THE STATE OF THE NATION

IRELAND SINCE THE SIXTIES

DESMOND FENNELL

Desmond Fennell was born in Belfast and educated at University College, Dublin and Bonn University, Germany. After finishing his studies, he worked for some years in Spain and Germany — as schoolteacher, newsreader, Aer Lingus sales manager, theatre critic, etc. — travelled widely in Europe, the Far East and the USA, and lived a year in Sweden. From 1964 to 1968 he edited, in Freiburg and Dublin, *Herder Correspondence*, an international review of theology, philosophy and politics. In 1968 he moved to Connemara, where he helped to launch the first Gaeltacht political movement, campaigning for a Gaeltacht radio service and regional government. From 1976 to 1982 he taught Political Science and Modern European History in University College, Galway. He has written extensively for newspapers and magazines on the Northern question, decentralisation and cultural matters. His principal books are *Mainly in Wonder* (a travel book about the Far East), *The Changing Face of Catholic Ireland*, *Sketches of the New Ireland* and (due this year) *Beyond Nationalism*. He currently lectures in Communications at the College of Commerce, Rathmines, Dublin.

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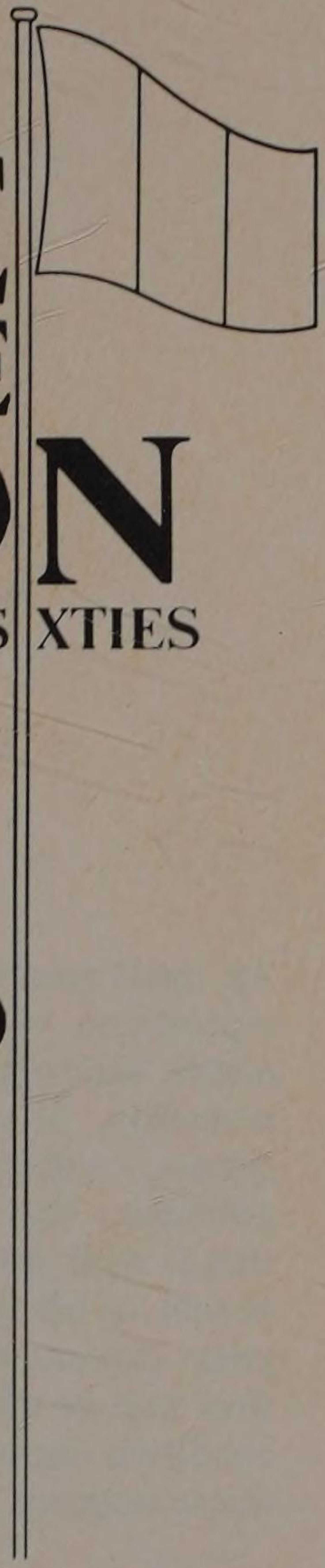

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DESMOND FENNELL

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For Mary

Deir an Tiarna: Is eol dom d'oibreacha, nach fuar thú agus nach te. Uch nach fuar nó te thú! De bhrí go bhfuil tú alabhog, gan a bheith fuar ná te, taím chun tú a sceitheadh as mo bhéal amach.

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Foreword to the Second Edition

Much in this book is critical of the cultural, political and ideological developments in the Republic during the past twenty years, and of the state of affairs which these have produced. Consequently, it was not surprising that most Dublin reviewers — who in the nature of things tend to be supporters of the status quo — disapproved of it. I expected them to do so and it was their right. However, a number of them suggested, polemically, that I was advocating a return of some sort to the Ireland of forty years ago, or the re-creation of such an Ireland; so I think it is only fair to inform (or warn) the prospective reader of this edition that the book advocates no such thing.

True enough, I correct some polemical distortions of the de Valera era, but this only for the sake of truth and as an aid to understanding where we are today. My central argument (Chapter 1) is that the first attempt, in those years, to define and establish an independent Irish identity collapsed, irretrievably, about twenty years ago; that a second attempt is called for; and that (Chapter 5) the prerequisite for doing that successfully is to create and develop an independent and realistic Irish view of the world. It seems odd to have to spell out what a book says, when it actually says it; but such are the times we live in.

In this new edition, I have corrected printing errors and minor factual errors.

D. F.
June 1984

Preface

This is a book about the "state of the nation", and if the question is asked "Why the nation? Why concern ourselves about that?" the answer is simple. Our nation is our given social vehicle in the world and history. For good or ill, it makes us what we are, places us in the world, identifies us among mankind. Most of us live within its social framework. Our chances of living human lives, and of being ourselves in the world with dignity, depend on how it is, how well it functions, and on whether it is serving us as a nation should. If it is in good shape and functioning properly, it promotes our human well-being and we can have a good life. If it is in bad shape, it is a millstone around our necks, cheating us of our possibilities during our time on earth.

The history of Ireland in the twentieth century has been that of a nation, long deprived of its nationhood, trying to regain it and becoming stuck halfway. We have achieved some basic physical prerequisites — a surplus of wealth over essential needs, a stabilised and growing population, and reasonable protection against bodily disease. In addition to these, we have acquired a large reservoir of modern technical skills, an abundance of learned men and women, and a remarkable modern literature in prose fiction, verse and plays. Many Irish people and organisations have had direct and enriching relationships with many parts of the world. Ireland has been recognised for sixty years as a sovereign state, and for a time, earlier in the century, she stood out by her achievements as one of the three chief collective personalities of the English-speaking world, alongside England and America. What we have been unable to do is to move beyond those enduring gains, and that temporary eminence, and acquire what we set out to acquire, namely the attributes of real nationhood or — to put it more precisely — of *a representative unit of mankind.* The first and most essential of these are mental, cultural and political self-determination. Today as sixty years ago we lack autonomy in these three spheres.

We know and have accepted for centuries that a nation (such as we claim to be and are) is a representative unit of mankind, and therefore by nature autonomous, basically self-sufficient, and capable of providing itself with a normal human life. It forms its own view of the world and itself; manages its affairs, internal and external, in accordance with that world-view; and produces, as a net result, that representative human life in which its members realise their own humanity and freedom.

We have believed that, known that, and wanted that for our own nation, so that we might enjoy the fruits of it, collectively and individually. But despite our efforts in this century, we have not achieved that, nor are we perceptibly in the process of achieving it. We are caught between provinciality and nationhood, not moving forward, doubting whether we should continue trying, strongly tempted to stop trying: in a word, stuck halfway.

A representative human society is *a community of communities and persons.* That is how man organises himself, socially, when following his natural bent, and that, therefore, is how a nation is when it is fulfilling its nationhood. It is a community of communities and persons which is not a state, but which *has* a state of its own making, a form of political organisation. However, when we tried, earlier in this century, to restore our nation to nationhood, we did not try to transform it into a society of that kind. We accepted the conventional modern view of what a real nation is, as propounded and propagated by nationalism.

Nationalism said that a real nation was a *nation-state* like Britain or France — a legally sovereign political entity made up of individual citizens, which has control of its entire "national territory" through an omnipotent central government, and is equipped with a national parliament, army, language, culture, currency, and the various other things which signify real nationhood in the modern world. Having accepted this view of a real nation, we tried to become a state of that kind.

We fought to gain control of the British state apparatus in Ireland, and we made it into an Irish state in as much of the national territory as we could, while committing ourselves to extending it, as soon as possible, to the entire territory. In the meantime, we did our best to equip it with all the other appurtenances of a twentieth-century nation-state. We gave it a national parliament, flag, anthem, currency, radio and airline. We declared our distinctive language, Gaelic, to be the national language, and we set about reviving it and saving the Gaeltacht. We made the state constitutionally sovereign and republican, and endowed it, symbolically, with a Gaelic and Catholic cultural identity which distinguished it from Britain and the other states of the English-speaking world. Meanwhile our writers built on, and added to, the new national literature in English and Gaelic which had been created during the revolutionary years.

This process reached its high point under de Valera, from the 1930s onwards. While de Valera concentrated on the legal and symbolic aspects, Lemass devoted himself to providing a self-sufficient material base, especially in the field of manufacturing industry. Both men were agreed that Ireland must be economically self-sufficient: that was "Sinn Féin economics" and part of the standard nationalist recipe for real nationhood. The Second World War saw the Irish state performing its most sovereign act since its foundation — the decision to remain neutral while our former imperial masters fought Germany. Then, in 1949, Costello's government put officially into words what was already a fact: the state, hitherto variously named, was declared to be "The Republic of Ireland".

The 50s were a decade of disillusionment, caused largely by the growing economic stagnation and the return of largescale emigration. It was clear that Sinn Féin economics weren't working. The first moves towards a new economic policy were made in the late 50s, under Costello's second government, but it was under Lemass, from about 1960 onwards, that the new departure really took off. Its most distinctive features were economic planning, free trade with Britain, and the subsidised importation of foreign industrial enterprises which would use Ireland as an export platform. These foreign enterprises were regarded as the chief factor likely to provide us with a secure material base and a stable population.

This new course produced the boom years of the 60s and led to a general ideological reaction against the nationalist programme inherited from the revolution. The Gaelic revival was neglected and tacitly shelved. "Catholic" became an unfashionable word and the Irish identity was declared to be non-Catholic. Things English came into fashion again, and this meant, in effect, that London was once more the acknowledged metropolis; from the "swinging London" of the 60s came the tune to which Dublin and Ireland danced. "Republicanism", reinterpreted by the new élite, meant something quite different from what de Valera had meant by it: namely, the pursuit of an all-Ireland state whose laws and institutions would serve the purposes of consumer capitalism. For minds newly enlightened by the light from London, partition was no longer an injustice perpetrated by Britain against Ireland, but a problem, largely of our own making, which would be solved by the removal of religious influences from the laws of the Republic, and by "reconciliation" in the North.

Then the Northern rebellion and war began, and the Republic, after responding, initially, in the old nationalistic manner, decided that its interests lay in avoiding the issue;

it disowned the rebels and condemned them as murderers. In the referendum, in 1972, on Irish entry to the EEC, Mr. Lynch and his government urged the citizens to vote "Yes" on the grounds that, since Britain was joining the Community, they had "no alternative" but to do likewise. There was a massive "Yes", and to the increasing dependence on London was added a further dependence on Brussels. But payment came in the form of high prices for Irish agriculture which made the farmers — who had been lagging badly — full participants in the new affluence.

Prosperity of a degree never experienced before spread throughout the Republic, and even the previously poorest regions ceased to be poor. Emigration ceased, and, for the first time in more than a century, the population of Ireland increased — and went on increasing. Irish traditional music flourished in revitalised forms, and became the second most popular music in Western Europe after pop. Between the late 50s and the late 70s, suicides more than doubled and attempted suicides increased sixfold. Ireland, previously noted for its high standards of sexual behaviour, its low incidence of violent crime, and its respect for unborn babies, ceased to be noted for these things: sexual licence increased dramatically, violent crime became epidemic, marriage breakdowns were frequent, and each year several thousand women went to have abortions in England. In the last remaining Gaeltacht districts, most young parents began rearing their children in English. Serious monthly and weekly journals disappeared. There was virtually no intellectual, or even coherent, debate, nor any regular forum for it. The poets wrote private poems in which all the words looked and sounded right. The Catholic clergy — apart from their frequent condemnations of the IRA — fell silent, except in church* The mass media had a virtual monopoly of the day-to-day public discourse. There was a remarkable renaissance of Irish book-publishing, but not in the field of thought. As we passed through the recessions of the 70s and early 80s, with the government borrowing wildly to keep the party going somehow, while unemployment grew weekly and the North rumbled on, people seemed dazed, like sleep-walkers, and were afraid to think. Chatter about unemployment, wages and prices, the bankruptcy of the public finances, political scandals, divorce and abortion, and Northern violence, filled the air.

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*This book was completed before the debate about the Constitutional Amendment relating to abortion entered its final stages, and the bishops spoke out forcefully on this subject.

I believe it is time to take stock of the situation, to discover where exactly we are and how we came here, and to consider what we now want to do. During the 60s and 70s, living in Dublin, the Connemara Gaeltacht and Galway, and making frequent visits to my native Belfast and to elsewhere in the North, I have watched the passing scene, played some part in it, and written many articles about it. I have worked out a view of our situation which I believe will be of use.

Much of the groundwork for this view has been done in my column in the *Sunday Press* and I am grateful to have had this weekly opportunity to try out ideas, get reactions to them, and mature them. Chapter 4, dealing with the North, is an extended re-writing of an article which appeared in *Etudes Irlandaises* (Lille), December 1982.

June 1983

The State of the Nation

Chapter 1
Wrestling with our Self-Image

In late 1982, while Conor Cruise O'Brien was away in the Middle East, the *Irish Times* invited several "guest speakers" in turn to fill his weekly space in that paper. One of these was Eamon Dunphy, the sports writer.

Dunphy's piece was entitled "Lies and Myths". It was in the nature of a complaint about the "great national lie" which he believed was being foisted on the Irish people by their "public men" — principally, the politicians and bishops and the people in the "communications business". "It's not", he wrote, "that Public Man is mostly telling lies, it's just that mostly he is not telling the truth. Thus almost every idea, opinion or emotion publicly expressed is a distortion of reality. The cumulative effect is the national mythology, an image of ourselves that has more to do with the publicly-expressed bullshit of communicators than our personal experience of Irish life."

Dunphy believed this false self-image was a product of the "gombeen" mentality. It had to do with matters such as the Pro-Life Amendment, the "national question", the "language question" and the religious and cultural questions. The reason why Public Men misrepresented such matters was, for the most part, that they wished to say "acceptable" things, things which would "not offend the punters." "In passing", he wrote, "we can dismiss the Public Man Who Really Believes. There are, floating around the airwaves and public prints, real gombeen men. These Donka O'Dingbats, Mad Dog folk groups, Crazy

Catholic Spinsters and Pure Irish Poets really believe.'' But ''for every true believer, there are a hundred public men'' merely pretending, and ''thus contributing to the great national lie.''

''As a result'', wrote Dunphy,

> we have at the heart of our national life an undeclared battle between public gombeenism and private humanity. It is a struggle for the soul of the nation ... The forces of common humanity, denied the commanding heights of the communications business, huddle behind the barricades, confused and overwhelmed by the image of themselves with which they are constantly bombarded.
>
> The real people of Ireland, the punter, the guy on whom the Referendum will be foisted, is the guy who doesn't want a thirty-two county blah, blah, republic, but who wonders instead as he lies in bed at night if his kids will get a job. He is the man who doesn't speak the language, who thinks that language is a way of communicating with other human beings, rather than a cultural virility symbol; the man who lives in single-channel land, but wishes he could receive the BBC to watch ''Match of the Day'' and ''Dallas''. The man who thinks the Provos *are* murderers, the Catholic who is Christian, who doesn't hate, patronise or mistrust other religions, who in his heart is far more tolerant than the indecent national myth created in his name.
>
> Unlike the Mythology he is real ... The importance of being Irish is not for him a matter of being Irish. He is a member of the human race, curious, imaginative, hungry for new mind-broadening experiences rather than the emotional straitjacket of the Gombeen Dogma.
>
> So far it's been a secret war, not enough officers, for every Patrick Kavanagh and Hugh Leonard a hundred Green Dingbats and a thousand frightened

> Public Men ... It's time to fight back, to declare war instead of apologising. Time for Ireland to find its true identity ...

If I have quoted at some length from this article, it is not because I believe it portrays a state of affairs which exists now or which existed last year. Like every other reader, I recognise the battle which Dunphy is fighting, but it is a battle which was won long ago. The national self-image which he sketches — with some polemical misrepresentation — was the more or less agreed national self-image up to the end of the 50s. Powerfully attacked throughout the 60s, it gradually disintegrated and, from the early 70s onwards, has not been propagated by the generality of "public men", and most certainly not by the general run of communicators in the mass media. Because of this, Dunphy's piece, when it appeared, had an oddly dated quality. It could have been written by a Rip Van Winkle returning from a long sleep, or it could have been written years previously and touched up slightly for printing in 1982. Only the reference to the Pro-Life Amendment related it to the actual circumstances of Ireland in that year. To mention nothing else, the bit about the "real" Irishman who "lives in single-channel land, but wishes he could receive the BBC to watch 'Match of the Day' and 'Dallas'", placed the article in contemporary relevance eight or nine years back. In 1979, the second television channel was introduced, thus putting an end to "single-channel land". But that single RTE channel had been transmitting BBC's "Match of the Day" since 1975, and "Dallas" since 1978. During that year and the following year, when I was still living in Gaelic-speaking Connemara, "Dallas" was one of the most popular television programmes. The only other possible explanation that occurs to me is that, for some years before writing the article, Dunphy had the habit of watching only British television and reading only British newspapers, so that what was happening in the Republic — off the soccer fields — and what was being "communicated" here, escaped him.

All of that, however, is only by the way. The reason why I have quoted from the article is that it illustrates the central problem which we have faced, as a nation, since the 1920s, namely, the problem of our national identity, and it illustrates the particular way in which this problem presents itself to us today after our first attempt at solving it has broken down. Moreover, perhaps because Dunphy is a sports writer who doesn't normally write on this problem, he deals with it in an instinctive and intuitive way which reveals more about its real nature, and what "solving it" means, than many discourses on the subject by cultural and social theorists. For a start, his article shows clearly that the problem is not literally one of our national "identity", of "what we are" — which is what our identity means — but of how we shall *represent* to ourselves and to others what we are. A problem, in other words, of the public "image of ourselves" which we shall present to ourselves, and also, therefore, to others. Notice how Dunphy begins by complaining about the propagation of a "false image of ourselves" and ends by saying that it is time for Ireland to "find its true identity" — meaning for us, as a nation, to find and present a "true image of ourselves." This intuitive linking of the concepts "identity" and "image of ourselves" reflects the real nature of the problem.

Towards the end of his book, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History 1922-79*, Terence Brown discusses (p. 323) how the theme of "national identity" has been explored or avoided during the 60s and 70s, and refers particularly to Seamus Deane's treatment of the subject. He writes of the "real social and ideological difficulties which occur when an over-simplified, anachronistic conception of Irish identity and history is found no longer to fit experience in an Ireland confronted by the Northern crisis and by [quoting Deane] 'the problem of adjusting a hard-won single-minded version of Irish identity to the complex realities of modern Europe.'" When Brown writes there of a "conception" of Irish identity, and Deane of a "version" of it, we can in both cases read "image".

Similarly, when Hugh Munro (*Sunday Press*, December 12, 1982) fears that "the IRA, portraying itself as the embodiment of the national identity, will gain in strength," it is evident from his very words that he is talking about the IRA projecting itself as the image of the nation. On the other hand, when Joseph Lee writes that "Ireland suffers from a peculiarly weak sense of identity by European criteria" (*Unequal Achievement: The Irish Experience 1957-82*, p. 13), that "sense" of national identity he refers to is what a nation has, satisfactorily, when it has projected, accepted and internalised an image of its identity which distinguishes it from neighbouring nations. This quality of perceptible distinctiveness from neighbouring nations is also what is at issue when people talk, as they often have done, of the danger of "losing" our identity (or our cultural identity). What is meant by the phrase is not, actually, that we might cease to have an identity, cultural or otherwise. Since our identity is what we are, we always have it; we are always *something*, and something which no other nation is, no matter how dull, derivative or undistinguished that may be. The danger referred to is that the image of ourselves, which we present, willy-nilly, to the world and ourselves, might cease to have that distinctiveness from neighbouring nations which is proper to a nation, and show us, rather, as an extension of Britain or a *Sacsa eile darb ainm Éire* — as the poet foretold in the seventeenth century. But clearly, even "another England called Ireland" would still be an identity, and indeed a unique one.

Just as a teenager emerging from a condition of tutelage and dependence finds himself confronted with the problem of identity, so, too, with nations when, in similar circumstances, they try to establish themselves as independent nations in the world. The nation, as the teenager, *is what it is*, but that is many things; and for it to represent itself as all those things, or to try to live as all those things, is not a solution to its national identity problem in a world of competing and interacting nations. Ideally, its various communities and other groups can represent and live out everything it is, but that is another matter. The problem of its national identity is to choose from its manifold reality an image of itself which will make possible and activate or, in one word, *serve,* its independent life. In effect, this means a national image which asserts the nation's shared humanity and nationhood; distinguishes it from its neighbours; bonds it internally; links it advantageously with like nations; buttresses its self-respect; and arouses its will to act and create. This *serviceable* image of itself is the identity which the nation, with a view to those benefits, opts to possess and realise. Its choosing and appropriation of this image is the radically autonomous act of mind and will which founds and activates its cultural, economic, and political independence. Without that act there can be no autonomy and therefore no national community in any real sense. The nation's identity problem is solved when it has chosen and started realising a serviceable image; relegated it to its subconscious; acquired, as a consequence, a satisfactory *sense* of identity — and dismissed the question of its identity from its mind. Then — but only then, and not till then — the nation is free simply to live, and to do those things, such as re-creating and transforming the world, which go with being simply and self-confidently alive.

For the past twenty or thirty years, many newly independent nations in Africa and Asia have been wrestling with their identity problem. When the North Vietnamese communists conquered South Vietnam, and found themselves faced with a recalcitrant population, they departed from their communist orthodoxy to stress the importance of the Confucian and Buddhist elements (but not the "foreign" Catholic element) of the Vietnamese heritage. When Algeria became independent, it presented itself as a secularist socialist republic along the lines which its new rulers had learned in France from the French Left. Then, finding after a few years that this image of its identity didn't serve it internally or internationally, it became an Islamic socialist state. When Castro and his comrades won power in Cuba, they were socially-reforming, but not socialist, nationalists. Then, when it became clear that Cuban independence, threatened by the impinging American power, required to be strengthened by the support of a distant, powerful ally, Cuba redefined itself as an anti-imperialist, Marxist-socialist nation, linked with the Soviet Union. Earlier in the century, Egypt buttressed its newly-won independence by choosing to regard itself not only as Arab and Islamic, but also as the successor nation to ancient pharaonic Egypt. The new Israeli nation has chosen to define itself, legally, as an exclusively Jewish nation and — though it in fact speaks many languages — to regard and present itself as Hebrew-speaking. As for the newly-independent black African "nations" — very few of them are actually nations — one can imagine the multiple problems of choosing and establishing an image of the national identity when the "nation" is a medley of nations and bits of nations thrown together within boundaries drawn by European colonial powers.

England faced the problem of its identity in the sixteenth century when, shorn of its French attachments and breaking free from its various dependent links with the Continent, it sought to establish itself as a new nation-state. On the one hand, it used the Welsh Tudor dynasty to identify itself with pre-Anglo-Saxon Britain and the Celtic ancestry of King Arthur; on the other, in its religious veerings from Roman Catholic to Catholic but not Roman, to extreme Protestant, to Roman Catholic linked with Spain, and finally to a judicious Protestantism, it provided a textbook example of a nation wrestling with an aspect of its self-image and image-for-others, and trying, with an eye to internal and external necessities and expediencies, to "get it exactly right."

When Greece emerged from Ottoman dominance in the early nineteenth century, most Greeks saw themselves as heirs to the Christian Byzantine realm, and regarded

Constantinople as the centre of their nation. But the Westernised liberal leaders of the newly-independent nation called in a German king to rule them and defined the modern Greek nation as the heir to the ancient Hellenic one. Consciously, they did this because their ideology made them prefer to see "Greece" thus, and because the romantic philhellenism of Europe in those days encouraged them to make this choice. But it was also, implicitly, a decision to give, or attempt to give, a sense of wholeness to the new nation-state rather than have its citizens regard it as a mere instalment of their nation on the road to the reconquest of Constantinople.

Albania was faced with an identity problem when it was liberated and became communist after the Second World War. Its sense of being a non-Slav nation among the South Slavs had already induced it to differentiate itself, religiously, by becoming Muslim and linked with Istanbul. Now, with the neighbouring Slavs sharing communism with it, it felt compelled to differentiate itself, ideologically, once again, in a way which would bond it internally and link it with a distant metropolis. Hence its consistent rejection of links with communist Yugoslavia, and its demonstrative alliances, first with Moscow, and then, after Krushchev's attack on Stalin, with Peking, until the latter turned its back on Mao. Bereft of the Chinese link, its resulting total isolation deprived its communism of its bonding effect, and threw it into the convulsions of the last few years.

Russia's decision, since the 1920s, to re-present itself as the chief communist nation has not been as unswerving as it might seem. During the Great Patriotic War against the Germans, Stalin brought the Russian Orthodox Church to the forefront and presented Russia to its people more as Holy, and Mother, Russia than as the chief communist state. Djilas, the Yugoslav writer, spent some time towards the end of the war in Russian establishment circles, and he reports in one of his books that there was talk there to the effect that Marxism-Leninism had run out of steam as a bonding identifier, and that it might be better to bring back the Church, completely and permanently, to its traditional place in Russian life. Instead, as we know, Russia restored Marxism-Leninism as the nominal identifier, but then, from the late 1950s onwards, replaced and complemented it, to a considerable degree, with a quasi-religious ideology of space technology, harnessing the ether and reaching towards the stars.

