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TRANSITION IN IRELAND: MODERNIZATION OR UNDERDEVELOPMENT?

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BY

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JACK POUND  
IN MEMORIAM

He is wintering out  
the back-end of a bad year,  
swinging a hurricane-lamp  
through some outhouse;

a jobber among shadows.  
Old work-whore, slave-  
blood, who stepped fair-hills  
under each bidder's eye

and kept your patience  
and your counsel, how  
you draw me into  
your trail. Your trail

broken from haggard to stable,  
a straggle of fodder  
stiffened on snow,  
comes first-footing

the back doors of the little  
barons: resentful  
and impenitent,  
carrying the warm eggs.

SEAMUS HEANEY: Servant Boy.

## DECLARATION

I, Terry Mulhall, being a candidate for the degree of Master of Arts as awarded by the N.C.E.A. declare that while registered as a candidate for the above degree I have not been a registered candidate for another award of the N.C.E.A. or a University. Secondly that none of the material contained in this Thesis has been used in any other submission for any other award. Further, that the contents of this Thesis are the sole work of the author except where an acknowledgement has been made for any assistance received.

Terry Mulhall

Date:

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	III
TABLE OF CONTENTS	IV
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	VIII
PREFACE	IX
ABSTRACT	XV
CHAPTER I.	INTRODUCTION
I. IRELAND IN TRANSITION.	1
1. The Planned Economy: "The loveliest garden you ever saw"	3
2. Revisionism.	6
II. THE TRANSITION INTERNATIONALLY: THE PASSING OF TRADITIONAL SOCIETY.	10
1. Modernization: Rapid Transition	11
III. BOURGEOIS SOCIAL THEORY AND THE TRANSITION.	14
1. The Sovereignty of The Market	15
2. Civil Society	16
IV. THE BREAKDOWN OF THE TRANSITION.	18
1. Economic	18
2. Political	21
3. Catholic Church	23
4. Nationalism: The Return of The Repressed	26
V. UNDERDEVELOPMENT, THE COLLAPSE OF MODERNIZATION AND THE MARXIST THEORY OF TRANSITION.	29
1. Marxist Political Economy	32
2. World System Theorists: The Primacy of Exchange	34
3. Mode of Production: The Primacy of Class Struggle	36
NOTES	39
CHAPTER II.	<u>THE TRANSITION FROM FEUDALISM TO CAPITALISM: THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF CLASS STRUGGLE AND COMMERCIALIZATION</u>
I. TRANSITION DEBATE.	40
II. THE CONFLICT BETWEEN LORD AND PEASANT IN THE DESTRUCTION OF FEUDALISM.	42
1. Growth of the Cash Nexus and Peasant power	43
III. THE ABSOLUTIST STATE.	46
1. Reformation	47

2. Naval Dominance	48
3. The Colony and Absolutism	50
IV. THE FIRST BOURGEOIS STATE.	50
1. Mercantilism	51
2. Social Relations of Agricultural Modernization	52
3. Transition to Manufacture	52
V. THE ROLE OF SURPLUS TRANSFER FROM THE COLONIES IN THE EARLY EXPANSION OF CAPITALISM.	55
VI. THE COMPACT OF ARISTOCRACY AND BOURGEOISIE: CIVIL SOCIETY AND LIBERALISM IN BRITAIN.	58
CHAPTER III. <u>COLONIAL SOCIETY AND THE TRANSITION</u>	
I. MODE OF PRODUCTION IN GAELIC CLAN SOCIETY.	62
1. The Clan	63
2. Property	64
3. Church	65
II. SURRENDER AND REGRANT: ENGLISH PROPERTY AND IRISH LAND.	66
1. Commercialization of Agriculture	67
2. The Crown, Catholicism and Military Conquest	69
3. Dualism: "Two Worlds"	71
4. Colonial Social Relations and Agriculture	71
5. Eighteenth Century	73
III. MODERNIZATION OR UNDERDEVELOPMENT? IRELAND IN THE CONTEXT OF THE INTERNATIONAL DEBATE.	74
1. Crotty and Cullen	75
2. Colonial social Relations and Political Liberalism	77
3. Colonialism, Catholicism and Liberalism	78
IV. SETTLER COLONIALISM IN ULSTER AND THE IMPORTANCE OF PETTY COMMODITY PRODUCTION IN THE TRANSITION.	80
1. Linen	80
2. North and South Contrasted	82
V. THE FAILURE OF THE BOURGEOIS REVOLUTION.	84
NOTES	86
CHAPTER IV. <u>CAPITALISM AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT: THE WORKSHOP                           OF THE WORLD AND THE AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT.</u>	
I. COMPETITION AND ACCUMULATION: THE WORKSHOP	87
1. Cotton, Capitalism and Empire	89
2. Railways	91
3. Laissez-Faire	91
4. Liberalism	93

II.	THE AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT: DESCRIPTION.	94
	1. Agricultural Involution	96
	2. "Up Horn, Down Corn"	97
	3. Recovery	98
III.	THE AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT: EXPLANATIONS.	99
	1. The Nationalist View	100
	2. Political Economy	101
	3. Modernization	102
	4. Underdevelopment	103
IV.	UNDERDEVELOPMENT AND THE DUAL STRUCTURE: THE SOCIO-POLITICAL ASPECT.	105
	1. Railways	106
	2. Nationalism: The Political Janus	107
	3. Dualism: A Question of Evolution	108
	4. Dualism: A Question of Civil Society	111
	5. Catholic Church	112
V.	ULSTER.	114
	1. Industrialization	115
	2. No Home Rule	116
	NOTES	118
CHAPTER V.	<u>FINANCE CAPITAL AND PEASANT PROPRIETORSHIP</u>	
I.	ACCUMULATION: DECLINE OF BRITAIN AND RISE OF GERMANY	122
	1. Entrepreneurial Ethos or Production Relations	122
	2. Lenin: Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism	123
	3. Banking: Concentration and Centralization	124
	4. Eastern Europe as a Colony	125
II.	FINANCE CAPITAL AND AGRICULTURE: CONCENTRATION AND FRAGMENTATION.	127
	1. Accumulation and Differentiation	127
	2. Obstacles to Differentiation	128
	3. Failure of Accumulation	130
III.	POLITICS TRADITIONAL AND MODERN: NATIONALISM AND SOCIALISM.	132
	1. Cultural Nationalism	133
	2. Class Struggle	134
	3. Underdevelopment: Class and Community	135
IV.	IRISH NATIONALISM AND BRITISH LIBERALISM.	137
	1. Peasant Property versus Capitalism and Socialism	137
	2. Vocationalism: The politics of Incorporation	138
VI.	CATHOLIC CHURCH.	139
	1. The Parnellite compact	139
	2. A State Within A State	140
	NOTES	142

CHAPTER 6.	<u>GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT: PLANNING THE TRANSITION</u> <u>WITH "DEPENDENT INDUSTRIALIZATION" AND</u> <u>THE QUESTION OF NATIONALISM</u>	
I.	GLOBAL PLANNING:THE INSTITUTIONS.	143
II.	IRELAND: THE INSTITUTIONS OF PLANNED DEVELOPMENT	145
III.	IRISH AGRICULTURE: THE WHITE REVOLUTION.	148
	1. Dualism: Peasant Mentality or Logic of Underdevelopment	149
	2. Green Revolution	150
	3. Marginalization or Accumulation?	151
IV.	INDUSTRIALIZATION BY INVITATION!	152
	1. Planning the Foreign Sector?	154
	2. Mining	155
	3. The National Debt: The Cost of Underdevelopment	156
V.	THE WAY FORWARD.	158
	1. Creating the "Achieving Society"	157
	2. Back to Nationalism	
	3. The Ultimate Problem: The Social Relations of Underdevelopment	159
VI.	THE POLITICS OF "DEPENDENT INDUSTRIALIZATION" STATE CLIENTELISM AND POLITICAL INCORPORATION.	160
	1. Cultural Explanation	160
	2. Class Explanation	161
	3. State Incorporation	161
	4. The Agricultural Sector	163
	5. The Unions	
VII.	NATIONALISM: ECONOMIC DEPENDENCE AND POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE.	165
	1. Conor Cruise O'Brien and the British New Left	167
VIII.	THE CATHOLIC CHURCH: SETTING THE TERMS OF THE DEBATE	171
	NOTES	174
	SUMMARY.	175
	CONCLUSION.	181
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.	185



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## PREFACE

The following study is an examination of the question of social change in Ireland over recent decades. Since the early nineteen sixties there had been a general feeling in Ireland that society was in some form of transition from a traditional to a modern world. The door had been closed on the past and a new era was being ushered in. This no doubt partly had to do with the social and economic changes which Ireland experienced during this time. It was also related to Ireland's colonial history and the feeling that the promise of independence was at last being achieved.

