

Those who, like myself, regret rather than celebrate the undoubted truth that “anti-authoritarianism” is today the whole content of “culture and consciousness”, will quickly concede that Flacks is onto perhaps the deepest truth about contemporary politics. There is an impressive and clarifying integrity about this book. There is no way to miss the seriousness of the political commitment and the honest linkage of personal experience and theory. The arguments about the present and the future are accompanied by a thoughtful survey of American political experience since 1900. It is not easy reading, but well worth it.

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Peter Fry and Fiona Somerset Fry — *A History of Ireland*. London and New York: Routledge, 1988. Pp. x, 366.

Insofar as this book begins with a review of the first 6,000 years B.C. of Irish history within the space of twenty pages, one is not surprised to find a highly selective chronology of events. But many, if not most, of the important names and places are included. Moreover, the narrative is written in the style of an accomplished storyteller that results in a reasonably comprehensible account of the often vague and complex strands of early Celtic history. Where this book is woefully deficient, however, is in its interpretation of events. There is very little critical analysis, and much of the text covering the more recent centuries of the Irish historical experience appears to have been written without the benefit of any reference to the existing historiography. The notes, for example, refer to less than a dozen sources, most of which are not monographs or specialized studies, but rather general works of reference. Even the list of suggested readings contains none of the important titles that have been published outside the British Isles, including, as it does, little more than general histories.

Yet, even if the people and places of Celtic Ireland are presented in a bewildering succession of family and regional names, the reader cannot help but appreciate how the tribal rivalries and topographical landscape conspired to frustrate all early attempts at establishing a viable nation-state. And that same disunity, of course, made the Irish vulnerable to interlopers, plunderers and conquerors.

Roman Christianity came to Ireland in the 5th century and the pastoral tendencies and tribal values of the native population made the territory inhospitable to the episcopal and parochial church systems that flourished in more bureaucratic and urban societies. Monasticism became the predominant and nearly exclusive expression of Irish Christian belief, the appeal of which was perhaps partly attributable to the individualistic temperament of the Celts. The authors remind us, of course, that St. Patrick is said to have built as many as fifty churches, some of which were staffed by women priests who were an accepted part of the early Irish clergy.

The Vikings arrived during the 8th century, sacking monasteries and terrorizing the indigenous population. But they never succeeded in conquering the country and their lasting contributions to Irish life were developing the towns and cities, and accelerating the secularization of the Church. The Normans, however, who first came to Ireland in the 12th century to aid one Irish tribe against another, decided instead to

remain in the country and to divide the land among themselves. The reader also learns how the Crown was subsequently called upon to protect "obedient English" subjects (Norman descendants) in Ireland, long before the first Tudor plantations were established in that country.

During the Tudor reign, England became a Protestant nation, and those who came from England and Scotland to Ireland brought with them an uncompromising hatred for popery. Irish Catholics were often passively indifferent to the hostility directed against their Church, but they reacted defiantly when the Protestants began to establish themselves as an Ascendancy class. Bloody clashes between Protestants and Catholics resulted ultimately in the latter's defeat and subjugation to the humiliating Penal Laws. What the authors might have mentioned, however, is the fact that King William was personally disposed to embrace the Treaty of Limerick. It was the blind prejudice and vengeful intent of parliamentary leaders that prevented him from implementing an honorable peace with Irish Catholics.

And it is precisely the absence of such nuances that one encounters repeatedly throughout this otherwise factually reliable and eminently readable history. No mention, for example, is made of the fact that Daniel O'Connell had his own reasons for welcoming the elimination of the fourty shilling freeholder franchise in 1829. Nor do the authors offer any satisfactory understanding of the real ideological differences that separated O'Connell from the Young Ireland leadership. Relatedly, the IRB Military Council did not, as the authors suggest, simply go over Eoin MacNeill's head when he attempted to prevent the 1916 rising. In point of fact, the Council deliberately deceived him.

One would also like to see a more sophisticated analysis of the circumstances that prompted the Irish government both to remain neutral during World War II and to declare for a Republic despite the continued existence of partition in 1949. Moreover, Eamon de Valera did not turn the Free State into a virtual republic in 1932 (331), but, instead, accomplished that task incrementally between 1932 and 1937. Curiously, the authors have chosen to spell Eamon with a double n throughout the text, and de Valera's surname is indexed under the letter V. Otherwise, most spellings and usages are given correctly except for a few misprints, as in the instance of J.S. Lyons for F.S. Lyons (278).

In what is a refreshing contrast to the often polemical treatment accorded the modern-day troubles in Ulster, this book offers an account of the conflict that is reasonably informative and indisputably fair. Yet, it is all too often incomplete. The last sentence of the book makes an oblique reference to the "involvement" of Britain and the Irish Republic in the affairs of the North, but no reference whatever is made of the recommendations of the Irish Forum, or to the Anglo-Irish Accord of 1985.

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