisions and accusations of 'dirty tricks'. Porter says the party's biggest problem is defining its social and political policies, not just defending the union. The big question for many party members is whether the Union is safe or under threat and, therefore, how far they can move to an accommodation with nationalists.

Martyn Turner/Irish Times



It's arguable that Trimble is trying to steer his party towards the more liberal ground of Ken Maginnis - whose base in the party is possibly about 25 per cent.

Trimble's hard-line reputation could help win the rest of the party. This is why he is sometimes compared to Richard Nixon - the only US President who could recognise Communist China. Other comparisons might include Fianna Fail as the only party that could intern the IRA.

Some of Trimble's conference themes may have gone over the heads of the audience - decent and solid farming folk in the main. The rhetoric involves inclusiveness - reaching out to the 85 per cent of northern Catholics who are not what Trimble's spin-doctor, David Burnside called 'rebels', making a deal with John Hume, doing business with the South (without infringing sovereignty) and all this whilst not looking over his shoulder at the DUP and Bob McCartney (singled out for

vehement denunciation). Trimble's compromises over the Mitchell report and placing decommissioning second on the talks agenda incurred the wrath of 'DUP extremists' but may have given more life to the Stormont talks process.

A sure sign that 'new Unionism' had arrived would be an accelerated attempt to break the constitutional link with the Orange Order. Trimble concedes that progress has been slower than he wants. Other issues - particularly the talks - have got in the way. The Orange Order only meets every six months and, I understand from senior Orange sources, may elect new officers in December.

Interviewed over a pint of Guinness after the conference, Trimble told me that redefining the Orange Order link is 'very much on his agenda'. On this and other reforms, many in his party need convincing. Only time will tell if the UUP is capable of genuine modernisation or is doomed to be stuck in a sectarian groove ■

What's left?

The right wing wave of the 1980s is broken. But what remains of the old left? Nostalgia seems to prevail. Here in Sweden the dream of the good old days of the Swedish model of the 1960s is still there. We have social-democratic governments in the Nordic countries, but there are few elsewhere and they are threatened from the right rather than from the left.

The Left Party programme of May 1996 states that the party struggles for the 'abolition of capitalism' and for a socialism which will result in the 'liberation of man from oppression'. It also says that representative democracy should be supplemented with 'forms of direct influence for people'. This can mean 'self-management among people as workers, residents and users of public service'. But the programme says very little about how capitalism should be dismantled, how the liberation of man should be reached or how a self-managed socialism should emerge.

The programme is also lacking in historical perspective. It states: 'In Europe the collapse of the planned economies and the fall of the party dictatorships have dissolved a big power bloc.' In the programme adopted as late as 1987 it was said that 'Socialism is a mode of production characterised by the peoples' common ownership of the most important means of production and natural resources.' And as a consequence of this we then called those countries socialist which we today call 'party

JOHAN LONNROTH calls for the restoration of socialism as an ideology of freedom

dictatorships'. Do we still call those systems socialist? Probably we do not. Perhaps we feel that it is too embarrassing to discuss the problem.

• If socialism is to represent a more profound democracy and to be restored as an ideology of freedom we must get rid of the tradition of 'scientific socialism' •

The 1996 congress also decided that Marxism is our theoretical base: 'We are a socialist party in renewal The tradition of thought with Marx as its origin is alive and can be developed'. But we are not able to explain what is living in Marxism and how Marxism should be developed. We also say in the programme: 'Together with humanism, ecological thinking and feminist theory

Marxism can help us understand the world that we want to change.' The congress also decided that the Left Party now is a feminist party. I dare say this is a rather unique combination! But do we really know how to combine Marxism with ecology and feminism?

In my opinion, the theory of alienation is the most relevant part of the Marxist and socialist tradition. The worker who cannot survey the process of production of which she is a part becomes alien to what she is doing. We want socialism and self-management because it means freedom from alienation in work. At the same time, new structures in the sphere of production makes it necessary to define self-management as something more than simply 'workers control'. And human work should be broadly defined as something you can do at the factory, at the office, at home, at the nursery and at the hospital.

If socialism is to represent a more profound democracy and to be restored as an ideology of freedom we must get rid of the tradition of 'scientific socialism'. This dead end of Marxist and socialist tradition has its roots in the writings of the elderly Marx and it was developed by Engels and Lenin. Later it grew into the rigid ideologies of 'Marxism-Leninism' in the Soviet bloc. The linking together of socialism with the planned economy was an historical mistake. 'Social science' with its unnatural division of reality in economics, sociology and political

'science' was overestimated.

The labour theory of value was originally used by Marx to show that the capitalist, who did not himself participate in work, lived on the workers' surplus production. In this regard it holds true today. But when Marx, under pressure from the marginalists in the early 1870s, tried to use the labour theory of value to analyse market pricing he went astray. The so called law of value - that market prices under certain conditions have labour values as long term equilibria - has no basis in fact.

The ambition of the left cannot be to bring about a political control of the many billion of daily decisions to buy and sell on markets. Our goal should instead be to create self-managed democratic powers and freedom for those who are today oppressed by minor or major dictatorships. Of course this also means that elected bodies on the local, national and global levels should gain power to influence what is produced, how it is produced and to whom the end product is distributed.

In Sweden today there are between two and three million shareholders in private companies. The abolition of capitalism does not mean an end to the private ownership of all physical means of production. What we want to abolish is capitalism in its 'pure' form, that is capitalists who do not work at all themselves and who have no knowledge about the companies and means of production they own.

So our socialism ought not be



incompatible with either private ownership or the market. Progressive tax systems together with fees and subsidies closing the gap between private, social and environmental costs and benefits can make the market an efficient tool to reach a more just and sustainable society. It is impossible to centralise more than a small number of strategic decisions on consumption and production. Capitalism is not the same as the market economy. Competitive forces on the market constitute a dangerous enemy for capitalist power. The left is against capitalism, not against the market.

The neo-liberal delirium of the 1980s is over. Reagan's and Thatcher's policies failed even if measured only in strictly economic terms. Speculative profits and volatile money markets lead

to uncertainty and inefficiency. A more brutal class society fostered crime, violence and social cost. It has also become common knowledge - see for example UNDP's Human Development Report from July 1996 - that an even distribution of income and a fairly high level of state intervention fosters economic growth and development.

But still most established social scientists and almost every major political party with ambitions to be in government in the industrialised world think within the neo-liberal paradigm of the 1980s and seek to attract international capital and the well-educated elite to their region, country or trading-bloc through better material and immaterial conditions.

There is little basic difference between parties calling themselves socialist, social-democratic or Christian-democratic.

So why cannot powerful political alternatives be created on the left? Of course the Marxist-Leninist tradition and the revolutions of 1989 still linger in our collective memory. It was not only a collapse for the communist party type of constitution, it was also a total collapse for 'scientific socialism' and 'socialist economics and planning' of the form that was promoted in many communist and left-wing parties.

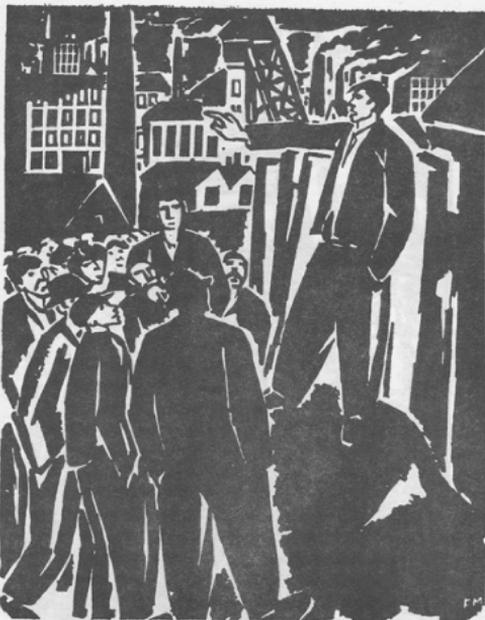
The fundamental problem has to do with motive - or incentives in the language of economists. Or to develop a proverb by Chairman Deng in China: It is not enough to describe the cat that takes the rat or to tell how the caught rat should be distributed. We must also

learn how to motivate the cat to catch the rat.