In the 1980s however this belief in the advance of modernization has suffered a reversal. These were the years of the two referenda on abortion and divorce and the beginning of the present economic crisis. What was particularly interesting about this time was the way in which these events, over a very short space of time, seemed to undermine or reverse everything that had been taken for granted in Ireland for two decades. In view of the reappearance of many of these old problems, the following work represents a contribution towards a critique of this model of modernization.

Looking back on the period since the early sixties one of the most salient features of intellectual debate has been the interpretation of problems in Ireland in terms of the modern and the traditional. This is itself, of course, part of the larger

question of the relationship of the present to the past which has been central to the question of change in Ireland. The social change since the sixties placed the past in an unfavourable light, not only materially but intellectually as well. The prosperity which followed the abandonment of the policy of economic self-sufficiency seemed to undermine the philosophical basis upon which the state rested. This essentially was the old nationalist belief that economic independence was the sine qua non of political independence and vice versa. As a consequence, a major part of the intellectual effort of the sixties and after went into a reinterpretation of history or a demythologizing of it, as some writers would have had it.

When one looks closely at this recent "revisionist" turn in Irish history, one of the interesting things about it is the way in which the terms within which contemporary change was being interpreted reappeared in historical interpretations. The conceptualization of Irish history in terms of the transition from traditional to modern is probably one of its most prominent characteristics. This contemporary interpretation of social change now seems to have been projected back onto the past so that ever since the onset of colonization Ireland seems to have been involved in a modernization process.

The collapse, or at least standstill, of this supposed transition now calls into question the philosophical basis upon which the interpretations were based. This is to say it calls into question the theoretical framework of Irish history which

underpinned or accompanied the contemporary belief in modernization. For example the modernization view had suggested that development was a product of integration into the capitalist system. This identification of communications and integration with development became a theme in modernization theory. Contemporary experience however suggests that integration and close communication with capitalism does not necessarily lead to development.

This may then call for a reappraisal of the historical role of integration and communication. Closer integration with the metropolitan centre may indeed have lead to underdevelopment. The theoretical analysis of the historical evidence in relation to the Irish colonial experience, suggests that this is the case. The work here then represents a contribution towards what might be called a "revision of revisionism".

Discussion about the problem of social change quickly leads on to the general historical debate about the emergence of modern society. It does not take long to realize that the debate in Ireland about the transition can, and indeed must, be situated within this much broader frame of reference. Furthermore it is clear that there were concrete political and economic issues which placed the problem of development in Ireland very much as part of the international pattern of development.

The present work is an attempt to situate the debate in Ireland about the transition to modern society in the context of these international debates. The concept of modernization is commonly

used to describe this passage from traditional to modern society. These concept itself derives largely from the thinking of classical political economy about development. Marxism emerged as a critique of classical political economy and in a similar fashion neo-Marxism in turn offers a critique of modernization theory. The present work situates the question of development in Ireland within the contrasting perspectives of "modernization" and "neo-Marxist" models of social change.

I have approached this problem starting from the present, making a detour through "revisionist" historiography, and finishing up with a fresh perspective on the present. This involves both describing recent change and tracing the origin of particular interpretations of this change to their source in Western social theory. The next stage in this plan involves a closer look at how the transition actually occurred in Britain and how classical models of social change were based on the British experience. Having identified the key elements of the transition we will be in a better position to examine the Irish case. The following chapters in the work are devoted to precisely this problem.

The issue of the transition is divided into three areas or themes which illustrate the argument. These are the economy, politics and the church. The argument operates on two levels. Firstly, on the theoretical level, the theories of transition are explained and the arguments of various historians and social theorists are situated within the terms of this. Accordingly this work does not claim to make a contribution to Irish history in

the sense of producing any original empirical research on a particular area of study. It is confined, in the main to a critical examination of the large corpus of research already published. In this sense it is more an exercise in social theory or historiography, than of history as it is commonly understood.

My objective is to make explicit, where appropriate, the theoretical presuppositions which govern interpretations of the evidence. To take an example, it is not proposed to question the validity of, say, Louis Cullen's contention that in the course of the seventeenth century: "From a woodland society Ireland was emerging as an agricultural region with a substantial agricultural surplus"(1972.9). What I do wish to question is the sense in which this change can be properly interpreted as a "transition from medieval to modern"(1981.26).

If by modern is meant, as Cullen suggests, that Ireland was coming to resemble England in important ways, then this contention can be challenged on a number of fronts. It can be challenged firstly from a comparative analysis of English and Irish society. Secondly, it can be challenged through an internal analysis of Cullen's work by showing, for example, that the author evades the question of why, if Ireland was modern, it did not become capitalist. Ultimately it can be challenged on theoretical grounds by locating Cullen's theory within the modernization perspective, which is shown to be mistaken about the prerequisites for economic development. The limitations of modernization theory are in turn delineated through a critique from the perspective of the Marxist theory of transition.

An important philosophical issue arises here. This concerns the relationship between the social context and historical interpretation. Having posited a relationship between revisionist history and the social context out of which it originated I may have committed myself to the conclusion that all history, my own included, consists in projecting onto the past the prejudices of the present. In that case I would have to abandon Lord Acton's stricture that history should be our deliverer, "not only from the undue influence of other times, but from the undue influence of our own" (Acton 1960:44). However if I may enlist the support of another eminent historian on my side I hold that my own position has the benefit of precisely this self awareness of the undue influence of our time. As E.H. Carr put it, "the historian who is most conscious of his own situation is also more capable of transcending it, and more capable of appreciating the essential nature of the differences between his own society and outlook and those of other periods or other countries" (1964:44).

## ABSTRACT

The first chapter situates debate on social change in Ireland within the context of the debate on the transition. There are three aspects of this, the economic, the political and the cultural, which provide three themes running through each chapter. I begin by situating Ireland within the international socio-political context. The economic expansion in Ireland is related to the international expansion and the emergence of revisionism is related to the emergence of modernization theory. This is to say that the basic characteristics of the Irish situation are related to the international one.

I then go on to situate these factors within the larger historical context of the development of capitalism and the emergence of bourgeois political economy. The reversal of social change in Ireland is in turn described and related to the international situation. This international situation has promoted the development of a neo-Marxist theory of imperialism as a critique of modernization. The terms of this critique are outlined in terms of mode of production and the conditions for the transition. This sets the scene for the second chapter.

The second chapter deals with the debate on the transition from feudalism to capitalism. On an empirical level the case of the transition in England is used. The basic characteristics of the feudal mode of production in England are described. Following this the process of historical change is described and within the context of the theoretical debate an attempt is made to locate



the determining influences. The debate basically turns upon whether commercialization or class conflict was the determining factor. The evidence in comparison to other countries would seem to suggest that the transformation of class relations was the decisive factor.

Having clarified this issue the next step is to look at Ireland historically within the context of this transition. This involves firstly a reconstruction of the mode of production in Ireland prior to colonization and secondly a delineation of the new mode of production which resulted from a merger with the embryonic capitalist mode. On the basis of the theory of transition we can then set out to explain how the social relations of colonial society obstructed the conditions whereby capital accumulation could take place. The social relations which forced an increase in relative surplus value were not created. Instead the commercialization of society saw a huge increase in output and upon this increase a rentier class developed. In the north-east social relations were different and thus also the form of economic development.