Some nations have solved their identity problem better and more durably than others, and have had, as a consequence, a particularly successful and creative national life. The English are an outstanding example. One of the most important reasons for their success was the extreme care of their rulers and communicators to keep the projected national image very broadly acceptable to the members of the nation, as an image of themselves. In other words, the national image was never — or almost never — allowed to deny or misrepresent the national reality to any serious extent. (Eamon Dunphy is, of course, in error when he suggests, inadvertently, that "acceptability" or "not giving offence" are faults in a national image!). Thus comparatively little force was needed to win more or less continuous acceptance of the English national image by the English people, and it was normally embraced eagerly, and with a bonding and energising effect, by the great majority of them. Moreover, during the construction of the British nation-state, when the English national image was complemented by a "British" one, care was taken to give this a "multi-national" aspect so that Wales and Scotland could be represented in it, peripherally, as nations of a sort — as junior sister-nations with England within the overall community of "British" nationhood. This procedure was maintained when, after the French Revolution, it became customary for nation-states, following the French example, to impose the undiluted metropolitan nationhood on incorporated nations and to give their nationhood no place in the national image.

As a result of its long and largely undisturbed development, the English national image has acquired an unusual richness of texture. The ancient monarchy, parliament and laws are there at the top. The English language articulates the English reality and world-view since early modern times, and, in the language's earlier, Anglo-Saxon form, since the Dark Ages. Centrally, the nation is vaguely Protestant in a somewhat Catholic way, but extreme, puritanical Protestantism shines brightly in the historical background, and Roman Catholics, since they proved they could be loyal subjects, share with that very English category of people, eccentrics, an honoured place on the fringe. England prides itself on its unique heritage of civil liberties and human freedom, and it guards this heritage, not for its own benefit merely, but as an inspiring beacon for mankind and a warning to foreign tyrants. An Englishman's word is his bond. British justice, which is basically English, is the fairest in the world. England has given the world the gentleman, and the English, generally speaking, have the gentleman's sporting attitude to life. They believe in fair play, and are basically reasonable people, given to compromise; but they are also, let no one forget it, the bulldog breed whom it is folly to provoke. Not excessively brainy people, though they founded modern science; not very imaginative, though they have a splendid literature and have given the world its greatest poet; not what you would call methodical, but very good at muddling through — they are, essentially, normal, decent, practical human beings, such as there are all too few of in this unruly world. And that being the case, it is only natural that they have created a world in their image, stretching from the Antipodes to the Arctic wastes, and that races of all colours pay homage to their Queen. Such, more or less, is the image of themselves which the English present to themselves and to others, and, as I said, few nations have managed this fundamental business of nation-making and nation-maintenance quite so well as they.

Our first self-definition as a nation began to crumble in the 50s, was assaulted throughout the 60s, and faded away in the 70s. All that is left in its place, as a public image of Irish identity, is the factual Twenty-Six County state, without any cultural or ideological overtones other than "democratic". We haven't chosen it as our national image: we would prefer to have no image, to be quite invisible to ourselves and others. But it is one thing to demolish a national image which, in the nature of such things, is a symbolic creation and could therefore be got rid of fairly easily, and quite another thing to demolish a state which is factually there and internationally recognised in treaties and so on. You can, of course, attack and undermine its Constitution, and we have done that for fifteen years continuously. We have also done all that *could* be done to make it invisible, by stripping it of the vestigial symbolism of its name: our politicians and leader-writers generally refer to it, anonymously, as "this state", rather than by its name "the Republic" (of Ireland) or by the title "Ireland", which they often used to give it and which it bears at international gatherings.

Needless to say, this state, whether so called or called otherwise, is not, and could never be, really an image of our nation. Quite apart from the fact that it includes only part of the nation, it is not, in its administrative structures or legal system, even an Irish creation, but an inheritance from the British; and its Dáil, however much it may be an integral part of our life and self-image, is a House of Commons manned by Irish people. A few years ago, when I had written an article in the *Sunday Press* advocating new, decentralised forms of government, a letter from a reader revealed the subconscious feelings of many of its citizens about "this state":

> It is as if the Irish people are still living as an underground movement in their own country. The "shape" of Irish society and institutions fits the Irish people like a badly tailored suit. We do not acknowledge the suit as our own; we do not feel at home in it, but we tolerate it as we have always tolerated everything. I never hear Irishmen talking about *our* courts, *our*

> gardaí, *our* representatives, etc. There is disillusionment and phrases like "Is this what it was all for?"

Obviously, "Ireland" represented to the mind as "this state" is not something one would die or kill for. This simple fact goes far to explain, beyond all polemics, the gulf of consciousness and understanding between most of the citizens of the Republic — born, sixty years ago, out of armed revolution — and the contemporary IRA. (The gulf is reinforced on the IRA's side by the parallel fact that its zealously nurtured image of the Irish nation omits the Twenty-Six County state entirely by defining it as illegitimate — as "not really there"). More to the point because of its practical effect: our demolition of the national image which supported and clothed the Republic of Ireland, and our further denudation and reduction of the Republic to "this state", have robbed it of any power at all to inspire. Those who speak and act for it at home are not sure of what ground they stand on other than party. Those who speak or negotiate for it abroad are undermined by its anonymity and by the knowledge that the nation which it nominally represents is holding its head down lest it be seen. The result, since the early 70s, has been irresolute and paralysed government, no discernible foreign policy nor even policy on the North, except in both cases — our stand on the Falklands war being the sole exception — a conforming to the policies of others; and finally, a timid and uncreative Irish participation in the EEC.

The present situation may be an interlude between the first attempt at a serviceable self-image and a second one, or it may be the end of this effort altogether, and the end, therefore of our attempt to found and activate an independent Irish mind and life. I will assume it is the first, despite the discouraging fact that there are no visible stirrings to suggest this. There are no groups or notable individuals putting forward positive proposals for a reformulation of our image of what we are. It was inevitable, given the real difficulties of the time and its intrinsically iconoclastic and reactionary nature, that there should be a period without such constructive effort, but it was not inevitable that it should still be continuing.

The *Crane Bag*, which is now the only Irish journal of ideas, was started in 1979, and in its twice-yearly issues there has been a good deal of discussion, direct and indirect, of what it means to be Irish. Seamus Deane edited two issues, and in his editorial introducing the first of these he wrote: "No authoritative vision of Ireland has emerged in recent times to take account of the economic and demographic changes and the various forms of political crisis which have marked or marred the last fifteen years or twenty years." In his postscript to the second issue, he wrote that "there is no emergent, systematic and organic reformulation either of Irish tradition, Irish dilemmas or of Irish problems. Our position is relatively static." Struck by the largely negative and evasive approach of the writers in the two issues he had edited, he went on to say that "it may be that we are doing no more than suppressing the old revolutionary impulse of the century by weighting it down with questions, by making a virtue of vacillation and a boast of seeing much on all sides of any particular question. We may, in fact, be defending a new status quo in the delusion that we are radically revising an old tradition." Those remarks apply accurately — and not as "maybes" — not only to those particular issues of the *Crane Bag*, but to the general discussion and role of the Irish intelligentsia from the 1960s to the present moment.

However, the dissecting criticism has, by its very nature, contained oblique pointers towards an alternative national image. Occasionally, too, as a way of making its polemical points, it throws up accidental sketches of an alternative image. Eamon Dunphy does this in the article I was discussing. Not all such sketches fulfil even the minimal conditions of a *serviceable* image, but Dunphy, in his unreflective and intuitive way, manages to imbue his casual sketch with some of the basic and necessary qualities of a serviceable image.

A serviceable national image shows clearly that the nation is a representative unit of mankind. It generalises about the national characteristics. It highlights features which distinguish the nation from its neighbours, bond it internally, and link it, advantageously, with like nations and powers. It respects, and does not ignore, what the members of the nation know from their everyday experience. Its characterisation of the nation is such as to give rise to self-esteem in its members. If there is a minority within the national territory who disclaim membership of the nation, and there is no intention to use force and indoctrination to make them conform, then the national image does not include them, even implicitly — as, for example, by asserting, in the standard nationalist manner, that "the nation consists of everyone born and living in the national territory." Those are some of the necessary qualities of a serviceable image, and Dunphy's sketch of "what we really are" displays them in some degree. Brought together and put in a sort of order, his sketch would be roughly this:

> The Irish are human beings like the rest of mankind. An English-speaking nation, they are unworried about having lost Irish, and they like the same kind of television programmes as the English. Deaf to the public rhetoric about a united Ireland, they care, rather, about their families and practical, day-to-day necessities. Catholics, who take seriously the Christian injunction to love one's neighbour, they are a tolerant people, especially with regard to other religions, and they abhor and condemn the killing of people, even when it's done in the name of "freeing Ireland from British rule."

All I am saying about that sketch is that it has sufficient of the necessary qualities of a serviceable image to be worth discussing. One could argue about it and work on it to some purpose. Its most obvious lack is of a historical dimension. It sensibly does not include the British community in Ulster who disclaim and reject membership of the Irish nation. Its distinguishing/bonding/linking content is inadequate. "Human" links us with mankind, and "English-speaking" with our neighbours; "Catholics" is the sole distinguishing/bonding/linking feature.

The exclusion of the Ulster British from the image of "what we really are" is sensible, first of all, because "we", the Irish people throughout Ireland, don't regard them as part of us, but also and decisively, because we have no intention of using force and indoctrination to incorporate them into our nation. If the case were different, if we intended to use force and indoctrination against them as so many other nation-states have done against *their* minorities, then there would be some practical sense in pretending that the Ulster Unionists are part of our nation. It would be a necessary part of our propaganda of forceful incorporation. However, since our intention is simply to persuade or pressurise them into participating with us in an all-Ireland state — in a common citizenship — to include them against their will in our public image of our nation would be counter-productive. It would have the appearance of a threatening imperialism while lacking imperialism's teeth. We would have the worst of both worlds. (We are not, remember, as were the English when constructing Britain, or the Castilians when making Spain, talking about a "greater", all-inclusive nation with a different, all-inclusive name ("British", "Spanish"); we are talking, simply and solely, about our own *Irish* nation).

A factor which prevents many of us from thinking clearly about this matter is the belief that, if we recognise the Unionists as the Britishers they say they are, then this means relinquishing our claim to the entire national territory and to the unity and freedom of our nation. But it no more means that than the fact that Serbia contains a million Albanians and several hundred thousand Hungarians means that the Serbs relinquish their claim to all of Serbia and to national unity and freedom. What it does entail, however, is formulating our claim to the North rather differently than has been our wont, and planning a state which recognises the ethnic diversity of its inhabitants as, in their various ways, Serbia, Yugoslavia, Italy, Spain, Great Britain and the Soviet Union do.

Once we have got clear in our minds that what we are looking for is *really* an image of *ourselves*, and not of a fictional nation, the task itself is clarified. We know we are a community existing throughout Ireland, but sharing part of it with the Ulster British. We are the community of those who, regardless of language or religion, ancestry or birthplace, feel that they belong to the Irish nation, and stand as Irish among men. It is a matter of representing this community to ourselves and others in a serviceable manner.

Our first image of our national identity included many features which we share with our neighbours — the English language (if only in a "secondary" capacity), liberalism, capitalism, social democracy, laws and legal principles, forms of trade union organisation and practice, styles of architecture and so on. It may be assumed that, in our next self-definition, we will decide to include some or many such features, beginning inevitably with the English language. These will link us, perceptibly and publicly, with Britain and the USA, and generally, with all the nations of the English-speaking world. Obviously, these features will not be the clinching part of our national image: they will not be that element in it which makes it an image identifying our distinct and independent nationhood. The features which perform that service for us will be those which define and display our distinctiveness from Britain and America, and which bond us, accordingly, as a body of people possessing and sharing characteristics which set us apart from them. Moreover, some at least of these features must also link us with nations and powers which share the same characteristics, in such a way as to fortify our autonomy vis-à-vis Britain and America.

These two nations and powers are, politically, culturally and economically, the neighbours which impinge on us, and which are tending to veto our independent existence by making our mind and life a mishmash of undigested elements of theirs. To counter that, we will have to plant, deliberately and ostentatiously, amid the Anglo-American features of our national image, certain features which characterise *us*, but not Britain or America. This will not be easy. America and Britain are powerful countries, or rather, New York-Washington and London are world power-centres, and we are habituated by our history, and our ingrained second nature, to relate ourselves provincially to London. Cuba, faced with the task of establishing its independence from the USA, had, to begin with, a different language and a different religious culture; but the exigencies of maintaining its political, economic and cultural independence from its overshadowing neighbour obliged it to add further differentiating features to its national image: "anti-imperialist in the Soviet sense", "Marxist socialist", "non-aligned in the East-West conflict", "linked to the communist states of Eastern Europe, to Marxist régimes in Africa, and to left-wing revolutionary movements in the Caribbean and Latin America."

Difficulty, however, is not a barrier, and we Irish are, moreover, not unpractised in this field. Our achievements, revolutionary, political and literary, in the first half of this century, together with our proclaimed Catholicism, our Gaelic revival, and our inherited status as mother-country to millions of Americans and Australians, cast us for a time in the role of third chief national personality of the English-speaking world alongside, and distinct from, England and America. In reacting against and demolishing that first image of our identity, we have virtually vacated its attendant role; but we are still tinged by the role's afterglow, and it remains there in our recent past both as a reminder of our capability and as a part, created by us and still available to us, on the world stage.

However, there can be no question of our proceeding straightaway to assert and project what distinguishes us as a nation. In our present condition we are quite unable to.

First, we would have to begin once more to represent ourselves, and see ourselves, *as a nation.* This is the only way we can begin to rid ourselves of the sense of rightlessness and incapacity, and of consequent inferiority, dependency and shame, which now makes us afraid and unwilling to show ourselves as we are. While this compulsion to self-concealment remains in force, we cannot assert and project our distinctiveness because we cannot summon up the *will* to do so. That will come only with the perception that we are a nation like other nations, with all that this implies. It will come, in other words, only when leading forces in Irish society are representing us to ourselves as a nation like other nations — a *representative human society* — possessing in full and normal measure the rights and abilities inherent in that condition and status. Specifically,

> the right to manage, order and shape our affairs, under God, in the manner which we find appropriate;
> the ability so to manage, order and shape our affairs by the use of our own faculties; and
> the ability to sustain ourselves, physically, through our own intelligence, enterprise and work, and the maintenance of appropriate relationships with other nations.

Everyone living in the Republic knows that, for years past, our "public men" have been representing us — through their words, actions and behaviour — as a society not possessing those rights and capabilities. They have been representing us, in other words, as effectively *not* a nation — *not* a representative human society. And we have accustomed ourselves to accepting these misrepresentations of "what we are".

Only when we have begun to plant the direct negations of those misrepresentations in our public self-image, will we find the will in ourselves to begin planting there, for all to see, a chosen selection of the features which distinguish us from Britain and America. Both those assertions of our national identity go inseparably together. They go together not only because the perception of the qualities, rights and abilities inherent in our nationhood gives us the will to project our distinctiveness, but also because the representation of our distinctiveness gives us additional and clinching confirmation that we *are* a nation like others. Suffice to recall that, when, in the first years of this century, we were launching the first coherent image of our national identity in modern times, that was how it was. Arthur Griffith's Sinn Féin, D.P. Moran's *The Leader*, the Abbey Theatre, the Gaelic League, the Catholic Church, and other organs and organisations, proclaimed with their various and combining voices, that the Irish had an absolute right to determine and shape their own life, were self-sufficiently capable of doing so, and were a distinct, non-British, European nation.

However, we are not now in the first years of the twentieth century, but well into its last quarter, and those far-off days of nascent Sinn Féin, Gaelic revival and Abbey Theatre are not our days. It is from the stock of what Ireland supplies to us now by way of distinctiveness that we must choose — when we have the will to choose — the differentiating elements of Irish identity which are most serviceable to us.

In the judgment of the world and in fact, the two features which distinguish Ireland, most sharply and enduringly, from Britain and America are our long freedom struggle and our Catholicism. For a century and a half, first in Europe, then in Africa and Asia, our struggle to free ourselves from England has singled us out for admiration and sympathy, and encouraged imitation. For as long or longer, in Europe and the lands of European settlement, we have been seen both as a notably Catholic nation, and, specifically, as the only Catholic nation of the English-speaking world.

Of these two distinctions, our Catholicism is the more important because it is a religion. After a language, a religion is the most effective distinguishing and bonding agent a nation can have, and the greatest stimulant to creativity and independence. But our Catholicism has also a considerable linking value. It links us with the Irish in America, Australia, Argentina and Britain. Because the Irish-Americans are powerful and influential in the USA, and because the Catholic Church is both the largest religious body there and one which derives to a considerable degree from Ireland, our Catholicism gives us, so to speak, a substantial bridge across the Atlantic into the world's most powerful country. It also links us directly with the Vatican and its world-wide influence, gives us sympathetic points of contact in much of Africa and Latin America, and affords us, through Polish Catholicism, a major access to Eastern Europe. In a particular way which defies description in detail, it links us with every place on the Continent of Europe where there is a *Schottenkloster* or an ancient Irish manuscript; with every town, city and village where an Irish saint is honoured, and with those two thousand places throughout the world where there is a church dedicated to St. Patrick.

For all of these reasons, and because it is the major heritage, and the most valued one, which has survived to us from our past, our Catholicism will almost certainly figure centrally in any new assertion of Irish identity in the world. The only conceivable circumstances in which this would not be the case would be if that reassertion were made by an anti-religious Irish state as fanatical and tyrannous as the state which seized hold of Russia in 1917. But it would be unlikely that such a misrepresentation would endure. As occurred in Poland after the Second World War and since, our Catholicism, and the tradition of civil liberties which is interwoven with it, would prevent such a state from establishing itself or defining us as non-Catholic. It would be forced to modify its pretensions and to tolerate a more truthful image, or it would be overthrown. (In mentioning this hypothetical possibility, I am not suggesting that the Irish state, whatever its hue, will necessarily play the leading role in launching our next self-definition. The national image which we have demolished was launched in its main lineaments at the beginning of this century, when we had no Irish state, and in opposition to England's projected image of us. Similarly, now and in the years ahead, any major Irish social body or movement, or a combination of such agencies, could initiate the second definition of Irish identity).

So much nonsense has been talked in recent years about the Catholic dimension of our national life that a few clarifying words are necessary. To say that the Irish are a Catholic nation is to make a generalising, commonsense statement, like saying the Irish are an English-speaking nation, the Poles are Catholics, the Egyptians Muslims, the Italians Italian-speaking. None of these statements purports to declare that every member of the nations in question conforms to the general description. The purpose of such statements is to depict the general characters of nations. When they are made by the nations themselves, included in their self-definitions, and represented symbolically in their national lives, the purpose is to distinguish, bond or link the nation, or, in some cases, to do all three. It is in this context that the definition of Ireland as a Catholic nation must be seen. It is better for a nation to have a sense of distinct identity and to be bonded than to lack these qualities. A typical national religion which distinguishes the nation from its neighbours can be a very effective means of providing both qualities. It is better for individuals, generally speaking, to belong to a nation thus distinguished and well-bonded than to one which has little sense of distinct identity and a weak bonding. If there is religious tolerance and no religious discrimination, this is as true for the members of minority religions as it is for everyone else.

Our history of freedom struggle distinguishes us sharply from Britain and America. In the Republic, during the past fifteen years, we have deliberately dimmed consciousness of this history, and we have represented the contemporary struggle against British rule in the North as criminal and anti-national. But there is still sufficient proud awareness of this aspect of our history and heritage to make it a considerable bonding agent, and its potential in this regard is great. In addition, there is the objective fact that our history in this century — our revolt against colonialism, our missionary movement to Africa and Asia, our emergence as a newly-independent, ex-colonial nation, and the contemporary freedom struggle in the North — has won us both a fund of common experience with many African and Asian nations and a certain regard among them. This regard, which was ardent and widespread in the first part of the century, has dwindled somewhat with the passage of time, both because of the Republic's political commitment to the EEC and its collaboration with Britain against the rebellion in the North; but it is still much greater and more widespread than we are generally aware. Only the other day one could hear on the radio an Irishwoman, back from five years in Teheran, saying that "many" documentary films about Ireland, with a political point, are shown on Iranian television. During the past ten years, moreover, largely unknown to the Irish public, there have been many contacts at congresses and conferences between the Republican Movement and the national liberation movements of Western Europe, Africa and the Middle East. In all these instances, it was the Irish struggle in the North which provided the link and the sense of common cause.

However, our long freedom struggle, whether against English rule in Ireland or, as in de Valera's day, against the remnants of that rule, is only the most conspicuous aspect of a broader and more deep-reaching category of distinctiveness which our recent history confers on us. One might call that category the experience of *decolonisation.* We are the only nation of the English-speaking world which has been engaged in this century in the process and endeavour of decolonisation, and this feature links us, in sympathy and understanding — or could so link us if we saw ourselves in this light and represented ourselves accordingly — to many nations of the Third World. We share with them a history of colonisation; of expelling, or trying to expel, the colonising power; of trying to overcome the enduring effects of colonisation and build an independent nation; and of trying to solve a national identity problem so that the formally independent nation might be really independent, and produce a new, indigenous, autonomous and creative life. If we were to define ourselves, by ostentatious speech and action, as belonging to the community of nations which are thus characterised, we would be affirming a very real aspect of our identity and occupying a place in the world which is ours whether we take it or not.

Already, in a haphazard way, much of the groundwork for such an affirmation of Ireland has been done, and is being done. There has been a great growth of Irish organisations sending material aid and trained personnel to Third World countries. The new breed of missionary priests and sisters, working in Central and South America, and in African and Asian countries, see their role as that of identifying with the movements towards real, as distinct from nominal, autonomy which are taking place among the peoples of those countries. Our semi-state companies, and a number of private firms, are engaged in enterprises of various kinds in the Third World. All of this work, which is now proceeding on the periphery of the national consciousness, would be brought to the centre of our awareness, given coherence, and built upon, if we recaptured our decolonising impetus and made our status as a decolonising nation a defining mark of Ireland in the world.

As well as "long struggling for freedom" and "Catholic", we have also been perceived — though not so widely, and in more restricted circles — as a "literary" nation. Obviously, there is substance in this perception. It is not a quality which distinguishes us, markedly, from Britain or America, and, because of the nature of contemporary literature, it isn't something which enters profoundly into our national consciousness. But it does characterise us to some degree, and, as it happens, it is the only one of our characteristics which we have chosen positively to emphasise during these iconoclastic years. The income tax relief for writers and artists, and the Aosdána scheme, are both concerned with more than writers, but they have been seen abroad and in Ireland principally as encouragement to writers, and have helped to set a seal upon us as a nation which values literature. Obviously, the principal way in which our image as a literary nation would be further enhanced would be through the regular production of notable literature, and that is not something which can be ensured by any kind of collective action. But short of that, there are things which could be done to characterise us more strongly, both in our own eyes and in those of others, as a literary people. We surely owe it to ourselves to institute an important international literary prize. We have yet to take real possession of Irish literature from ancient times to the present, but especially since the seventeenth century; and we have yet to present this literary heritage, coherently, to our youth through the education system, and to the people at large by making it effectively available in bookshops and public libraries. Aosdána's support scheme for writers could be extended to include all kinds of creative writers, and not only, as at present, writers of fiction, verse and plays. Outside those limited categories, our contemporary literature is, in fact, abnormally feeble.

Another aspect of our identity which does distinguish us, fairly sharply, in the Anglo-American context is our Celtic heritage, linking us with Scotland, Wales, Mann, Cornwall and Brittany. Despite the Gaelic revival movement, this has been largely neglected in the public image of ourselves. Strangely, because, as anyone can gather from a glance around any large bookshop and at the "alternative lifestyles" magazines, never has there been more consciousness of the Celtic heritage in Western Europe than there is now. True, there is considerable to-ing and fro-ing between Ireland and the other Celtic countries. Groups of Scottish and Irish Gaelic poets go on alternate reading-tours. Musicians from all the Celtic nations assemble in Killarney every year for the Pan-Celtic Festival. Irish musicians meet their Celtic confrères annually at the Pipers' Festival in

Lorient. The Celtic League, in Dublin, publishes the pan-Celtic news journal *Carn.* Irish film-makers participate in an annual festival of films from the Celtic countries. But all of this activity does not impinge, significantly, on the national consciousness. State and Church ignore our Celtic dimension. De Valera was aware of it, and was presumably trying to set a headline when he visited each of the Celtic countries in turn. But his initiative had no follow-up. To this day there is no Irish consulate or information centre in Cardiff, Edinburgh or any Breton city. The Dublin media, most notably the television and radio with their many news bulletins and their ease of contact, ignore Welsh, Scottish and Manx news and current affairs, though these countries are in fact our nearest neighbours. In the early part of this century, Ireland was looked to in all the Celtic countries, but especially in nationalist circles in Wales and Brittany, as an example and an inspiration. This admiration and sympathy have wilted considerably due to the Republic's general indifference to its Celtic neighbours, and the reactionary course which it has been taking during the past fifteen years.