At our party congress in May this year I asked our Irish guest - a Democratic Left member of the Irish government - about the difference between his party and social democracy in Ireland. He thought for a while, and then said that his party talked more about production, the social democrats more about welfare. And seen in the perspective of the Marxist tradition this is quite logical. But in the modern tradition of the left it is - I am afraid to say - more of the other way around.

In the tradition of Marx, to understand history we must start with human knowledge and technology - the productive forces. And the most powerful new technology has to do with information networks. They are changing the conditions on practically every corner of the global arena. Global money markets, patterns of trade and transport, processes of work and production, class structures and political power - every aspect of human life will be influenced by Internet and its heirs.

In a speech to the Swedish Academy of Engineering Science in 1994 Carl Bildt - at that time prime minister of Sweden - spoke of the ideological connotations of the new information technologies. He referred to them as signs of the 'successive withering away of collectivism' and as expressions of the 'market revolution'. He also hailed them as the technologies of 'refined intelligence and small scale' which are now going to dominate over the



technologies of 'raw strength'.

But the dialectics of the new IT is much too sophisticated to be streamlined in slogans of this sort. The origin of the Internet was an order from Pentagon (raw strength!) and the system would not have spread over the world without a number of dedicated persons who worked collectively and relatively independently from market pricing and profits. Bill Gates and his successful colleagues were fostered in the spirit of the new left anti-establishment anarchism.

The actors on the market for information technology - in the form of a number of giant corporations - tries to gain monopolistic or oligopolistic control, but it seems to be more difficult compared to traditional markets for goods and service. The markets leaders

- like IBM before Apple and Microsoft - lived in the tradition of hierarchic conservative capitalism. Big capitalists and market leaders seem to grow lazy and inflexible.

IT has made it possible for international capital, to transfer billions and for dictators to send commands to their generals in microseconds. But IT also makes it easier for environmentalists and for trade union and human rights activists to establish contact outside the control of the power elite. Also, big companies and organisations are today more dependent on working people who are capable of working on their own initiative. In short, IT can be used to foster any type of ideology or power

group. The task for the left must be to make it a servant of self-managed socialism.

'The times they are a'changing,' Sweden has today a growing trade with countries nearby where wages are one fifth of ours. China will probably within a decade or two become the biggest producer of and market for goods in the world. The volume of traffic on the communication highways is growing with the speed of light. The volume of international money exchange is today in the order of magnitude 1000 dollars per day and person - only a small part of those transactions represent payments for delivery of goods or personal service.

International big business does not really care about nation, kings or flags even if the corporate rhetoric

sometimes suggests otherwise. It is practically impossible to re-establish the old type of regulations on the national markets for exchange and credit. Spain tried but failed. Capitalist power must be fought on the international level.

Perhaps capitalist infidelity to their home nations is not such a bad thing for global equalisation. East Asian expansion used clever industrial espionage. Southern China is an Eldorado for product piracy. It is a rather mild form of revenge for the massive brain drain to the West in earlier days. Chinese communists could refer to Western textbooks in economics, where the models of perfect competition has free information as one important condition. (When the Chinese regime now tries to hinder opposition communication via Internet they will hopefully lose).

Capitalist expansion in countries like South Korea and Thailand has meant children's work, prostitution and brutal exploitation. But when capitalism has reached a certain level of material living standard the historical experience seems to be that it can no longer resist demands for human and workers' rights, better environment and social conditions. The fundamental problem is that if the rest of the globe reaches the material and energy consumption levels of USA, Japan and Western Europe - and if they use existing methods of production and consumption - the world will become uninhabitable.

In the UNDP report mentioned above it is said that the difference in GDP per capita in the industrialised and the developing parts of the world was 5,700 dollars in 1960 and 15,400 dollars in 1993. The poorest 20 per cent of world population had during the same period seen their share of world income reduced from 2.3 per cent to 1.4 per cent. You get a similar picture if you use the Human Development Index instead of the GDP.

But there are also big differences in different parts of the developing world. In Eastern Asia and in parts of Latin America economic and human development has been faster than in Europe and the USA. But in Africa south of the Sahara average income and health indexes have declined.

Of course there are complicated historical reasons for this uneven development. Colonial oppression still explains some of the problems in Africa. But probably we must also draw the conclusion that paternalistic aid in the spirit of the 1960s did not have any substantial impact on the global distribution of income. It is more important to work for international solidarity within the international workers movement and for the right of poor countries to import technology from and export industrial goods to the rich world.

In the December 1994 report *A Call to Action* from the UN Commission for Global Governance a number of propositions are made that on the whole should be adopted by the left. It is proposed that an Economic Security Council - more representative than the group of seven and the Bretton Woods institutions - should be formed. The new council should 'provide a long-term strategic policy framework in order to promote stable, balanced and sustainable development' and 'secure consistency between the policy goals of the major international organisations, particularly the Bretton Woods bodies and the WTO'.

According to *A Call to Action*, a set of rules for the 37,000 transnational corporations must be created. The IMF should supervise the monetary system so that economic policies in some countries do not destroy other countries. Radical 'debt reduction is needed for heavily indebted, low income countries ... Global military spending should be reduced to 500 billion dollars by the end of the decade.'

Also 'an international tax on foreign currency transactions should be explored as one option, as should the creation of an international corporate tax base among multinational companies.' The so called Tobin tax is now also supported by the European Parliament!

According to the UN report global taxes should also be used for 'the needs of the global neighbourhood ... including charges on the use of global resources such as flight lanes, sea lanes and ocean fishing areas.' The authors of the report also 'support the European Union's carbon tax proposal as a first step towards a system that taxes resource use rather than employment and savings, and urge its wide adoption.'

The global economic institutions - the EBRD, IMF, WTO etc. - must be reformed so that non-OECD countries get more power and so that economic democracy, full employment, equality and ecologically sustainable development become goals with a higher priority. (By the way, OECD is an anachronism - the left should work for its liquidation). The UN must also - after democratisation - be given the power to take qualified majority decisions on questions like taxes on foreign exchange transactions and carbon dioxide, emissions of SDR, methods for depreciation of debts and environmental aid in the spirit of the Rio conference.

The last GATT agreement - leading to WTO - was mainly about reduced trade barriers between relatively rich countries, who are still protecting themselves against the competition from poorer countries in sensitive sectors such as agriculture and textiles. Governments in richer countries also protect patent rights and monopoly power for their giant multinational companies.

The left should in principle be promoting free trade. Of course there must exist certain socially and

environmentally motivated restrictions, but restrictions should not be used as an excuse for protectionism. Global laws against monopolist and oligopolist behaviour are needed including the right to split up mega-companies in smaller units. The duration of patents should, as a rule not last longer than five years.

The left within the EU cannot afford to ignore the possibilities of influencing the Union in a new direction - to transfer power from experts and governments to popular movements and parliaments, to open it for the states in Eastern Europe and to set minimum standards in laws on environment, trade union rights, and social protection. The task for the left in countries inside or outside EU must also be to find policies that weakens capitalist power in nations, in trading blocs and on the global arena.

The Milton Friedman school of politics is no longer popular, but monetarist opinions on the impotence of fiscal 'fine-tuning' and the necessity of fighting inflation at almost every price were still very much in vogue in 1991 when the Maastricht treaty was written. In Sweden some 100,000 jobs and tens of billions of crowns were sacrificed in a fruitless campaign in 1991/2 to hold the crown in a fixed relation to ECU and German marks. Even now a rigid inflation target and the adaptation to the EMU-criteria serve to limit Swedish economic policy options. The 60 per cent debt criterium is an anomaly in a country where the state has big assets and the net debt is fairly small.

To join the ERM and then the EMU raises the possibility that we will



experience 1991-2 again. And if every EU-country tries to qualify for membership in the EMU, the result will be even higher mass unemployment. National fiscal policies are not as potent today as in earlier days, but still it is good if you are able to consider the general situation on different markets and the timing of the business cycle. A more pluralistic and flexible economic policy - and a higher degree of trade with the most dynamic parts of the world - is a quite realistic alternative for Sweden and other countries with our structure outside the EMU.