Chapter four examines how the accumulation of industrial capital created areas of different levels of productivity. In Britain the increase in relative surplus value led to a concentration and centralization of production and a massive expansion of output. In Ireland, on the other hand, the social relations enabled no increase in absolute surplus value and created no capital accumulation. The fall in the rate of surplus value reduced the share of surplus available for peasants which

eventually lead to a famine followed by mass emigration and a restructuring of Irish agriculture. This created the social conditions for the Irish land war.

The dual structure which modernization theorists take to be evidence of transition is explained in terms of this question of surplus value. In the North-East social conditions led to an increase in relative surplus value and an accumulation of capital. The logic of concentration and centralization which this involved eventually led to industrialization. This created a further element in the opposition to nationalism.

Chapter five looks at the movement towards the secession of Ireland from Britain within the context of Imperialism or Finance Capital. The logic of industrial concentration and centralization led to the development of national trusts and created intense national rivalry. This led to an international conflict in 1914 and to a subsequent break-up of empires. Ireland was part of this process. The effect of this industrial concentration on Irish agriculture was the centralization of certain agricultural processes combined with the creation of peasant proprietorship. This provided the social basis for the war of independence. In the North-east, on the other hand, capital accumulation had meant a closer integration of the economy and society into Britain which culminated in the successful opposition to Republicanism.

Chapter six brings the debate up to the era of the multinationals and Ireland's reintegration into the international economy. The major feature here is the move away from the export

of primary products to the export of manufactured goods through multinational companies. The effect of this was a commercialization of the economy without the creation of the conditions of capital accumulation. The logic of capital accumulation marginalized Irish industry rather than revolutionizing it. The result was that in the next phase of concentration Ireland was effectively bypassed.

## CHAPTER 1.

### INTRODUCTION

The past is such a curious Creature  
To look her in the Face  
A transport may receipt us  
or a Disgrace

Unarmed if any meet her  
I charge him fly  
Her faded Ammunition  
Might yet Reply

Emily Dickinson

1

... the struggle of man against  
power is the struggle of memory  
against forgetting.

Milan Kundera.

### I. IRELAND IN TRANSITION

The last decade has seen Irish society being rapidly overtaken by its own past. With unemployment on the island now standing at roughly 380,000 and with emigration again reaching haemorrhage proportions, the decades of "development" seem to have sunk into oblivion. Ireland, from this angle, hardly looks European. As for the future, the prospect seems even bleaker. With a state debt, in the Republic, of something in the order of 22,000 million pounds it takes approximately one third of government revenue to pay the interest alone (Tansey 1987). The strategy of cutting public expenditure to reduce this debt seems only guaranteed to accelerate the upward spiral of unemployment which has already passed the crisis point. In spite of this however, there is little on the political front to indicate that the old consensus reflected in the broad-based political parties is being

undermined; class differences have yet to find a clear expression in Irish politics. On top of all this, society is still reeling from a conservative backlash which has seen the defeat of referenda on abortion and divorce and the general ascendancy of a cultural conservatism. Of course there is nothing new about these problems in Ireland. The past few decades simply offered a brief respite from the age-old problems, Farming, Faith and Fatherland. It is this continuity in the three areas of economy, politics and the Church that the following work attempts to explain.

The general sense of bewilderment which people still feel about this situation is symptomatic of the gulf between people's expectations about the nineteen eighties and the harsh reality. The nineteen sixties, the "best of decades", was popularly interpreted as the time when Ireland had at last shaken off its colonial heritage of economic backwardness and cultural isolation as the country moved to take its place among the developed nations of the world. Ireland, as contemporary intellectuals interpreted it, was in a transition from being a provincial backwater to becoming a modern consumerist society. David Thornley, a socialist luminary of the time, eulogized the role in this task of "a devoted handful of twentieth-century men" in the uphill struggle: "the period in which we are now living in Ireland seems to me a transitional one...We are for the first time at the threshold of a delayed peaceful social revolution" he declared. In future, he continued, "our social habits and our politics will take on a flavour that is even more urban and as a consequence even more cosmopolitan". (1964:16)

This evolutionary idea of transition informed most peoples' thinking about change during this time. It was largely based on the idea that as Ireland became more industrialized it would increasingly assume the characteristic features of industrial society. The mushrooming of industrial plants all over the country had made this industrialization process seem inevitable so that the major task was to bring social institutions into line with this. Political pundits never wearied of pronouncing the end of "civil war politics" and the beginning of class politics based on real bread and butter issues. They were, no doubt, encouraged in this belief by the appearance for the first time of the word socialism in the Labour party programme and by assurances that the "seventies would be socialist"[1].

#### 1. The planned economy: "the loveliest garden you ever saw"

The beginning of this economic development in Ireland is usually dated from 1958, the year when the first Programme for Economic Expansion was launched. This programme, along with the publication of the document Economic Development by the Department of Finance, represented "the turning of the tide" as Garret Fitzgerald, "an economic commentator of rigorous intellectual detachment"[2] called it. This programme basically recommended a rejection of the economic policies of protectionism which had prevailed since the early thirties in favour of a liberalization of import and export laws.

The background to this change was the economic crisis of the nineteen fifties which had seen some 400.000 people emigrate during the decade (Blackwell 1982:47). Such was the country's state of dependence on Britain that a team of economic experts, called in to assess the situation, found it to be incompatible with political sovereignty (Rumpf 1977:119). The basic problem as diagnosed by economic advisors at the time was that protection had prevented the price mechanism from ensuring the most efficient use of resources through competition. Furthermore, it was argued that the home market was too small to provide a basis for <sup>the</sup> large manufacturing operations and capital investment required to increase exports (Bew 1982:135). The capital required for increasing the productivity of the economy could only be acquired, it was argued, through a liberalization of trade restrictions.

This turnabout in policy was not as sudden as it appeared to be. The Irish government had received Marshall aid after the war and was under increasing pressure during the fifties to open up to foreign capital [3]. A number of agencies had also been established in line with contemporary ideas about economic development. The Industrial Development Authority was established in 1949, An Foras Tionscail in 1952 and the Institute of Public Administration in 1957. The very idea of a Programme for Economic Expansion, with its emphasis upon "productive" investment and integration into the capitalist economy, was characteristic of this new attitude. In the words of Kenneth Whitaker, a (sagacious) economist at the the Department of Finance, it was necessary to

formulate: "An integrated programme of national development for the next five or ten years which I believe will be critical years for the country's survival as an economic entity" (Dept of Finance 1958:227).

The wide acceptance of this interventionist philosophy in political circles was evidenced some years later in a speech by the then Taoiseach, Sean Lemass who accepted "the proposition that national, economic and social progress will not happen of its own accord, that it has to be planned and organized" (Bew & Patterson 1982:167). The 1958 plan for development had a dual focus on agriculture and industry. An increase in the productivity of agriculture was to provide the basis for an industrial development programme. Agricultural productivity would be increased through mechanization and the consolidation of holdings. The increased exports that this would generate could then be used for investment in industry. Pursuing a policy of "industrialization by invitation", foreign companies were to be offered tax concessions and other incentives to establish branches in Ireland. The people displaced in the agricultural modernization programme would then be able to find employment locally in industry.

The changes which followed the 1958 Programme were dramatic and while they hardly transformed Ireland into Dr Fitzgerald's vision of "the loveliest garden you ever saw", they nevertheless seemed to represent a substantial departure from the past. Because of the suddenness of this change, the post hoc ergo propter hoc reasoning applied to the programme,



however misleading, becomes easier to understand. For example while in 1958 there were 433,000 people or 38% of the workforce employed in agriculture, by 1980 employment in this sector had fallen to 220,000 or 19% (Blackwell 1982:47). This was partly offset by an increase in industrial employment from 257,000 in 1961 to 319,000 in 1978 (Rothman-O'Connell 1982:67). Out of the 200,000 employed in manufacturing in 1979, 80,000 of these were employed by foreign firms based in Ireland (Wickham 1983:168).

This economic change was reflected demographically in increased urbanization and especially in the growth of the population of Dublin which increased by 18% between 1971 and 1981 (Rothman-O'Connell 1982:81). More historic was the recording of the first sustained population growth since the Famine. The total population of the area comprising the twenty-six counties having declined from 6.5 million in 1841 to 2.8 million in 1961, grew to 3.4 million by 1981 (Rothman-O'Connell 1982:76).

