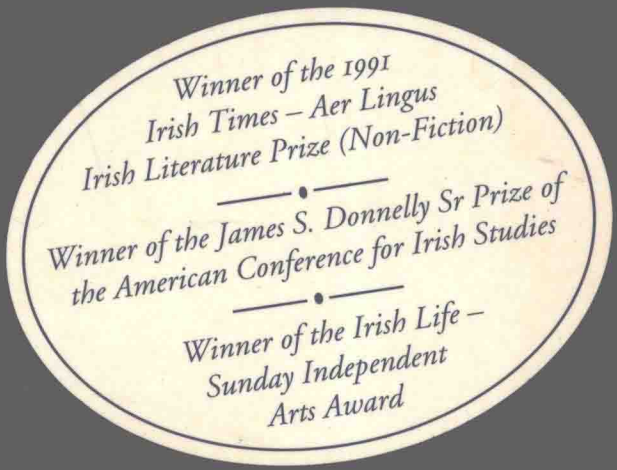
IRELAND

1912-1985

POLITICS AND SOCIETY



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For my wife Anne,
and our children
Amhairgín, Caoilfhionn and
Desmond

MAPS

PREFACE

This study was conceived in the tranquil atmosphere of Peterhouse, continued in more turbulent times in Cork, and completed on the serene slopes of Fiesole. I gladly acknowledge my debt to Peterhouse, where I learned much not only about scholarship, but about fellowship. I do not seek, however, to emulate what has 'become the Peterhouse manner – stern, unrefutable and arcane'.[1] If there be stern and arcane passages in this book, their inspiration derives from other sources. And I hope the text remains sufficiently intelligible throughout to be consistently refutable!

The late F. S. L. Lyons lamented nearly twenty years ago that the historian of contemporary Ireland is condemned to make bricks without straw.[2] The supply of straw has greatly increased since then. There has been a massive expansion in the available archival material, and a marked increase in relevant published work, not only by historians but by scholars in cognate disciplines. Yet the present situation contains its own dangers. The avalanche of archival material, only a small fraction of which has been excavated, not only threatens to obscure perspective beneath mounds of detail, but also to lull the historian, starved for so long of any archival sustenance, into complacency concerning the enduring quality of his necessarily provisional conclusions.

One function of the historian is to transcend the fragmentation of perspective characteristic of the contemporary mind. Research is now so specialised that this fundamental objective has become increasingly difficult to attain.[3] In few fields of intellectual endeavour do the means so threaten to subvert the ends. Synthesis thus becomes even more emphati-

[1] J.G.A. Pocock, 'Introduction: the state of the art', in J.G.A. Pocock, *Virtue, commerce and history* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 34.

[2] F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine* (London, 1971), p. ix.

[3] D. Thelen, 'The profession and the *Journal of American History*', *JAH*, 73, 1 (June 1986), pp. 9–10, records the widespread unease among American historians at the fragmentation of the subject.

cally the supreme challenge for the historian.[4] Synthesis is always, at one level, premature. It may seem presumptuously premature in the case of recent Irish history, where so much of the necessary monographic research remains to be tackled, and where no satisfactory interpretive paradigm exists. I hope this effort will encourage others with easier access to the source material to pursue the research on which a more satisfactory synthesis can soon be based. If the contemporary historian is not himself to become an agent of yet further fragmentation, he must strive towards total history, not in the futile sense of trying to write everything about everything, but in the sense of seeking to reveal the range of relevant linkages between the varieties of activity with which he is concerned.[5] That is a formidable task, conceptually and technically, even when an author confines himself to the study of public policy. I am painfully aware of how short of that goal this study falls, but I hope that it at least leaves the reader facing in the right direction.

The familiar problems of contemporary history are exacerbated in the Irish case by the shift in perspective imposed by the emergence of statehood. The nature of Anglo-Irish relations has traditionally constituted the main organising principle of Irish historiography. The historian of independent Ireland, however, and to some extent even of Northern Ireland, must focus more on the relationship between the potential and the performance of sovereignty, however much that relationship may be moulded by external influences. Potential and performance are elusive, complex and, in certain respects, subjective concepts. In tentatively probing the layers of the popular psyche that shaped the quality of national performance, I venture occasional meditations on *mentalité*. Critics of this no doubt faltering effort are urged to construct their own more robust interpretive frameworks.

This shift in the angle of approach has inevitable implications for the role of the historian in the wider society. In a work equally impressive for integrity and intelligence, a French thinker has observed that 'Ireland is a country where history is autobiographical and autobiography historical. It is an important indication as to the way in which a man of letters considers his status in the country.'[6] If there can indeed be still a sense in which the Irish historian may consider himself 'the custodian of the entire

[4] For superior expositions of this viewpoint, see B. Bailyn, 'The challenge of modern historiography', *AHR*, 87, 1 (February 1982), pp. 1–24; T. Bender, 'Wholes and parts: the need for synthesis in American history', *JAH*, 73, 1 (June 1986), pp. 120–36.