Some nations, for example, Switzerland, Yugoslavia and the United States, base their distinctiveness and bonding largely on the original and distinctive form of their state. We, too, could have such a state and use it similarly, if we adverted to an aspect of our identity which we are normally not conscious of, and decided to represent it in institutional form. I mean the fact that we are *a community of communities* (however repressed and frustrated they may be). All nations are that in fact, whether they represent it institutionally or not: it is part of the identity of a nation as a natural human society, and therefore something which the Irish nation is too. But the point is that, whereas most modern nation-states conceal and repress this feature of national being, we could devise and create a state which would reflect it. We could do this in political terms, so as to make Ireland a community of self-governing (i.e. real) communities, federally related; or go further, and represent our multi-communal reality in economic terms also — by reorganising our economic life on the basis of multi-communal control of resources and co-operative production. In either form, but more so in the second, such a state of our own creation would not only distinguish us, but also bond us together as no state inherited and copied from England can ever do. In the second form, as a multi-communal, co-operativist state, it would link us with other nations which are organised on those lines, or moving in that direction.

Finally, there is the fact that, as John de Courcy Ireland keeps reminding us, Ireland is an island. To spell it out more fully, we are a nation with a long coastline on a much-frequented ocean and a much-frequented sea. Nations thus circumstanced are usually "maritime nations" in the active and conspicuous sense of possessing many ships and having much to do with the sea. This is part of their national image — think of Norway. Certainly, there are historical reasons, arising out of our forced association with England, why this has not been the case with us in recent centuries; but they are not decisive reasons. The principal reason why we are, now, a maritime nation without appearing to be, or seeing ourselves as such, is that Dublin — rather than Galway, say — is the capital of Ireland and the Republic is extremely centralised. Dublin, with its eyes fixed on London, manages to feel and think like an inland city — like Manchester, say, or Leeds. Because it controls the Irish communications system, decides the school textbooks and so on, it casts this inland mentality like a spell over Ireland. But it remains part of our identity that we are a maritime nation, and it is possible that we might decide to make our national image reflect this fact.

Each of these distinguishing or potentially distinguishing features I have mentioned can combine with any of the others. If and when we come to choose a second image of Irish identity, it will include a selected combination of them.

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I referred at the outset to one way of misunderstanding the problem of national identity, namely, as a problem of the identity itself, rather than of how it is to be represented. There are other ways, too, in which the problem is misunderstood. People often imagine it is a problem of "having all these English and American things" (from language and laws to house-styles and etiquette) cluttering up our life. So they worry about this mass of imported, alien things, and think that if we could get rid of them, and use native, Irish things instead of them, the problem would be solved. But the presence of these alien things is not the problem, nor is their removal and replacement the remedy. The problem is that we lack a serviceable public image of Irish identity such as would activate us to transform these things into Irish-shaped things — into elements of our indigenous being — as the Japanese, say, have transformed countless Chinese and Western things into Japanese-shaped things, into elements of Japanese culture. The trouble with these imported things in our life is not that they are there, but that they are there *in alien, undigested form,* like chunks of undigested food lying heavily in a stomach. As such, they are a *symptom* of our problem of identity and a sign of our failure to solve it. A serviceable national self-image would remove this symptom because it would found and activate autonomous Irish life of all kinds, and therefore activate, among other things, our autonomous transformation of these imported, alien things.

Now clearly, in order to do that, it would need to be an image of great power. Given our inherited reverence for alien and especially English things, the autonomous transformation of them would be an act of great daring on our part, requiring a correspondingly great power of liberation and encouragement in our self-image. Our way of seeing ourselves would need to have a motivating potency as powerful as that of the Japanese or Swedish or English self-image; that is, of a thoroughly normal, thoroughly nation-serving self-image. Our first national image, which we have demolished, did not have that potency. That is why, though it empowered us to acquire political autonomy, to thrust towards economic autonomy and towards the acquisition of a medium (Gaelic) for linguistic autonomy, it did not empower us to transform the English we speak into a language of our own meaning, our English state into an Irish-shaped state, or our English etiquette, academic life, trade unions and food habits into Irish forms of all these things. It lacked this potency because the vision of Irishness from which it was drawn was still, to too great a degree, an English vision of ourselves and the world, and not sufficiently an autonomous Irish vision. And that brings us to an important point.

It must be obvious from my previous discussion of the shared and distinguishing features of Irish identity, and of how we might go about representing it, that this work of representation derives from a prior scrutiny and vision, not only of Ireland, but of *the world and Ireland and their relationships.* In other words, it depends on, and presupposes, an autonomously-won Irish world-view or world-image centred on Ireland and related to Ireland. Consequently, the degree to which our second image of Irish identity will be serviceable to us — founding and activating our collective autonomy as a nation — depends on the degree to which the world-image from which it derives has been constructed by ourselves, and is not merely an Irish modification of the Anglo-American image of the world. *

There is yet another way of misunderstanding our identity problem which is oppressively common in Ireland today. This consists in believing that it is not, as are all soluble human problems, *something for solving*, but rather, something which exists for the purpose of having its endlessly problematic and painful nature aesthetically, intelligently and endlessly described and analysed. That way lies nothing but boredom of ourselves and of such world as hears us. Much better, in every way, to become British and, by that means, normal human beings.

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*This matter is treated more fully on pp. 121–40.

Chapter 2
From Modernisation to Decolonisation and Back

Politics within states in the twentieth century have been principally of two kinds: the politics of *modernisation* and the politics of *decolonisation.* When I say "modernisation", I am using the word in the special sense which political scientists and sociologists have given it. I mean the process of social change, connected with egalitarianism and the industrial revolution, which has transformed societies in Western Europe and elsewhere from their previous condition to their present one. As factory-style production became predominant and technological innovation continuous, traditional rural and urban communities were uprooted and replaced by a mass of "individuals" living mostly in urban concentrations. Birth gave way to merit as the criterion for advancement. People's understanding of the world and their values became increasingly secular and materialist. Literacy spread and, after a period of great poverty for many, most people gradually became materially richer than most people had ever been before. Broader and broader groups, and finally everybody, came to participate in state politics. The state intervened increasingly in the lives of people and, in order to do so, multiplied bureaucracy.

The political ideologies and action which furthered or opposed this process, and the political struggles arising from it, were the politics of modernisation. They occurred, first and classically, in the parliamentary states of Western Europe, but also, as the nineteenth century approached its end, throughout all of Europe, and in America, Japan and China. Since these politics occurred within states in the high noon of nationalism, it goes without saying that nationalism was a factor shared by the various parties, and was not at issue. The political contest was, essentially, between parties which favoured modernisation (the "Left") and parties which were less enthusiastic about it or opposed to it (the "Right"). At first, speaking broadly, it was a contest between the Liberal Left and the Conservative Right. In the years after the First World War, when universal suffrage had been introduced in most states, the Left was no longer made up principally of liberals, but largely of socialist and labour parties and communists. The parties of the Right were mainly updated conservatives and liberals under various names. In all of the Western democracies, except Ireland, a Left/Right cleavage on those lines has persisted from that period to this day; or rather, it has persisted nominally, because in fact there has been a gradual lessening of actual cleavage and a movement towards a shared Centre.

From the time of Daniel O'Connell to the First World War, Irish politics were part of the politics of modernisation of the United Kingdom. O'Connell made liberalism the political creed of the Catholic middle class. As the franchise widened in the second half of the nineteenth century, most of Ireland stood, politically, on the liberal, Left or modernising side. The same was true of most of Wales, Scotland and the North of England. Most of the "periphery", in other words, was actively modernising; or, to put it in religious terms, there was, on the one hand, a rough coincidence between Anglicanism and conservatism, and, on the other, between non-Anglican religious adherence (whether Non-Conformist, Presbyterian or Catholic) and liberalism. This changed, locally, in Ulster, from the time of the first Home Rule bill onwards, as the Presbyterians gradually joined the Anglicans in a common conservative Unionism; but generally the pattern held. Most of the Irishmen who went to the British House of

Commons were utilitarian liberals; they had scant regard for things, other than religion, which had been inherited from the past, and a conviction that, in most respects, the world was moving in the right direction. Because of this, and because the condition of Ireland called for special measures and its separate administration made them possible, Ireland became in the course of the nineteenth century a sort of laboratory for, and an advanced example of, liberal ideas of government. Aristocratic influence was progressively reduced both in central and local administration. A well-trained, centralised police force, and a system of universal primary schooling, were introduced from an early date. An extensive and efficient public health service was developed. Administration of all kinds was increasingly centralised, and staffed by professionals rather than amateurs. With the aim of alleviating poverty, the state intervened, increasingly, in the economy both as entrepreneur and regulator. Added to this pervasive modernisation of government was the fact that, from the early part of the century, the politicisation of the population was extensive and profound. In short, all that was lacking to make Ireland the most "modern" country in Europe was widespread industrialisation and a substantial abandonment of religion.

Ireland, however, was not a state but a dependent nation within a centralised multi-national state. As in all such states, modernisation throughout the state was directed, ultimately, by the metropolis (London) of the core-nation (England), and was inextricably interwoven with the dominant cultural values of that nation and city. This combination of circumstances had two significant consequences. On the one hand, modernisation in Ireland, as in Wales and Scotland, was also cultural denationalisation — in almost everything from language to social etiquette. On the other hand, most of the Irish modernising politicians, whether parliamentary or Fenian, were — like many of their liberal counterparts in other dependent European nations — political nationalists who dissented to a greater or lesser degree from the official nationalism in favour of a local one. In other words, they were Irish nationalists who dissented partially or totally from British nationalism with respect to Ireland; they wanted either a self-governing Ireland within the British state or a sovereign Ireland outside it.

After the nationalist revolution and the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922, Irish politics ceased to be politics of modernisation and became politics of decolonisation. By "decolonisation" I mean the process by which a nativist nationalist movement in a colonised country succeeds, after independence, in establishing the new nation-state on a broad basis. The politics of decolonisation were first exemplified in the nineteenth century, in the various Balkan states which broke away from the Ottoman Empire. In the first half of the twentieth century, Ireland provided the principal example of this political process, but after the Second World War it became commonplace in many countries of Africa and Asia. The overriding issue in these politics is the *fundamental legitimation* of the new state — its legimitation as a *nation*-state embodying the perennial nation and its sovereignty.

This is not an issue in modernisation politics because these take place in nation-states whose fundamental legitimacy has been established by the fact that they are visibly, in the eyes of most of the citizens, the embodiment of the perennial nation and its sovereignty. So fundamental legitimacy is not in question in the contest between Left and Right. The only kind that is in question is the *contingent* legitimacy which a state derives from conspicuous success in military, economic or expansionist terms, and the contest is about whether this legitimacy shall be won or maintained by Left means or by Right means. In the politics of decolonisation, on the other hand, the state has not yet acquired the fundamental legitimacy of a nation-state, and the pressing task is to give it that. This is done by making it appear to a broad majority of the people to be *a continuation of the pre-conquest nation in* *modern form* (i.e. the embodiment of the perennial nation), and *a sovereign entity with regard to the former imperial power.* In the process of bringing this about, the nationalist movement divides into a Right and a Left. The Left is the party which seeks to do the job thoroughly, the Right the party or parties which are less enthusiastic about going the whole way.

The Left (Fianna Fáil in our case) finds that to do the job thoroughly, it must base itself on the rural periphery — on those poorer regions, remote from the former colonial capital, where traditional and native culture have best survived. Mobilising support in these regions, it uses this support to "invade the centre", and establishes a régime there based, ostensibly, on ruralist, nativist, traditional values. At the same time, it pursues a modernising policy, takes a tough line with the former imperial power, and removes any remaining restraints on national sovereignty.

The party which does this, convincingly, acquires support throughout the nation, and is able to free itself from disproportionate dependence on the rural periphery which put it in power. It becomes the normal party of government — often it creates a one-party state — while the party or parties which are less radical about decolonisation — the nationalist Right — become the normal parties of opposition.

In the years before 1932, Fianna Fáil, based largely on the western, small-farmer regions, pursued that Left-nationalist line. Fine Gael, by comparison, was Right-nationalist, and Labour dubious. Once Fianna Fáil was firmly in power, it used the Gaelic language, Catholicism, a ruralist ideology, industrialisation, slum-clearance, and state enterprises, to legitimise the state as a continuation of the pre-conquest nation in modern form. To complete that legitimation in terms of sovereignty, it removed those elements of the Treaty settlement which detracted from Irish sovereignty. When the Second World War provided the opportunity, it crowned the process by declaring and maintaining Irish neutrality while Britain fought Germany.

This exhibited Irish sovereignty in an ultimate form.

Thus the main cleavage in Irish politics — Fianna Fáil on the one hand, Fine Gael and Labour on the other — was established in quite different terms from the cleavage of modernisation politics. It was a cleavage based on relative forwardness or backwardness in the process of decolonisation, and more particularly, in the business of legitimising the new state, fundamentally, in the eyes of a broad majority of its citizens, thereby making it a fully *usable* state. Even when, in the succeeding decades, decolonisation was no longer the name of the game, the pattern of division established by its politics persisted, and it holds good still in the 80s. It follows that any attempt to discover, between the Irish parties, a Left/Right cleavage of the conventional West European kind is a vain effort. Similarly, any surprise that the de Valera era shows no sign of a conscious politics of Irish reunification is misplaced: the aim of Fianna Fáil politics, before the crisis of the 50s, was not reunification, but the legitimation of the actual Irish state as a nation-state, and the maintenance of that legitimacy.

As the politics of decolonisation reached their culmination in the 1940s, a question stood posed, however silently. Would the state which was now rendered fully usable prove *useful* in the ways which the nationalist revolution had intended? Would political sovereignty be able to achieve what two centuries of nationalism had predicted it would, namely, economic prosperity and cultural restoration. Back in the Gaelic messianism of the eighteenth century, cultural restoration had meant restoration of the two chief cultural symbols of Irish nationality, Catholicism and the Gaelic language, to their place of honour in the land. With the substantial restoration of Catholicism in the nineteenth century, the emphasis shifted to Gaelic alone, and the revolutionary movement, from Pearse to Collins, made it the king-pin of that cultural restoration which sovereignty would bring. The revolutionary movement added other things, such as the restoration of Irish intellect and moral character, but these had faded from vision some years after independence, and the restoration of Gaelic as the spoken language was now what cultural restoration meant. Efforts to revive Gaelic, and to save the Gaeltacht, had commenced from the earliest years, and Fianna Fáil, in its long reign, had raised the language to high honour. But would the actual language change from English back to Gaelic now begin? That was one part of the question posed to the new-won sovereignty. The other was: would Ireland now at last be able to provide a decent living for all its people?

In the 50s the economy was stagnant or declining. During the previous decade, masses of people had migrated from the small farms and small towns of the West and South-west to Dublin and there had been a flow of emigration to England; now tens of thousands every year were leaving for England. The most pressing need, clearly, was for a great surge of industrialisation, a revitalisation of agriculture, and development of the neglected sea-fisheries; but above all the need was for industrialisation. Since its foundation, the state had pursued the Sinn Féin economic policy of self-sufficiency, and this had been re-affirmed with emphasis by the republicanism of Fianna Fáil. Sinn Féin economics were a policy of national capitalism which depended, for its success, on the emergence of an Irish entrepreneurial class the equal of Norway's, say, in size, courage and ambition. By the 50s it was clear that such a class had not emerged. If it *had* emerged and had provided the required industrialisation, and if the definition of national identity on which the state was founded had been developed and reinterpreted to keep pace with and guide the economic and social transformations, then the Republic could have moved forward as a normal nation-state, identified with the nation and retaining its sovereignty. Something like another spurt of "modernisation" could have occurred, only different, because it was indigenously Irish and guided by different principles from what passed for modernisation in the power-centres of the capitalist world: something "post-modern", perhaps, as the revolutionary humanists had intended when, in the early years of the century, they hoped for an Ireland that, by linking up with ancient values, would transcend the modern and make all things really new. But that was not to be.

The cluster of symbols of Irish nationality and sovereignty which de Valera's republic had gathered around it, and on which its fundamental legitimacy depended, was being undermined by the obvious failure of the system's economic principle. The state clothed in that symbolic array was simply not holding the people — not in the crudest physical sense, and decreasingly, therefore, in a spiritual and emotional sense. The latter was obvious in Dublin in the 50s, which, as it happens, were the last great decade of Dublin as a cultural capital. Whether in the literary magazines (then so abundant), in the flourishing school of painting inspired by Paris, in the provocation of Church and state by several theatrical productions, in the poetry of Clarke and Kavanagh, or the determined and successful assault on the book censorship, there was a straining against and away from a concept of Ireland that was felt, increasingly, to be imprisoning or illusory or both. Gael-linn, bringing a new style to the language revival and commissioning Ó Riada's *Mise Éire* and *Saoirse* music and Behan's *An Giall,* and Sairséal agus Dill publishing Ó Riordáin, Ó Cadhain and Ó Direáin, pointed another way. But that way was not to be.

The world was writing and talking of the "vanishing Irish". Not fundamental legitimacy, no such luxury, but contingent legitimacy — some elementary, conspicuous success — was now the Republic's imperative. Whitaker and Lemass realised that if the state was to hold its people in the crudest physical sense, it must be refounded on a new economic formula. Lemass did this by abandoning national capitalism and by refounding the state on the basis of foreign capitalism, and the industrialisation, jobs, and rising living standards, which it provided and promised to provide. This was not how national sovereignty was supposed to render the nation prosperous. It was a confession of the failure of sovereignty to deliver the predicted material goods. The new policy involved an implicit declaration of dependence on the international capitalist system headed by New York. It entailed a free-trade agreement with Britain, and a re-entry, in dependent condition — two-thirds of our exports went to Britain — and with a feeling of dependence, into a United Kingdom arena which was dominated by London to an even greater degree than previously.

In the period since the 1920s the North of England had lost its industrial power and pride. In 1960, as though to symbolise it, the *Manchester Guardian* removed "Manchester" from its title, and a few years later it moved to London. The new industry was mostly in the South-East. Increasing regulation and intervention by central government had made London loom larger in the land, and television magnified it further. In those years, moreover, London was moving into its "swinging" decade, when it would set the style, as a world capital, for a new consumerist and "permissive" modernity and a fresh wave of modernisation.

In 1960 the victory of *Lady Chatterly's Lover* in the law courts set the style of that modernisation in one respect. In 1963, Harold Wilson set it in another, when, in a famous speech that dwelt on the wonders of computers and the promise of science, he promised a New Britain "forged in the white heat of a technological revolution". Finally, London no longer radiated its own power only; it served now also as a transmission-centre for American influence.

Consequently, the Republic's new course was, in effect, a frontal return by nationalist Ireland in the Twenty-Six Counties both to the politics of modernisation and to the dependent condition, in intensified form, in which it had practised those politics in the pre-revolutionary period. Small wonder that on this occasion, too, modernisation went hand in hand with cultural denationalisation. Now, however, it was not the living Gaelic language and the general, non-religious cultural fabric which our modernisers began to reject. Now, by gradual stages, it was Catholicism, as the religion typifying Irishness, and the whole symbolic system signifying Irishness which the nation, led by the nationalist state, had sponsored and upheld. More particularly, it was all the symbols and institutions which had underpinned that image, ranging from the GAA ban on foreign games and the Christian Brothers (as a nationalist teaching order) to the nationalist history books, the Gaelic revival policy, the cult of the heroes of 1916, and the celebration of the national freedom struggle. But this time the denationalisation was more than cultural, for there was more than culture there to denationalise. The nation had acquired the political form of a nation-state, and this political dimension was embodied in the Constitution. Consequently, the denationalisation also had a political aspect: it was a subversion and partial cancelling of the Constitution.

It subverted that part of Article 1 which declares that "the Irish nation hereby affirms its inalienable, indefeasible, and sovereign right to ... develop its life, political, economic, and cultural, in accordance with its own genius and traditions." It sapped the claim to the entire national territory in Articles 2 and 3, and the intention implicitly expressed there to integrate the nation throughout that territory. By causing the abandonment of the Gaelic revival, it mocked Article 8 which declares that "the Irish language as the national language is the first official language." Most graphically of all, it removed from the Constitution, by referendum, that vague and nominal identification of the nation with Catholicism which was expressed in Article 44: those sections, namely, which recognised, firstly, "the special position of the Holy Catholic Apostolic and Roman Church as the guardian of the Faith professed by the great majority of the citizens", and then all the other Christian churches by name and the Jewish community.

Like all denationalisation, it was a two-sided process. It was not only a deletion of elements of the Irish cultural fabric and a partial cancelling of the Constitution: it was also a replacing of the deleted cultural elements and of the lost substance of the Constitution by alien culture and political influence. The Republic was pressed by the denationalising forces, without and within, into increasing conformity with London's latest norms of cultural modernity — which were now not exclusively English, but Anglo-American in fact. After two decades of this process, F.S.L. Lyons wrote in 1979 *(The Listener,* March 20):

> Both parts of the island are now so exposed to the dominant Anglo-American culture that I cannot see the process of absorption ever being held in check, unless the political arrangements of the future take a much more sensitive account of our complex of cultures than they have so far ... It could very easily and quickly happen that Anglo-Americanism could extinguish what remains of our local and regional identities ... The things we quarrel about now, may in fact have disappeared in a generation.

Terence Brown has this passage in mind when, referring to the talk about pluralism in recent years in Ireland, he writes of the "troubling superficiality" of those who have attempted to formulate it, and continues:

> These, almost without exception, have spoken of the various strands of Irish tradition without taking due account of the enormous changes that have taken place in Irish society in the last 20 years. In seeking an accommodation between the differing strands of Irish life, to create a comprehensive Irish identity, in a manner Russell and O'Faoláin had advised so frequently, such thinkers may be striving for amity, cooperation and synthesis between wraiths of the past ... Those who propose pluralism as a concept to illumine contemporary and future Irish reality may in

> fact be ignoring how much Ireland as a whole, the Republic where Gaelic civilisation and the Irish language were once so ideologically esteemed, and Northern Ireland where two antagonistic versions of Irish identity have traditionally asserted their vitality, may be losing the social diversity it once had in the homogeneity of a consumer society. If this reductive process is in fact occurring, then social and cultural pluralism will be before long an entirely otiose concept in a signally pallid and diminishing Irish reality.
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> (*Ireland: A Social and Cultural History 1922-79*, pp. 308-10)

Similarly, from the early 60s onwards, Irish sovereignty, as defined by the Constitution, was increasingly replaced by British, and behind it, American dominance. Neo-colonialism is the simple word for it. The resulting situation was manifested, graphically, in its political aspect, when the North erupted and its war became a feature of Irish life. Throughout the 70s and into the 80s, Dublin waited passively for British "initiatives" without producing one of its own, and spent hundreds of millions of pounds combating the rebellion against British rule and guarding the border of Northern Ireland against armed incursions from the Republic. It was therefore entirely in accord with the general pattern of the situation that, in 1972, the Republic voted for a further alienation of sovereignty to Brussels on the grounds, as the then Taoiseach, Jack Lynch, put it, that "since Britain is joining the EEC, we have no alternative but to join." Some who dispute that we have lost independence since the 50s point to the fact that we now send only one-third of our exports to Britain, whereas previously we sent two-thirds; but it is difficult to take them seriously. Even leaving aside the obvious increases in our political and cultural dependency, anyone who reads the newspapers knows that the Irish pound's exchange rate with sterling is still regarded as its most important exchange rate, and as a major determining factor in the health of our economy. But anyhow our economic dependence on Britain is now merely part of a wider dependence on foreign capitalism generally.

In the early 60s, during the first years of the new course, it was not obvious that it was a reactionary or anti-national course. On the contrary, as wealth visibly increased, and first Dublin, then other centres, experienced a new bustle and sense of movement, morale rose and it was a morale tinged with national pride. In retrospect, it seems that this was principally due to the fact that Lemass, with his impeccable Republican credentials, was at the helm, and that he presented the new course in patriotic and nationalist terms. "The historical task of this generation", he said, "is to secure the economic foundation of independence." Not merely, as he pointed out, would the new departure do *that:* it would also, by making the Republic prosperous, provide inducement to the North to join it. Consequently, when he went to Stormont to drink tea with Terence O'Neill, and the Northern premier returned the visit, these seemed to be steps forward in a new, dynamic approach to national reunification.