## 2. Revisionism

The intellectual ferment that this change generated in the sixties led to a questioning of the nationalist ethos which had prevailed in the country since independence. The fundamental tenet of Irish nationalism was the belief that Ireland's problems, social and economic, were rooted in British colonialism. "A free Ireland", Patrick Pearse had argued, "would not and could not have hunger in her fertile vales and squalour in her cities" (1952:180). In support of this thesis, George O'Brien (1921) the nationalist economist had attributed the

failure of Irish industry during the nineteenth century to the malevolence of British policy. The failure of the Irish Free State to develop after independence seemed to question this but what finally seemed to undermine it was the relative ease with which Ireland seemed to progress during the sixties.

The idea that development in Ireland was incompatible with integration with the international capitalist system now seemed unfounded. Indeed, the argument now went, it was Ireland's isolationism which had retarded development. Debate in the sixties then tended to resolve itself into an opposition between protectionism, and nationalism on the one hand as opposed to the open economy and internationalism on the other. Indeed this intellectual division seemed to be embodied in the very division of Irish society itself into a backward peasant sector and a progressive industrial one. As Ireland became more closely integrated into the international economy this backward sector, it was argued, would be gradually replaced and Ireland would "catch up" with the rest of Europe. Part of the task of development then from this perspective seemed to require a systematic assault on nationalism.

The emerging reinterpretation of the post-independence period clearly shows this. The removal of moral censorship, and other legislation of the post-independence period was transformed into a kulturkampf against cultural and economic protectionism which were believed to stand in the way of development. The opening salvos in this long siege were delivered by Garret Fitzgerald in an attack on "the crippling burden of restraint, subsidies,

feather-bedding and back-scratching" in Irish society (Bew & Patterson (1982:131) [4].

Politically, the civil war gerontocracy passed on, to be replaced by a no nonsense type of politician, personified by Sean Lemass. "Beat the crisis, let's get cracking" was the slogan under which the new leadership seemed to have achieved, by dint of entrepreneurial brashness, what the dreams of de Valera could never have done. "It was to be the historical achievement of Sean Lemass" argued historian Joseph Lee, "to lay the foundations of a new Ireland perhaps destined to endure as long as its immediate predecessor"(Lee 1979:170) This was The Achieving Society in which, by means of an invisible hand, personal success was transformed into a social one. Thus the fact that many of the new leaders made personal fortunes for themselves "making a quarry out of the city", as one writer put it, (Mc Donald 1985:105) only seemed to lend credibility to the association of individual with national success.

The Catholic Church too, the last bastion of traditional Ireland was believed to be on the retreat. Despite the assurances of Archbishop Mc Quaid to the faithful that "No change will worry the tranquillity of your Christian lives " (Lyons 1973:690), it was nevertheless accepted that with the ending of his patriarchate, a new era of secularism would be ushered in. Mass communications, especially television, would play an important part in this by exposing people to ideas in conflict with Catholic teaching. The role that the popular "Late Late Show" was

to play in this process is now an established part of Irish revisionist mythology. The evolution in education was also believed to be an important part of this secularization process. The growing complexity of the economy was believed to be ultimately incompatible with the influence of the Church in education. This sense of euphoria of course is only intelligible against the background of depression and disillusion of the fifties. How this was interpreted is important for understanding the later era.

This spirit of revision was soon directed towards Irish history in what F.S.L.Lyons later called "a revolution in Irish historiography" (1973:7). In view of the recent economic upturn, the events of the nationalist canon seemed to be of less contemporary relevance than factors hitherto ignored. Nationalist historiography had generally viewed Irish history in terms of the development of the nationalist movement in the struggle for independence from Britain, "the history of the dispossessed". "What we must endeavour never to forget is this" urged Douglas Hyde "that the Ireland of today is the descendent of the Ireland of the seventh century, then the school of Europe" (Brown 1981:55). This continuity within Irish history could be seen in the resistance to British rule right from the Gaelic chieftains through to the United Irishmen, to Young Ireland, the Fenians and finally Sinn Fein. The essence of The Separatist Idea was expressed by Tone, Davis, Lalor and Mitchel; "the four gospels of the new testament of Irish nationality" as Pearse called them (1967:183).

From the perspective of the new historiography this tended to obscure the internal developments in Irish society which were of much greater importance in the modernization of society: the development of state structures, the railways, newspapers, education and political parties, or what nationalists took to be Anglicization. Joseph Lee, in the classic text of this new historiography, argued that Ireland's failure to develop economically during the nineteenth century, had less to do with British policy than with the lack of native initiative or entrepreneurial talent [6]. Lee takes this entrepreneurial function to be one of the key factors in economic development. Despite the accepted belief that this economic development was the result of indigenous factors alone it really cannot be understood outside of the international expansion of capitalism.

## II. THE TRANSITION INTERNATIONALLY: THE PASSING OF TRADITIONAL SOCIETY

The post-war international political settlement is the proper starting point for an analysis of the current economic situation. The war itself had resulted partly from the increasing contradiction between the international expansion of German capitalism and the development policies of other states. The conference at Bretton Woods, New Hampshire in 1944 attempted to lay the basis for international free trade through the establishment of a number of regulatory institutions. The two most important of these were the International Monetary Fund and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (the World Bank). These agencies were established with the purpose of

facilitating the expansion of international trade through the elimination of foreign exchange restrictions and the promotion of exchange stability [6]. This itself required a massive investment of funds to get the international economy moving after the war, and in Europe, Marshall aid was the principal means whereby this was done. By 1950 Ireland had received some \$150 million in exchange for "efforts to make currency freely convertible, to liberalize trade and to integrate into the European economy" (O'Hearn 1986:4)

The decade following the war saw a rapid expansion of output in capitalist countries as recovery got underway. Between 1949 and 1956 GNP in the European Community increased by 42% as against 8% in Ireland during the same period (Rothman & O'Connell 1982:65). One aspect of this expansion was the penetration of capitalist products and capitalist methods of production into the non-capitalist world, especially through the agency of the multinational corporation. The direct investments of US-based enterprise in manufacturing in Latin America, for example, increased sixfold between 1950 and 1970 (Warren 1973:25) This meant a shift in importance in the indigenous economy away from export of primary commodities to the export of manufactured goods. In Latin America, manufacturing exports as a percentage of the total increased from 10% in 1955, to 40% by 1975 (Hoogvelt 1982:29). The transformation of the Irish economy was to be part of this international process.

## 1. Modernization: Rapid Transition.

This expansion itself coincided with the movement towards political independence of the former colonial countries. In the first six years of the sixties alone, 38 nations achieved independence. The combination of these political and economic changes led to heightened expectations about the prospects for full scale industrialization along the lines of the already industrialized countries. These expectations were themselves fuelled by capitalist governments supplying technical and economic assistance through the IMF and World Bank in the form of "aid". A phalanx of aid agencies, UNESCO, UNICEF, WHO, ILO, emerged in the capitalist world to tackle the problem of third world development.

Planning agencies were established in many "developing" countries, with financial assistance, whose role it was to draw up "programmes" for national development. The ESRI, established with the assistance of the Ford Foundation, is an example. Formal trade agreements between capitalist and underdeveloped countries such as The Alliance for Progress between the United States and Latin America in 1961, involved an investment of an estimated \$20 billion of American capital in Latin America in exchange for guarantees for the security of American enterprise in those countries (Horowitz 1970:45)

This prospect of planned economic development for whole continents, along with the provision of material aid also involved a theoretical component which eventually gave rise to a

whole new academic discipline of "Development Studies" concerned with the broad issues of development. The basic premise underlying this discipline, and one which inspired development assistance, was the belief, expressed succinctly by one of its major protagonists Daniel Lerner, that "The model of western modernization has universal applicability and relevance, it shows certain components and sequences whose relevance is global" (1958:46).