The former Swedish prime minister Ingvar Carlsson used to say that Keynesianism has lost its power on the national level and that it must be restored through the EU. I think that the first part of the statement is correct to a degree. It has become more difficult for a small nation state of the Swedish type to swim against the tide in countries nearby. The long term rate

of interest is set by volatile money and credit markets. So the old Keynesian idea of a low rate of interest is difficult to implement.

But it is also extremely difficult to restore Keynesianism on the federalist EU level. In that case the EU budget must have a turnover at least ten times larger as a percentage of total GDP compared with the situation today. But a certain degree of Keynesianism could be developed on the level of inter-state agreements - especially in a situation where the participating states have a total balance of payment surplus towards the rest of the world. But Keynesianism could not be married to constitutional monetarism of the Maastricht treaty type. A profound constitutional reform of the EMU is needed.

At the time of writing, there is a rather high probability that the EMU will commence in January 1999. But it is not too late to put the EMU on the intergovernmental conference agenda. Or at least it is not too late to change the convergence criteria as is proposed - among others - by the Italian vice prime minister Veltroni. The left should in my opinion today unite in order to try to postpone the EMU, so that the project is at least modified.

But the left must also have an agenda for common action after the eventual formation of the EMU where some of the EU-members are out and some are in. We must form common programmes for the harmonisation of fiscal policies based on the fight against unemployment as the most important goal. We must also try to adopt a common position on equal rights between the sexes, redistribution of

working time, and environmental reforms.

And our common thinking should not be confined to the GUE-group in the EU parliament. The New European Left Forum must expand into the 'unknown land' of Eastern Europe. And it must initiate a dialogue with the Sao Paulo Forum and with leftists groups in Asia, Africa, North America and Australia. Also our relations to the socialist and ('pure') green parties must be developed.

The strategic goal for national and trade union policies of the left in advanced capitalism must be to end mass unemployment. For this, three types of structural change are necessary. They have to do with working time, environment and education.

The peasants a century ago would not have been able to imagine in their wildest dreams that one of them in the future could feed 25 others. Today it is difficult for the industrial worker to understand that perhaps 10 or even five per cent of the population in the future will be able to produce sufficient amounts of material goods for all the others. A more even distribution of different sorts of working time is not only useful in the fight against alienation and patriarchal and class oppression. It is also necessary in order to avoid mass unemployment.

In Japan the average working time for an employed person is more than 2,000 hours, in Sweden it is 1,500. But in both countries the overall average among the population between 18 and 65 years of age is almost the same. The difference lies in the degree of evenness in the distribution of working time and is mainly explained by a higher rate of employment among women in Sweden.

The same goes for homework. Differences in total working time per person at home is not so big if you compare different welfare capitalist countries. In Sweden today the average woman works - washing, cleaning,

baby care etc. - around three hours per day, the average man works around one hour. The same amount of hours would be worked if everyone worked two hours a day. So the question of six hours working day - and two hours of homework - is a question of redistribution, not of less work.

The big problem - as always - has to do with money. A redistribution of working time means cost.

With the aid of robots and computers an industrial worker can produce more and more goods per hour. But the number of hours needed to read and erase incoming messages and to follow the news in cyber-space is growing. And the symphony orchestra cannot play a Mahler symphony faster. And the nurse should not talk faster to the patients. Schools and the institutions of health care and culture must take a growing share of work in the society, more as an effect of productive forces than of post-materialist values.

Productivity growth would certainly fall in the short run with a more even distribution of labour time. But the alternative is a society with a widening gap between insiders and outsiders on the labour market - a class society where a large minority feel that they are not wanted by the majority. In order to finance a shorter working day - especially in the public sector - paid work must be complemented with non-paid 'idealist' work. The users of public service - parents in the schools for example - must take more responsibility.

Of course six plus two hours work outside and inside home can never be a universal solution. The state - and the international organisations - can only form its policies to promote redistribution. Flexibility is here to stay. We must see to it that flexibility means the right for working people to choose, not the right for employers to exploit people around the clock.

Material standards within the labour market cannot be as high with six hours

normal working day as with eight. But it is high time to start a gradual lowering of the normal working time from eight to six hours and to make an equal distribution of responsibility for home and children between the sexes become normality. The left should try to develop a common strategy to reach this goal.

It is high time for most of us who were influenced by the green movement during the 1970s to confess that we under-estimated both consumer power and new technology as means to reach a more ecologically sustainable development. The industrial product of the future must be acceptable to consumers with a high level of environmental consciousness.

Market power - corrected by means of taxes and subsidies - is normally the most efficient tool against the destructive powers of private or state-monopolistic capitalism. Modern nuclear power plants probably would never have been built if they had competed with other forms of energy production on equal terms including the duty to cover the costs for education, security and waste.

The tax system must be changed so that labour and recycling gets relatively cheaper and so that energy and wasteful methods gets more expensive for producers. Taxes on energy and petrol must go up substantially, but at the same time new jobs must be created to substitute the loss of jobs in the old type of heavy industry.

Information technology opens up possibilities to send drawings and instructions instead of products and persons. The motorways are the dinosaurs of our time. There are tendencies today that nature and culture gets more important as attractions for advanced labour and thereby for employers compared to material incentives. The possibility of a swim in a lake, the quality of music and theatres, the historical continuity of the city are factors of growing importance.

The task for the left must be to bind together the traditions of the workers movement with the traditions of the modern green movements. Only we can speak both languages.

A World Bank study - based on statistics from 198 countries - claims that only 16 per cent of economic growth can be explained by physical investment and growth of physical capital. Twenty per cent can be explained by the growth of exploitation of natural resources. And as much as 64 per cent can be explained by investments in human and social capital. While allowing for the difficulties associated with this kind of statistical analysis investment in education is the best way to foster economic development.

The quality of basic education seems to be the most important factor. And new strategies for education are needed to meet new productive forces. A high quality of education is not only necessary to get access to new technology, it is also good for competitiveness on the world market. Probably it is a fact that the Swedish communal music school has been the most important factor behind the disproportionately high market share in international pop and classical music.

The UNDP report mentioned above also recommends investment in education. Investment in knowledge that gives women power to control their own lives is especially needed. Of course it is also a question of the distribution of education between classes. A high quality public/state school system for everybody, must be financed through the tax system. Private schools must be allowed to exist within the framework of basic democratic values, but they must not necessarily be given the right to get subsidies from states or local governments.

The trends of splitting up knowledge and bureaucratisation must be reversed. So called social science should

return to its origins in humanistic and natural science. Economics - and normative 'social science' as a whole - is a product of the reactionary idea that ultimate decisions on resource allocation should be taken by experts and not in a democratic process. Basic knowledge of history, geography, culture and language must be combined with basic knowledge in natural science and polytechnics. The aspects of sociology and political economy should come in as parts of such a broader education system.

The majority of the population in

*“The symphony
orchestra cannot play
a Mahler symphony
faster”*

welfare capitalism - the upper class, the middle class and partly also the traditional working class - enjoy a fairly high material standard. They vote in general elections, they participate in different clubs and social activities. But most of the one quarter to one third of the population who are unemployed, chronically ill or handicapped and most of the immigrants live a less privileged life from a social and material point of view.

The international corporation of today is a very different creature compared to the old type of industrial firm with a fairly homogeneous working class and a small capitalist leadership. Today the gap between the more or less anonymous owners on the stock- and financial markets and the local leadership at the workplace is widening. Also the differences have grown between a well educated workforce with safe jobs on the one hand and the unemployed or those who have casual work on the other.

A survey in the 1950s revealed that a

low standard of living was the most common problem in the small town Katrineholm in Sweden. The lack of power was seldom mentioned, most members of the working class thought that they possessed political power through their social democratic government. When the survey was repeated at the end of the 1980s, the lack of power and influence was the biggest problem. The people 'up there' in Stockholm - including not only big capital and government but also the top levels of the trade unions - did not listen to them. And the people 'down there' - the immigrants, alcoholics etc. - were a threat for many people.

In 1950, individuals in Sweden still owned more than 70 per cent of total market value on the stock exchange market. Today they own less than one fifth. Among them a small number of families dominate, most of them got their position more than half a century ago when a founding father built his capitalist empire on personal relations to entrepreneurs and innovators. Among those families the Wallenbergs are more dominant than ever, controlling most of the biggest Swedish-based multinationals. The new factor since the beginning of the 1970s is a number of Swedish and foreign big share-owners - pension funds, saving funds etc. - without a long term strategy for the individual company and with short-term profit as only goal.