Appearances apart, moreover, it is also a fact that, in those early years, the new course was not intrinsically reactionary or anti-national. Just as Lenin's partial return to a private-enterprise economy, in the New Economic Policy of 1921, was necessary to gain a breathing-space for the Bolshevik Revolution, so was Lemass's turning to foreign enterprise necessary to rescue the Republic's economy. The state's initiative in seeking and encouraging outside intervention was, in the circumstances, its only available means of serving the nation as it needed to be served. When a boat is sinking, it is right and proper to throw weighty, precious things overboard. What made the new course reactionary and anti-national in the long run was that, unlike Lenin's New Economic Policy, it was allowed to continue indefinitely, to become the new norm, and thus to undermine the revolution which it was ostensibly intended to serve. For the new course really to "secure the economic foundation of independence", it would have been necessary, after a few years of benefiting from it economically, to end it; or rather, it would have been necessary, from the start, to regard it as temporary, and to proceed with preparations for ending it and for using its gains as a base for autonomous development. The "economic foundation of independence" cannot be built in a context of decreasing independence or continuing dependency. It can be built only in the context of a movement towards independence and, ultimately and decisively, only in an independent nation which is reliant primarily on itself, and not on outsiders, for producing its wealth. Whether it was decisive in this respect that Lemass retired in 1966, and was followed as Taoiseach by Lynch, is a matter for speculation. The fact is that the Republic's New Economic Policy continued, and generated a wave of comprehensive modernisation which, because it occurred in conditions of dependence — and not, as in Norway, say, of substantial *in*dependence — was comprehensively denationalising.

The state lost its fundamental legitimacy and acquired a merely contingent legitimacy instead. It ceased to embody, in the citizens' eyes, the perennial nation and its sovereignty; it was presented and seen as embodying merely itself — and itself as merely an agency for supplying the citizens with material goods. It became, in other words, a state legitimised by money. There is a great difference between the relationship of citizens to a state legitimised in this way and their relationship to a state seen as embodying the perennial nation and its sovereignty, and succeeding reasonably well materially. The latter kind of state, by reason of its conspicuous identification with the nation's traditions, aspirations and sacred values, makes itself lovable by its citizens. They can, and most of them do, love *their nation as embodied by its state*, and this love renders them willing to make sacrifices at the state's behest. This was literally the case in Ireland during the Economic War of the 30s when Irish farmers — in unconscious imitation of the most ancient form of sacrifice — slaughtered their cattle for Ireland's sake, rather than send them to Britain. The state which has a merely contingent legitimacy, based on the material advantages it offers, cannot evoke love or the willingness to sacrifice. Its legitimacy, and its power to exact obedience, have no spiritual source to draw on, only a material one.

This was the kind of state which the Republic became from the early 60s onwards. Authoritative voices told us that the state's function was to "create more jobs", distribute bigger doles, invent new kinds of doles, build bigger and better-equipped schools and hospitals, give free access to them, improve the telephone system, and provide more police and soldiers, with better and better equipment, to protect the citizens' growing wealth against the increasing assaults on it by robber gangs. That, said the politicians, civil servants, economic gurus, radicals and bishops, was what the state was there to do. By doing that, it showed itself a good state and deserved our loyalty and obedience. Governments which did all of that were good governments, and those which did not deserved rejection. The communications media, strengthened greatly by the addition of television, made propaganda for this new state. They called it the "compassionate" and "caring" state and compared it, favourably, with its nationalist predecessor. They urged governments to spend more, and to give more things "free" to people. They went further and argued that the state, to be fully good, must facilitate increased sexual consumption also, by removing the legal impediments which restricted or discouraged it.

Thus the new, reduced conception of the state's function — as a dispenser, facilitator and protector of material goodies and as nothing else — became established in the public mind during the 60s. By the time the 70s arrived, and the recession hit, governments were finding that production and revenue were not sufficient to finance the expectations which they and the media had aroused — and which needed absolutely to be satisfied to justify the state's existence and keep governments in power. That was when governments began to over-borrow in order to keep the spending going. They had an extra reason, besides the obvious one, for being concerned about legitimacy. Then and subsequently, the nation was struggling and suffering in the North, and the Irish state which they represented was doing nothing to help it, but rather supporting British repression and the illusion that it would solve something. In other words, in face of a two-pronged threat to the credibility of the state and of the governments which represented it, the only available means of retaining credibility was foreign money.

Now, for the past few years, we have reached the point where the lavish borrowing has to stop, and the accumulated debt must be reduced through a fall in the material standard of living. But how does a state which has separated itself from the nation, and turned its back on patriotism, get the people to accept that sacrifice? This is the question now posed, silently, beneath the surface of the Republic's politics.*

The immediate reason why the Republic failed to maintain its independent course was the lack of sufficient economic enterprise, particularly of the productive kind. But the profounder reason, and the ultimate cause of that lack, was the insufficiency of intellectual enterprise — of creative thought. Since most Irish intellect was gathered in the universities, this was a failure of the universities, and primarily of the Arts faculties. Individuals such as Daniel Corkery apart, the intellectual class continued to see the world and Ireland largely through the English looking-glass. Refusing to take the thought of the revolution seriously —

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*As I write this in March 1983, I read in a newspaper: "UNIONS DERIDE BOLAND'S 'DAY FOR IRELAND'. Trade Unionists last night derisively rejected the suggestion by the Minister for the Public Service, Mr. Boland, that the entire workforce should do one Saturday's work without pay 'on behalf of Ireland' instead of taking part in threatened work stoppages."

the thought of Hyde, Yeats, Russell, Pearse and Connolly — they didn't recognise there the beginning of an Irish philosophy or of several schools of Irish philosophy. They turned away from it to their sober British textbooks which showed how the world should be seen.

When the nation-state, under the guidance of de Valera and seconded by Lemass, presented itself to them decked out in a cluster of guiding principles — Gaelic, ruralist, Catholic, liberal, democratic, economically self-sufficient, linked tenuously with the British Crown — some of them nodded their heads reverently, the majority were indifferent. A new nation-state (their own) was struggling into being and needed a philosophy or, rather, an overlapping cluster of philosophies, but they had to teach philosophy, politics, law, social science, economics or literature as one did in Bristol or Hull — or theology as one did in Naples. They didn't see in the guiding principles presented to the nation a challenge to their creative thought. If they had directed their minds creatively to those principles, they would have prevented them from becoming the frozen and desiccated things which they became for lack of fertilising mind. They would have transformed them by their thought into creative principles which, as they pulsed through the state and society transforming *them*, would have smashed the brake on economic enterprise and released it in a thousand places.

The brake on economic enterprise was not lack of capital — that existed in adequate quantities and was often invested abroad. The choking impediment was the inherited dogmatic conviction that what was *native, Irish* or *local* — the "present life" in any guise — did not contain significant possibilities for development, but was given and finished, immutable in its inherited form. The state did what it could to dent that conviction by founding state companies to transform Irish water power into electricity, Irish beet into sugar, Irish bogs, dug by machines, into mountains of ready fuel. It gave encouragement and protection to private manufacturing industries. But limited as it was in its resources, it could only do so much, and anyhow it was the state — an agency which everyone took to be omnipotent like God (and therefore inimitable), and which already under the British had engaged in and nurtured enterprise to a considerable, if lesser, extent. The anti-entrepreneurial conviction about the native, Irish and local needed to be smashed, not dented, and the only force which could do that, and do it throughout the land, was intellectual enterprise. Specifically, that would have meant the active perception by the intellectuals that *the native and Irish principles on which the nation-state was founded* were themselves not given, finished and immutable in their inherited form, but imbued with significant possibility for development — such significant possibility that they could and should transform the public philosophy, the state itself, society generally, and, as an inevitable consequence, that bastion of the apparently given and immutable, the Church.

The *Gaelic* principle on which the nation-state was founded had become attenuated to the Gaelic language and a way of describing the national essence. For the revolutionary thinkers, however, it had meant Gaelic civilisation in its entirety, viewed as a national property and a many-branched inspiration for the new Ireland. The high status and material security which it gave to men of art and learning offered a model for public patronage of creative thinkers and writers in the new Ireland — a model followed at long last, in attenuated form, by the Aosdána of our own day. Then there was the localism which made the ancient nation an assembly of a hundred and twenty *tuatha*, and halves or thirds of provinces, pointing towards a twentieth-century Ireland decentralised and restructured as a community of communities in which the dispersal of power, and of the dignity of self-management, would have revalued, strikingly and profoundly, all those disvalued communal lives. There was the ancient communal ownership of the basic resource, land, suggesting similar ways of funding the communities of modern Ireland for economic take-offs in the 1930s, 40s and 50s. (Whether with regard to a multi-communal polity or communal ownership of resources, these possible developments of the Gaelic principle would have linked with the thought of Connolly and Russell, and connected through them with William Thompson a century earlier). Finally, the principles of Gaelic law, recognised by the courts of the First Dáil, offered a basis for re-shaping English law in Ireland into a new Irish legal system which, in some respects, would have been in the vanguard of twentieth-century law reform: for example, it would have abolished capital punishment and illegitimacy, and enhanced the legal status of women.

The *Catholic* principle was associated with a Catholic social philosophy drawn from papal encyclicals and natural law. It accorded a central value to the "community", whether national or sub-national, and it stressed the right of "subsidiary" groups and communities to self-management and the entitlement of the workers to participate financially in economic enterprises. On its own, or even more, combined with the communal implications of the Gaelic principle, it pointed towards an Ireland organised as a community of communities, and therefore towards social and political pluralism in the proper meaning of that abused word. Implicitly, therefore, the Catholic social philosophy was a criticism not only of the monolithically centralised state, but of the organisation of the Church itself as a clerical bureaucracy administering a mass of non-participating laity. It pointed towards a reorganisation of the out-of-date dioceses to correspond to actual communities, and to the re-shaping of dioceses and parishes *as* communities, that is, with the active participation of the laity in diocesan and parish affairs. Moreover, the fact that Catholicism itself stressed the rights of subsidiary communities within the state had important implications for the Northern Protestant community in the context of Irish reunification. It could have been shown, convincingly, that Catholicism in Ireland, far from being a threat, was a major buttress of Northern Protestant rights and autonomy. After all, in the most Catholic centuries, had not the most ardent crusading Catholics in the Middle East built Catholic churches with a mosque for Muslims in a side-chapel? But the fact was that, though Catholic social philosophy was taught, made available in pamphlets and so on, it was never taken up and developed by the (predominantly Catholic) intelligentsia, or a section of it, into a transforming force. Intellectual leaders of the revolution, whether Connolly, Pearse, MacDonagh or Plunkett, had shown what could be done with Catholic principles by enterprising minds. Their example was not followed.

The *ruralist* principle was not merely an exaltation of the value of rural life and an aspiration to keep as many families as possible on the land. It was also — as expressly stated in the founding aims of Fianna Fáil — an aspiration to site modern industry in the countryside. Implicitly, then, in this respect, it was an aspiration to do something which philosophical socialism from Thompson on had aimed at, namely, to overcome that crass difference between town and country which had arisen when the industrial revolution concentrated manufacturing in towns and cities. Alternatively, it was an anticipated form of Maoism.

Moreover, the exaltation of "rural" life was not merely of the rural *per se*, but also of the rural understood, ideologically, as a balanced material and spiritual life — a properly *human* life as distinct from the inhuman life of a materialistic, urbanised age. Ruralism, in this aspect, was a humanism opposed to the contemporary, dehumanising materialism, and as such something very much at the heart of the revolutionary movement in its philosophical, ethical and literary dimensions. Michael Collins had expressed that humanism in a passage which showed its link with the Gaelic principle (Gaelic Ireland was rural):

> In the ancient days of Gaelic civilisation the people were prosperous and they were not materialists. They were one of the most spiritual and one of the most

> intellectual peoples in Europe. When Ireland was swept by destitution and famine the spirit of the Irish people came most nearly to extinction. It was with the improved economic conditions of the last twenty years or more that it has re-awakened. The insistent needs of the body more adequately satisfied, the people regained desire once more to reach out to the higher things in which the spirit finds its satisfaction.
>
> What we hope for in the new Ireland is to have such material welfare as will give the Irish spirit that freedom ... The uses of wealth are to provide good health, comfort, moderate luxury, and to give the freedom which comes from the possession of these things.
>
> Our object in building up the country economically must not be lost sight of. That object is not to be able to boast of enormous wealth or of a great volume of trade, for their own sake. It is not to see our country covered with smoking chimneys and factories. It is not to show a great national balance-sheet, not to point to a people producing wealth with the self-obliteration of a hive of bees.
>
> The real riches of the Irish nation will be the men and women of the Irish nation, the extent to which they are rich in body and mind and character.
>
> *The Path to Freedom*, pp. 127-8 (1922)

When de Valera, in a famous passage, described the Ireland which the revolutionaries "dreamed of", the rural imagery he used is incidental to the main point: Ireland was then still, after all, a largely rural and agricultural country. The main point was that that largely rural Ireland would be, as he begins by stating, "the home of a people who valued material wealth only as a basis of right living, of a people who were satisfied with frugal comfort and devoted their leisure to the things of the spirit." In short, the ruralist principle included the concern that people in Ireland would live humanly rather than inhumanly. Taken seriously and developed, that concern could have been the springboard for a critical and thrusting philosophical humanism such as we lack in Ireland to this day.

By those and other routes, intellectual enterprise could have developed the native Irish principles on which the nation-state was founded. By means of such enterprise directed to the native English principles of the early English nation-state, England moved with a basic continuity of development, and an integral Englishness, through modern history. Naturally, if the Irish intellectuals had performed this public service, political enterprise would still have been required to give effect to their thinking. But in all political societies which are not tyrannies — as the Irish one was not — intellectual development of native, well-known principles leads, inevitably, to corresponding political transformation.

In the event, the making of the Irish nation-state, and the establishment of its place in the world, were left almost entirely to political and ecclesiastical activists. In the 60s, when we turned our back on that Ireland — on de Valera's Ireland as it has come to be seen — it became customary for the new élite to represent it as "narrow", "isolationist" and "inward-looking", and this view has won a certain currency among the uninformed. Narrow it certainly was in its dogmas — undeveloped by enterprising minds — and narrow, too, in the material stringencies and limitations of its life. But its consciousness of the world was not narrow, nor was its consciousness of what being Irish meant. Indeed, accustomed as we have become to saying and feeling that "Ireland is a small country", and cut off as we have become from awareness of the world-wide community of Irish origin — hostile even, and contemptuous, towards the American Irish — it is difficult for us to feel ourselves back into the spaciousness of being Irish then. Nor is it true that de Valera's Ireland was isolationist and inward-looking. It looked out on the world with an independence of vision such as had not occurred in Ireland for centuries previously, and such as does not characterise our world outlook now. The only barriers against the outside world which were maintained during de Valera's time — and I say maintained because they had been erected in the 1920s — were certain ideological barriers *vis-à-vis* England, or more precisely, London, in its role as definer and transmitter of the latest metropolitan values of the capitalist world. Apart from that, however, Irish people saw themselves as widely involved in the world, and as more influential in it than they see themselves today.

When de Valera, on St Patrick's Day, 1943, made that broadcast in which he spoke of "the Ireland we dreamed of", he commenced by saying: "Before the present war began, I was accustomed on St Patrick's Day to speak to our kinsfolk in foreign lands, particularly in the United States, and to tell them year by year of the progress being made towards building up the Ireland of their dreams and ours ..." Notice that before the Second World War, the Taoiseach used to speak on St Patrick's Day by radio to the Irish abroad, particularly in the United States. In those years and for some time subsequently, such phrases as "the Irish race throughout the world" and "Ireland's spiritual empire" were common in public discourse. The Irish overseas, from Australia and Argentina to the USA and Britain, were felt to be part of us, and were a source of pride.

The Catholic element in the public ideology made Irish people emotionally involved in the Spanish Civil War and, later — on the occasions of the Mindszenty and Stepinac trials — in the politics of communist Hungary and Yugoslavia. The "Celtic" aspect of the public ideology caused de Valera to visit the neighbouring Celtic countries. Irish people were aware that the Indian freedom struggle, and other freedom struggles in Africa and Asia, were inspired by their own revolution. Ireland played a more significant role in the League of Nations than it has played in UNO.

At the same time, the second Irish missionary movement — much greater in scale than that of the "Golden Age" —

was under way. Letters from all over Africa, Asia and South America arrived regularly in Irish homes. Though its history has not yet been written, it was the largest organised Irish enterprise overseas which has ever occurred in our history. By the mid-60s, when a certain falling-off began, ninety-two Irish mission-sending bodies had 6,500 missionaries in fifty-three countries. Some of these were lay people. But, of course, the principal lay Catholic enterprise of the time was the Legion of Mary, based in Dublin. In the 50s, in China, it formed the backbone of Catholic resistance to the communist persecution of the Church. By the early 60s, before its decline began, it was established in 1,300 dioceses in the five continents, and its bulletin was being published in twenty-one languages.*

In short, it was not the case that the Irish nation-state of de Valera's time lacked breadth, world involvement or wide perspectives. It had all those things. But eating away at its base was a deficiency of native economic enterprise, and it was seriously lacking in that because it lacked intellectual enterprise almost totally.

In those same years of the swinging 60s when the new wave of secular modernisation was spilling over into Ireland from London, a wave of ecclesiastical modernisation was hitting Ireland from Rome. *Aggiornamento* was what Pope John called it, and "modernisation" is as good a translation as any. It has been remarked, and it is true, that the Second Vatican Council, and the changes it wrought in the Catholic Church, contributed both to breaking the moulds of Irish society and to lessening the Church's hold on people's minds and hearts. This edifice of apparently unchangeable forms, this authority of seemingly immutable teachings, was seen to shudder, shift and change. The new forms were not as gripping as the old; the new teachings —

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*For fuller accounts of the missionary movement and the Legion, see the relevant chapters in *The Changing Face of Catholic Ireland*, ed. D. Fennell, London and Washington DC, 1968.

for new is what they seemed — were vague, sentimental and modish by comparison with the rational crystal-clarity and the perennial solidity of the old. The Catholic Church ceased to be the foundation rock for Irish society which it had been previously; its members felt both a greater freedom and a reduced attachment.

What has not been noticed, I think, is that the ecclesiastical modernisation contributed, inadvertently, to that denationalisation of Irish life which the secular modernisation was deliberately pursuing. Due to the disappearance over the centuries of most of the distinctive features of Irish culture, the forms and practices of the majority religion had come to function, disproportionately, as distinguishing Irish cultural features. Thus when the Church ended Friday abstinence, the Lenten fast, the night-long fast before Communion, the keeping of the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle on the altar, and the Latin hymns at Benediction; when it seemed to discourage, and thereby caused a gradual abandonment of, confraternities, sodalities, Sacred Heart devotions, Miraculous Medal novenas, scapulars, the rosary, frequent confession, exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, and other practices; and when it removed most of the statues and holy pictures from the interiors of churches — it thinned Irish culture considerably, and reduced its distinctiveness from British and American culture.

It is commonly accepted that the conflict which erupted in the North in 1969, and which developed subsequently into warfare, contributed its own large share to the denationalising process. But it seems more precise to say that certain widespread perceptions of the Northern conflict in the Republic did this. These perceptions contributed to the denationalisation both in its cultural and ideological aspects and, politically, by undermining the Constitution.

The nation-state which had been established in the Twenty-Six Counties was, both in fact and by virtue of its Constitution, a state of and for the entire nation. The

Northern nationalists, as they were called – the Irish community in the Six Counties – looked on it as their state and gave it emotional allegiance. Articles 2 and 3 of its Constitution indicated that the nation existed throughout Ireland; that the state's limitation to the Twenty-Six Counties was a temporary circumstance; and that its thrust and destiny was to embrace all of Ireland. As the Northern conflict gathered momentum, it was perceived as a menace by the Republic's ruling groups and by that considerable section of the people who had become well-off, and were becoming better-off, as the boom continued. Such people saw the North's turmoil as something the Republic might get drawn into, or which might spill over the border, and consequently as a threat to the Republic's prosperity and political stability. This last perception, combined with the illusory and self-abasing view that the Republic, despite all its talk, could do nothing to resolve the Northern problem or to reunite Ireland, had a denationalising effect. It led to the Republic's mental, moral and political withdrawal from the Northern question, and to a policy of "doing nothing to rock the boat". There was a widespread disowning of the Six-County Irish, which was made manifest by public objections to the description of them as "our people" (the British loyalists were "also our people") and a cessation of this manner of speaking. Implicit in all of this, and occasionally explicit, was a withdrawal from the commitment to reunite Ireland, which betrayed the spirit of the Constitution and the meaning of the state.

In addition to this, the nationalist armed rebellion which began in 1971 was widely perceived in the Republic as a particularly vicious and atrocious kind of warfare, and consequently as something of which the Irish must feel ashamed. Leaving aside whether this was an accurate perception, and the very active part which the Dublin media and politicians and the Catholic bishops played in making it widespread, it certainly had a strong denationalising effect. It contributed, significantly, to that aversion from Irish nationalism, and the historic freedom struggle, which was already occurring in the Republic, and to the feeling which was already strong there that there was something basically wrong with the Irish. At the same time, the raging war in the North thrust the Northern problem on the Republic's attention as never before. The conspicuous tragedy of the conflict, the feeling that we could do nothing politically or militarily to end it, and the feeling of shame about what the Irish nationalist rebels were doing to the Northern Protestants specifically, gave rise to a desire to do *something*, to make even a gesture, which might help to remedy the situation, or at least placate or atone. These feelings, prompting a search for a scapegoat, focussed on the Republic's deference to Catholicism. They were encouraged so to focus by the Dublin media propaganda (notably by the *Irish Times* and RTE) to the effect that the deference in question was the chief negative force in Ireland — blocking unity with the North as well as freedom in the Republic. Out of this confluence of perceptions, feelings and propaganda, came the decision to remove from the Constitution the text which recognised the "special position" of the Catholic Church, as well as the other Christian churches and the Jewish community. In other respects, too, the perception of the Republic's Catholicism as offensive to Northern Protestants, and therefore blocking "peace and reconciliation", gave additional impetus in the 70s to the campaign to de-Catholicise the Republic which had got under way in the 60s.

In these various ways, then, certainly, the Northern conflict contributed, significantly, to the denationalisation taking place in the Republic. It was therefore, on the face of it, a truly remarkable conjunction of events that the Northern conflict occurred precisely at this time, as if made to order. Moreover, when we reflect on the fact that its denationalising effect arose from certain perceptions of it, and connected with it, in the Republic, and that these were decisively influenced by the process of modernisation-cum-denationalisation which was going on there, then mere coincidence does not seem to be an adequate explanation. "Made to order" seems excessive, but there appears to be an underlying connection between what was happening in the Republic from 1960 onwards and what began to happen a few years later in the North. An impression arises of waves from the Republic's maelstrom of self-obliteration causing the North to shudder and explode, and of the North, then, in exploded state, being drawn into the maelstrom's whirling circles, increasing their force. There seems to be some truth, or perhaps a great deal of it, in this impression.

The fresh surge of modernisation which swept across Western Europe in the late 50s and 60s seems somehow to have sparked off the upsurge of ethnic consciousness, on the peripheries of the nation-states, which occurred in the late 60s. Welsh, Scots, Bretons, Basques and many others experienced a wave of self-consciousness and rebelled, one way or another, against domination by the power-centres. Part of the reason was probably that the spreading affluence and educational opportunities of those years raised the expectations of these peoples and gave them confidence. But they would also have sensed in this latest, powerful modernisation, trumpeting its gospel through television — and like all modernisation, uprooting, tugging towards the centre, and massifying — a threat to themselves. Roused from their accustomed reliance on the centre, they felt now that the state power and money power accumulated there were not *with* them, but against them, or at least pursuing interests other than theirs. Consequently, they must look to their interests themselves.