The idea here then is that the manner in which modern capitalist society evolved out of pre-capitalist society, the modernization process, is a sequence of logical stages through which all modernizing societies must pass. Pre-capitalist or "traditional" societies as they became known, once integrated into the world capitalist market, would follow the course of the already industrialized countries. The task of the development expert then is to draw up a simple outline of western economic development which can act as a blueprint for development elsewhere. The characteristics of each underdeveloped country are matched against the ideal typical features of development and the extent to which each country falls short of the ideal is the distance of development to be travelled. The most influential of such attempts is undoubtedly Walter Rostow's The Stages of Economic Growth (1960). In this book Rostow attempted to set out in simple form, the sequence of stages on the path to modern development. "The stages", argued Rostow, "are not merely descriptions. They have an analytic bone-structure rooted in the dynamic theory of production"(1960:12).



### III. BOURGEOIS SOCIAL THEORY AND THE TRANSITION

This conceptualization of historical development in terms of a series of evolutionary stages, each with its own distinct worldview, does not originate with modernization theory. The contrast between what are taken to be the characteristics of modern society and those of pre-modern society, underlies much modern social theory. Auguste Comte, considered to be the founding father of sociology, divided the history of mankind into three stages; the theological, the metaphysical and the scientific. Later social theorists attempted to describe more clearly those characteristics which distinguish modern from pre-modern society. In terms of social integration, Ferdinand Tonnies distinguished between "Community" in traditional society and "Association" in modern society. Max Weber similarly drew a distinction between the objective form of rationality governing behaviour in modern society and the value form governing traditional society.

These distinctions themselves derive from the vast amount of research into the transition from pre-modern to modern industrial society. This transition involves a combination of economic, political and cultural development each of which is seen to have its own evolution. Certain broad, common characteristics are evident however and leave their imprint on modernization theory. There is Liberalism in the general political and economic sense which involves a rejection of the authority of tradition in favour of rationalized authority. Politically this means the democratization of society, the transfer of power from the few to

the many, and the involvement of the masses in the political process. Related to this is economic liberty, the freedom of the market and the absence of restraint upon the purchase and sale of goods and labour.

This combination of developments is believed to be part of the logic of the evolution of modern society regardless of time or place. Because it has no concept of development other than that which is believed to characterize western industrial society, it offers a misleading explanation of changes occurring in countries like Ireland. Policies which lead to development in one era or country can prevent development in another country, and because of the unevenness of development, the concepts of traditional and modern lose any explanatory value. A critique of the evolutionary aspect of development must be preceded by a closer examination of each of the key aspects.

#### 1. The Sovereignty of The Market.

Economically the origin of modern society is believed to begin with the operation of the free market. Adam Smith argued that given the right circumstances of political liberty, a natural effort of everyone to better their condition materially will, combined with "a propensity to truck, barter, and exchange one thing for another", lead inevitably to an increase in the wealth of nations (1974:117). Smith's reasoning here was that self interest acts as a driving power to guide men to whatever work society is willing to pay for. However, a community activated

only by self interest would quickly become a despotism. Competition in Smith's view was what prevented this. A man who lets his self interest run away with him by charging too much will find that competitors have moved in to take his trade from him. The result then, of self interest tempered by competition, is the provision of those goods society wants, in the quantities it desires and at the prices it is prepared to pay.

This inevitably in Smith's view would lead to an accumulation of capital because this was, he argued, the best way to reduce costs. Competition then inevitably leads to an increase in the wealth of society by increasing the productivity of labour through its division into specialized tasks. Thus by the operation of an "invisible hand" the selfish motives of individuals are transformed into the common good. Extend this theory onto the international level and we get an explanation of the development of capitalism. The basic problem here, as Robert Brenner points out, is that the theory presupposes the existence of capitalist social relations (1977:35). It assumes firstly a free mobility of labour and competition which forces an increase in the productivity of labour and secondly that through continued specialization productivity will continued to be improved.

## 2. Civil Society.

Politically the beginning of modern society is marked by the overthrow of the absolutist state and the gradual democratization of the political process. Liberty in the market place is connected with political liberty. The kind of economic

organization that provides economic freedom also promotes political freedom, argues Milton Friedman, because it separates economic power from political power (1962:9) [7]. A society with an increasingly complex economy needs a non-arbitrary system of government. What was established through revolutionary action in England, and later in other countries, was a system whereby the government was placed in a form of market situation. The government was treated as the supplier of goods necessary for the smooth operation of the free market capitalist economy. The government could then be made responsive to the demands of those it was expected to cater for, by making them subject to periodic elections at which they could be "cashiered for misconduct" in the immortal words of Dr Price [8].

Thus the liberal state was a system of multiple parties whereby governments could be held responsible to different sections of society who had a vote. The job of the competitive party system was to keep the government responsive to changes in the nature of market society. To make the choice an effective one, certain other liberties were required; freedom of association, freedom to form political parties, freedom of the press, freedom of speech etc. It was these freedoms which insured the gradual incorporation of all sections of society into the political process. The gradual accumulation of capital then had as its eventual result the political confrontation of the two leading economic interests in society, the bourgeoisie and the working class.

Political democracy however was not the basis upon which liberalism or civil society developed. The opposite was the case. Democracy did not come until after the liberal state was established and the capitalist market was in operation. The function of democracy was to ensure the reproduction of capitalist social relations and the operation of the free market. However in a situation where long-term structural transformations to lay the basis for economic development are required, liberal democracy may prove an obstacle. The extension of this political scenario outside of the industrial European countries depended upon a similar type of economic development.

However, as nineteenth century European history shows us, the extension of the capitalist market into non-capitalist areas did not result in the establishment of capitalist relations of production. In Ireland, for example, integration into the British capitalist economy did not lead to a development similar to that which was occurring in Britain. This created a different set of social relations and different interests which in turn became the basis for a different politics. Because of this, Irish politics cannot be understood within the same framework as the politics of industrial society.

#### IV. THE BREAKDOWN OF THE TRANSITION IN IRELAND

##### 1. Economic.

The application of this modernization model to Irish development presupposed, as we explained, the smooth transition to industrial society. Unfortunately however, the expected

transition has not occurred in the manner in which the planners and intellectuals thought it would. For well over a decade it has become evident that while dramatic changes have occurred, their effects have been much more uneven than was anticipated. Taking the twin aspects of the economic plan we can see this clearly. The dramatic decrease of 19% in the agricultural workforce was only partly compensated by a 7% increase in industrial workers (Blackwell 1982:47). The result was that the extra workers were absorbed into the service and state sectors. Between 1960 and 1980 public service employment expanded by 62% (Rothman & O'Connell 1982:67). The task of financing this, combined with the provision of huge financial incentives to the multinationals who caused this displacement, involved the state in a massive increase in public spending. For example, between the years 1958 and 1972, the ratio of state expenditure (current and capital) to GNP rose from 27% to 42% (Parker & Driver 1975:2).

This decrease in productive workers combined with an increase in public spending made possible by foreign borrowing ran totally counter to government planning programmes. Indeed the extent to which later development diverged from the economic programme makes questionable the exact function of economic planning in Ireland. The 1958 Programme for Economic Expansion had stated that in future "Any external borrowing will be confined to the financing of productive projects" (Blackwell 1982:53). In fact a lot of the government investment of this era went into establishing the infrastructure for multinational investment; telephone systems, roads, etc. The expected linkages that these

multinationals were to generate with the local economy never really developed. Only 16% of inputs on average are purchased locally while in some cases the figure is as low as 3% (Kelly 1984:17).

When this type of investment began to go elsewhere, the state was involved in massive financial commitments with a decreasing economic base from which to pay it. The government's ability to reverse this downward spiral was negligible, given its dependence on the international situation. Irish exports as a percentage of total manufacture rose from 17.1% in 1958 to 54.4% in 1980. (While) on the other hand the overall labour force was 50,000 less in 1979 than in 1951 (Rottman & O'Connell 1982:69). The possibility of planning economic development within this framework became very unlikely. Indeed such was Ireland's dependence that as one economist had it, economic development became less a matter of good planning than "a matter of good marketing" (O'Hearn 1986:10).

