

way of the serpents, and 3,000 expected hotel-and-seat bookings have been whittled down to about 1,000. After Bloody Sunday there were 200 cancellations from the U.S., and the festival directorate says a 90% native support is going to be needed to make the fortnight viable.

With all that to contend with, nobody should be surprised if a new malady called Directors' Disease enters the medical textbooks, and the couches of the trendier Dublin psychiatrists are filled with men with their bow-ties under their collars, agitatedly puffing on half-coronas, and babbling of fringe benefits and bed-nights.

ARE WE TWO NATIONS?

L. Callender

Not since the 1920's has nationalism been so rampant in Irish politics. Catholic politicians from Jack Lynch to Michael Farrell are predicting that a "united Ireland" is close at hand, and calling upon the Catholic population at large to steel itself for the final push, for the realisation of the century-old ambition of forcing the Ulster Protestants into a state run by gombeen men and priests. The jingoists and mob orators are abroad. Amidst the clamour and the din there is a growing boldness and a growing audacity. The masses are mobilised. The campaign is on. It's now or never.

Coercion of one kind or another has always, and of necessity, been central to the realisation of Catholic nationalist ambitions towards Ulster. Where mass agitation and armed force have been rejected by the more timid nationalist politicians, they have been rejected not out of principle—as is often claimed—but out of the realisation that sooner or later a strong reaction on the part of the Protestant population was bound to be provoked. But the agitation and the bullets and the bombs have been going on for nearly three years now. They have increased during that time. As the weeks and months rolled on, as one provocation gave way to another, the expected reaction did not materialise. Confidence grew. The propaganda became more strident, the bombs bigger and the assassinations more frequent. With each successive escalation the timidity receded and boldness took its place.

But it is a boldness mixed with apprehension. Even fear. Will that Protestant backlash come or will it not? Are we really advancing or are we not? Are we actually fighting and winning, or is it all just a war dance? Are we falling victim to our own propaganda? Such are the feelings and reflections which recently moved Eddie McAteer—a man with practical experience of politics in

Northern Ireland—to say: "I am sick with fear in this moment of opportunity."

While the Protestant community has not allowed itself to react physically to this barrage, it is evident to those who are not blinded by pre-conceptions and emotion that its determination and resolution to resist the imposition of a Catholic state has grown steadily during that period. Its morale has not been broken, and for those who care to learn from history, it is clear that it is highly unlikely that it will. In the main the Protestant community has not expressed this determination in terms of the violence and demagoguery of the Catholic politicians. Indeed, it is this very aspect of the situation which, away from shouting and roaring crowds, most disturbs people like McAteer. Is it the lull before the storm?

This situation holds very grave dangers for the working class, both Catholic and Protestant. In a national conflict it is always the workers who sustain the main losses. The rising tide of nationalism is threatening to burst asunder the Trade Union movement and produce widespread physical conflict between the workers of the two communities. It will make impossible for a long time to come the emergence of a socialist movement capable of influencing politics in Northern Ireland.

In such an atmosphere, where people are prone to look for easy solutions, to succumb to immediate pressures and ignore essential considerations, it is of fundamental importance to emphasise and re-emphasise one of the basic social realities of Ireland. There is a great deal of talk about "new political initiatives" and "lasting political solutions". But policies which fail to take into account fundamental social facts are bound to fail. Whatever the practical details of a successful solution might be, it is bound to base itself on that one great social fact which is the key to modern Irish history.

This fact is that there are two nations in

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Ireland.

The basic assumption, often only half perceived, which underlays the Catholic nationalist claim to rule over the Ulster Protestants is that all the people of Ireland constitute a single nation. A single nation is entitled to a single state. And the Ulster Protestants, so the argument runs, are a minority in this "historic Irish nation", and must submit to the will of the majority which desires a "united Ireland". "No minority", said Jack Lynch and his predecessors, "has the right to opt out of the nation". And the refusal of the Ulster Protestants to entertain the notion is put down to religious bigotry and British intrigue. It is the myth which unites Provisional and Official, the PD and the SDLP, Bernadette Devlin and Eddie McAteer, Fianna Fail and Fine Gael, and both with the ILP. It is a powerful myth. But it is no less a myth for that.

The reality is quite different. There has not, since the seventeenth century, been anything resembling a single national community in Ireland. And even prior to the Ulster Plantation the native Gaelic society—fragmented and incapable of reacting to outside influences as a coherent unit—could not be described as a nation in the sense in which that term is used to refer to the modern European societies of the 17th, 18th and later centuries. The Ulster Plantation brought into Ireland a community of people radically different from the native population in history, culture, world outlook and social organisation.

Out of that community developed the United Irishmen movement of the late 18th century, a movement created, developed and led by the Presbyterian middle class. The United Irishmen recognised that three communities existed in Ireland at the time: the Catholics, representing the overwhelming majority of the population and being, in the main, a rack-rented and depressed peasantry; the Protestants, by which term was meant the Episcopalian Anglo-Irish ascendancy class, developed from the Anglo-Norman conquest of the 12th century and based in Dublin; and the Dissenters, the descendants of the lowland Scots who were brought into the Plantation. It was the intention of the United Irishmen to "replace the name of Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter by the common name of Irishmen". But the United Irishmen failed, and they did not succeed in fusing these three communities into one.

