

Dublin Talks

The meeting in Dublin today of members of the Irish and British Governments and leaders of unionist and nationalist parties in the North is both welcome and encouraging for a variety of reasons, even if, for the time being, some of them have more to do with symbolism than substance, at least of the kind that is clearly visible to observers.

It will be the first occasion on which a session of Strand Two of the talks designed to produce a new Irish-British agreement has been held in Dublin. It will be the first visit to the Republic on official business of the leader of the Ulster Unionist Party, Mr James Molyneaux. And it will be Mr Molyneaux's first meeting on their own territory with members of the Government led in this case by the Tanaiste, Mr Wilson.

Naturally, the occasion is somewhat diminished by the absence of the leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, the Rev Ian Paisley. Nevertheless, the atmosphere in which the meeting is being held is distinctly friendly. In interviews yesterday Mr Molyneaux's mood was confident as he rehearsed his party's line on Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution and drew on international experience in Europe and the Middle East, to demonstrate the risks attached to claims made by one state on the territory of another: sooner or later, someone seeks to implement them. He looked to Maastricht as a precedent for the procedural way out: agreement between governments could always be followed by popular ratification of their decisions.

Mr Molyneaux's colleague, Mr Ken Maginnis, was, as usual, even more forthcoming. He detected a more reassuring attitude in a speech made during the talks last week by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Andrews, and disclosed at the weekend. With commendable courage and independence, Mr Maginnis also announced that his party was not going to be driven from the negotiating table by criticism from unionist quarters. He did not refer specifically to the Democratic Unionists and when Mr Molyneaux did, it was to stress that the UUP and DUP were separate parties.

The division between the DUP and the UUP is nothing new and on previous occasions followed tactical rather than strategic or philosophical lines. While it is particularly noteworthy on this occasion, to lend it undue significance would be to repeat an old mistake made by protagonists on either side of the unionist-nationalist fence: they insist on confusing anything short of outright opposition on the part of their opponents as evidence that the other side is "coming round" or "going soft"; and they feel deceived when this turns out not to be the case.

Mr Maginnis spoke of the emphasis and tone (rather than content) of Mr Andrews's speech. In it the Minister said that if negotiations achieved the basis of a new beginning in the relationship between the two traditions in Ireland, and if agreement on a fair and honourable accommodation between them were to entail any constitutional consequence in the South, the Government could approach the electorate with the hope and prospect of a positive response — a response to a new agreement that would lead to peace throughout Ireland and to reconciliation between the two traditions.

This still does not amount to a clear promise that the Government would be prepared to recommend a rewriting of Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution along aspirational lines should it help to make agreement more likely, although such a promise — and indeed, a clearer statement of what the Government hopes to achieve — would invest the current discussions with a greater sense of purpose and realism.

depth. I argued, rather, that length of net is critical, and even suggested that it might be necessary to shorten the fishing week further — hardly points likely to find much favour with some fishermen. I suggested that if questions like these were tackled, the issue of net composition might not be so critical. I also argued against (and teach students of journalism to beware of) monocausal explanations for complex phenomena. Given the present climate of opinion, I am mildly surprised that the salmon netmen have not also been blamed for the dearth of sea trout.

signed, have been
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Yours, etc.,
JOHN
19 Upper Gard
Dublin 1.

ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY

Sir, — Dr Garret FitzGerald (September 8th and August 29th) undertakes a worthy cause in appealing for a genuine exchange of ideas fundamental to adopting viewpoints on morality, individual and social, which are not themselves merely the repetition of religious edicts or founded on waning scholasticism.

Such an appeal is opportune in the context of the "autumnal discussions" on moral issues that are expected to be waged through the media, even though they will probably be limited to the familiar, time-worn issues of domestic morality.

It is unfortunate, therefore, that the ensuing exchange of views in your letters columns seems for the most part to have been distracted into defending the relative merits of schools of philosophy — no doubt as a result of Dr FitzGerald's rather rash description of linguistic analysis, or Anglo-American philosophy, as "self-destructive" and "heretical". At this time I suggest we seek something rather more enlightening.

Dr FitzGerald seems to search for fundamental moral imperatives and implies they might be found among the Continental philosophers. He believes that there are objectively determinable examples of a common good of society (a British utilitarian concept?), his example of which is open to further question at several levels.

The history of mental philosophy, on a panacea Descartes' "Dubit Social Contract; distinction between "practical" reason, Antithesis and degger's *Dasein*, *mauvaise foi* are many examples de the one hand, the rationally elaborat imperative, and maintaining a delic tween the suprema vidual conscience influences, whether clerical.

Can Dr FitzGerald where exactly we the "Continental bases of moral disc if there is one thing the possibility of re logue across the w of moral issues, re slinging of emotive each other.

In the meantime selves no service if the logical develop tivism in analytic p these times we need careful in what we say how we say it — and er's letter (Septem Wittgenstein says: cannot speak, thereo silent". — Yours, etc. JOE

Caiseal Geal,
Castlegar, Galway

BLAMING THE CHURCH

Sir, — The tribulations of unmarried mothers and reluctant fathers is hardly newsworthy in this permissive age. Why then did *The Irish Times* give such prominence to a reprint of a case from the *Guardian*? Was it because the father is a priest and this could be used once again to make the Church the whipping boy? Under any circumstances, the story was biased, unfair, and one-sided.

The *Guardian* is a good paper on national, international and social matters, and it is particularly good on justice and the Third World — but it should leave religion out of its coverage because it is aggressively secular itself. It shows no understanding or sensitivity on this subject — though it shows discretion in the absence of disrespect for the Moslem religion, "the better part of valour" after the Rushdie affair!

People who attack the Church, the Hierarchy, the Vatican, etc, as

if it is something "monolith, or a Big B ing us into unnatur are forgetting that we are the Church as mu priests, bishops, the trying to follow Ch Gospel, all helping. The function of priest chy is to provide p service, liturgy and They are shepherds of We all tend to b when our standards fer our guilt onto a Church serves this pu age when morals are with the Gospel. It b so — the Old Testam met a similar fate. B on proclaiming Go fearlessly. This is hov today responds to un Yours, etc., P. S.

Castlefergus,
Quin, Co. Clare.

INSIDE

ULSTER.