The impact of these changes upon the Irish social structure was not quite what was envisaged either. Society undoubtedly became more urbanized but the urban proletariat which was supposed to develop on this basis has not materialized. In fact the multinational penetration has contributed to a shift in the balance of employment away from working class and small farmer, towards lower middle class white collar jobs (Rottman & O'Connell 1982:72). This itself is a symptom of a much more fundamental shift in the Irish economy away from a basis in

agrarian radicalism and native industry towards large farmers, merchants, state functionaries and foreign capital. This new economic situation expresses itself in a cleavage between the modern hi-tech economy and the traditional agricultural economy which seem to have little connection with each other. The connection only becomes apparent when some crisis lays bare the skeleton of Irish society. The crisis caused by poor harvests of 1984 and 1985 revealed the almost pre-Newtonian character of the Irish economy. Similarly the "aid" package which accompanied the Hillsborough agreement was another example of Ireland's Homeland status within the European Community [9].

## 2. Political.

The cleavage in Irish society fails to find expression in class terms and is expressed instead in the division between the so-called modern progressive elements in society, based on the hi-tech economic enclave and having a definite interest in the dominance of foreign capital, and the traditional elements, workers, small farmers etc supporting native enterprise. Ireland is seen as a dual society in which a transition to modern society depends upon the extension of the values of the core or modern area to the outlying traditional periphery. Ireland, in the considered view of political theorist Tom Garvin is a "periphery dominated centre". Normal political development in Ireland is, he argues, "complicated by the tendency of Westerners to move East and to bring their political culture and loyalties with them" (1974:313). What is at basis an economic problem then, has been displaced, in typical Irish fashion, on to the



cultural level.

The shortcomings of this evolutionary theory of modernization in Ireland can be seen in relation to the question of nationalism. A major tenet of modernization, as was explained earlier, is the idea that nationalism or "civil war politics" is an anachronism in the era of European integration when the nation state is allegedly becoming obsolete. Nationalism is anachronistic because it places outworn cultural ideals above material self interest. It supposedly fails to appreciate that economic self interest is furthered through international integration and not through struggles between nations. Nationalism in the Republic is seen from this perspective as a sentiment of those traditional elements yet to be converted to a modern outlook. The understanding of the situation in Ireland then seems to constantly resolve itself into the two extremes of nationalism and modernization. The irony is of course that the current crisis is beginning to be seen as a direct result of those policies of international integration and nationalism is being seen again in a positive role. Beyond the antinomies of nationalism and modernization however intellectual life in Ireland ceases to exist.

Yet while a historical analysis will show that nationalism offers no long term solution to problems in Ireland it will also show that nationalism was not the cause of those problems. Nationalism, it will be argued here, was a response, albeit an inadequate one, to the problem of colonialism which confronted Ireland during the emergence of modern society. In industrial

society, as we saw, once the accumulation of capital had attained a momentum of its own, a complex of subsidiary institutions developed around it competing for influence. These institutions themselves acted as a buffer between the state and the mass of the people. It was on the basis of these that political parties developed.

In the pre-industrial formation, the social basis for these types of institution did not exist. In these social formations state action was virtually unmediated. It is into this vacuum that the nationalist movement as a mediator between people and colonial state originates. The extent to which class politics supercedes nationalism then will depend upon the extent to which the social basis for nationalism is replaced. One part of the analysis of the transition will be concerned with the extent to which this occurred.

The situation in the North is further overdetermined by the colonial issue. The Unionist population there defends a dependent relationship with Britain in order to secure a dominant position within the society. The modernization process in the North has undermined this dominant position and provoked a reaction by Unionists. This further exacerbates nationalism because the nationalist working class in the North recognize that the only way they will achieve basic liberties is through a defeat of Unionism which means British withdrawal.

### 3. Catholic Church.

The continuing importance of religion and the Church is the

other aspect which modernization has failed to properly explain. The power of the Catholic Church to mobilize people against the abortion and divorce issues came as an embarrassment to people long schooled in modernization theory. No doubt the spectacle of the faithful from the "thin faced parishes" of rural Ireland flocking to see moving statues, reassured them that Irish Catholicism is after all a peasant phenomenon. All the indications however are to the contrary. The Catholic Church is very much part of the fabric of Ireland of the multinationals. Indeed, in an era when the other great cohesive force in Irish society, nationalism, is becoming a divisive issue, Catholicism as a cross class ideology becomes all the more important. The fracturing of society in the modernization process creates the need for a binding force which Catholicism attempts to be.

Can it be said therefore that the Catholic Church is an obstacle to change. The question we are concerned with here is the extent to which the Catholic Church affected the transition to capitalist society. The Protestant ethic thesis of capitalist development expressed by Max Weber and others before him holds that the Catholic Church acts as an obstacle to development of a vigorous bourgeois economic outlook. In Ireland, one version of this thesis was argued by Horace Plunkett at the turn of the century. Plunkett held that Catholicism retarded the development of an achieving ethos which was, in his view, an essential precondition for the development of capitalism: "the reliance of that religion on authority, its repression of individuality, and its complete shifting of what I may call the moral centre of

gravity to a future existence...appear to me calculated , unless supplemented by other influences, to check the growth of the qualities of initiative and self-reliance"(1905:101). Another version of this argument was put forward by Emmett Larkin (1976) who attributed the lack of capital accumulation in nineteenth century Ireland to the appropriation of surplus by the church in its building programme.

The power of the Catholic church in Ireland however cannot be taken as evidence of an obstructionary role even if one accepts Smith's idea about the importance of the entrepreneurial ethos. The colonial situation in Ireland effectively prevented the emergence of a native bourgeoisie and its characteristic institutions which had in capitalist countries deposed the church. The church was then in the position of power due to the colonial position, which at the same time threatened this position by total integration. To become totally British would secularize society while independence and the development of bourgeois society would also challenge its influence. Either a total colonization or total independence then threatened the powerful mediating position of the church.

This contradiction within the church can be seen in its role in the educational system where a process of colonization was combined with the maintenance of a separate identity. If we accept Robert Brenner's contention (1977:78) that the development of capitalism required initially the creation of the social conditions for capitalist development then the question of the role of the church must focus on the extent to which it helped to

maintain existing social relations.

#### 4. Nationalism: The Return of The Repressed.

Despite the collapse of the economic, political and cultural expectations generated by the "development era" there has as yet been no serious attempt to reappraise the intellectual premises upon which they stood. Economic policy is still based upon an open market philosophy despite Ireland's obvious competitive disadvantage and the consequences of this disadvantage. Politically the five major parties in the Republic have been unable to formulate a vision of any alternative future for their society.

They have not been helped in this by an intelligentsia which remains imprisoned within a theory of social development which is of little relevance to the Irish situation. The idea of Ireland "catching up" with the rest of Europe is still the dominant image. There seems to be implicit faith in the idea that closer integration with Europe will necessarily mean a similar type of development. And yet if anything is evidenced from the study of Irish history it is that closer integration with economically more advanced areas does not guarantee a similar type of development. The Union of Ireland and Britain in 1801 was not followed by a similar form of development in both countries. The failure of the policies of recent decades shows a structural continuity with the past.

It was precisely this argument, as was indicated above, which was fundamental to nationalist historiography in that it attributed Ireland's underdevelopment to British imperialism. "A nation cannot" argued Arthur Griffith, "promote and further its civilization and its social progress equally as well by exchanging agricultural products for manufactured goods as by establishing a manufacturing power of its own"(Probert 1978.38) The source of Griffith's inspiration was the German economist Fredrich List who had argued that German economic development and the principles of classical political economy were not compatible. Griffith founded Sinn Fein to further this argument in Ireland. The movement of Irish nationalism then carried with it an alternative vision of development to that of the accepted capitalist one.

In this sense Irish nationalism is bound up with the anti-colonial movement of this century and the struggle against imperialism and can only be understood in this context. The struggle against modernization philosophy in the present era is in many ways an extension of this anti-imperialist struggle. The same issues are involved here, namely, whether the development of underdeveloped countries, cultural, political and economic is promoted by integration into the capitalist system. The struggle in Ireland is again very much part of the international one and the whole discourse of modernization in Ireland cannot be understood outside of this international context. It is to this international context we must now turn to locate the Irish debate.