Traditional Swedish industrial- and taxation - policies were designed to support the flagships of industrial capitalism: Also organised labour and organised capital preferred to co-operate with each other and they were sceptical of more small scaled and anarchistic capitalist entrepreneurs. Most entrepreneurs and innovators today attach themselves to the industrial establishment in order to realise their ideas. The lack of new ideas and persons willing to take personal risks is a much bigger problem than the lack of money.

New technologies - as stated above - also foster different more or less spontaneous forms of co-operation. Also the border lines between blue and white collar labour gets more and more diffuse. At the same time, even the upper levels in management see aggressive speculation as a more dangerous threat against the long term survival for their company than organised labour. They also need a close co-operation with well educated workers or groups of workers who can themselves take responsibility for 'just in time' and 'lean production'.

One of the leading neo-liberal thinkers in Sweden - Patrik Engellau - speaks about 'human capitalism'. And even within the left a discussion is going on about whether socialism should be abandoned in favour of 'capitalism with a human face' as the long term goal. In this situation, the left must renew its thinking about its strategies for socialism. Self-management - or the free associations of working people to use the classical term of Marx - is the fundamental idea of future socialism.

A common reaction to the concept of self-management is to cite the 'workers managed' system in former Yugoslavia with its civil war, ethnic cleansing and collapsed economy. But the problems there were not the workers managed system. In terms of both micro and macro-economic efficiency, the system was fairly successful up to the beginning of the 1970s when regional differences and historical contradictions made politicians nervous and a bureaucratic planning system was superimposed and made the system too complicated.

The main theoretical argument against the system of self-management/workers control is that it leads to a short-sighted maximising value added (wage+profit) behaviour.



Illustrations by Frans Masereel

This may entail that too little money goes to reinvestment and that less efficient workers are driven out in a way that is even more brutal than in capitalism. Another argument is that the system is unfair since the market events outside the control of workers themselves can favour groups of workers and disfavour others. A third argument is the lack of responsibility for the opening of new companies and for the closing of old and inefficient ones.

But those arguments rather show that workers' control is not enough, you must also have efficient capital markets where self-managed firms and entrepreneurs can 'hire' money. There is also needed a progressive tax system and an efficient labour market and working time policy with instruments strong enough to make the firms take care of the 'outsiders'. Also you can argue in the good old Marxist tradition

that the productive forces in former Yugoslavia was not 'ripe' for workers control and that now first - in the post-Fordist industry and information society - the new system is ready to take over.

In 1965 C. H. Hermansson wrote in *The Road of the Left* that the five political parties in the Swedish parliament where all 'old fashioned', they had not been able to meet the new problems of our time. Today - 30 years afterwards - this is truer still. The political parties existing in present day Sweden will die if they are not radically changed from being a part of a 'political class' - a part of the establishment - to being movements in closer contact with everyday life. If they fail, we have paved the way for the small fascist groups who are now active in most European countries.

How can the marginalised be induced to mobilise for political action? How can the working and the entrepreneurial classes be convinced that it is in their own interest to abstain from certain material goods in order to make provision for the marginalised class? This means that if they believe that they will be less threatened by violence in the streets and they will not need walls with crushed glass around their houses, then they can abstain from wage or profit increase. Only then can an anti-establishment alliance be formed.

In other words, the left cannot be content with being only a 'part of the workers-, the women- and the green movements' as we say in our programmes. We must also be present in the everyday life of the unemployed, the immigrants and the entrepreneurs. We must be an integrated part of the movements building islands of contra-power to the power elites on the local, regional, national and global levels. Dreams of a Leninist type are gone for ever ■

Questions of language

When I was growing up in North Belfast in the 1950s London was our second home. Half of our family had emigrated to the English capital early on in the century and there was a regular to-ing and fro-ing from London where my great aunt and her extended family lived. We went by boat and train and eventually by air. We attended weddings and funerals, holidayed there, and I lived there for a while before opting for Belfast in the late 1960s.

As Belfast Protestants, not of the churchy or party political type, Britain existed as England. It was the cyclorama to our lives. We listened to BBC on the radio, and watched BBC and ITV when the time came. Our house retained the black-out blinds from World War Two up to the late 1950s. The bottled sauces and Indian tea. Camp coffee and medicines, brand-named jumpers and socks, Lyle Golden Syrup with its sleeping lion and sleeper slogan, Christmas cake and boxes of biscuits were all British made. My toys too and comics and football.

When it came to school, our history was British and the songs (along with accompanying gestures) which we were taught by the slightly eccentric Miss Gray were English and Scottish ballads

*My body lies over the ocean
My body lies over the sea
My body lies over the ocean
O bring back my body to me.*

The fact that it was 'bonnie' seems to have passed us by. And the headmaster of my school, the mythopoetically named Mr Nelson, reputed to have looked exactly the same when my uncle

GERALD DAWE on some personal and political points of order in the current debate about Irish cultural identity

attended a generation earlier, walked about with a Raffish stoop and had, in his small unlit office, two memorable symbols - a fighter-plane on a perspex mantle and a globe of the world demarcating the Empire. He was a proud, dignified and tolerant man so far as we could tell, and he never seemed to interfere in our lives.

On the other hand, the teacher who looked like Clark Gable, spoke with a distinct twang under the voluptuous moustache and smoked Senior Service, bore all the marks of a devil-may-care veteran. The war was the centrepiece in our upbringing. Its effect on the Belfast of my boyhood were clear. Behind our house, the Bricks - a derelict house; above us, he deserted US Army installation - a warren of outhouses and garages; away below us, prefabs which housed hundreds of families whose homes had been destroyed when Belfast was blitzed in 1941.

And the stories of my great grandmother sitting through the Blitz under the stairs, giving out to the Jerries as an unexploded bomb lodged in the back wall; my grandmother working in an ammunition factory, ducking IRA bullets; my mother's romance with a touring army bandsman, and the men you could see and hear throughout the fifties and sixties, on the buses late at night, or stumbling home of an evening, regimental blazers and grey flannels, talking away to themselves.

So for someone like me coming from that Belfast Protestant background, I consider myself lucky in having attended what was then called the New University of Ulster in the early 1970s.

While I was a student there, I spent a lot of my time in the company of Irish speakers. I learnt a little, wrote a couple of plays for the Cumann Drámaíochta, which were translated into Irish, played in an Irish traditional group, and had no difficulty whatsoever with either the language or the literature. The notion that 'Irish' was a badge of identity never occurred to me, probably because at that time politics meant politics. There was no sense in which 'being Irish' meant being more Irish than the next.

When I left the North in 1974 and moved to Galway, the one thing I remember was my shock at hearing some lads in the Cellar Bar in Galway making fun of the country accent of an Irish speaker who sat beside us. It is impossible and foolish to generalise from such a random moment, but it troubled me a lot. I also started to see the economic realities behind the language and the psychological complications which clustered around it as well. I met for the first time people who saw the language as a morally superior form of identity and who assumed that others should acknowledge this cultic status.

In some way I have never understood, these people fed themselves on the ghosts and tragedy of the past, but rarely stopped to consider the very real and pressing problems of the here-and-now. Rural poverty had a kind of authenticity which should be left culturally unspoilt. I also think that they looked down their



noses at those who were learning the language for the first time. They seemed to believe that they had some kind of inner secret to which the rest of the world could no longer lay claim. These people were very much in a minority. I also met a number of people who just happened to speak the language and love it for what it was, but who could not, or would not, see themselves as activists on its behalf. Their sense of who and what they were - as individuals as much as being 'Irish' - was easy-going, unspectacular and confident.

Throughout the early 1980s, around the time of the Hunger Strikes, journeying back and forth between the west and north, I started to spot changes taking place. In particular, the extent to which 'the language' was becoming increasingly more politicised by the republican movement. There is absolutely nothing wrong with this since artistic and educational progress can often come out of such cultural conflict. Language is there to be used for whatever reason people choose to use it for. The only problem is that others might equally decide that in being so used they want to simply walk away. I could see this happening too. I think the past ten years or so had brought the language into the public spotlight and there is no mystery why

this should be so.