[5] H. Rothfels, 'Zeitgeschichte als Aufgabe', *Vjh. f. Zeitgesch.*, 1, 1 (January 1953), p. 7; W.J. Mommsen, 'Die Geschichtswissenschaft in der modernen Industriegesellschaft', *Vjh. f. Zeitgesch.*, 22, 1 (January 1974), p. 9; M. Broszat, 'Aufgaben und Probleme zeitgeschichtlichen Unterrichts', *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, 9 (1957), pp. 535–6.

[6] Maurice Goldring, *Faith of our fathers: the formation of Irish nationalist ideology 1890–1920* (Dublin, 1982), p. 8.

history of his country',[7] he can no longer succumb to delusions of grandeur in this regard. A fine generation of Irish historians had already begun to adopt from the 1930s a more discerning approach towards the role of Viking, Norman, English and Scot in Irish history than had been possible for the protagonists during the protracted struggle for sovereignty. That generation discharged its duty, which was essentially one of inculcating a more mature attitude towards Anglo-Irish relations. Central though the relationship with England remains, the main function of the contemporary Irish historian of a later generation is to evaluate the performance of a sovereign people. The effective discharge of that duty is not destined to win him the affection of all his Irish readers. The market for truth is a distinctly finite one, even in Ireland! In a culture where ambiguity plays so active a mediating role in human relations, anyone venturing to suggest that the Emperor may even occasionally be glimpsed in a state of *déshabillé* risks remonstrance for *lèse-majesté*. The author is already well aware that the slightest lack of reverence for sacred cows arouses intense resentment among the guardians of the bovine faith! An absence of systematic self-appraisal, as distinct from complaint, of which there is ample if incoherent supply, remains characteristic of the Irish intellectual condition. The contemporary historian can be reasonably expected to supply some of the deficiency.

Comparative perspective can illuminate our understanding of the Irish condition. Yet there is no wholly comparable case. Many distinctive features of the Irish experience might be listed. The South, following a highly unusual colonial-type history, achieved a degree of political stability rare for a new state. Northern Ireland, on the other hand, failed to acquire legitimacy in the eyes of a sufficient number of its inhabitants to prevent itself being torn apart by what appears to be a variety of tribal religious war, as if a slumbering monster had writhed out of some primeval slime. The South has succeeded in maintaining military neutrality, but it has succumbed ever more to cultural dependence. It has a unique demographic history, and a most unusual economic history, with the slowest rate of growth of gross national product of any European country in the twentieth century. The North, too, in a rather different way, counts among the striking economic failures of the century. Even this cursory catalogue suffices to remind us that recent Irish historical experience cannot be encompassed within conventional categories of either European or Third World historiography. It is none the worse for that. On the contrary, if comparative perspective can illuminate the Irish scene, an understanding of Irish history may in turn enrich wider historial perspectives. Yet the distinctive nature of the Irish case complicates the challenge confronting the historian.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

The Irish contemporary historian finds himself in the unusual position of being simultaneously insider and outsider. He cannot pronounce on both Northern Ireland and the Republic from the same perspective, relying on the same silent assumptions. A truly comparative history of North and South has yet to be adequately conceived, much less completed. Southern Irish historians, like myself, are likely to be as ambivalent towards the North as are citizens of the Republic in general. If it was a striking achievement of an impressive generation of Irish historians to 'exorcise passion' from the study of the Irish past,[8] it did so largely by evading the challenge of contemporary history. This book is inevitably written from a Southern perspective. My own preferences are not concealed. But I have tried to assess individuals, North and South, *within* their own traditions. Many an unworthy cause has been worthily served, in Ireland as elsewhere, just as many a worthy cause has, sadly, been unworthily served.

The personalities of Ireland and of Ulster are traditionally defined in historical terms. 'Without history', writes Liam de Paor,

> the Irish nation is nothing. It has defined itself by history. Perhaps it is nothing. That remains to be seen. Without history, Ulster is nothing. It is a corner of Ireland, or a corner of the United Kingdom, where infantile behaviour has become tedious as well as dangerous. Perhaps it is nothing. That too remains to be seen.[9]

These are high claims. They may reflect the disenchantment of the mid-eighties, stumbling towards the future with tragedy in the North and gloom in the South. They may reflect too a sense of the unfulfilled potential of self-government. It is usual to aver that the Irish are haunted by history, that they suffer from too much rather than too little historical consciousness. But the modern Irish, contrary to popular impression, have little sense of history. What they have is a sense of grievance, which they choose to dignify by christening it history. History therefore is 'not so much a matter of learning from the past as of stirring old grievances to keep them on the boil'.[10]

How to learn from history is one of the most difficult challenges confronting any people. It is central to my argument that the Irish of the late twentieth century have still to learn how to learn from their recent history. As Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh has observed:

> The process of de-colonisation is not simply an exercise in erasing, expunging and substituting. As many new post-colonial states have discovered in this century, the achievement of political-constitutional independence is the beginning and not the

[8] A. Clarke, 'Ireland 1534–1660', in J. Lee (ed.), *Irish historiography* 1970–79 (Cork, 1981), p. 34.
[9] Liam de Paor, 'Gone with the wind', *Irish Times*, 4 July 1985.
[10] Dick Walsh, *The Party: inside Fianna Fáil* (Dublin, 1986), p. 1.

end of the task of national liberation. These new states may learn valuable lessons from the Irish experience, under the Union and since Independence. So too may the Irish themselves.[11]

[11] M.A.G. Ó Tuathaigh, 'Ireland and Britain under the Union, 1800–1921: an overview', in P.J. Drudy (ed.), *Ireland and Britain since 1922*: Irish Studies 5 (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 19–20.

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Norma Buckley, Orla de Barra, Eileen Fehily, Veronica Fraser, Charlotte Holland, Catherine Long and Margaret O'Connell have contributed greatly to the making of this book. The efficiency, dedication, good humour and grace under pressure of these wonderful secretaries in University College Cork have been a constant reminder of the potential of Irishmen – or at least of Irish women!

The staff of the Boole Library of University College Cork have likewise combined efficiency with fortitude and good cheer in coping with my importunate demands. Jill Crowley and Valerie Fletcher bore the brunt of my direct assaults, while Nora Browne and Finola O'Donovan resolved a variety of difficulties. I want to specially thank themselves and their staffs, for librarians rarely receive the recognition they deserve in Irish universities. I wish too to thank the staffs of the following archives and libraries:

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Dermot Keogh, Brian Girvin and Richard Dunphy, colleagues in my own department in Cork, have recently published, or will shortly publish, important studies on aspects of the history of twentieth-century Ireland. I owe much to the stimulus of their scholarship and commitment.

Three of my university teachers who profoundly influenced my understanding of Irish history have since died. I recall, with mingled pride, gratitude, and sense of loss, Dudley Edwards, Maureen Wall, and Desmond Williams.

The price of domestic neglect has been borne by my wife Anne and our children. Anne has not only coped resourcefully with the domestic disruption caused by my physical and mental absences, but has sharpened my awareness of the Irish condition with acute observations. On the admittedly debatable assumption that absence has constituted deprivation, this study is dedicated, in gratitude and restitution, to them all.

I alone am responsible for all errors.

ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Auswärtiges Amt
AFT	An Foras Talúntais
AHR	*American Historical Review*
BA-MA	Bundesarchiv–Militärarchiv
CVO	Commission on Vocational Organisation
DD	Dáil Debates
DDI	Documenti Diplomatici Italiani
DGFP	Documents of German Foreign Policy
DO	Dominions Office
EB	Ernest Blythe Papers
EJPR	*European Journal of Political Research*
ESR	*Economic and Social Review*
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
FG	Frank Gallagher Papers
FRUS	Foreign Relations of the United States
IBR	*Irish Banking Review*
IDA	Industrial Development Authority
IESH	*Irish Economic and Social History*
IHS	*Irish Historical Studies*
IMI	Irish Management Institute
IPA	Institute of Public Administration
IRA	Irish Republican Army
ISC	Irish Situation Committee
JAH	*Journal of American History*
JSSISI	*Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland*
NESC	National Economic and Social Council
NIEC	National Industrial and Economic Council
NLI	National Library of Ireland
OKW	Oberkommando der Wehrmacht

PA	Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes
PM	Patrick McGilligan papers
PRO	Public Record Office, London
RM	Richard Mulcahy Papers
RUC	Royal Ulster Constabulary
SPO	State Paper Office
StSekr	Staatssekretär
TL	Truman Library
TRHS	Transactions of the Royal Historical Society
UCC	University College Cork
UCD	University College Dublin
UCDA	University College Dublin Archives
UCG	University College Galway
UDA	Ulster Defence Association
UDR	Ulster Defence Regiment
UVF	Ulster Volunteer Force
Vjh. f. Zeitgesch.	*Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*

NOMENCLATURE

Expressions like the Republic, Éire, Northern Ireland, Ulster, the Six Counties, the Twenty-Six Counties, South, North, etc., are normally employed as stylistic convenience dictates, except where a precise constitutional designation is analytically relevant for my purposes. South and North are capitalised when referring to the political entities colloquially subsumed under these terms. Nationalist, Unionist, and Home Rule are capitalised when referring to the relevant political parties: lower case is used for the ideologies involved, or for popular opinion of the relevant persuasion. Government departments are normally referred to by their substantive titles. Thus, the Department of Finance is usually called Finance.

Irish language nomenclature is employed according to colloquial usage in the Republic, as with Taoiseach (Prime Minister), Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister), Dáil (the lower house of parliament), Oireachtas (parliament). The police, the Gárda Síochána (Guardians of the Peace), are usually called either the guards or the gárdaí, as in popular parlance.