The impact that the capitalist model of development has had upon Irish intellectual life through modernization theory is all pervasive. The image of the free market as the agent of progress is one example. There is a failure among historians and economists in Ireland to understand the contradictory nature of the impact of the market on an underdeveloped country such as Ireland. This contradiction means that the availability of the products and services of capitalist society is incompatible with the requirements of capitalist accumulation.

Politically the influence of the modernization model is evident in the inability to account for the anomalies of the Irish situation. Despite the ostensible existence of a liberal democratic system, many aspects of the Irish political process contradict this. The persistence of brokerage or clientelist type politics in Ireland and the failure of class politics to find institutional expression points to a more fundamental structural difference in Irish society. This structural difference derives from the contradiction between the integration of Ireland into the international capitalist system and the requirements of economic development. Ireland's integration into the system has produced a form of liberal democracy. This form of political process evolved as part of the development of capitalist society. Whether this political system is compatible with the long term planning requirements of underdeveloped countries is debatable.

V. UNDERDEVELOPMENT, THE COLLAPSE OF MODERNIZATION  
AND THE MARXIST THEORY OF TRANSITION.

One could show further examples of where the modernization model of development has been unable to explain the uneven character of development in Ireland. The development of the Irish economy and society has followed a path different from that of the developed industrial countries and requires a different theoretical model to adequately understand it. Ireland is not alone in this development. Despite the expectations generated by development experts, it has for a long time been obvious that in the so-called developing world, the type of development expected is not actually taking place. Of an estimated four billion people in the world in 1978, 2,200 million lived in 39 countries whose per capita income was less than \$360 per annum. The American figure at this time was \$9,590 (Hoogvelt 1982:17). Instead of following the path already traced by the developed countries, they are, as one economist put it, going through "a process that economies that have achieved a high level of development have not necessarily passed" (Furtado 1973:34) This is to say that underdeveloped countries are not simply at the stage that the developed countries were at two centuries ago, but are rather going through a particular type of development process themselves which can be described as underdevelopment.

Economically, underdevelopment is characterized by underemployment, both quantitatively in terms of unemployment and qualitatively in terms of low productivity of labour. In the underdeveloped economy agriculture and raw materials exporting



tends to predominate, while manufactured goods in general tend to be imported. The other side of this is the importance of multinational enclaves within the economy, exporting high productivity goods. The underdeveloped economy then tends to divide between a modern and a traditional sector. Politically, underdevelopment is characterized by the incorporation of the masses into the political project of the ruling class, and the absence of an institutionalized socialist opposition. Culturally, underdevelopment is often characterized by the dominance of other loyalties other than class, whether they be regional, linguistic or religious. In this case a church or a quasi-nationalist movement can provide the framework within which people collectively express their differences.

The idea that capitalism and development can be incompatible is not new. We have already identified it as an aspect of early Irish nationalism. The success of the communist revolutions in Russia, China and Cuba, in avoiding the path of underdevelopment lent weight to this argument. In the aftermath of the second world war when modernization theory was in the ascendent, an attempt was made to link the political and economic struggle in the colonies. It was argued that development could not follow unless economic independence was combined with political independence. The Bandung conference of African and Asian countries in 1955 established a non-aligned block of countries outside of the East-West confrontation. Leaders like Abdul Gamel Nasser of Egypt and Jawaharlal Nehru of India, as leaders of this movement, became internationally powerful.

In theoretical support of this position the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) argued that conventional economic theory as expounded in developed capitalist countries was inadequate for dealing with the problems of underdevelopment. Its president Raul Prebisch argued that primary products, upon which underdeveloped countries depended, were faced with a long-term secular decline in their terms of trade. This resulted partly from the fact that the industrial countries' income elasticity for these exports was declining while the underdeveloped countries' income elasticity for manufactured goods was increasing (Prebisch 1950).

It was this political development and especially the colonial wars of the 1950s and 1960s that led to a refocusing of anti-imperialist theory on the non-capitalist world. The increasing contrast between the industrial west and underdeveloped third world and the contrast between the militancy of sections of the underdeveloped world and the quiescent workers movements in the west, led to a revision of socialist economics and an emphasis upon the "third world" as the possible source of international change. The most prominent among the earliest of these economists were Paul Sweezy and Paul Baran. Baran in his The Political Economy of Growth (1957), working within a Marxist framework, attempted to explain the failure of the transition to capitalist society in the underdeveloped world in terms of a modern theory of imperialism. To understand the basis of this we must understand the basis of Marxist political economy.

## 1. Marxist political economy.

The object of analysis of Marx' major work, Capital, was the capitalist mode of production. Marx saw the evolution of society in terms of a succession of modes of production. A mode of production is characterized by the manner in which the surplus produced in society is appropriated and distributed. Upon this basis the social relations within which people live are determined [10]. The capitalist mode of production is characterised by generalized commodity production in which society is divided into two classes, the bourgeoisie, owning the means of production, and the proletariat owning nothing but their labour power.

Marx saw capitalism as a historically specific mode of production which was preceded by feudalism and would be succeeded by communism. In contrast to Smith and other bourgeoisie economists Marx saw the entrepreneurial ethos as a product of capitalism and not as its basis. Because of this historical approach, an important part of the analysis of capitalism in Capital was the dynamic or dialectic which impelled the system forward. Because he was dealing with capitalism in Britain, Marx in Capital was concerned specifically with the transition from feudalism to capitalism and from capitalism to communism. Elsewhere he looked at the problem of the transition of non-Feudal societies to capitalism. This difference is of great importance in the Irish case where Feudal society never really existed.

The transition from feudalism to capitalism has traditionally been a subject of debate among Marxist historians. Controversy has centered on the relative importance of economic and political factors in the transformation. The first approach represented by Paul Sweezy (1975) and others, emphasizes the corrosive effect of mercantile activity and commercialization upon the feudal system. "The root cause of the decline of feudalism was the growth of trade" he argued. The alternative approach represented by Maurice Dobb (1975) and Robert Brenner (1974) among others emphasizes the importance of the transformation of production relations, the creation of a proletariat and bourgeoisie. Mercantile activity can explain how more of what is produced is turned into commodities, but it does not explain how and why labour itself should become a commodity.

This seems to have been the position adopted by Marx on the question. "The process therefore which creates the capital-relation" Marx argued "can be nothing other than the process which divorces the worker from the ownership of the conditions of his own labour; it is a process which operates two transformations, whereby the social means of subsistence and production are turned into capital, and the immediate producers are turned into wage-labourers". In Chapter 2 the question of how the transition occurred in England is discussed in more detail.

The transition from feudalism to capitalism in Europe involved the expansion of European influence worldwide. This automatically

raises the question of the worldwide expansion of the capitalist system. That this was a logical development was accepted by the early classical economists and even Marx himself. In The Communist Manifesto he argued that capitalism "creates a world after its own image". "England has to fulfill a double mission in India" he argued in Capital vol 3 "one destructive, the other regenerating --the annihilation of old Asiatic society and the laying of the material foundation of Western society in Asia"(1972:327).

However if we accept that feudalism did not exist in the areas where the European powers colonized, we must also accept that the contradiction within the feudal system which laid the basis for capitalism would be absent. The agent for the transformation, in this case, Marx argued would be commercialization. "The cheap prices of its [capitalism's] commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls"(1967:84). This idea that commercialization alone could lead to a transition to capitalist society was of course precisely the argument he had opposed in relation to European society.

## 2. World System Theorists: The Primacy of Exchange.

Within Marx's own model of capitalist expansion it has, however been possible to explain the failure of the capitalist mode of production to develop in colonial societies. Several versions of this neo-Marxist theory of underdevelopment have been in currency. These can be distinguished from each other by the manner in which they define the capitalist system itself. The

first group are what can be called the "world system" theorists, among whom Immanuel Wallerstein and Andre Gunder Frank are the best known. Wallerstein defines the world system as "a single division of labour comprising multiple systems, multiple political entities and even different modes of surplus appropriation"(1980:5). The basic concept Wallerstein and Frank are working with here is that of surplus utilization on which Paul Baran had founded his theory of capitalist development. Baran's argument was that the rate and direction of economic development in a country depends on the size and mode of utilization of the economic surplus (1957:158). The economic surplus is the difference between a society's output and its consumption.