For the very simple reason is that those who are concerned about the direction and quality of Irish cultural expression and institutions are having to assimilate extraordinary changes - changes the like and speed of which Ireland has not previously experienced.

These changes come directly from the generally mind-numbing populist influences of Anglo-American television and film-media. The changes are also related to the political redrafting of the northern state and the slow establishment of a new civic concordat in Ireland as a whole, and its place within, or without, the British and wider European context.

Vast sums of money are - or will be - invested into Irish cultural channels, involving everything from schooling, to streetscapes, to community groups and local administration, theme parks, folk-museums, flags and emblems. But who will be mediating these changes and what range of cultural experience and priority will guide their decision-making?

Cultural self-consciousness is everywhere becoming a civil service. What was once an accent, an idiom, a voice turns into community action, a manifesto, a speech; a categorical imperative. There is nothing inherently 'wrong' in all this, so long as it is not

predicated upon politically correct social engineering. Speaking a certain language, any language, cannot make an individual a 'better' human being.

From the strictly northern Irish point-of-view, through the invisibility of decades, the Irish language is at last coming out into the open where it rightly belongs. It is, after all is said and done, a language, not a Masonic order of secret signs. The real worry is that if all this push for public access is eclipsed by political motive, the language will itself suffer and become an object, not a living thing. The language as badge then becomes a token of historical self-righteousness, cultural forbearance, and fatally, racial distinctiveness: the good old bad days of the Free State and the First Official Language. In place of the harp, round tower, Quiet Man, should there be a brash merchandising of the language as a breathless modernising rush (The *Riverdance Syndrome*) or, conversely, what future is there for maintaining the language as a form of cultural resistance (The *Tiocfuidh Ar Lí Syndrome*)?

What balance is there in-between these options? When you read Cathal O Searcaigh, or Mairtín Ó Direáin, or watch the films of Bob Quinn, Muiris Mac Conghail, you are experiencing work of the first order. But what do we get when we see and hear the language

being used as if it was a ploy to remind others that they do not belong to the 'fold'? An introverted and atrophying delusion. The language is a state of mind in which all people should feel at home, exploring it or not, as the case may be. Gaelic is a part of all our speech; it names our landscape, district and ourselves. Once it is allowed to become exclusively the badge of cultural identity, it will cease to be a language and will end up dependent upon political favouritism for survival. Indeed identity has itself become a term much used and abused. It is thrown around like a frisbee. Irish, British; nationalist, unionist, Protestant, Catholic. But what does identity actually mean, or, more importantly, are people really so preoccupied with it in Ireland as compared with people in France or England or the US?

With the firebreak of the cease-fire, the first real signs of political reality are breaking through 25 years of noxious and suffocating insularity. Like most people in Ireland, I have been a spectator at the game, not even sure of the rules or the players. Observing what is happening in and to one's country can be a strange and estranging sensation. As a poet, there is also the business of watching language being put through the mill. When a unionist politician talks about 'Eire' as a poor, backward country, run by priests, I have to pinch myself. Is this the same place where I have lived for the past 20 years? The loyalist notion that the Irish state is massing on the border, either physically, metaphysically or constitutionally, to take over Ulster, that jewel in the crown, is simply mind-altering. Whereas republican rhetoric about an Ireland 'Gaelic and free', a proud and sorrowful nation weeping and/or dancing at the crossroads, is in as sorry a state of delusion when compared with the reality and cultural priorities of the actual republic, here-and-now.

Whatever the incontrovertible right

of spokespersons to entertain such views, the fact that people died for them is chillingly beyond belief. The scales will have to drop from everyone's eyes. New things will need to happen so that the old ways and dusty rhetoric gets dumped, along with the Armalite and Semtex. The Protestants who have kept themselves insulated in a comforting nostalgia called the British Empire will have to step into the real world for a start. This does not mean abandoning their past, which is an honourable one. Indeed, the

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Protestant cultural history is a complex and challenging history, emblematic of much that is repressed in Ireland.

Sadly, all too often, their story is patronised or distorted by journalists and other writers. But to engage publicly and directly with the political and economic power-brokers, whoever and wherever they are, is the only rational way forward. There certainly is no way back. Internal affairs are everyone's business now. Protestants who believe in the union and all those who believe in democratic rights have absolutely nothing to lose or fear, from speaking their minds on the arguments about why the union should remain. Far too often, all one hears is rant about a mysterious cultural 'link'. My own deepest wish is that along the way to peace and justice the genuine common traditions and experience of

northerners is reclaimed from the nightmare of the past.

It would be foolhardy to assume, however, that cultural reprogramming and therapy will do the trick; as if unionists who are Protestant are merely closet Irish who need to come out. Many already see themselves as Irish. And many more do not. Others see themselves as British and Irish. So what? Is there not a community known as Irish-American?

Indeed the single greatest contribution and lasting strength that Protestantism could contribute to the ongoing debate is their own history of individualism and dissent. The civic right to say No.

Undoubtedly after much pain, anger and uncertainty, Protestants are coming to the realisation that they have to reconsider their past, not as a gesture of 'sell-out' or compromise, but simply as an exercise in influencing what the future may hold. Marooned within their own statelet for so long, ordinary Protestants had no other imaginative stability than that bequeathed to them by the unexplored and hasty formulations of a Craig and Carson. No wonder then that the Protestant community could be caricatured as introverted, imaginatively dull and uncreative.

This cultural short circuit disempowered writers within their own culture - writers such as Louis McNiece, Sam Hanna Bell, Sam Thompson and many others. It was a failure of educational will, critical blindness and fashion, and institutional complacency on a massive scale going back generations, which perpetuated the stereotypical clichés in the north. Depressingly, many of these clichés are recycled in the Republic and further afield by critics and commentators who should know better. The incipient subconscious sectarianism becomes a way of life ■

Big Fella, Good Fella

There is no doubt that those who go to see *Michael Collins* will be entertained. Liam Neeson in the lead gives a stirring performance. More bullets are fired than in the course of Irish history. It is essentially a 'buddy' movie, with Collins and Harry Boland (Aidan Quinn) fighting, first the British, and then each other.

The sex is characteristically (and unnecessarily) restrained, with Julia ('Which one of you two gunslingers is going to ask me to dance?') Roberts adding little to the film. The crowd scenes, the sets, and the atmosphere in Dublin during and after the first world war show how Hollywood's 28 million dollars were spent. The genre is universal action movie; art it is not.

Nor is it history. A number of Irish historians have pointed to the following significant flaws and inaccuracies:

- constitutional nationalism has been written out;

- so also has Ulster - except for a scene in which a Belfast policeman is killed by a Dublin car-bomb (Provisional IRA technology dating from the 1970s);

- the 1916 Rising was opposed by most Dubliners;

- there was no armoured car in Croke Park on 'Bloody Sunday' 1920;

- Ned Broy (Stephen Rea) was not hanged in Dublin Castle; he died in his bed in 1972;

- Collins's time in London in 1921 with Lloyd George, Birkenhead, and Churchill (and Lady Lavery) is left out, the treaty compromise being viewed only from a - fratricidal - republican perspective;

- there is no basis for the final, near-

AUSTEN MORGAN sees Michael Collins transmuted into the cosmeticised pan-nationalist consensus hero of the 1994 cease-fire

miss reconciliation between Collins and Eamon de Valera (the film's anti-hero) in County Cork during the Civil War of 1922-3.

Michael Collins is straight from the '800 years of oppression' school of history. The Brits, the bad guys, are portrayed as racially incapable of anything other than gratuitous violence. The film is propagandist, worthy of the term 'fascist art' according to historian Paul Bew. Neil Jordan's response to criticism has been to retreat to the mountain top of artistic licence - the story demanded that he bring Collins and de Valera together again!

The director of *Angel*, *Mona Lisa*, *The Crying Game*, and other less notable films, set out to portray the revolutionary nationalist who became a man of peace (shades of Gerry Adams?). Unfortunately, the real Collins used Irish state violence mercilessly against his former comrades. If he had not been killed by the IRA, he would probably have become an authoritarian leader of the 1920s and 1930s.