Some sensation of this kind must have affected the Irish community in the North when they saw Dublin launched headlong into its denationalising modernisation, and Lemass drinking tea in Stormont with Terence O'Neill. They read those Dublin newspapers of the 60s which said that the Northern Catholics exaggerated their grievances; that discrimination against them wasn't really so bad as they said; and that if only they would be more forthcoming towards the Northern state, and more "ecumenical" and so on, then well-meaning Captain O'Neill would be able to improve matters. Protestants of good will would meet them halfway and there would be gradual reconciliation of what were merely two groups with different traditions within a single Irish community. They heard, too, the rumoured remark of Lemass's when he visited Queen's University that "one side" (in the North) "is as bad as the other." The sense of belonging with Dublin and the Republic, of being cared for by them and forming one nation with them, of being ranged together with them against the oppressor Stormont and the British oppressor beyond — all that, and the sense of security even in subjection which it gave them, disintegrated. For the first time since the foundation of Northern Ireland, they took to the streets, militantly, in their thousands, to achieve their liberation, at least as citizens, on their own. That was the civil rights movement. When it climaxed, in the rising and siege of the Bogside, the Dublin government moved some army units to the border, ostensibly to set up field hospitals for the wounded. It was a last conditioned reflex of the dying nation-state. In Belfast, when police and Loyalist mobs attacked Catholic districts, the IRA were so few in numbers, and so conspicuous by their absence, that during the next days "I Ran Away" was chalked on walls in those Catholic ghettos. The British army came out on the streets. The Irish army withdrew from the border. In Tralee, a month later, the Taoiseach, Jack Lynch, made a speech which was generally interpreted as meaning "calm down, let's not get excited. It's a difficult problem." In May 1970, Mr. Lynch sacked two ministers from his cabinet for allegedly having been involved in the secret importation of arms which were to have gone across the border to Northern nationalists in case of need. The British military read the signals from Dublin: there was to be no attempt at armed intervention on behalf of the Six-County Irish, either direct or indirect. In June, a British Conservative government came to power and allowed the Northern premier, Faulkner, to unleash the British army against the Catholics of the Lower Falls. That was the Falls Curfew and house search, during which the British seized some antiquated guns and shot four people dead. Now the Six-County Irish saw themselves confronted by an aggressive British army, backed by triumphalist Unionists and by the London government. They, too, had read the signals from Dublin: no intervention, direct or indirect, on any account. A military vacuum yawned and the Provisional IRA sprang out of it. That autumn, hundreds of young men trained in IRA camps and, in February of the following year, 1971, the first IRA offensive began. The nationalist rebellion was under way which the politicians and media managers of the Republic were to condemn as totally unjustified, shameful and evil, and to use as a further powerful argument against Irish nationalism, 1916, and the celebration in song, narrative or monument of Ireland's freedom struggle against Britain.

"Made to order" is an excessive description of the helpful contemporaneity of the Northern conflict with the Republic's process of denationalisation. But it is not altogether without truth.

Chapter 3
Bringing Ireland into Line

"Modernisation", in the special and limited sense of the word, has been occurring in successive spurts for nearly two centuries. But modernity existed before that: Europeans have talked about being "modern" for the past five hundred years. Obviously, then, as the years and the centuries followed one another, modernity has meant many different things. "Modern" is connected with "modish". Effectively, it means living, thinking and feeling in the manner which is approved and fashionable in the great power-centres of the capitalist world. And that, obviously, has meant different things through the past few centuries.

Two things follow from this. In the first place, for most people, most nations, and most capital cities, being modern means being provincial — taking one's modes of life, thought and feeling from elsewhere, from a world power-centre. Secondly, it is impossible for most people to be modern continuously: just as they achieve full modernity or are coming near to it, a new version of modernity is proclaimed, and makes them old-fashioned.

Take this ideology called "liberalism". Whether with a big "L" or a small one, it has, since the early nineteenth century, been the ideology of competitive capitalism, which we call "capitalism" for short. But increasingly in the 1950s, and definitively in the 60s, liberalism in New York and London acquired a meaning which it didn't have before, and certainly not in its "classic" period in the nineteenth century. It became the ideology of capitalism in its consumerist phase, whereas previously it had been the ideology of capitalism in its abstemious phase, and its content changed accordingly.

As a result, when we in Dublin, in the 60s, switched into London again as our ideological metropolis, a surprising thing happened. We had been liberals for a long time. Almost since the first Liberal Clubs were founded in County Clare and other places in the 1820s, under O'Connell's aegis, liberalism had been our mainstream political ideology. It was a liberalism that had some Irish and Catholic features, just as English liberalism had English, Non-Conformist features, and Japanese liberalism Japanese features; but it shared the core of principles common to liberalism world-wide. In politics, we were liberal democrats. The Republic was a liberal democracy. Its Constitution, as Basil Chubb and other authorities tell us in their textbooks, was a liberal charter with a number of Catholic features. Now, however, the spokesmen of the new modernity began to present themselves in Dublin as "liberals" with emphasis, indicating that they were something new and unheard of in the land. And they *were* something new, or rather, the ideology which they spoke for was such a major development and revision of the old liberalism as to constitute something new. It was consumerist liberalism, as opposed to that old abstemious liberalism which we had imbibed with our mother's milk.

That old, classical liberalism corresponded to the middle phase of the industrial revolution, and to parliamentary government based on a restricted franchise. While its most prominent features were those well-known principles of political liberty and enlightened reform which the names of John Stuart Mill and Gladstone conjure up, it was also associated in practice with such notions as thrift, money-saving, self-control, temperance, and sexual restraint or abstinence. Leading liberal intellectuals had close platonic friendships with intellectual ladies. In Sweden teetotalism, in Britain the strict licensing of pubs and anti-gambling laws, were liberal causes. Liberalism was the political ideology of puritanical Protestant sects, and in Ireland, of a Catholicism almost as puritanical. Liberals frowned on lavish spending, whether monetary or sexual. Reason, man's spiritual nature, the sanctity of family life, were values dear to the liberal heart. Liberals shrank from "gross materialism" and "the animal nature of man." But tentatively from the 1920s onwards, and decisively after the Second World War, all of that changed. Faced with the task of serving a capitalist system characterised by mass production, mass democracy, new technologies for mass control, and increasingly costly defence systems, liberalism passed into its consumerist phase.

It is no accident that modernity means, effectively, living, thinking and feeling in the manner which is approved and fashionable in the great power-centres of the capitalist world. What is approved and fashionable in those power-centres is what serves capitalist power — that intricate combination of money power and state power which rules the capitalist world. As circumstances change, so do the modes of living, thinking and feeling which that power requires, and which enable it to maintain itself and grow mightier; and consequently, what was approved and fashionable yesterday becomes no longer so today.

The enduring purpose of capitalist power, as of all man-made power systems which have broken loose from human purpose, is to survive and to do things — more and more things, endlessly. It is power *to do that.* As it accumulates this power, it allows people to participate in it — to survive in greater numbers and for longer, and to do more and more things — on condition that they are subject to it, pay it a tribute in labour and money, and follow its lead. It subjects them and makes them tributary by atomising and materialising them: it atomises their societies, materialises their view of themselves and the world, and thereby renders them, effectively, material objects. In defiance of their communal and spiritual natures, and the reality of things, it persuades them to envisage themselves, consciously or effectively (it makes no real difference), as discrete "individuals" consisting only of matter; to live as if they were that, and to allow themselves to be treated as if they were that. This in itself makes them easily malleable in large masses, but the private anxieties, confusions and guilt feelings which follow inevitably from their multiple self-betrayals increase their docility by crippling their wills. In its own sphere of dominance, the Soviet socialist system pursues a similar course.

The implementation of the capitalist programme of subjection, tribute collection, and admission to participation in the capitalist power, has taken place in stages according as the available technology permitted. Abstemious liberalism was a sort of halfway house, suited to a period which lacked assembly-line production, computers and television. The technological advances made during the two World Wars opened up the possibility of proceeding to the final stage. Moreover, in the period after the Second World War, the vast cost of defending the capitalist world with atomic bombs, intercontinental missiles, nuclear submarines and space satellites, made it imperative to generate vast quantities of money. These were the principal reasons why, in the late 1950s, New York-Washington and its subordinate power-centres made consumerist liberalism the new orthodoxy of the American empire.

In London, as in Dublin, in the early 60s, it was noticed that a new kind of liberals were asserting themselves. Maurice Wiggin, writing in the *Sunday Times* (October 21, 1962) felt compelled to remind all and sundry that "freedom of speech includes the temporarily unfashionable freedom to express a certain scepticism of liberal shibboleths." A few months later (January 18, 1963), Judith Pakenham wrote acidly in *The Spectator:* "Every little authoritarian these days pays lip-service to liberal ideals, those being the OK ones in this century." In the course of the 60s and the early 70s, the principles and programme of the neo-liberalism revealed themselves.

The old free trade principle — everything must be rendered saleable to everyone who has the money — was retained and expanded. It was now to be applicable to things, such as contraceptives and pornography, in which trading had previously been forbidden or limited by law. Nationalism, both political and linguistic, in small and medium-sized nations was anathema: it could impede the free flow of goods, add costs to advertising, and restrict the freedom of multi-nationals.

To the free trade principle, the new consumerist principle was added: everything must be rendered consumable, and — short of reducing consumer activity by damaging physical health — consumed as much as possible by everyone. Just as the old abstemious principle had been applied right across the board, so too was the consumerist principle. Applied in the sexual sphere — and its application there was a central theme of the 60s — it meant making human bodies, and particularly women's bodies, sexually consumable at will without troublesome consequences. This, in turn, required the dissolution of sexual morality, removal of the reticences supporting it, free availability of contraceptives, easy divorce, and abortion on demand.

To boost the consuming power of poorer people, states were encouraged to extend and increase "social welfare" payments. States assumed leadership of the national and international economies, regulating, animating, redistributing. Tax revenue subsidised industry and the introduction of new technology.

From the end of the 60s, feminism was revived and given major roles in the programme. Propaganda for the "woman's right to work" brought more women into the workforce, where expanding production needed them. As wage-earners, moreover, they became more effective consumers, and "equal pay" made them more so. The feminists were encouraged to believe that female contraception (not by unprofitable natural methods, but by saleable gadgets and chemicals), as well as easy divorce and legalised abortion were "women's rights" and would bring women great advantages. Many of them believed this and contributed actively to overthrowing the legal obstacles. In this case, as in many others, most people who furthered the interests of capitalist power were not consciously working in its interests, but for some private purpose or from some humanistic or altruistic motive. But motives were a matter of indifference to the managers of consumerism: all that mattered was that atomisation, massification and materialisation proceeded, and that production, consumption, and money flow increased.

Measures were taken to get rid of, or at least obscure, any remaining "distinctions" between groups. Distinctions between races were to be blurred by ending discrimination and encouraging intermarriage; between Catholics and all sorts of Protestants, by ecumenism, mixed education, and the removal of conditions attached to mixed marriages; between men and women, by unisex clothes and haircuts, co-education, the employment of women in "men's" jobs and vice versa; between married and unmarried mothers, by giving a heroic status to the latter and underpinning it with public money payments; between social classes, by comprehensive schools, propaganda for "casual" clothes, and mass-audience television. The aim was, as far as possible, to transform society within states, and throughout the capitalist world generally, into a majority and a minority: on the one hand, a large, uniform mass of unisex human units which could be uniformly clothed, housed, fed, schooled, administered and persuaded, and, on the other, a smaller mass of similarly uniform people who felt themselves distinguished from the majority by being enlightened, tasteful, fashionable and sensitive. Over and above this, distinctions between groups were to be retained — there were to be "nice" and "nasty" people, "right-thinking" and "wrong-thinking" and so on — but the distinctions were to be made, not by society itself, but by politicians, advertising firms and media managers, as the power game demanded.

Traditional taboos, especially in the sexual sphere, were to be smashed, and traditional social and civil deferences demolished. People conventionally regarded as important or distinguished were to be shown for what they were — at best, "human beings like the rest of us", at worst, scoundrels. New taboos and deferences, decided not by society, but by the commercial and political interests and their propagandists, were to replace the ones demolished.

The press had long been recognised in the capitalist system as a power distinct from parliament. The advent of television raised this power to a new height in the guise of "the media" — in which television was the loudest voice. Television was zealously committed to the new orthodoxy, and found in its propagation its chief *raison d'être.* While social welfare payments provided the "free bread", television supplied the "circuses". Television journalists became bureaucrats administering the public mind, deciding whom and what should gain entry to it, and ensuring, by means of the interview and the steered discussion, that whatever gained entry there (whether personality, book or cause) should pass through their filter and come marked with the approval or scepticism of the official mind. In the early years, before the old authorities and norms had been overthrown and the new ones had replaced them, television led the mockery and pioneered the breaking of taboos. Kenneth Baily wrote in *The People* (January 20, 1963):

> To be up with the Joneses today, you must watch "TWTWTW" ("That Was The Week That Was") and laugh at it even if you don't half understand it, or resent it. There is a serious danger in this new TV snobbism. It means that people think it is just not done to criticise the programme. It means that TV can spew adolescent bad taste over the nation's screens, and nobody will protest. Because if they do, they will be considered old fogies. But far too many

> ordinary people are going around afraid to admit that there is something about this programme which is as unhealthy as foul muck clogging up a sink drain.

That passage recalls the intimidating pressure to conform which those of us who lived through the period remember: "just not done to criticise the programme ... nobody will protest ... they will be old fogies ... ordinary people going around afraid." In Britain it was generally agreed that a decisive breakthrough had occurred when, on November 13, 1965, Kenneth Tynan said *fuck* on television.

Many neighbourhood communities were disbanded and their members lodged in the isolation of tower-block flats or housing estates, where, in the isolation of their living-rooms, the Authority that cocked its snook at all authorities spoke to them daily with suggestive images. On the grounds that relationships between married couples were based on laws which were unjust to women (they were based on more than that, but no matter), and that parents often abused their authority over their children, families were encouraged to cease being social units where people managed their relationships autonomously, and to become, like the rest of society, individuals related by state law and deriving their authority, rights and status from it.* Meanwhile, the continuing concentration of industrial and service employment in certain regions of states, and in certain parts of Europe, forced millions of men and women, boys and girls, to leave their native places on their own and go to live among strangers. In short, by prising individuals out of natural communities, religious communities, and family units, into individual isolation; by taking to itself the authority which those communities and families had exercised; and by adding that to its previous power which was being increased, independently, by telecommunications and computers, the state and money power brought to bear on each individual a degree of persuasive and coercive force unequalled in the history of mankind. Nor did the individuals thus subjected lessen their subjection by forming associations to further their economic interests. The monetary gain which the associations brought them — until inflation robbed them of it — made them vulnerable to the commands to consume and more obedient to these injunctions.

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*In Sweden, where they always carry things quickly to extremes, and stake out where other capitalist countries will arrive later, laws have been passed forbidding parents to slap their children, and allowing husbands, wives and children to change their first names or surnames at will. The latter measure tends obviously in the same direction as the practice of the Pol Pot régime in Cambodia, when family members were scattered to different parts of the country, given new names, and forbidden to use their old names.

Rules and regulations multiplied: people had to get the state's permission to do many things which previously they could do without such permission. Public instruction and exhortation attained a didactic intensity which rivalled Victorian times or communist countries. Whether in public places or in their own homes, by means of paperbacks sold in supermarkets or advertisements or current affairs programmes, expert advice in all the media, stills on cinema screens or hoardings on the highways, the citizens were told what was good for them and bad for them: what to buy, what to think, what to drink and eat, how to dress and behave, what to do or not do to avoid sudden death, physical injury or dread disease. Countless couples making love in bed were conscious of admonitions far more numerous and more detailed than any church had ever issued.

As regulation of the citizens' lives increased, so, too, by one means or another, did police powers, and the numbers, surveillance facilities, and armaments of the police. These measures were necessary to combat the great increase in robberies, burglaries and attacks on persons which accompanied this wave of modernisation as it had accompanied all previous ones.

Abstemious liberalism had had a split relationship to material and spiritual reality. Materialistic in its practice, it paid homage to the human spirit and frequently gave credence to the divine. Consumerism was consistently materialist, and at most agnostic with regard to non-material reality. For all practical purposes, the world consisted of material things only. Human problems could be solved by a combination of money, technology, education, laws, regulations and administration; but in the end, since most of those other things cost money, by money. Reason was no longer a major value: right attitudes, feelings and opinions were more important. Greed, that is, the desire to possess endless things for their own sake, and lust, were no longer sins. In fact, inasmuch as sin denoted a breach of "God's law" and an offence "against God", sin had no real existence. There were only things deemed to be "manifestations of evil" or "socially undesirable", or things which "shocked, outraged and appalled all right-thinking people". Education in the schools was to be directed towards teaching practical skills to contribute to the economy, and right attitudes for participation in civil society. The imparting of knowledge for its own sake, character formation, training in virtue, were no longer educational aims. Indeed, many of the qualities traditionally called virtues — chastity, above all, but also loyalty, moral courage, patriotism, piety — were to be regarded with scepticism or outright distaste. Death, "even the loss of a single human life" (postnatally), was an unmitigated evil, because it was the cessation of physical existence. Religion had a role to play, but not on its own terms. It was to bless consumerist policies, condemn hostile forces, and give private consolations to those who had as yet found no other way of dealing with emotional problems. Poetry was to be strictly a private communication between poet and individual, even at poetry readings. No more than religion was it to be a voice of the people, let alone a prophetic one. And it was to conform, after its own manner, to the materialist principle: it must be concerned solely with words, and with how they look and sound.

Consumerism sold itself as liberation and social justice. It was liberation from material deprivation — the spreading affluence proved that — and from all those traditional taboos and deferences which deprived men, women and young people of their right to stand and live alone and sovereign. In the 60s youth was flattered and encouraged to stand up for its rights *vis-à-vis* parents and teachers. "Protest" was encouraged against every established form of authority, on the grounds that all authority existing prior to the new kind was oppressive. In the 70s women were flattered, not in the traditional way — they were told to reject that — but as beings "like men", or superior to men, who had the right to live "as men did". Social justice was defined as equal opportunities for all; access for everyone to housing, health services, and schools of all kinds; and money for spending in everyone's pocket.

Whether, apart from such considerations, the way people were living together was a human society in any real sense; whether it did justice to man's needs and nature; whether mass dependency and the belief that "real life" was Elsewhere, not in the suburbs, countryside and small towns where everyone lived, constituted *freedom* — those questions were forcefully relegated to the margins and abysses of the collective consciousness.

Ireland adapted more rapidly to consumerist liberalism than it had to abstemious liberalism in the nineteenth century. Indeed, as Terence Brown points out (*Ireland*, pp. 243-5), the speed with which previous attitudes and ways were jettisoned in the early 60s surprised contemporary commentators. Partly this was due to the urgency of the situation — the boat was sinking, or people thought it was — but principally to the fact that the Irish have long been the least conservative nation in Europe and have become less conservative as time passes. More completely than in any other European nation, and even within the formal framework of Catholicism, the medieval culture had been destroyed or abandoned, and what was left of it, together with later styles of living, was largely abandoned in the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth. The resulting rootlessness made for a loose, pragmatic attachment to existing ways, and uncritical openness to novelty if it seemed useful or exciting. Irish countrypeople took to travelling by air when, for example — I know by personal experience — most German countrypeople still shuddered at the idea. When television came, sets spread like an epidemic. When the Second Vatican Council put the Mass into English, Ireland was the only European country where Catholics didn't found a Latin Mass Society or the equivalent to resist the change. The mini-skirt of the late 60s penetrated the entire countryside and the smallest towns, and was more popular in Ireland than in France. The various money-making fads decreed by the American empire in the 70s, and transmitted to us via London or directly — pool-tables, skateboards, the cult of "Star Wars", computer games — have been obeyed in Ireland with alacrity. As a Connemara shopkeeper said to me three years ago, talking about the changes he had seen there in the previous ten years, *Aon rud nua a thaganns amach ó Mhoscó go Boston, bíonn siad ag súil len é fheiceáil i siopaí Chonamara laistigh de choicís.*" ("Any new thing that comes out from Moscow to Boston, they're expecting to see it in the Connemara shops within a fortnight.").

Once Lemass had given the go-ahead, the media swung into action. To be precise, first of all, the *Irish Times* did. Previously, as the "Protestant" newspaper, with the aura of its former West Britishness hanging around it, it had been a marginal paper, appreciated by its small readership of Protestants, civil servants, businessmen and intellectuals, for its good journalism, its letters page, and its social respectability. Now it sprang into the forefront and, with a rapidly increasing circulation, became the official voice of consumerist liberalism in Ireland, and the *Pravda* of the new establishment. The television station, set up in 1962, took its day-to-day line from it, and together they formed an enduring axis which the radio and the other papers gradually followed. Everyone is agreed that Irish television played a leading role in swinging Ireland, mentally, onto the new wavelength. On current affairs programmes, religion, politics, and sexual mores were discussed with a public frankness which was quite unaccustomed. American serials began to acclimatise us to that "glass of water" attitude to sex which consumerism was propagating everywhere.

In Britain and America, too, at this time, there was a sharp antagonism between the world-view which television was promoting and some of the nation's values; but there was also a constant, selective affirmation of the national ideological consensus. With time, as the new values became norms, television's affirmative role became predominant. In the Republic, however, television suggested from the start that there was a basic inadequacy or wrongness in the nation's mind and culture, and as the years passed, this message became more pronounced, so that for years now it has characterised RTE's relationship to Ireland. For all except the most provincial nations this is an anomalous situation. Its oddity is illustrated by the following quotation from a book called *Reading Television* by J. Fiske and J. Hartley, published in London in 1978 and intended as a textbook for communications students. The authors say that television performs seven functions in a modern society which the bard performed in a traditional society. These are:

1. to articulate the main lines of the established cultural consensus about the nature of reality;
2. to implicate the individual members of the culture into its dominant value-systems, by cultivating these systems and showing them working in practice;
3. to celebrate, explain, interpret and justify the doings of the culture's individual representatives;
4. to assure the culture at large of its practical adequacy in the world by affirming and confirming its ideologies/mythologies in active engagement with the practical and potentially unpredictable world;
5. to expose, conversely, any practical inadequacies in the culture's sense of itself which might result from changed conditions in the world out there, or from

pressure within the culture for a reorientation in favour of a new ideological stance;

6. to convince the audience that their status and identity as individuals is guaranteed by the culture as a whole;
7. to transmit by these means a sense of cultural membership (security and involvement).

If one were to tell a class of communications students in the Republic today that these are the functions of Irish television, they would stare incredulously. They would understand its function to be, essentially, no. 5, and most of them would be upset by the mere suggestion that it might or should have those other functions.

Everyone is agreed that the spearhead of the acculturation by television in the Ireland of the 1960s was "The Late Late Show", and Gay Byrne the supremo of the operation. "The Late Late Show" had this special importance because "everyone" watched it: it was a weekly public meeting, not exactly of the nation, but of as much of it as could receive Irish television. Gay Byrne was perfectly fitted for his historic role, and, consequently, by that rule of the survival of the fittest which applies to television more than anywhere, he and his show have survived to this day, and he has acquired, in addition, a daily radio programme. He found, and finds, many Irish characteristics repellent. The world's norm, the place where the sun rises and sets, is for him London. As the years pass and the winds change, his nose for what opinion is in or out, what person or cause U or non-U, is impeccably fine-tuned. People have often wondered why, when he was so good at his job, he had not moved to British television (he began his career on British radio) like some other well-known Irishmen who had blazed that trail, but their wonder is misplaced. His professional skills apart, it has been precisely on his role as transmitter of the latest London values to Ireland, as a playful shocker of the Irish and a verbal breaker of their taboos, that his success and eminence have depended.

Consumerism required some radical breaking of Irish taboos, and taboo-breaking begins with verbal breaches and proceeds from that to actions. Byrne himself, or the performers and studio audience whom he prodded, provided the verbal breaches before a mass of viewers. He saw to it, moreover, that this serious, evangelical side of the business was leavened by music and fun, and graded to what the field could carry at any given time. Early in the 60s, a young man on his show called the bishop of Galway a "moron". Nothing of the kind had been heard before on a public platform, and there were letters to the newspapers for weeks, protesting and defending. On another famous occasion, subsequently, Byrne asked a woman on the show to describe the nightie she had worn on her wedding night, and she answered that she had worn "nothing". The Bishop of Clonfert spoke out next day against the indecency, and the letters poured into RTE and the newspapers. But with time, the drop-by-drop treatment worked as it does on stones. By the 70s, Byrne could ask a woman in the studio audience had she gone to the toilet that day and how often, and have her inform him without a blush — and no bishop protested nor was there a letter to any newspaper. Of course, all such incidents — and the accompanying changes in private mores — were trivial in themselves; and if the taboo-breaking had gone no further it would have been genuinely liberating. Much prudery and uncritical reverence had been inherited from the Victorian era. In fact, however, such incidents and changes were merely the beginning and the spearhead of a far-reaching, destructive process which was the reverse of liberating.

There had been strong taboos on showing disrespect to religious things or persons, and on discussing or displaying in public the physical intimacies of women. There were also strong taboos on shooting people, but especially gardaí, in the course of robberies. As the years passed, and the new, authoritative word got around that "nothing is sacred anymore", these and many other taboos disintegrated. In various ways, women's physical intimacies were displayed and paraded, often by women themselves. Stealing from churches became commonplace, most robbers carried guns, shooting incidents were frequent, and if gardai got in the way they were shot at. In January 1982, in the space of one week, a garda was blown up in his car in Dublin, a man was shot dead in an armed robbery, and a golden rose which Pope John Paul had deposited in the shrine at Knock was stolen. There was a hubbub for a few days about the two deaths, and then silence as people braced themselves for the next assault and muttered about birching the young criminals and exiling them to some island.