In the succeeding decades, for reasons which were essentially economic rather than ethnic, the Catholic and Ulster Protestant communities diverged, while the Anglo-Irish degenerated. By the time

of the Home Rule movement (that is to say, the movement for political control of Irish affairs by the Catholic middle class) in the late 19th century the two main communities, which, by this time, must be considered nations, stood opposed to each other on economic, cultural and other grounds.

The Catholic nationalists declared that the Unionists had no right to resist Home Rule—which meant Catholic domination of the Ulster Protestants—and must submit to the majority party (at first the Home Rule Party, later Sinn Fein, and finally Fianna Fail). But the Ulster Unionists demonstrated the fallacy of this by building an all class alliance of the Protestant community against Home Rule. And it does not make any sense to include as part of a nation a coherent community of a million people of various classes and political outlooks who deny that they belong to that nation, and who organise a powerful political and military movement to prevent themselves from being forced under a government of the ruling class of that nation.

From 1886 to the present day, whatever class struggles have come and gone, this fundamental struggle of the two communities has remained constant. It is not a party struggle. It is not a class struggle. It is a struggle between two communities each of which contains within it all the classes of modern capitalist society. It is a struggle between

nations. This national conflict has been kept alive by the undemocratic claim of successive southern governments to rule over the North. Millions of Catholic Irishmen and women are raised with a burning sense of grievance over "the lost counties of Ulster."

But on real democratic grounds, and far more so on socialist grounds, the Ulster Protestants have a right, as a nation, to self determination, the right to live within the state of their choosing. No solution to the problem in Northern Ireland which is based on a negation of this right can succeed. The Protestants are right on this question, and that is the source of their determination.

Support is growing for their position, and underneath the apparent substance of the Catholic nationalist offensive, support, where it really counts, is beginning to decline. And that is in the working class. Recently, a Workers Association for the Democratic Settlement of the National Conflict in Ireland was formed. It bases its policy on the recognition of the rights of the two nations in Ireland, and the extension of full democratic rights to national minorities, both in the North and the South. It now has branches in Belfast, Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Coleraine, as well as some in Britain. There is no doubt, whatever may happen in the short term, that this view will eventually become the dominant one among workers. North and South.

archetypal goodie goodies, had got their G.C.E.s. or whatever their outlandish equivalent might have been. But my envy of their lot was not without its qualifications. For, while exams meant success, I had to admit to myself in moments of something less than religious fervour that being boiled in oil, crucified upside down, or skewered for the faith was just not my idea of same.

Sex, of course, was a subject not to be discussed by anyone entertaining even a slight hope of salvation. And even for the more pessimistic amongst us it was little more than a three letter word to be feverishly encountered on page 207 of the Pocket Oxford — an entry assiduously and pruriently milked for clues.

The school, alas, provided few opportunities for further study; the teaching staff was male and predominantly clerical. Consequently, one's only contact with the opposite sex might be a bi-annual glimpse of the amorphous bulk of the cleaning women, each apparently hand picked for their lack of anything faintly resembling a female contour. However, for day-boys like myself who could go home, there was always the chance of extra-mural study, but for the poor boarders, life was empty indeed.

Lunchtime would find us congregating outside the school gate, hoping for glimpses of the girls from the Protestant school further up the road. The sight of their pre-mini skirts was a high point in everybody's day; though as to what exactly went on under same skirts was mostly a mystery. It was the subject of much wild — and at times — alarming — speculation.

Boys from the country would invariably flaunt a knowing air of being one up on the rest of us in these matters, because of their observations of animal life down on the farm. But occasionally one could detect a frightening inability on their part to distinguish between animal and human functions — though this point was purely academic to us innocents at that time. However the cross fertilisation of knowledge at the school gates produced a highly original, if bizzare, version of the facts of life. And armed with this many a pink cheeked youth must have died a thousand deaths as he sailed, blissfully ignorant, into his first sexual debacle.

But this was all in the future. The immediate hurdle to be overcome at the time was an inability to hold a normal conversation with a girl without going red, or hitting her over the head, or standing on ones own, or otherwise restraining excruciatingly embarrassed limbs. The Protestant boys could do it all right.

CROSS PURPOSES

John Rooney

An English couple were looking around for a suitable school on which to unload their tear-away son for a few years. Word happened to reach them of the spartan discipline reputedly exercised in Irish religious schools, so, thinking that a stretch in one of these establishments might do him — and them — some good, and being agnostics with no particular religious axe to grind, they promptly packed him off.

At the end of the first term the boy came home a changed character. The parents, both delighted and not a little amazed at this transformation, enquired of their subdued offspring whether the school was indeed as tough as made out. "Tough?" said the boy his eyes wide with fear. "You just walk through the main door there and they've got this Bloke nailed to the wall!"

There were Blokes nailed to the wall all

over the school in Belfast that I went to though in fairness it must be said that the standard of discipline fell disappointingly short of this epic promise. However the twisting Christs and various assorted life size saints were not without a quelling effect on young and lascivious spirits. Like spiritual chaperones they lurked in every dim recess, confronted one around every corner; their sober presences admonished young sinners bent on unworthy errands, or when entertaining (and being entertained by) unworthy thoughts.

Examination times were the worst. For then not only did one have ones fellows, parents, and sundry adoring relations to deal with if results went awry, there was also the gauntlet to be run of sad "they know your sins and would find you out

looks from the various hanging, floating and praying interested parties on the walls. All of these, no doubt, being

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