There was no basis, contrary to what the film suggests, for peace between Collins and de Valera. If there had been reconciliation, it would have seen a reunited IRA resuming its war against Britain (the *casus belli* being Northern

Ireland). Thus Jordan has played into the hands of Sinn Fein which has most to gain culturally from the film being successful.

Michael Collins, hitherto the Free State hard man, and therefore the hero only of Fine Gael, has been transmuted - courtesy of Hollywood and Jordan - into the cosmeticised pan-nationalist consensus hero of the 1994 cease-fire. Ireland against Britain, maybe with the violence constrained, but national struggle all the more menacing.

Jordan admitted on the *South Bank Show* that the cease-fire was a pre-condition for funding. He told his American backers, searching for a happy ending, that this was coming in the form of permanent peace. In the event, Jordan was proven to have as little political sense as he has historical sensitivity.

What Field Day began in the early 1980s, with its attempt to repeat the Irish cultural revival (not as farce?), an exercise in sectarian nationality, Neil Jordan continues with his powerful, popular exercise in nationalist piety. The production notes boast of a Fianna Fáil suggestion that the Irish government should have purchased the film's O'Connell Street set (forgetting that it was made of ply-wood) and turned it into a national monument. The heritage industry in overdrive?

Theme parkery staffed by leprechauns? Hollywood tried twice to make a Big Fella movie before backing Jordan.

Projects by Michael Cimino and Kevin Costner foundered on the rock of Irish history being stretched to fit cinematic stereotypes - Collins as Scarface in one case. The question of artistic



Liam Neeson gives a stirring performance

responsibility also arose.

It is believed that Warner Brothers would not have funded *Michael Collins* if the IRA had been blasting away. And it has been suggested that the film's release was delayed because of uncertainty about the cease-fire. But the fact that Warners released the film can only mean that corporate executives were determined to get a return on their investment regardless.

W.B. Yeats once asked: 'Did that pluck of mine send out/ Certain men the

English shot?' Warners would seem not to have asked what might be the connection between *Michael Collins* and any future deaths at the hands of the IRA or loyalist paramilitaries.

Neil Jordan is entitled to his artistic freedom. But responsibility is also necessary, especially when terrorists prey on democracy. *Michael Collins* has been described accurately as a tribal time bomb. Its message is that political violence was necessary in 1916-23, a questionable assumption which is

constantly invoked to justify today's IRA.

The film could stir up sectarianism in Northern Ireland. It will strengthen anglophobia in the Republic. And, in the United States, it will only reinforce ignorance. It will do nothing to explain Irish history to British cinema audiences.

At best, *Michael Collins* is an action movie with blarney; at worst - I hope I am wrong - it is a symptom of the growing cultural power of Sinn Fein

Book Reviews

Understanding the Provos?

The events of the past few years - from the Hume/Adams talks, through the IRA cease-fire of August 1994, to the resumption of IRA terrorism and the political posturing of the Sinn Féin leadership since - force anyone with an interest in the politics of Irish republicanism or a concern with the restoration of peace to pose a number of questions of contemporary Provisionalism.

Amongst the most obvious and pressing are:

- How and why was a majority of the IRA army council persuaded to call a cease-fire in August 1994? To what extent did their decision reflect a willingness to compromise, rooted in disillusionment with an unsuccessful military strategy; or, alternatively, a belief that they could realistically hope to achieve their end-goals, without compromise, through a political offensive? If the latter, then on just what foundations did such a belief rest? What was the nature of their contacts with the British Government and with political forces in Ireland? Just what expectations were fostered about likely political change, and how?

- To what extent does the supposed existence of a supposed 'peace party' versus a 'war party' within the republican movement reflect tensions between Sinn Féin and the IRA, or within both Sinn Féin and the IRA? Is there any evidence that Sinn Féin has changed its fundamental character in any way, becoming any more like a

Brendan O'Brien *The Long War: the IRA and Sinn Féin from Armed Struggle to Peace Talks*; O'Brien Press; £9.99
M.L.R. Smith *Fighting for Ireland? The Military Strategy of the Irish Republican Movement*; Routledge; £25.00

normal political party committed to parliamentary democracy, or does it remain subservient to the IRA, organisationally, structurally and ideologically

- Has republican thinking towards Britain and on the British presence in Ireland really changed? Above all, are the Provos any less incapable now than in the past of coming to terms with the reality of Ulster unionism?

Both of the books reviewed here were published before the Provos decided to abandon the cease-fire and resume their bombing campaign; they cannot be expected to have prophesied such an outcome. They can, however, be judged at least partly to the extent that they offer any new or convincing insights into the sort of questions listed above.

Brendan O'Brien's *The Long War* claims to offer an analysis of the republican movement's so-called peace strategy. In terms of analytical rigour, the book leaves a lot to be desired. O'Brien certainly has written a very comprehensive narrative; indeed, his

tendency to list every bomb attack, shooting and robbery involving the Provos on an almost monthly basis tends to pack the book with too much detail. Certainly, if his point is to emphasise the small-scale, 'routine' and harrying nature of much of the IRA's operations, then the point is overstated. There is much to be said for O'Brien's journalistic account of the events of the past few years: he offers a valuable and highly readable summary of events which those unfamiliar with the details will find especially useful. His book contains maps and diagrams showing arms and explosives finds in the South, tables listing IRA and security forces casualties, and Sinn Féin electoral results, and an array of appendices, quoting from primary sources. The book will therefore be a useful addition to the library of any serious student of contemporary Irish politics. The author also tries consciously to balance his own nationalist sympathies by both emphasising some of the weaknesses and contradictions of Provo thinking and by interviewing some ordinary Ulster Protestants. He does not always succeed - an 'us' and 'them' approach is still present in his writing in places - but at least he is conscious of the issue.

The problems arise with the claim that this is an analysis of the republican movement's peace strategy. O'Brien certainly describes the increased involvement of Sinn Féin in political activity from the hunger strikes on, the

growing confusion within republican ranks over a military strategy which by the early 1990s clearly was not leading to 'victory', and the steps taken to marginalise and/or reassure elements who might have been suspicious of or downright hostile to the August 1994 move. He also demonstrates how concern with unity of the organisation was paramount in the minds of republican leaders. But he does not offer any convincing explanation for the readiness of the IRA leadership to entrust the pursuit of 'British withdrawal' from Northern Ireland to a political alliance between Sinn Féin, the SDLP, Washington and the despised 'Dublin government'.

O'Brien shows convincingly that, talks of interim arrangements aside, the republicans never seriously wavered from an insistence that peace be on their terms and that these included as central a British commitment to persuade, cajole or force Northern Ireland out of the United Kingdom. That being the case, one has to conclude that either the IRA/Sinn Féin leadership misread the signals from London and elsewhere and committed a gross strategic miscalculation; or they were in receipt of more communications from the British side than we yet know about. Or perhaps both.

Certainly O'Brien's interviews with republican grass-roots activists in Belfast and elsewhere suggest a

constituency which saw any cease-fire as a tactic to be abandoned if they failed to get their way. As one such activist put it, 'Gerry Adams is not in a position to say that [that a compromise could be reached] ... Gerry Adams will appease the Unionists within a United Ireland.

financially. Talking gets nothing in Westminster or in Stormont.' From the outset, it was clear that unless Sinn Féin and the forces of 'par-nationalism' could deliver a British pledge to withdraw, the cease-fire could not be maintained without a

fundamental reappraisal by the IRA of more than just tactics: republican ideology and self-identity were the key issues at stake. O'Brien demonstrates that the Provisionals under Adams and McGuinness managed to create more room for political manoeuvre and strategic fudge by eschewing the fundamentalist rhetoric of Republican Sinn Féin on such questions as abstention in the south. However, he risks exaggerating the extent of change.