There had been a taboo on showing disrespect to funerals and the dead. In 1976, Frank Stagg, a Republican prisoner in a British jail, died on hunger-strike, having expressed the wish to be buried in the Republican plot in Ballina cemetery. When his body was being flown to Dublin, the government diverted the plane to Shannon; police and soldiers took possession of the body and buried it under concrete in an ordinary grave at Ballina. Many people, especially in the country parts, were shocked at the desecration. But by 1982 in Dublin, it was noticed that attendances at funerals had dropped. Thieves had taken to reading the death notices in newspapers and burgling houses which were likely to be empty because the bereaved or their friends were attending the funeral.

Also in 1982 — though it could have happened in most parts of Ireland ten years previously, and I merely heard of it by chance — there was this outsider who bought a field in East Galway that contained a "fairy fort". The fort was sacred for the people of that place, not only in the way that all such ancient raths are sacred, but also because local tradition had it that Famine victims were buried there, and that it had been used in the old days as a burial place for unbaptised babies. The stranger put a tractor into the field and word got around that he was going to plough it, fort and all. A group of young men in the village were very upset by this. They went to the priest, who said he could do nothing. They went to the gardaí, who said it was not a matter for them. The man had begun to plough the field and had destroyed part of the fort when they set off to Galway to find the professor of archeology at the university. They failed to find him and, when they returned, the fort had vanished.

Consumerism brought its own taboos. Previously there had been two kinds of "good death" a person could have: death in the state of grace or death for Ireland. It became taboo to speak of any kind of death as good: all death, being a cessation of physical existence, was evil. Early on, it became taboo to talk of chastity or to mention virginity without laughing. It was also taboo to speak of Ireland as a Catholic country or to mention "Ireland's spiritual empire". Later, it became taboo, in fashionable circles, to celebrate Ireland's freedom struggle or to speak with pride of the American Irish. For years past, it has been taboo on the national broadcasting service to report the realities of the war in the North, and in particular to let the people of the Catholic ghettos speak their minds on air about the IRA, the RUC or the British Army. There is a taboo, enforced by law, against members of Sinn Féin (including elected representatives of the people) being heard on radio or television; and it is taboo to broadcast nationalist hit songs from the North, even when they soar to the top of the Top Twenty.

Then there is the secularist taboo on religious influence which, though not yet fully imposed, is being pushed hard and is winning acceptance. In Ireland because of the inherited strong influence of religion, consumerist liberalism had to fight the battle of secularism that had long been won in other capitalist countries. It had to get a religious people to accept that their religious values must not influence the laws and other civil institutions. At first glance, this seems an absurd proposition: why shouldn't religion influence the laws and public institutions, and especially why not in a state where most of the citizens are religious and which declares itself a democracy? But if you depict religion as a force opposed to human freedom, and particularly the "freedom of the individual"; it begins to appear plausible. In the Republic, moreover, it was sufficient to depict Catholicism as that, and generally to make a case against *Catholic* influence. The latter was done in two ways. You argued that the national goal of reunification could not be achieved if any civil laws or institutions in the Republic were or seemed "Catholic" — the Northern Protestants would never accept that; and you argued that any law which reflected Catholic influence was "sectarian" — the word had acquired very negative connotations in the North — and therefore illegitimate. The laws, insofar as they were concerned with moral matters, should reflect the views of all churches, and if there were a clash, then preferably of the Protestant churches, since the Protestants were a minority (four per cent) and minorities must not be oppressed. That, you said, was "pluralism", which everyone agreed was a good thing. Gradually, Protestant spokespersons and the Protestant churches were mobilised to support this argumentation and to urge secularism/pluralism as a Protestant principle. A final argument which occasionally surfaced was that secularism was "truly republican" in the tradition of Tone and Davis, and weren't we all republicans of that school? Somewhere along the line the question of democracy got lost and few seemed worried about that. There was an underlying feeling that, while it was normal for democratic nations to shape their laws and institutions in accordance with their religious or ideological values, it would be presumptuous of the Irish to do this.

Actually there were very few Catholic influences on the Republic's laws, which were essentially a British Protestant legal system. But Catholic influence had created legal obstacles to the key consumerist aim of "sexual consumption at will without troublesome consequences": there was a law prohibiting the sale or importation of contraceptives and a constitutional ban on divorce. There was also strong Catholic support for a law inherited from the British which prohibited abortion. These factors have caused delay in implementing this part of the consumerist programme. Contraceptives for "*bona fide* family planning purposes" were made legal, on prescription, in 1979. Charles Haughey, as the minister responsible, called this "an Irish solution for an Irish problem", and the phrase has since become a stock jibe among the consumerists, who repeat "Irish solution" with the jocose English meaning of "Irish". The Dublin media, the Labour Party, and a growing section of the population favour divorce. A Divorce Action Group provides the media with spokespersons. It seems likely that divorce will come, in a couple of years, at all events, as a result of the ruling which the European Court of Human Rights is expected to give in a case brought up by an Irish couple. The raw material for many divorces is there: marriage breakdown and separations are frequent, and hundreds of legally married persons who have entered new liaisons want to regularise these partnerships.

Agitation for abortion had been started by some feminist groups, with the support of a couple of TDs, but the Pro-Life Amendment Campaign made a pre-emptive strike by seeking and obtaining constitutional reinforcement for the law prohibiting abortion. Since the 70s, however, abortion has become a regular feature of Irish life: several thousand women get abortions each year in England. At the same time, illegitimate births have increased from 1.6 per cent in 1960 to 6.4 per cent in 1981. Schoolgirl pregnancies, which used to be extremely rare, numbered a thousand in 1981. Rape has become much more frequent, and women are afraid to walk alone in many places where they used to feel safe. Last year, 7,600 unmarried mothers were receiving allowances from the state. (In 1973, when these payments started, the cost was less than half a million pounds; for 1982, it was £16,000,000 — more than the total estimated cost of Knock airport or twenty times the cost of the Pro-Life Referendum, which its critics objected to as too costly). The present government has promised legislation to end the legal status of illegitimacy. In short, while there has been a considerable spread of "sexual consumption at will", there are still, quite frequently, "troublesome consequences" of various kinds, and some of these are costly to the taxpayers.

For a combination of reasons, the numbers of police and soldiers have doubled. As well as the Republic's commitment to help suppress the Northern rebellion, and the robberies in the Republic connected with it, there was a great growth in ordinary crime. The gardaí were given greater powers of search, detention and arrest, and phone-tapping became and has remained prevalent. The prisons have filled to bursting. The principal causes of the crime wave are the breakdown of self-restraint and social control through the assaults on the moral consensus, the undermining of parental and religious authority, the migrations from country to city and, within cities, to large new housing estates that are merely housing. Growing numbers of young people, faced with this social chaos, are seeking solace in drugs, stealing to pay for the drugs, and thereby swelling the tide of criminality. Last year the Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors published a discussion document on combating crime in urban areas. Its main thrust was that the garda approach to crime had become reactive rather than preventive, that it could be successful only if it became more preventive, but that it could become that only in a context of renewed social control. The document proposed re-establishing some social control in urban areas by forming committees to co-ordinate the work of voluntary bodies and public services in defined communities; and it proposed "community policing" by gardaí in consultation with these committees. However, there is little likelihood of any effective, as distinct from nominal, measures being taken along these lines.

The whole tendency in recent years has been towards greater centralisation of government and consequent massification of the citizens. Local government, which was already weak and sparse by European standards, has been weakened further by the removal of its health functions, the encroachments of semi-state bodies, and the ending of domestic rates without the provision of any equivalent source of autonomous revenue. There is no co-ordination of public services in any "community area" in the entire Republic — whether in communities of half a million people or of fifty or twenty thousand. Most of the public services are administered directly by central departments and other agencies which operate separately throughout the entire state. In short, the system, by its extreme centralisation, fragmentation and confusion, frustrates any possibility of people in groups, large or small, taking responsibility for their own lives. At the same time, the great increase in regulation and intervention by the state has resulted in what Tom Barrington has called (in a lecture to the Regional Studies Association in 1981) "a gross overloading of the business of government at the top". "As society progresses materially", he said, "the constraints on the exercise of human discretion cease to be those of poverty and scarcity and become, increasingly, those of government itself ... If the effect of concentrating at the centre trivial matters that could well be decided at some other level is to impede the centre from doing the job that only the centre can do — the development of overall policy and coordinated action — then such centralisation is suicidal." The death which results is the death-in-life of paralysis.

A by-product of the growth in the size of government has been to add to the dominance of Dublin over the rest of the Republic. Dublin city and county have nearly a third of the population of the state and, together with the three other counties forming the East region, two-thirds of its office jobs. The capital's dominance has been further augmented by its monopoly of television broadcasting and, except for local pirate stations, its virtual monopoly of the radio channels. But this great increase in power has been accompanied by, and has contributed to, the destruction of the city. Anyone who walks through the uncared-for wasteland that is now most of Dublin, while mindful of the new, well-equipped houses on its outskirts with tasteful interiors and well-kept gardens, will recall that phrase heard somewhere about "private splendour, public squalor". If he is a Dubliner walking among the offensive office-blocks, one who can cast his mind back twenty years, fifteen or five, he will remember the vast Theatre Royal with its troupe of dancing-girls, the Capitol and old Metropole with their tea-rooms, Jammet's Restaurant and its back-bar, the incomparable Russell, the Dolphin and the Red Bank, Bewley's and the Bailey as they used to be, the elegant grocer's shops staffed by professionals of the trade, the specialist tobacco shops with their jars and priest-like attendants, the Hibernian Hotel and its Buttery Bar, and three or four — now vanished — spacious coffee-houses between the Green and Westland Row. It would be an exaggeration to say that consumerism destroyed or reduced the quality of everything: it improved the quality of tape-recorders, computers, intercontinental missiles and many other things. But it destroyed many of the amenities and much of the pleasure of cities and, in a sense, the city as such. As the new-rich masses reached out to seize hold of the good life, it lowered its standards to greet them. How were they to know?

The Catholic Church collaborated in every way it could. In sympathy with the switch from abstemiousness to consumerism, it ended the Friday abstinence, the Lenten fast and the night-long fast before Communion. Its teaching of Christian sexual morality evaporated; or at least, by the end of the 70s, few people believed their children were being taught that it was sinful to have sexual intercourse outside marriage. The Church concerned itself with Third World causes and, at home, with those "social" causes which consumerism thought proper for churches. It interpreted "social justice" in materialist terms, ceased talking about the nation, and described the nationalist rebellion, not the injustice which caused it, as the "greatest evil" in Northern Ireland. In the Republic it was often difficult to distinguish between a religious talk on radio and the patter of a nice, compassionate disc-jockey. On both sides of the border, after the 60s, bishops thundered only about the IRA: otherwise they stressed their non-involvement in politics. Regularly, they submitted to interviews on RTE which dealt solely with the IRA, contraception, divorce and the Church's regulations for mixed marriages. As a result, the Church was depicted, regularly, as consumerism wanted it depicted, namely, as a clerical organisation which condemned the IRA (though perhaps not strongly enough), held rigid and intolerant views on contraception, divorce and mixed marriages — abortion joined the list in 1982 — and thereby deprived its followers and others of human rights. That it was an organisation devoted to the liberation of man in Ireland was not apparent, for it neither believed that it was nor said so. It eschewed prophecy in any sense, but particularly in the word's basic sense of "bold, unfashionable statement about things as they really are".

Apart from Irish nationalist and socialist thought at its best — and that is long past — there is no tradition of philosophical humanism in Ireland. Not surprisingly, then, there was no humanist critique of consumerist liberalism and its programme, except for occasional lectures by Ivor Browne, occasional statements by others, and occasional articles in the broadsheets devoted to "alternative life-styles" and Eastern mysticism. The only body of writing which had a humanist content, though of limited scope, was the critique of Irish institutions initiated by Charles McCarthy in *The Distasteful Challenge* (1968), continued by Tom Barrington in his many writings, and added to by others. Such "socialist" critique as there was, was purely nominal, since it accepted most of the consumerist premises and programme and merely wanted a larger and more distributive role for the state.

In de Valera's Ireland, a few fiction-writers and poets such as O'Faoláin, Clarke and Kavanagh, were the prophetic voices declaiming against the oppressions of the system and reminding their hearers of their humanity. Under consumerism, the writers and poets conformed. Together with most of the intelligentsia, they restricted their criticism to de Valera's Ireland and its survivals, and ignored the issues which were concerning humanists throughout the capitalist world. Poetry confined itself to parochial or private verse about life's brokenness, in which the words looked and sounded right. An Eoghan Ó Tuairisc or an Anthony Cronin might break the rules, but the rules were clearly to keep your head down and shrink from any large, admonishing or celebratory statement about the state of Ireland or the world or man. This ideological retreat from poetry about the public weal or woe was made strikingly evident by the Northern events. The new band of Northern poets, who formed the foremost single school in Irish poetry during this period, were mostly of Six-County Irish (rather than Ulster British) stock. As a glance at the history of literature makes abundantly evident, it is not normal for a group of poets to experience the revolution of their people without some of them, at least, responding to it in verse. Yet all of these poets managed not to. They wrote their poetry as if the drama of their people — the rising from the gutter, the casting off of cravenness, the overthrow of Stormont, the world-wide epic of the Long Kesh hungerstrike and the ten funerals — left them unmoved. I say ''as if'' because, of course, it was not a case of collective, psychological malfunction, but an illustration of the degree of self-denial which consumer capitalism exacts from poets, as from other humans, who live according to its rules.

In all these ways, and in other ways, Ireland was brought into line, and made to help pay for the construction of the West's nuclear arsenal and its attendant early-warning and satellite surveillance systems.

Chapter 4

Facts for Peace in the North

It is an obvious and basic fact that the armed conflict these last twelve years in Northern Ireland has been fought between, on the one hand, Irish rebels against British rule, and, on the other, agents and free-lance supporters of British rule. If the presentations of the "Northern Ireland problem" over the past twelve years had started by noting this basic fact known to everyone in Northern Ireland, they would have stood a good chance of being realistic presentations which illuminated the problem in a convergent manner, and thus facilitated its resolution. For one thing, the conflict would then have been seen by all concerned for what it is — a very ordinary sort of conflict such as has occurred countless times in past history and, specifically, in the twentieth century; and this in itself would have helped towards a solution.

In fact, however, most presentations of the problem, whether by the media, politicians, academics, novelists or clergy, have begun by ignoring the above-mentioned basic fact and other related and equally known facts, and have proceeded to "describe", "explain" and theorise without reference to them. As a consequence, there have been many divergent and illusory presentations, spreading various and conflicting views, and giving rise to a fashionable opinion that the Northern Ireland problem is "extremely complicated", "baffling" and *sui generis.*

There were reasons, clearly, why most of the presentations proceeded in this unempirical manner; partly it was ignorance or prejudice, partly carelessness, partly deliberate design. Whatever the causes, the fact is that this manner of presenting the Northern Ireland problem has not been conducive to peace-making. In particular, by establishing the notion that the problem is mysterious and *sui generis*, and the conflict quite irrational, it has furnished the responsible power-holders with an excuse for maintaining the essential status quo and doing nothing effective to end the conflict.

For peace sake, therefore, it is necessary to demystify. With a view to this, I present the basic facts of the Northern Ireland problem as they can be observed or discovered by anyone who wishes to know them.

1. Northern Ireland, pop. (1981) 1,507,000, comprises six of the nine counties of Ulster and slightly under a fifth of the area of Ireland. It was created by the British parliament in 1921 when Ireland, under its First Dáil, was seceding from the United Kingdom. Its regional parliament at Stormont, which was established in the same year, was suspended in 1972. In the following year, the six counties and other units of local government were replaced by twenty-six districts. The district councils have very limited functions and powers.

2. *The two communities.* Northern Ireland contains two ethnic communities.

The larger one is made up of people who regard themselves as ethnically British, i.e. as Irish persons sharing the historic British nationality with the English, Scots and Welsh. These people fly the Union Jack and the Ulster flag and regard "God Save the Queen" as their national anthem. Because of the Ulster regional allegiance, they are most accurately described as *Ulster British.** Culturally, their strongest links in Britain are with Scotland. Politically, their British allegiance is directed principally towards the British Crown. They are sceptical of English politicians and often resentful of English job-holders in Northern Ireland. They are called "Unionists" or "Loyalists" because most of them support the political union of Northern Ireland with Britain.

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*This is the term applied to them by T.J. Pickvance of Birmingham University in *The Northern Ireland Problem: Peace with Equity,* 1975. Mr. Pickvance had previously been a member of a commission investigating the Austrian-Italian problem in the South Tyrol, and he found the Northern Ireland problem similarly a "dual minority problem".

The other community is made up of people who regard themselves as ethnically Irish, i.e. as Irish persons who belong to the historic Irish nation. They fly the Irish Tricolour (when they can) and regard the "Soldier's Song" as their national anthem. Since they seldom express any special allegiance to "Ulster", and since they are merely a section of the Ulster Irish on both sides of the border, they are most accurately described as "the Irish community in Northern Ireland" or the *Six-County Irish.* They are often called "Nationalists" or "Republicans" because most of them support the Irish nationalist aim of an independent all-Ireland republic.†

3. *Size and distribution:* The precise size or distribution of the two communities is not known because no census or survey has ever asked the people of the province, individually, to choose between the national self-descriptions "Irish" and "British".†† However, judging from statistics for religious adherence, voting patterns, etc., it seems likely that the British community comprises 60-65 per cent of the population (900,000 to a million people), and the Irish community 35-40 per cent (5—600,000 people).

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†Apart from these two major communities, a small number of people, mostly former members of the British community, regard themselves as belonging neither to the British nor the Irish nation, but to an "Ulster" nation which derives its origins from the most ancient recorded inhabitants of north-east Ireland, the *Cruithin* or Picts. These Ulster nationalists, who include some of the leaders of the Ulster Defence Association, aspire to an independent Ulster state.

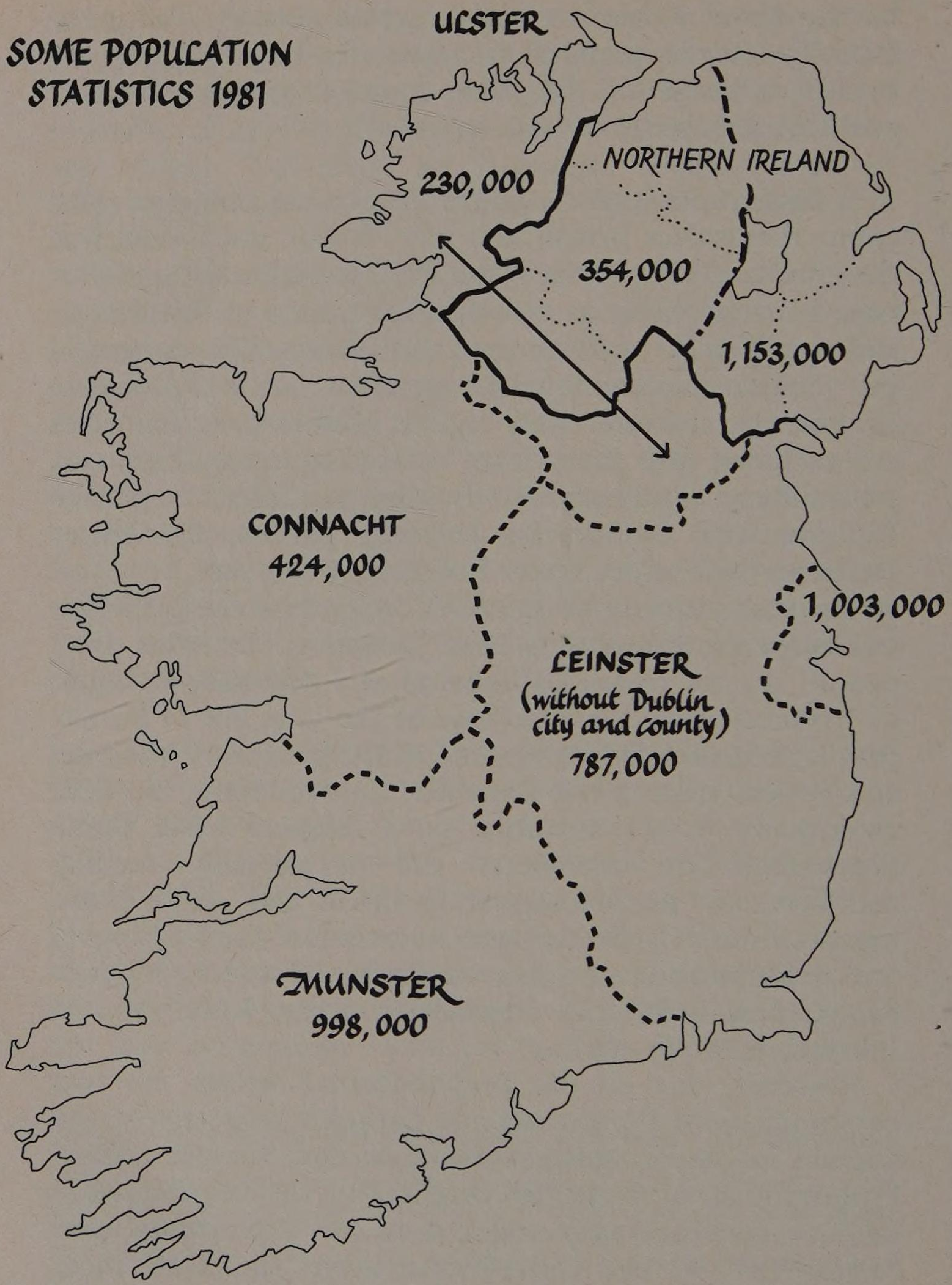
††The fact that this has not been done, and that even the Census in 1981 did not do it, illustrates the overall unwillingness of politicians, academics and the media to get to grips with the realities of the situation.

In the three eastern counties, which contain the great majority of the population, there is a large majority of British, whereas in the three western counties there is probably a majority of Irish (see map).

4. *Protestants and Catholics.* There are Catholics who count themselves British and who favour the Union, but the great majority of the Ulster British are Protestants who regard Protestantism as an intrinsic attribute of Britishness, and specifically of *their own* Britishness. Consequently, the British community is *organised as a Protestant community*, and effectively regards itself as such. Catholics are excluded *ipso facto* from its ideological, political and paramilitary organisations (the Orange Order, the Ulster Unionist and Democratic Unionist parties, the Ulster Defence Association, Ulster Volunteer Force, etc.).

The vast majority of the Six-County Irish are Catholics, but some are Protestants. The Catholics, like other Irish people, do not regard Catholicism as a necessary attribute of Irishness: they are conscious of the long line of Protestant Irish nationalist leaders and of the patriotic Protestant and Jewish Irish in the Republic. Consequently, the Irish community is not organised on a religious basis. Some Protestants are members, and occasionally leading members, of its ideological, political and paramilitary organisations (Gaelic Athletic Association, Gaelic League, Social Democratic and Labour Party, Irish Independence Party, Sinn Féin, Irish Republican Army, Irish National Liberation Army, etc.).

However, due to the preponderance within the two communities of Protestants and Catholics respectively, the absence of any language difference, and the self-defined Protestantism of the British community, the two communities are conventionally referred to as "Protestants" and "Catholics". In this conventional usage, therefore, these denominational names are, in effect, *ethnic* terms — analogous to "Catholics and Orthodox" (Croats and Serbs) in Croatia, and "Greeks and Turks" in Cyprus, *but not* to


SOME POPULATION STATISTICS 1981
ULSTER
230,000
NORTHERN IRELAND
354,000
1,153,000
CONNACHT
424,000
1,003,000
LEINSTER
(without Dublin city and county)
787,000
MUNSTER
998,000

"Protestants and Catholics" in, say, Switzerland or Holland, or to "Christians and Muslims" in the Lebanon. In addition, in Northern Ireland, "Protestants" has the social connotation "descendants of colonists", and "Catholics", "descendants of conquered natives".

In the remainder of this chapter I will use "Protestants" and "Catholics" in this special Northern Ireland sense — as conventional names for the two ethnic communities.

5. *British and Irish nationalism.* Since most of Ireland achieved independence sixty years ago, Northern Ireland remains the last direct meeting-place and battleground of British and Irish nationalism. The conflict between these two historic forces has, since 1971, centred in Northern Ireland, and this is the principal conflict going on there today. In this respect, the local "Protestants" and "Catholics" are caught up in, and participating in, a clash between forces which are larger than themselves.

As the first colony of expansionist British nationalism, Ireland has for centuries occupied a special place in the British national psychology. Moreover, from Elizabethan times onwards, the conquest of Ireland had a specifically Protestant dimension. In its final, decisive phases under Oliver Cromwell and William of Orange, it was carried out in the name of a crusading political Protestantism. The colony was established most effectively in Ulster, first through immigration from Scotland, later and decisively through the government-sponsored Ulster Plantation of 1609-10, when Scottish and English planters were settled on lands taken from the Irish.