M.L.R. Smith's *Fighting for Ireland?* is more concerned perhaps with the failure of the Provisionals' military strategy than with the confusions and contradictions of their so-called peace strategy. (It has to be said that Smith's book is much broader in its scope, covering the Officials as well as the Provisionals, and indeed the pre-1969 IRA also.) Smith

demonstrates brilliantly that the military strategy of the Provisionals has been eroded over the years by its own inherent flaws. A persistent aspect of the Provisionals' 'misreading of their own position ... [is that] they were tailoring their demands not in relation to what could be feasibly achieved given the prevailing balance of forces,



He will not appease the Unionist without a United Ireland' Or as another put it more bluntly: 'Nothing will happen till Gerry Adams is at the table. It will happen eventually through an escalation of the war. The military campaign has to be sustained as it is. It helps keep up the pressure on the British man, power-wise and

but in accordance with their own exaggerated sense of power'. Examples of the Provisionals' 'misreading' include the nakedly sectarian nature of much of their violence which has done so much to undermine the credibility of any claim to espouse a non-sectarian politics, and their constant misunderstanding of the nature of their military opponent. As Smith put it: '... the advantage of forming the problem of Northern Ireland within a colonial context was that it fed an image of an inwardly flawed opponent; the notion that although outwardly stronger than republican forces, the British were psychologically weak, without the stomach for a fight, and unable to withstand the continuous on the inherently brittle colonial link with Northern Ireland.'

Hence, the tendency towards delusions of the 'British withdrawal any day now' variety. The implications for an understanding of the trajectory the Provisionals have followed over the past three years are obvious.

The bottom line is surely that the Provisionals remain prisoners of their history in at least three fundamental and closely related respects. First, handshakes with Reynolds and Bruton and attempts to enlist the 'Dublin government' in an anti-partitionist front simply do not mean that legitimacy has been conferred upon the institutions if the Irish state, or upon the democratic processes which underpin those institutions. The attitude towards 'Dublin' and towards nationalist politicians in general remains one of fundamental distrust.

The delusion that they, the Provisionals, speak for the 'real' Irish nation has not been shed.

Second, Sinn Féin remains very much the political wing of the IRA. The relative lack of attention given, in the pages of *An Phoblacht* and in various *árd* fheis policy documents over the past decades, to questions of policy-making structures and democratic accountability within the organisation underscores the fact that real power lies elsewhere: with the 'army'. It may be permissible for individual Sinn Féin members to question the armed struggle; but councillors can still be called upon to resign their seats if they do so publicly and the *árd comhairle* still takes its cue from the army council.

Third, the concept of 'national self-determination' repeatedly gets in the way of any realistic analysis of Ulster unionism. The Provisionals have not moved very far, if at all, from their position of the early 1980s when they declared: 'since the loyalists have cut themselves off from the hinterland of Irish culture by denying themselves nationhood, the culture of the Protestant people - when it tries to aspire above street-level Orangeism - can reach nothing higher than a pathetic imitation of English traditions ... Loyalism is an ideology and politics that can in no way be 'compromised with, short of a united Ireland' (quoted in O'Brien).

All of this means that the Provisionals have not, contrary to O'Brien's claims, changed in any fundamental way since 1988. Smith is closer to the truth when he states 'the

basic message in republican strategy was the same [in 1994] as it had always been, the only difference being that it took much longer to say it.'

Attempts to draw them into democratic politics cannot simply engage in wishful thinking, ignoring the all-important questions of: the movement's acceptance of the legitimacy of existing political institutions; the demilitarisation of Sinn Féin, abandonment of IRA control of its internal structures and establishment of democratic policy-making procedures; and the replacement of a hegemonic and exclusivist conception of the Irish nation with an acceptance that the people of Northern Ireland have the right to withhold consent from, as well as the 'right' to be 'persuaded' to consent to, a united Ireland.

The Provisionals are a long way from undertaking the sort of democratic transformation which would allow us to conclude with confidence that the restoration of a permanent cease-fire and the entrance of Sinn Féin into non-violent, democratic politics are realistic prospects. It may be that a combination of fudge, wishful thinking and political miscalculation on the part of the current republican leadership has left them bereft of any coherent strategy at present - marooned in an unhappy limbo of non-identity. It will not help matters for democratic politicians in either Dublin or the SDLP to help perpetuate their self-delusions.

Richard Dumphy

A century of the left

Donald Sassoon *One Hundred Years of Socialism: the West European Left in the Twentieth Century*; I B Tauris; £35.

Is socialism dead or can it be revived? This is the question posed by Sassoon's massive comparative study of 14 West European socialist parties.

Sassoon, a British historian specialising in Italy and Italian

communism, outlines socialist struggles for democratisation, the welfare state and labour market regulation, as well as communism's failed experiments, from the founding of the Socialist International in 1889 to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

The Socialist International aimed for the workers' emancipation and the abolition of wage-labour. Now 'no-one, any longer, anywhere, pursues a non-capitalist path.' And, as Sassoon says, 'only in Western Europe does socialism appear to survive, battered by electoral defeats, uncertain of its future, suspicious of its own past.'

Yet socialists have left an enduring legacy in Europe: 'regulated under the pressure of socialist parties, capitalism was rendered less hierarchical than in Japan and more humane than in the USA.' Without Keynesianism and the Cold War's massive military spending, capitalism might have faltered.

Through the inexorable pressures of mass electoral politics, socialists became reliant on capitalist stability to fund their reforms. This is socialism's 'inescapable dilemma': 'do short-term achievements undermine the ground for the eventual overthrow of the system?'

Sassoon identifies the debilitating shortcomings of three crude Marxist notions that inspired socialist parties founded in the late nineteenth century: capitalism cheats workers out of the full fruits of their labour and undermines formal equality through its control over economic development; history proceeds through stages; workers are 'fundamentally homogenous' and must unite for their interests.

This is an essentially economic determinist approach and, ironically, '... the key factors in the development of socialist parties were political, rather than social or economic.' Sassoon writes that socialist parties fared badly during capitalist crisis in the 1930s and recorded their greatest successes during the 30 years of growth from 1945.

Such Marxist notions were increasingly ignored in practice - 'the (German SPD's) verbiage breathes fire; the tactics are tame' - whilst they made it more difficult for socialist parties to navigate the complex waters of electoral politics. Their radical aims

motivated party activists but worried and confused voters.

British Labour activists in the 1970s, for instance, were inspired by Dennis Healey's promise to tax the rich until the pips squeaked. Instead of taxing the rich, Healey abandoned even Keynesianism. Near civil war ensued in the party. The voters took flight.

Sassoon's analysis of the 'poor political judgement and frequent inconsistencies' of the Left's leader, Tony Benn is unsparring: he had 'an over-optimistic, romantic and quite unwarranted assessment of the desire for socialism of the British people and of the strength and maturity of the labour movement.'

The contrast between socialists' revolutionary aims and moderate practices is a key theme of the book. Such contrasts also inspired three major waves of revisionism: Eduard Bernstein's at the beginning of the century; Anthony Crosland's in the 1950s; and the still developing 'neorevisionism' of the 1980s which 'entails accepting important aspects of the conservative critique of socialism'.

The book's sweep through European socialist history is comprehensive. It covers, for example, the split with Leninism, the post-war welfare consensus, foreign policy and Atlanticism, the 'perplexing 60s' of student revolt (when social-democrats 'lost contact with a crucial generation' over Vietnam for which 'the political price paid remains unknown'), Eurocommunist, feminist and ecological politics, the Swedish model, the success of the SPD's 'Ostpolitik' - détente with East Germany, socialism's 'thwarted alternatives' such as Austro-Marxism, and much more besides.

There are some omissions. He doesn't cover the Irish Left, for instance, on the grounds that it isn't a leading force, although two left parties are currently in government. Sassoon could have provided a useful analysis of the relationships between socialism's

universal message and Irish nationalism as well as unionism.

For Sassoon's accounts of key moments in socialist history are eminently readable and acute. He identifies the 1945 British Labour Government's 'astonishing timidity' in education policy, its constitutional conservatism and general unpreparedness, concluding that 'it did not know how to run the capitalist economy'. Sweden's left receives high praise for accepting the terms of the market but imposing its own terms and conditions to reach a 'working compromise'. Mitterand's government in the 1980s tested 'the celebrated doctrine of national sovereignty' but brought about 'a beneficial restructuring of the French manufacturing sector'.

Sassoon's short but thought-provoking epilogue speculates on future directions for socialist parties. He describes 'a *fin de siècle* turmoil reshaping the planet at momentous speed' and the great problems presented by the globalisation of capitalism to all national parties. He thinks it may be easier for conservative parties to combine support for untrammelled capitalism and nationalism (Forza Italia was an early beneficiary and British Euro-sceptics may be in the future). He thinks it will be electorally compelling for the Left to remain in its national shell but suggests that this 'would be like becoming a shadow that has lost its body'.