The continued inclusion of Northern Ireland in the British state is justified by the London government on the grounds that the majority of the people of Northern Ireland regard themselves as British and desire inclusion.

The Northern Protestants view the Republic of Ireland with apprehension. They see its aim of "Irish reunification" — supported by hundreds of thousands within Northern Ireland — as an imperialist threat to their freedom. Neither they nor the constitution of Northern Ireland recognise the existence of the Irish nation, or of a part thereof, in Northern Ireland.

Irish nationalism-republicanism sees Northern Ireland as the "unfinished business" of its effort to free Ireland from foreign rule. In its traditional, doctrinaire view, the island of Ireland is the Irish "national territory". Northern Ireland is a creation of British imperialism in Ireland and a defiance of the majority will of the Irish nation to independence and unity (expressed most formally in the all-Ireland general election of 1918). The Northern Protestants are part of the Irish nation, and their professed Britishness is a sort of "false consciousness" which will disappear if London rule is terminated. During the events of recent years, this belief in the Irish nationality of the Unionists has weakened somewhat, but is still a potent force.

The armed conflict in Northern Ireland is primarily between the forces of the British state and of militant Irish republicanism. On the one hand, the British Army (including a local militia, the Ulster Defence Regiment) and the local police (Royal Ulster Constabulary) try to suppress Irish republican subversion and to make British rule effective; on the other hand, the Irish Republican Army, Irish National Liberation Army, and other groups, try to force Britain to evacuate Northern Ireland. Loyalist paramilitary groups, particularly the Ulster Defence Association, act in support of the state forces.

While the Dublin government formally retains the aim of all-Ireland reunification, it no longer uses the rhetoric of doctrinaire Irish nationalism. It states or suggests — according to which party is in power — that Northern Ireland is an obvious failure and proposes that the British and Irish governments collaborate in working out a different arrangement which would put an end to the last remaining source of conflict between Britain and Ireland. Within Northern Ireland itself, the Social Democratic and Labour Party pursues a similar line. The Dublin government (like the SDLP) stresses that Irish reunification must be "by peaceful means". It disowns the IRA and INLA (both are illegal in the Republic) and has imprisoned many of their members. Its security forces collaborate with the British against both these organisations, especially along the border.

6. *Intercommunal conflict and antagonisms.* Conflict and antagonism between the two Northern Ireland communities occur within the context of the centuries-old clash between British and Irish nationalism, and derive largely, if not exclusively, from this source.

In the last hundred years or so, sharp outbursts of intercommunal violence have taken place at regular intervals, especially in Belfast. During this same period, however, many members of both communities, living in "mixed" localities, have had amicable personal relationships. Moreover, in most parts of Northern Ireland, the antagonism felt between the two communities is not directed towards individuals, but towards the other group as a whole. The day-to-day feelings of antagonism can be described as follows:

Protestants resent the political disloyalty of Catholics, regard them as inferior, and fear that they are only waiting for their chance to dispossess Protestants and to take back what was taken from their ancestors. In a situation where employment is relatively scarce, and the Protestants have more and better employment than the Catholics, the former regard the latter as a threat to their marginal advantage. Many Protestants have an intense and vocal dislike of the Catholic religion (Pope, Virgin Mary, priesthood, confession, Mass, etc.), while both these Protestants, and others who do not share their virulent attitude to Catholic beliefs and worship, dislike what they see as the authoritarian or anti-libertarian aspects of Catholicism, and fear it — if it were ever allied with political power — as a threat to their "civil and religious liberties".

The Catholics, for their part, feel no antagonism towards the Protestant religion — apart from its doctrinaire anti-Catholicism. They resent Protestant insults to their own religion, and Protestant expressions of contempt for their culture and persons, their nationality and its symbols. Many Catholics, recalling their experiences under the Stormont régime, regard Protestants as bullies and oppressors who deprived them of employment and of proper living conditions, persecuted them by police methods, deprived them of legal justice, etc. — and who would do these things again if they had the political power. Since almost all the members of the police and of the local militia (UDR) are Protestants, Catholics regard Protestants as active agents of alien rule. In some rural parts, moreover, there is an underlying resentment of Protestants as "planters" who "grabbed the best land".

7. *The armed conflict.* By comparison with most other twentieth-century wars involving paramilitaries and regular forces, the war in Northern Ireland has been on a very small scale and self-restricting. No artillery has been used, and, except for one abortive attempt by the IRA, no aerial bombing has occurred. The vast majority of bombings and acts of arson have been directed against buildings, etc. rather than persons, and, in the case of the bombings, the great majority have been preceded by adequate warnings and resulted in no casualties. From July 1969 to the end of 1982 the fatalities arising from civil disturbance or armed conflict were as follows:

British Security Forces	668
Republican paramilitaries	208
Loyalist paramilitaries	52
Civilians	1310
Classification uncertain	36

In the case of the 1154 civilian deaths where the agent is known with certainty, the agents were as follows:

British security forces	146
Loyalist paramilitaries	543
Republican paramilitaries	465

Religious affiliation of the 1867 fatalities native to Northern Ireland:

Catholics 1022 Protestants 845*

8. The *"guarantee to the Unionists"*. The British government has repeatedly assured the Unionists that Northern Ireland will remain within the United Kingdom for as long as a majority of its inhabitants so desire. This is often referred to as the "guarantee to the Unionists".

9. *The Republic's "Constitutional claim"*. Unionist spokesmen object to Articles 2 and 3 of the Republic's Constitution and call on Dublin to remove them. These articles read as follows:

> *Article 2*. The national territory consists of the whole island of Ireland, its islands and the territorial seas.
>
> *Article 3*. Pending the reintegration of the national territory, and without prejudice to the right of the Parliament and Government established by this Constitution to exercise jurisdiction over the whole of that territory, the laws enacted by that Parliament shall have the like area and extent of application as the laws of Saorstát Éireann and the like extra-territorial effect.

"Saorstát Éireann" was the official name of the Irish Free State established in 1922. The Unionists regard these articles as an aggressive territorial "claim". The Dublin government replies that Article 2 is simply a statement of fact and that, insofar as any "claim" is implied by both articles together, it is a necessary legal counterclaim to the British claim to a part of Ireland.

***Figures supplied by Michael McKeown, who has kept a register throughout and written extensively on the subject.**

10. *"Power sharing" and the "Irish dimension".* These phrases came into vogue in 1973 when the British government — having suspended the regional parliament and imposed direct rule — tried to establish a new regional parliament which would be generally acceptable.

Because the previous parliament had been based on ordinary democratic procedures, the parties representing the Catholic interest had always, inevitably, been in a minority, and were therefore permanently excluded from government. In order to end this situation, the new parliament was to choose a government drawn from all the major parties, thus including Catholics. This system of compulsory coalition was known as "power sharing".

The phrase "Irish dimension" (used in the British White Paper outlining the new arrangements) referred to the Irish dimension of Northern Ireland. It was proposed that this be recognised by the establishment of a Council of Ireland, with restricted functions, which would include representatives from Northern Ireland and the Republic. The course of events prevented the establishment of this Council.

The "power-sharing" parliament and government lasted only a few months. They were brought down by the Protestant workers' strike of 1974, and direct rule resumed.

11. *The basic Irish and British positions*

The Irish side

All groups on the Irish side (Irish government and opposition parties, SDLP, Sinn Féin/IRA, IIP, etc.) have as their ultimate aim an independent, all-Ireland state (a "united Ireland") with perhaps some form of regional self-government in Ulster. Dublin and the SDLP accept that the constitutional arrangements of such a state would include recognition, in some form, of the Ulster British identity.

Up to the last couple of years, Dublin and the SDLP were willing to envisage, for the immediate future, a power-sharing Northern Ireland government within the UK, together with some formal institutional recognition of the Irish identity in Northern Ireland. However, in view of the continued Unionist rejection of a power-sharing government, they have lost interest in such an arrangement and are now trying to work out proposals for an all-Ireland settlement in the Forum for a New Ireland established in Dublin in May 1983.

The British side

The basic position of the British Government is the "guarantee to the Unionists" and a willingness to accept a united Ireland if a majority in Northern Ireland should opt for it. (The Labour Party has declared its intention of working actively to bring about a united Ireland by majority consent).

For the first time, the British White Paper of March 1982 (the Prior initiative) gave verbal recognition both to the Irish community in Northern Ireland and to the legitimacy of its nationalist aspiration. It also provided for the establishment of a Northern Ireland Assembly to which powers would be devolved only with the consent of elected representatives of both communities. (This Assembly was subsequently established, but due to the refusal of the Unionists to share power, and the boycott by the SDLP and Sinn Féin, it has come to nothing).

The Ulster Unionist and Democratic Unionist parties aim to maintain the union with Britain and would accept a restored regional government only if they have complete control of it. They refuse and oppose recognition of the Irish community, and reject a united Ireland under any form.

The only important Northern Protestant group which takes a non-Unionist stance is the Ulster Defence Association. It advocates (but without much support) an independent Northern Ireland in which a distinctive Ulster identity could be developed.

12. *Growth of Catholic population in Northern Ireland.* The Catholic population in Northern Ireland is increasing

faster than the Protestant. More than half of the 15-year-old schoolchildren are Catholics. Some Northern Protestant church leaders have publicly advised the Protestant people to negotiate an all-Ireland settlement from their present position of relative strength rather than wait for a time when they will be almost, or in fact, a minority.

13. *The prospects for peace.* It is unlikely that there will be peace in the Six Counties while the "Catholic" — more correctly, the Irish — community is required to live under a constitution which does not recognise its existence and foists Britishness on it. Peace requires, for a start, that both communities have their existence and identities constitutionally recognised.

This can be done, satisfactorily, only through a form of British-Irish condominium of Northern Ireland or through an independent, all-Ireland *federal* state which gives formal and practical recognition to the Ulster British identity. A merely *devolved* government in Northern Ireland, within a unitary Irish state, would be most unlikely to meet the Ulster British community's need to feel secure and not "dominated".

Experience shows that successful federations must have several units, and certainly not as few as two. Consequently, the federal-Ireland solution, if it were to be really a solution, would require the division of Ireland into a number of suitable federal units. There have been suggestions as to how this might be done: the four provinces, the thirty-two counties, or an intermediate number of socially and historically determined regions.

Apart from providing one or more federal units in which the Ulster British would predominate, the federation could give them explicit recognition by distinguishing, legally, between citizenship and nationality (as is done in Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union). Thus there could be an Irish *citizenship* shared by all (leaving it open to those who so wished to have British citizenship also) and two recognised *nationalities*, Irish and British. Obviously, it would help if there were a distinct name for the citizenship, in the manner of "Yugoslav" (embracing Serb, Croat, etc. nationalities), "Soviet" (embracing many nationalities), or even "Spanish" or "British", which, though they are the names of nationalities as well as citizenships, are different from the names of the nationalities they embrace (Basque, Castilian, Catalan, Scottish, English, etc.).

14. The project of forming an all-Ireland state is clearly not a matter of joining the Republic with Northern Ireland. The entities to be joined politically are the Irish nation, which exists throughout the island today as it has for the past 1500 years, and the Ulster British community, which, since the seventeenth century, shares part of Ulster with this nation. It is a matter of devising a state in which both these communities can share. Or to put it differently, it is a matter of devising a political structure in Ulster which enables both communities to collaborate, and linking this with the rest of Ireland in an all-Ireland polity.

Ultimately, as the result of shared citizenship and interests, experiences and opponents — particularly in Ulster — the Irish nation and the Ulster British might merge into a single national community. But that is not essential either for peace in Ireland or for the well-being of the island's inhabitants.Any attempt to force such a common nationhood would do violence to one of the communities or to both, and serve no worthwhile purpose.

Chapter 5

A Language of Our Own

There is no instance known to history of a nation which, having changed, substantially, from one common language to another, changed back again to the former language within two or three generations. Nor is there any known instance of a state, or other outside agency, causing a shrinking language minority to stop shrinking. When we discuss the failure of the Gaelic language revival since 1900 or since 1922, and the failure of the effort to save the Gaeltacht after 1926, these two facts should be borne in mind. In both cases, something quite novel was being attempted.

Undoubtedly, throughout this century, at least until very recently, most Irish people have been favourably disposed towards Gaelic, and have approved of the idea of reviving it. This general goodwill has been reflected in the Republic by the increasing numbers of people in each successive census up to 1971 (no later data are available) who claimed that they could speak Gaelic more or less. What is not so certain is whether a majority ever seriously wanted Ireland to become as Gaelic-speaking as Denmark is Danish-speaking. This was probably never the case. But if we assume for the sake of argument that such a complete language change would have been acceptable, then it is clear now with hindsight that the measures taken to effect this change were quite inadequate, and the thinking behind them unrealistic.

After 1922, the state took responsibility for the language revival, and the language movement — existing principally in Dublin, but also in other cities and towns of English-speaking Ireland — became an increasingly subsidised auxiliary of the state. The policy which emerged had three main defects. Firstly, the immediate task of language change was left almost solely to the schools; they were and remained the only institution that was substantially gaelicised. Osborn Bergin wrote in *Studies* (March 1927):

> Today the people leave the problem to the Government, the Government leaves it to the Department of Education, the Department of Education to the teachers and the teachers to the schoolchildren.

Insofar as the "problem" meant actual language change, and not back-up work such as dictionaries, translations of official texts, books, magazines and so on, that was hardly an exaggeration.

Secondly, the language revivalists viewed Irish society as a mass of individuals. Consequently, they believed — in defiance of the nature of language — that the revival would be effected by "individuals" and "individual effort" (rather than by local communities and communal effort). The *Irish Press* editorial of March 18, 1943 exemplifies this conception of the revival (it followed on de Valera's famous radio address of the previous day, which was largely about the language revival):

> In his broadcast last night the Taoiseach dealt with the urgency of saving the language. He, like many others, believes it can be done in this generation. But it cannot be done either by the state or by public institutions. Only one person can save the Irish language and that is the individual citizen .... If they [the young men and women of today] could see the language as Pearse saw it, as the very breath of Irish liberty, they would themselves ensure, without more ado, its survival and its perpetuation. But it is the

> individual man or woman who must, and who, only, can do that. Although it can be directed and encouraged, the saving of the language is something personal, something that either the individual does or it remains forever undone.

A direct corollary of this individualistic view of language change was the assumption that the process itself would somehow — in defiance of the nature of language change — take place throughout all of Irish society simultaneously (instead of first in some places, then in others). Finally, the language revival effort was based on Dublin and English-speaking Ireland, rather than on those parts of the country — the Gaeltacht — where Gaelic was already the vernacular.

With regard to the separate effort to save the Gaeltacht, the basic error was to believe that the state could stop this shrinking language minority from shrinking further. The decisive factor in its contraction was the gradual abandonment of Gaelic which was occurring on its territorial fringes, and only the Gaelic-speakers themselves could have stopped that — by acquiring the will to do so, by deciding to do so, and by taking appropriate measures. Neither the state nor the language movement ever tried seriously to give them that will or even discussed the matter with a representative assembly of Gaeltacht people. It was vaguely believed that if they were made prosperous, they would acquire the will. But this was an unfounded assumption, and anyhow the will, without some form of political institution by which to implement it, would have been useless.*

If the language revival had been based, from the start, in the Gaeltacht rather than Dublin, the Gaeltacht people would probably have acquired the will to save, maintain and expand their language communities. They would have become language militants, like the Dutch-speakers in Flanders or the French-speakers in Quebec. The revival and Gaeltacht causes would have fused into one. In the event, in 1969, when the Gaeltacht produced its own political movement, *Gluaiseacht Chearta Sibhialta na Gaeltachta* (The Gaeltacht Civil Rights Movement), it demanded that the Gaeltacht people be given political institutions which would enable them to save the Gaeltacht, and it called on the language organisations to move their headquarters to the Gaeltacht. If these things had been done speedily, the course of events might have changed, but they were not done.

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*Taken together, the assumptions about saving the Gaeltacht amounted to a typically "capitalist" illusion i.e. state and money power combined could solve the problem, as they could supposedly solve all problems.

The front-line forces in the revival effort, the primary schools teaching through Gaelic, had been declining steeply in numbers through the 1940s and 50s. In the 60s, under Lemass, a tacit decision was taken to end the revival effort. In the course of a reorganisation of teacher training, the Gaelic-speaking colleges for training primary school teachers were closed. In 1965 a White Paper on the language question committed the state to an undefined bilingualism. In 1973 Gaelic ceased to be an obligatory subject for the state examinations in schools, or a requirement for entry to the civil service. By the early 70s, the remaining Gaelic-speaking districts and pockets, with a total population of less than 30,000, were prosperous and their population was increasing. Since the mid-70s, it has been evident that they, too, are in the process of abandoning Gaelic, like all the other communities of Ireland before them.*

The failure of the language movement, in both its main aspects, has not effected any change in our linguistic situation. Today, as eighty years ago, we are an English-speaking nation. To be precise, we are more completely English-speaking today than we were eighty years ago; but

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*For fuller treatments of these matters, see my "Where the Irish Language Movement Went Wrong" in *Planet* (Wales), Feb.-March, 1977, and "Can a Shrinking Linguistic Minority Be Saved? Lessons from the Irish Experience" in *Minority Languages Today*, Ed. Haugen, McClure and Thomson, Edinburgh University Press, 1981.

that can hardly be regarded as an effect of the language movement. Moreover, it is certain that for the foreseeable future we will be an English-speaking nation. Does this mean, then, that the language movement is now past history and has no further meaning for us? Far from it. Its ultimate purpose was that we should have a "language of our own", and that purpose is still as valid today as it was then.

In the minds of its founders, and particularly of Douglas Hyde, the movement to restore Gaelic as the language of the Irish people was not an end in itself. It was a means of achieving three other important aims. In its initial stages, it was to be a means of turning Irish minds and emotions away from London and towards Ireland. This was to be done by using Gaelic to "make Ireland intellectually interesting for the Irish". That was the theme running through Hyde's account of the Gaelic League in his evidence to the University Commission in 1902; the awakened interest in Ireland would, he explained, have revitalising economic and cultural consequences, and end the drain of talent and intellect from Ireland. After that, as the restoration of Gaelic proceeded and took effect, it was to be the means of "making the present a rational continuation of the past" and of giving the Irish nation a language of its own again. By that culminating aim, Hyde and the others meant not only the Gaelic tongue, but also and above all, a distinctive Irish way of seeing and talking about the world, which would be achieved through Gaelic by Irish intellect. "With her language", Hyde said, "Ireland lost her intellectuality"; and he often referred to the Gaelic League as "the intellectual movement". The restoration of Gaelic was to be the restoration of the distinctive Irish mind in the form of an indigenous Irish world-image and discourse about life.

It was natural that the founders of the language movement should envisage their aim and movement thus. Gaelic Ireland, while it lasted, had a world-image all its own and a correspondingly distinctive language about the world.

Every nation that speaks a distinctive tongue has, within that tongue — which is merely a verbal communication system — a particular way of seeing life and talking about it. Anyone who has lived in a country with a different tongue, say, France or Sweden, and learned the tongue, knows how, after a time, he becomes aware that the people around him have, in the back of their minds, a different image of the world than he himself has. He notices them unconsciously referring to, and reflecting, that image in their writings and their spoken language. They have a system all their own of verbal meanings, valuations and references, of linkages between notions, and so on. That shared world-image in the back of their minds is the key to it all. It has been built up over the years out of talk and thought and interchange about their shared experiences and circumstances, seen, not just as the particular things they were or are, but also as *representative of human experience and circumstance generally;* so that their national life has become for them both a mirror of all human life and their means of constructing their own particular image of it. Once that image of the world is there and shared by all of them, their language naturally refers to it and reflects it as they talk to each other. And so their talk, weighted and coloured and bent by the stuff of their lives past and present, and by their location in mankind, is, in the profoundest sense, a "language of their own" — their own special and inimitable way of representing reality in discourse.

As must be obvious, however, it is not necessary for a nation to speak a tongue of its own in order to have a language of its own in that truest of all senses. The Americans have a language of their own in English, the Mexicans in Spanish, the German-speaking Swiss in German, not because each of these peoples speaks a tongue peculiar to itself — which it doesn't — but because each of them has a world-image peculiar to itself, formed by thinking and talking about its experiences and circumstances, while regarding these as representatively human. By the same token, it is *possible* for us Irish to have a language of our own *in English*. Consequently, the issue which the Gaelic League raised, and placed on our national agenda, is still a living issue, not a dead one.

The essential difference, "linguistically", between Gaelic Ireland centuries ago and English-speaking Ireland today is not that the former spoke Gaelic and the latter speaks English, or even that the former spoke a tongue indigenous to Ireland while we speak a tongue that came from elsewhere and that other nations also speak. The essential difference is, rather, that Gaelic Ireland had an Irish world-image achieved by its own mind, and therefore spoke a language of its own about the world, whereas we lack an Irish world-image and consequently see the world and our own life through a borrowed image, and speak about them in the language of that image. (We use the Anglo-American world-image and discourse, transmitted to us from the capitalist power-centres of London and New York-Washington).

Moreover, just as we differ in that respect from Gaelic Ireland, we differ in the same respect from a *normal* nation. Thomas Davis was right when he said: "A people without a language of its own is only half a nation." He probably meant "language" in the conventional nationalist sense of "tongue", but he erred only in that, not in what he said nor in the intuition about nationhood which lay behind it. The absence in a nation of a distinctive, indigenous discourse about the world indicates the lack there of a home-made world-image, and that can only mean that those people do not regard themselves, their experiences and circumstances, as representative of humanity generally. In other words, they don't regard themselves as really a nation or take themselves seriously as one. Davis's "half a nation" is as good a way as any to describe a nation of that kind. Maimed at the centre of its consciousness, there is nothing much it can do except lie there prone in the world for others to do what they like with. Having no image of the world from its own viewpoint and in its own terms, it has no way of seeing where it really is in the world, and is therefore unable to define itself among the states and nations as its interests and autonomy would require. Having no language of its own — because it has no world-image — it lacks a matrix for creating a culture of its own, and transforming all its mishmash of imported thought and culture into elements of its own being. So the alien thought pervades its mind, and the alien culture its life; and because its second-rate thinking of the alien thought, and speaking of the alien language, interest no one, it has nothing of importance to say to the world. Aptly, as it happens, in a book called *The Gaelic League Idea* (1972, p. 100), Seán Ó Tuama describes that situation as it obtains today in Ireland:

> In business, science, engineering, architecture, medicine, industry, law, home-making, agriculture, education, politics and administration — from economic planning to PAYE, from town planning to traffic laws — the vast bulk of our thinking is derivative. One doubts if we have added anything of real importance to sociological or theological, philosophic or aesthetic thought. Our cinema remains Anglo-American. Our television is to a great extent either derivative or Anglo-American; so is our theatre; so is our music (despite a recent considerable upsurge in Irish music). Our reading materials, in particular our quality books and journals, are virtually all of Anglo-American provenance. Not remarkably, our opinions reflect quite closely what we read.

Our creativity in imaginative literature stands in striking contrast to our sterility in the field of thought and confirms, if confirmation were needed, that our failure to say anything significant about the world has nothing to do with our size as a nation or with any lack of mental capacity. There have, of course, been individual Irishmen who have managed so to imbue their minds with the imperial image of the world that they have mastered the imperial language and made respectable contributions in that way; but these are rare cases which do not alter the general picture. Such persons, moreover, in the natural course of things, remove themselves from the domestic discourse, join the imperial one, and do not constitute an "Irish" contribution in any real sense — not in the sense in which Irish fiction, poetry and drama have contributed to contemporary world literature.

Our lack of an Irish world-image also explains why we have no humanism, no coherent movement of "thought and concern that man live humanly and not inhumanly." Humanism presupposes an image of man, and in particular of human well-being. Because we have no world-image, we have no image of human well-being. In the revolutionary period, when there was an emerging Irish world-image, there was also an emerging Irish image of human well-being. It was sketched out principally by Hyde, Yeats, Russell, Connolly, Pearse and Desmond Ryan, and in its train, there was a nascent humanism. Later, after the state was founded and up to about twenty-five years ago, we had an image of human well-being which was not based on any thought-out world-view, but simply on belief and dogma: the image of the "good Catholic" as that was interpreted in Ireland. But now we have nothing — or rather, nothing of our own.