The short epilogue deserves careful reading for its rich insights. But Sassoon is too good an historian to predict whether we are now witnessing the *de facto* demise of socialism or the end of its pre-history: 'with history ... you never can tell'.

Sassoon's sophisticated history avoids baffling sociological jargon but brings events to life, puts them in their historical context and is often witty as well as sharp. He has single-handedly and successfully tackled an enormous

subject. The narrative flows more coherently than would a collection of essays by different specialists. He draws from a wide range of sources - the notes, bibliography and index make up 20 per cent of the book's 1,000 pages. Its size may deter some but my advice is to persevere, dip in and out, for this is an excellent and unique history.

Gary Kent

Secrets and stories

Seamus Deane *Reading in the Dark*; Jonathan Cape; £13.99

A commonplace of English autobiographical writing is the scene in which the youthful subject devours forbidden literary fruits, clandestinely, reading beneath the bedclothes with the aid of a torch. This scene has apparently been re-enacted countless times in the policed privacy of suburban bedrooms or in lonely beds in crowded dormitories: and thus 'the green twig bent'. The narrator of *Reading in the Dark*, Seamus Deane's remarkable debut as a novelist, shares a bed with his older brother Liam and so, when he acquires his first novel, *The Shan Van Vocht*, is denied such textual pleasures: 'For Christ's sake, put off that light ... you blank gom.' Instead he would read in the dark: '...lie there, the book still open, re-imagining all I read, the various ways the plot might unravel, the novel opening into endless possibilities in the dark.' To read in the dark is to elaborate, to construct, narrative, to make sense, when the authoritative text is occluded, in the absence of a master- (or meta-) narrative.

Reading in the Dark is a non-continuous but sequential first person narrative of growing up in Derry between 1945, when the narrator is some five or six years old, and 1961, when he graduates from university in Belfast. The high degree of congruence

between the unnamed narrator's career and the author's suggests an autobiographical novel, a fictionalised autobiography or an 'Irish *bildungsroman*'. Up to a point this is a useful approach to the novel. The autobiographical element is undeniably there and is significant, but not always straightforwardly so - as is illustrated by the novel's treatment of Seamus Heaney, Deane's former classmate. Heaney makes two appearances, the first as a 'country boy' whose essay is read aloud and praised by the English teacher. Later, a boy named Heaney demonstrates a precocious grasp of the wisdom of saying nothing whatever you say. Intriguing as these vignettes may be, they cannot be said to play a major role in the novel. Heaney has no significant part to play in Deane's novel but he would have been a plangent, and potentially disruptive, absence. The resolution of this difficulty does not lie in greater or lesser degrees of truth, or its opposite, but in deft authorial stage management.

The Irish novel of childhood, youth and young manhood (the *bildungsroman*) has a long tradition, with which Seamus Deane is, of course, thoroughly familiar. *Reading in the Dark* works, partly, within this tradition and plays off it: the generic and conventional bases - religion, family, nationality, schooling - are adroitly (and sometimes ironically) touched. The school episodes, in particular, stand out in this regard. The manic Fr Gildea is a worthy recruit to fiction's monstrous regiment of pedagogues. Fr Nugent's attempts to explain the 'famous act' etymologically ('From the Latin, *emittere*, to send out ... semen is the Latin for seed') are also memorable. Deane's gusto and *élan* in these set pieces dispel any initial feeling of *déjà-vu*. The same, unfortunately, cannot be said of his excursions into mythology and Donegal.

Derry is a substantial and potent presence in the book. Although there

are traces of the uncanny and even of the Gothic in the novel, its presentation of the city, and of the Derry Catholic *gemeinschaft*, is broadly realistic. However, this is not a piece of Derry 'dirty realism', nor is Deane an urban pastoralist as are (in their very different ways) Roddy Doyle and Gerry Adams. The Derry of *Reading in the Dark* is a Cold War city (see 'Political Education [November 1956]') and, in a sense, an imperial city. The evoked world of the novel has much in common with that of one of Deane's finest poems, 'Guerrillas', and is essentially pre-Troubles and pre-Provo: more Chocolate Doherty's turf than Martin McGuinness's. The Troubles and the subsequent 'war in the neighbourhood' only enter in the novel's final section - significantly entitled 'After (July 1971)'.

While the novel's historical moment is Cold War Derry, its central concern is with an earlier and enigmatic series of events. In April 1922 the narrator's Uncle Eddie, his father's brother, disappeared after participating in a gun battle between the police and the IRA. In November, a policeman was thrown to his death off a bridge and the narrator's maternal grandfather was arrested and charged with the murder only to be subsequently acquitted. Four years later Tony McIlhenny left Derry for Chicago, ostensibly to look for work, leaving his pregnant wife (Katie - the younger sister of the narrator's mother) and was never heard from again. What really happened? Was Uncle Eddie killed in the fire that followed the battle? Did he escape to America? Was he shot as an informer? Who killed the policeman? What became of McIlhenny and why did he never send for Katie? These secrets, as secrets will, give rise to stories, in a proliferation of narrative modes: rumour, gossip, reminiscence, anecdote, ghost story, sermon and confession. What *Reading in the Dark* chronicles is the process whereby the narrator learns to read these stories,

and finally pieces together from them an explanation or solution that is delivered in the 'After' section - a condition of his knowing this 'truth' is that it can never be articulated in the world of the novel.

Clearly, to read the novel in this way is to abandon a narrowly autobiographical approach. This is not to say that what Deane claims to have happened did not happen, or that it happened differently or for different reasons. I do not know that. As Frank Kermode has observed (in *Not Entitled: A Memoir*), 'in autobiography' the 'principal enemy' of 'truth' is 'not mendacity but good writing'. By good writing here I do not mean the novel's much-praised 'poetic qualities' but the whole process by which the narrative is elaborated, organised, patterned and plotted. *Reading in the Dark* insistently foregrounds its own elaborate formal organisation. The book is divided into three parts, six chapters, each subdivided into titled and dated sections or episodes, and across this intricate surface personal, family and public history are woven into a complex pattern: '...all linked in, dancing to somebody else's tune...'

Reading in the Dark, as I have already noted, is precisely this process of elaborating narrative, and of sense making. This is not, of course, an arbitrary or merely formal process.

In an early episode, 'Accident (June 1948)', the narrator sees a boy being accidentally run over by a lorry. The police arrive and one of them is upset by the incident: 'I think he felt sick. His distress reached me, airborne, like a smell...'. Later, he is told that the policeman did vomit and recalls feeling 'pity for the man'. This moment of empathy is more disturbing than the accident itself: '...this seemed wrong; everyone hated the police, told us to stay away from them, that they were a bad lot. So I said nothing...'. Shortly afterwards, Danny Green gives a detailed account of the incident in which the boy is 'run over by a police car which had not even stopped. Bastards...'. He knows this to be false but does not contradict it; this tacit acceptance of a lie 'allayed the subtle sense of treachery I felt from the start. As a result I began to feel a real sorrow for Rory's mother and the driver who had never worked since'. To be able to read in the dark is to move beyond the

need for such accommodation and to become capable of articulating those things which seem wrong.

In an otherwise laudatory review in the *New Statesman* Terry Eagleton commented that '[t]he book is least successful in its cuffing of autobiographical material into fictional shape'. What I think Eagleton is complaining about is its failure to achieve that highly desirable Lukáćian quality of totality. Reviewing the novel in *Fortnight*, Edna Longley also asserted that it failed to transcend the limitations of the autobiographical - and went on to argue that this was true of all Deane's work including (indeed, particularly) the *Field Day Anthology*. Longley's attempts to reduce Deane's entire oeuvre to the expression of a private grievance, and Eagleton's to sign Seamus up for his own marching band, may not be, intrinsically, of any great interest, but this rare moment of, if not perhaps agreement, then convergence, is worth noting. Longley and Eagleton (and Danny Green) aspire to, and proscribe for others, stern virtues. *Reading in the Dark* has not attained them, and is all the better for it.

Stephen Wilson

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