This very basic matter of our having no world-image is hardly ever raised or referred to, and so the question of *why* we have none is not examined. Before turning to that, however, let me clarify what I mean by that word "world". Because we so often see "world affairs" treated as something distinct from "home affairs" or "national affairs" — and probably for profounder reasons also — there is a feeling that "the world" is somewhere out there, at a distance from us, and does not include where we are. Of course, as soon as I say that, the absurdity of it is obvious, but it needs to be said. Moreover, when I say "the world", I also mean "life, here and elsewhere" and not something else than life. I mean what the Gaelic word *an saol* conveys so comprehensively and undividedly: the world, life, the state of existence, all creation, all people. In short, an image of the world is an image of everything, near and far, that our minds can focus on, *outside themselves;* and it has human life, here and elsewhere, at its centre.

There are three immediate reasons why we have no world-image of our own, and I have already mentioned the first of them: our refusal to regard specifically Irish experiences and circumstances as representative instances of human experience and circumstance. To put it another way: our habit of *regarding Irish phenomena as unrepresentative.* An examination of what has been said and written in Ireland about Irish nationalism, the replacement of Gaelic by English, the Irish identity problem, the Gaeltacht problem, the Northern situation, the Northern rebellion and armed conflict, Irish Catholicism and particularly its sexual morality, the marital and domestic behaviour of the Irish male, or Irish party politics — an examination of that will discover an overwhelming tendency to regard these Irish phenomena as unique of their kind. Hardly ever is there a suggestion that they have a human content or are of human interest.* Very seldom is there discussion of them in the context of similar phenomena in other countries, let alone discussion of "that kind of thing in general" based on acquaintance with it in Ireland.

What Irish experiences and circumstances offer to the enquiring Irish mind is the possibility of becoming expert on the corresponding categories of human experience or human circumstance. As Hyde said in his evidence to the University Commission, with reference to the role of a "national education" in the development of Irish intellectual faculties: "No critical faculty can exist, no surety of criticism can exist, without the knowledge which comes from knowing some one thing intimately, and we can only know intimately those things with which we are brought into vital contact. It is easier to bring an Irishman into vital contact with his own surroundings than with any other." But clearly, this natural road to the critical perception and representation of human experience is barred when the Irish instances of that experience are seen, not as that, but as oddities distinct from, or contrasting with, the human norm.

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*Notable exceptions are the recent works by Tom Garvin on the Irish political-party system, and by John Coakley on Irish nationalism and the Irish colonial experience.

A factor which encourages this mental habit is our geographical situation in combination with our history. The fact that we have only one other country — in the sense of nation-state — adjacent to us means that we have habitual contact with it alone. On top of that, we have had a colonial relationship with Britain and are therefore habituated to regarding it — or more particularly, England, and actually the English South-east — as the human norm. This combination of circumstances is reflected in that familiar Irish way of criticising something in Ireland which begins by saying that such and such is scandalous and then goes on: "Elsewhere, in Britain for instance, it's done differently, it's done better", etc.

If we were situated, say, where Austria, Belgium or Libya is, we would be in habitual contact with a variety of national experiences and circumstances, and would therefore find it difficult to continue regarding Irish phenomena as *sui generis* or odd. Alternatively, if Scotland and Wales were independent countries alongside England, it would have something like the same effect. Of course, Scotland and Wales are there, even as it is, and are different countries from England, or from "Britain" understood as the English South-east. They are also, along with Mann, our nearest neighbours. They have had many historical experiences — and have some circumstances — similar to ours and different from England's. But all of this is lost on us, for we don't notice it or them. Mentally, we are adjacent to, and in regular contact with, only one country.

The second immediate reason why we have no Irish world-image is the official *disowning of world representation as an Irish activity* which has taken place in Ireland over the past sixty years or so. By world representation I mean every way of representing the world in language, from philosophy, travel-writing, memoirs and political oratory to history-writing, biography and writing about the stars. Since the 1920s or thereabouts, these and all other forms of literary representation of the world have been disowned, on behalf of the nation, by the academics, literary critics and bureaucrats who have defined "Irish literature" and decided what kinds of Irish writers deserve public encouragement and patronage. To understand exactly what they have done, let us take a look at the *Cabinet of Irish Literature.*

The first major definition of Irish literature in modern times was contained in *The Cabinet of Irish Literature*, edited first by Charles Read and, after his death, by T.P. O'Connor, and published in 1880. It bore the sub-title: "Selections from the writings of the chief poets, orators and prose writers of Ireland." In his preface, O'Connor wrote: "The want has long been felt for a work in which the prose, the poetry and the oratory of great Irishmen might be found in a collected and accessible form ... In Ireland, as in other countries, literature is the mirror wherein the movements of each epoch are reflected, and the study of literature is the study of the country and the people." The *Cabinet* consisted of biographical accounts of each writer followed by one or more extracts from his or her work. Gaelic writings were translated into English. The first volume began with such writers as Seathrún Céitinn, Mícheál Ó Cléirigh, James Usher, Richard Stanihurst, Ruairi O Flatharta and William Molyneux. In 1902-3 the *Cabinet* appeared in a second revised and extended edition, edited by Katherine Tynan Hinkson. Hinkson wrote in her preface that she had done a good deal of "sifting" of the first edition. She had omitted many writers whose work she considered to be not strictly literature, as well as many military memoirists "because their work was special", and some orators and many divines because their "fire had died out." Some of the early writers in Gaelic and English were reduced to biographical notes without extracts. The final volume was devoted to "the score of gifted men and women who are identified with the present renaissance of Irish letters." These included Yeats, Hyde, Seumas McManus and George Moore.

What is most striking to our eyes about this "sifted" *Cabinet* is the consensus of the three successive editors and their publishers with regard to the categories of writing which properly belonged within the general category of "Irish literature". All the categories which are to be found in the literatures of Greece and Rome, England, France or Germany, are there: prose fiction, verse, plays, history, biography, collections of letters, political philosophy, aesthetics, science and oratory, antiquities and sermons, Swift, Maturin and Carleton are there with Tone, Mitchel, Emmet, Burke and O'Connell. Eugene O'Curry on "Druids and Druidism", the geologist, Richard Kirwan, on "The Mosaic Account of Creation", poetry by Yeats and short stories by George Moore, are all included.

Since then, "Irish literature" has been reduced, authoritatively, to fiction, poetry and plays. What this means, in effect, is that all the categories which represent *the world* have been deleted, and only those which represent images conceived within the writer's mind have been retained. It is not a matter of judgment as to literary quality, but of an ideological judgment against world representation, and in favour of mind representation. A badly-written novel by an Irish writer belongs to "Irish literature", but a splendidly written book on China by another Irish writer does not. Extended backwards into the past, in books of criticism and so forth, this criterion has been eliminating half the writers in the *Cabinet* collection and giving us, unlike any other European nation, a "national literature" which consists solely of stories, poems and plays.

Moreover, since state subsidies of writers began in 1975, this definition of Irish literature has been translated into a formal value-judgment as between the two kinds of writers. Only those who write invented stories, or poems or plays, are deemed worthy of the nation's encouragement through financial support. Recently, this preferential judgment has been given institutional expression in Aosdána, the state-sponsored association of artists and writers, each of whom receives an annual stipend of £5000. Photographers are eligible for membership, but not philosophers, historians, biographers, or writers about Africa or art. Writers qualify for admission only if they write "literature, which shall mean fiction, poetry or drama." The clear implication is that Ireland can well do without books such as the Blasket Islands classics by Ó Críomhthain, Ó Súilleabháin, Sayers and Flower; Corkery's *The Hidden Ireland;* Seán de Fréine's *The Great Silence;* Lloyd Praeger's *The Way That I Went;* David Thompson's *Woodbrook;* F.S.L. Lyons' *Parnell* and *Ireland since the Famine;* Estyn Evans' *The Irish Heritage* and Frank Mitchell's *The Irish Landscape;* Arland Ussher's philosophical writings; James Connolly's *Labour in Irish History;* Denis Donoghue's literary criticism, James Mackey's theological books and Dervla Murphy's travel-writing; Ernie O'Malley's *On Another Man's Wound*, Desmond Ryan's *Remembering Sion* and Tom Barrington's *The Irish Administrative System.* By implication also, Ireland can do without what Seán Ó Tuama, in the above quotation, indicated that she needs so badly, namely creative thought. Indeed, the full implications of the Aosdána scheme seem to go further than that. There is a suggestion that it is not in the nature of Ireland to produce notable philosophers or scholars, and that these very titles are therefore available for other uses. The President of Ireland is to award the title *Saoi* ("wise man, scholar") to five outstanding members of Aosdána.

Not surprisingly, this disowning of world representation, combined with our notion that our special Irish experiences and circumstances are unrepresentative, has a determining effect on the kinds of books we write. Some Irish writers still publish their books abroad, but Irish publishing has recently developed to such a degree that its publications in the course of a year give a fair idea of what we write. Take the publications of 1980, for example, as recorded in *The Irish Publishing Record* for that year. Of the 787 titles listed for the Republic and Northern Ireland, many are not "books" in the strict sense: some are governmental or semi-official publications, and most of these are listed under the heading "Social sciences, government, education". There are also pamphlets, major exhibition catalogues and so on. Taking both those points into account, and omitting school textbooks and new periodicals entirely, we find 669 titles divided as follows:

Social sciences, government, education	211
Literature and criticism	133
History, geography and biography	101
Religion and theology	72
Pure sciences, technology, medicine, business	74
Music, art and recreation	42
Juvenile literature	31
Philosophy and psychology	5

The picture of Irish writing which emerges from a perusal of the titles is typical for recent years. While there is a good deal of imaginative literature, there is hardly any creative thought. By and large, our writers produce stories, poems and plays, or write descriptive or narrative accounts of Irish events, places and things, in the past or present. They do not address their minds to the Northern problem . They write virtually nothing about the contemporary world outside Ireland or including Ireland, and very little (mostly ecclesiastical) about the world outside Ireland in the past.

In the *Record* for 1980, the only two sections where the outside world figures to any notable extent are "Religion and theology" and "Juvenile literature". There are many books about the Christian Scriptures and the world of their time, translations from Spanish and Catalan devotional writings, a book on Eusebius of Caesarea, and a book which deals partly with Zimbabwe. From a specialist publisher, there are reprints of books about the goddess cult in China, Japan and South-east Asia, and new titles about religion in ancient Eygpt. As for the juvenile literature — which is all in Gaelic — many of the titles are translations of Swedish, French, German and Spanish children's books.

The five titles listed under "Philosophy and psychology" are not what they might seem to be. Three of them are about water divining in Ireland, children in hospital, and abortion, respectively. Only one has a genuinely philosophical theme, but it is a study of two philosophers, not original thought. The principal works of creative thought for the year were Tom Barrington's *The Irish Administrative System*, John M. Kelly's treatise on the Irish Constitution, and Enda McDonagh's book on the Church, politics and violence.

Throughout, there is no evidence of any speculative enquiry or questioning about the present condition of the world or man. If we were to examine the books published abroad by Irish writers, the picture would be substantially the same.

The third immediate reason why we have no world-image of our own is closely connected with that lack of questioning. It is our intellectuals' substantial and often devoted *belief in the consumerist liberal image of the world* as transmitted from London and New York-Washington. This imperial world-image, based on the experiences and circumstances of American and British capitalist power under American leadership, is designed, naturally, to maintain and increase that power. It portrays the world, man, and human well-being as it suits that power to have them perceived. Obviously, if our intellectuals believe in this imperial image, they feel no need to search for another, let alone work together for that purpose. Some of them imagine that "anti-Americanism" constitutes dissent from the Anglo-American image, but they deceive themselves. "Anti-Americanism" is merely dissent from that small part of the image's political content which is reflected in American foreign policy. To believe it is dissent from the image as such is to ignore that fact and also the well-known fact that the capitalist system allows and encourages — both within states and throughout the system as a whole — inconsequential forms of dissent which can be presented as, and are believed to be, real dissent.

It is important to understand that these three features of Irish life which I have been discussing are not normal human behaviour, not natural ways of behaving. Leaving nations aside, any group of people of average intelligence who share distinctive experiences and circumstances together — in a Siberian labour camp, on an island in the Pacific, even on a long round-the-world tour — tend, instinctively, to acquire, through their shared experiences and circumstances, and their discussion of them, a special way of seeing the world and a "language of their own" about it. Instinctively, they construct together their own picture of the world, and they believe in that picture, which has been tested and validated by their own experience, reflection and discussion, in preference to any other. Consequently, those three features of Irish life which I have been discussing constitute unnatural phenomena. They point to some breakdown in the normal human processes caused by some crippling interference with them. They point to this all the more because it is not just any human group we are talking about, but a nation, that is to say, a group which is by definition a representative unit of humankind.

I have stressed that the features in question are the three *immediate* reasons why we have no world-image of our own. Viewing them together against the background of Irish history, it is not difficult to discern that the ultimate cause — the crippling interference with our natural human processes — is the colonisation of the Irish mind over the past couple of centuries and the continuing effects of that today. Colonisation, provincialisation, we could call it by either name, but we will use the former term. The process of mental colonisation is well known, and has been superbly described by Albert Memmi in a book entitled *The Coloniser and the Colonised*, based on his observation of the phenomenon in Tunisia. Its central feature is that the imperialists persuade the people they subject to accept the imperial world-image, in which the imperialists figure as the human norm and the subject people as an odd lot imbued with negative, subhuman characteristics. Naturally, as the colonised come to accept this image of themselves, they also come to regard themselves, their experiences and circumstances as unrepresentative of humanity generally, i.e. as not really human or possessing human interest. Closely linked with this goes the view that every feature which distinguishes them from their masters — which is "non-British", so to speak — whether it be language, religion, dress, skin colour or eating habits, is a negative feature, separating the colonised from what is normally and representatively human.

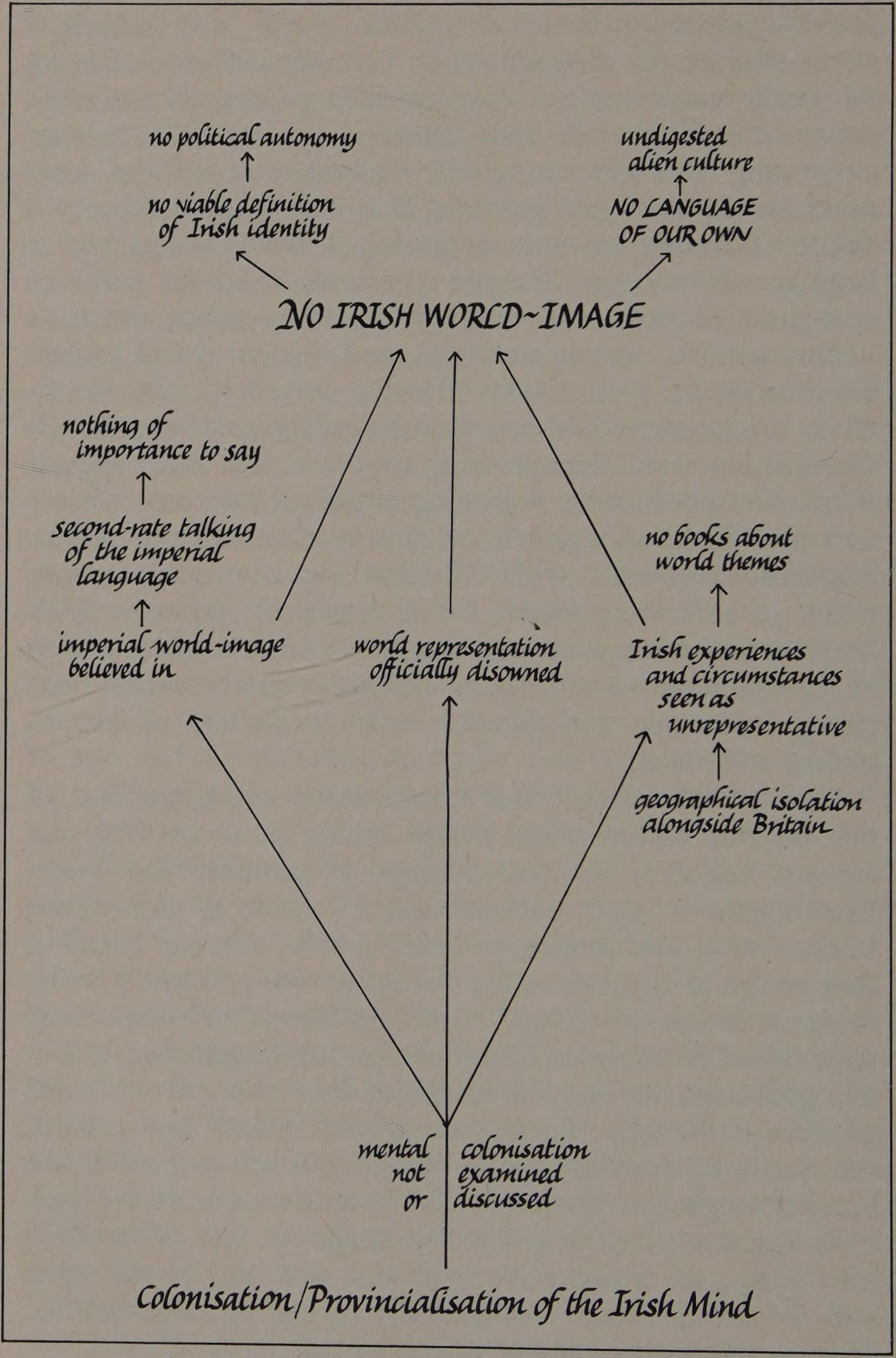
The imperial image of reality also allots roles and talents over and above the basic roles of master and subordinate. The subject people figure in it as entertainers and consolers of their lords, whose vocation it is to organise, administer and rule both the affairs of men and all useful human knowledge. The colonised are gifted with imagination, are instinctive artists, have a talent for fun, but are notoriously weak on reasoning and thoroughly impractical. Their masters, by contrast, are sober, unimaginative types, endowed with reasoning and discerning powers and all those practical skills that keep the world moving and in proper order. Matthew Arnold and others in the nineteenth century supplied a local version of this division of talents: on the one hand, the imaginative, poetic, feckless Celts; on the other, the methodical, utilitarian Anglo-Saxons. Our acceptance of this view of ourselves, as "imaginative, thoughtless Celts", is reflected in our disowning of world representation — particularly creative thought — and our exclusive encouragement of imaginative literature. What has been happening in this regard is, indeed, an effort by us to implement the imperial image of the Irish — to transform it into fact and ensure that it remains fact.

Our mental colonisation is something that has happened to us historically. It is one of the experiences and — inasmuch as we continue to be mentally colonised — one of the circumstances, which characterise us as a nation. The reason why it continues to pervade and condition our life and society is that we allow it to do so by ignoring it, not examining it, and not discussing it. (If we faced up to it, thought and talked about it, it would lose its force). It provides an outstanding example of a feature of Irish life which — whether in the guise of mental colonisation or provincialisation — is representative of the condition of contemporary mankind. It is something, therefore, which would enable us, if we faced up to it and recognised its representative quality, to gain a profound understanding of the contemporary world and have many important things to say. But in this instance, unlike others, it is not a matter of our failing to recognise its representative nature, but of our ignoring it altogether. Apart from Patrick Sheeran and Maolsheachlainn Ó Caollaí, I am aware of no one in Ireland who tackles it intellectually. We know that foreign authors, such as Fanon, Freire, Memmi and Schiller, have written about mental colonisation. We know that for years past there has been much discussion of it in France, with Bretons playing a considerable part, and we know that the principal discussion of it in English has been occurring just beside us in Wales. But we continue to ignore its presence and action in our own lives, when there is no people in the world who could, potentially, know more about it more intimately, and speak of it with greater authority, than ourselves.

While we insist on keeping our heads down in this manner, the colonisation of the Irish mind will continue to have the effects and ramifications throughout Irish life and society which I have described above and which I summarise in the diagram on p. 138. We will go on having no world-image and no language of our own. By the same token, the way to end that situation is clear: it is to start examining and discussing the colonisation of the Irish mind in the past and present. This would lead us by two different routes towards acquiring a world-image and a language of our own. On the one hand, it would make us conscious of how and why we regard ourselves and Irish phenomena as unrepresentative, and disown world representation as an Irish activity. Having perceived why we do these things, we would see their absurdity, realise how self-diminishing and impoverishing they are, and react against them. We would start regarding ourselves, our experiences and problems, as representatively human; end our monomaniacal obsession with "Britain" as our only outside point of reference (apart from America); redefine Irish literature in a more normal manner; and take measures to encourage creative writing of all kinds equally, rather than giving patronage and honour only to writers of stories, poems and plays.

On the other hand, our examination and discussion of our mental colonisation would make us aware that our current belief in the world-image of London-New York-Washington is that colonisation at work in our minds today. We would realise, in other words, that our belief in that image is an instance of "belief by the colonised in the imperial image of things". Since it stands to reason that such belief is always inauthentic, credulous and not rationally grounded, we would recognise that this current belief of ours is likewise. Scepticism would follow, and finally, the decisive breakthrough of *disbelief*. I call it the decisive breakthrough, for obviously, when we found ourselves not believing any more in the world-image we had believed in previously, we would have to find a new one of our own, and we would start instinctively trying to construct it. People must have an image of the world.

That is what would happen if we embarked on that


no political autonomy
no viable definition of Irish identity
undigested alien culture
NO LANGUAGE OF OUR OWN
NO IRISH WORLD~IMAGE
nothing of importance to say
second-rate talking of the imperial language
imperial world-image believed in
world representation officially disowned
no books about world themes
Irish experiences and circumstances seen as unrepresentative
geographical isolation alongside Britain
mental colonisation not examined or discussed
Colonisation/Provincialisation of the Irish Mind

The full pattern of cause and effect is somewhat more intricate, but this diagram shows its main outlines.

course and pursued it; it would end in radical disbelief and the beginning of an attempt to achieve in the last years of the twentieth century what our ancestors achieved in this island 1500 years ago and maintained for a thousand years after that: an Irish image of the world. Apart from all the weighty motives of self-respect, intellectual integrity, moral seriousness and so on, which there might be for embarking on it, there is the consideration that it would be extremely interesting, and would end up doing what the Gaelic League did in its day, namely, "making Ireland interesting for the Irish"; but actually, not only for the Irish. Since Ireland is certainly not interesting today, and not likely to become so while our present self-negation lasts, that would be a positive gain. An interesting Ireland is better than a boring one. Moreover, just as happened with that interest in Ireland which the Gaelic League awakened, it would open the way for us all to something else, something which we need personally and painfully: interest is the first step towards love. What weighs on us more leadenly today under the thraldom of consumer capitalism than the frustration of our capacity and need to love — not just "Ireland", but anything? Only the frustration of our need to be (ourselves) weighs equally heavily, but liberation from the one would remove the other: people who love their life together are themselves.

On second thoughts, since radical disbelief is the breakthrough point, what really matters is getting there, and to get there, it is not *necessary* to explore our mental colonisation. That is one way, rich in insights of various kinds, but it is not necessary. To arrive at radical disbelief, it is sufficient to examine what the current imperial image — the world-image of consumer capitalism — tells us about *human well-being*.

It tells us, in effect, that human well-being is the way people are living in the capitalist world today, *minus* various social problems which more money is required to solve. A critical assessment of that message will lead us to scrutinise the capitalist world from a humanist viewpoint, paying particular attention to societies, such as the USA, Britain and France, where the current consumerist scheme of things is exemplified more fully than in Ireland. Many features of this way of life have come in for humanist criticism; we can ignore all of them except one — the defence system which it is producing, if "defence" is the appropriate word. This array of nuclear weapons, with its attendant early-warning and surveillance systems, is the product of the political and social structures, the economy, and the world-view, of consumer capitalism, just as its counterpart in the East is the product of the political and social structures, economy and world-view of Muscovite socialism. If we can believe that a condition of human well-being is capable of preparing and producing human annihilation, then we can believe anything. But it is more likely we will react by disbelieving that this manner of living is in any sense human well-being — and by refusing to continue building man's mausoleum with our naïve faith.

That disbelief is important for us in the ways, and for the reasons, I have outlined. It may also be important for the world. It would certainly release into the world, in the form of the Irish mind viewing it, a new and incalculable quantity and force. That could have important consequences. When a few hundred thousand Greeks in southern Hellas and the Aegean islands confronted the Persian world-system with a radical rejection of all it stood for, and refused to be absorbed, it seemed to all the Persians and to some intelligent Greeks mere pigheaded petty nationalism. But it turned out to be important not only for the Greeks, but for all the world that came after them.

How stands the Irish nation today? As society adjusts to the pressures of the 1980s, the time has come to ask the question: what happened our sense of identity? In this hard-hitting, thoughtful book, Desmond Fennell provides a searching analysis of the values of an independent Ireland, and the steady process of cultural denationalisation that has sapped our vitality over the past twenty years. This book casts a cold eye on the mishmash of undigested consumerist liberal influences that have permeated Irish thinking since the 1960s, and throws down a challenge to the cultural life of the nation. Provocative, personal and intensely readable, *The State of the Nation* demands immediate attention.

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