Baran's basic argument was that in underdeveloped countries, imperialism had created a wide gap between the "actual" surplus and the "potential" surplus which could be mobilized to generate an independent economic development (1957:132). Starting from this proposition the world system theorists argue that capitalism is an international system of exchange divided into a core of developed countries and a periphery of underdeveloped countries. The core countries have developed because they have appropriated the surplus of the underdeveloped countries. As Frank puts it "the metropolis expropriates economic surplus from its satellites and appropriates it for its own economic development. The satellites remain underdeveloped for lack of access to their own surplus"(1971:33). Development and underdevelopment then are part of a single economic structure and process which we call

capitalism.

A number of conclusions follow from this analysis which are relevant for the Irish situation. Firstly this theory of underdevelopment agrees in certain respects with the nationalist theory which attributed Ireland's underdeveloped state to the transfer of the economic surplus out of the country by absentee landlords in the past and through the national debt today. Secondly, following from this, it is argued that breaking the connection with international capitalism will lead to an independent capitalist development. Frank argues that the underdeveloped countries experience "their most classically capitalist industrial development if and when their ties to the metropolis are weakest"(1970:10).

### 3.Mode of Production: The Primacy of Class Struggle.

The world system theory then by emphasizing the importance of exchange in the process of development and underdevelopment uses a similar argument to that which explained the transition from feudalism to capitalism in terms of the growth of trade. As against this other Marxist political economists such as Robert Brenner, Maurice Dobb and Ernesto Laclau, have emphasized the importance of the transformation of social relations as the motive force behind economic development. Laclau's criticism of Frank is that he "totally dispenses with relations of production in his definitions of capitalism and feudalism"(1977:23).The idea that development depends upon the appropriation of surplus through colonialism is not compatible with the Marxist view of

capitalist development as a function of the tendency towards capital accumulation via an increase in the productivity of labour, which is itself a product of the class relations of free wage labour.

Thus the mode of utilization of the surplus is itself determined by the manner in which the surplus is appropriated from the direct producers. Only by explaining the obstacles to the transition to the conditions of competitive wage labour, or in other words to a different form of surplus appropriation, will we explain the causes of underdevelopment. Thus the development of capitalism is determined by the outcome of a class struggle in which, as Brenner puts it, "the methods the extractors were obliged to use to increase their surplus corresponded to the needs of development of the productive forces"(1977:68).

Our essential task then, in the following chapters, is to construct a critique of the modernization theory of transition from a Marxist perspective. The first stage in this will be an analysis of the transition from feudalism to capitalism in England and the various theories offered to explain this. The next step is to look at the colonization of the Gaelic clan society in Ireland and the creation of colonial society out of a fusion of two different social formations. Having done this we can examine different explanations of this period in terms of the debate between Marxists and classical theorists on the question of the transition to capitalism. Within this broad framework the contributions of Irish historians, nationalists and modernizationists, can be situated. Once the terms of this debate



are established, the succeeding chapters will seek to build the argument against the modernization approach in terms of specific conditions in Ireland and the failure of the transition to industrial society.

NOTES

[1] The Labour party even dropped the phrase "Workers Republic" from its constitution in the 1930s on request of the Hierarchy. (Donal Nevin "Labour and the Political Revolution" in F.Mc Manus ed 1968 p.65)

[2]. See B.Chubb and P.Lynch (1969) for the civil service view of this era. The quotation is from Lynch, page 118.

[3] "In 1948, the Americans made Ireland an offer it couldn't refuse: ECA counterpart funds, or "Marshall Aid". Before any dollars were committed, negotiations took place about the preconditions that would make Ireland "worthy" of aid... In order to receive Marshall Aid Ireland had been forced to join the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC)" (O'Hearn 1986.3-5).

[4] By a strange irony what may have been the final assault in that siege, "Constitutional Crusade", was also lead by the Taoiseach Garrett Fitzgerald.

[5] "it was less the lack of mineral than of mental resources that inflicted on Ireland the slowest rate of growth of national income in western Europe"(Lee 1973.35).

[6] Hayter (1971) provides a comprehensive overview of the political nature of these institutions. "The Fund (IMF) clearly promoting the United States' point of view began to see its major objective not as the provision of additional international liquidity freely available to members, but as the achievement of the multilateralization of trade and the elimination of currency restrictions." (1971.38).

[7] "The kind of economic organization that provides economic freedom directly, namely competitive capitalism, also promotes political freedom because it separates economic power from political power and in this way enables one to offset the other." (Friedman 1962.9).

[8] This demand was quoted disapprovingly by Edmund Burke in his Reflections on the Revolution in France (1791.279). It was taken up again and supported by Thomas Paine in his Rights of Man (1791) in opposition to Burke and what Paine called "The vanity and presumption of governing beyond the grave" (1791.63)

[9] "Aid", says Hayter, "is in general available to countries whose internal political arrangements, foreign policy alignments, treatment of foreign private investment, debt-servicing record, export policies, and so on, are considered desirable, potentially desirable, or at least acceptable, by the countries or institutions providing aid" (1971.15).

[10] "The specific economic form in which unpaid surplus labour is pumped out of the direct producers determines the relations of rulers and ruled. (Marx 1867.791)

## CHAPTER 2.

### THE TRANSITION FROM FEUDALISM TO CAPITALISM: THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF CLASS STRUGGLE AND COMMERCIALIZATION.

Wealth, howsoever got, in England makes  
Lords of Mechanics, gentlemen of rakes.  
Antiquity and birth are needless here,  
'Tis impudence and money makes a peer.

-D.DEFOE, The True-born Englishman

#### I. TRANSITION DEBATE

Because the nature of the pre-capitalist mode of production is an important determinant of the type of development which follows it, an understanding of the mode of production prior to the development of capitalism is of crucial importance. In England, where the transition first occurred, feudalism was the dominant mode of production. Much of the subsequent debate about the transition therefore has tended to use England as the model for future development. The work of Karl Marx is a case in point. It is important in this context to bear in mind however that because England was the first society to make the transition its development was in fact in many respects unique. Alone of all the capitalist societies the transition there was not confronted by another developed capitalist society. It differs further from colonial societies because combined with the fact that those countries are attempting to develop in competition with capitalist countries it must also be remembered that modes of production other than feudalism preceded colonialism in those societies.

The point at issue here in the debate on the transition is whether commercialization, the increase in trade and the power of merchants, was the motive force of the transition or whether it was itself the result of other more fundamental developments. Paul Sweezy (1976) holds that "the root cause of the decline of feudalism was the growth of trade (1976:41). As against this it is argued that that these developments were the outcome of a struggle between the landed interest and the peasantry in which landlords were forced to increase relative rather than absolute surplus value. The enormous increase in labour productivity, which was what capitalism essentially was, was brought about by a combination of circumstances which meant that such an increase was the only option for those wishing to increase their surplus. In other words, as Robert Brenner points out, the new mode of surplus appropriation forced an accumulation of capital.

It was this contradiction whereby the thwarting of the landlord interest lead to a development of the productive forces which, it is argued, was the motor force behind the other developments. The commercialization of society which occurred during this era, which Sweezy (1976) and Moore (1966) holds to be the determinant of change, was in Brenner's and Dobb's view, simply the result of a more fundamental change in social relations. Moore argues that, "Among the most decisive determinants influencing the course of subsequent evolution are whether or not the landed aristocracy has turned to commercial agriculture and, if so, the form this commercialization has taken"(1966:419). This, in Brenner's view, is to mistake an effect

for a cause. In other words production for the market in itself does not necessarily lead to an increase in agricultural productivity and the development of industry.

The contrast between the transition in capitalist society and the failure of development in colonial society clearly shows this. The basic difference according to the Dobb-Brenner thesis is that the contradiction or conflict between the classes in society did not lead to an accumulation of capital. After colonial society was established, the power of the landed interest was such that the surplus could be increased by forcefully squeezing the peasantry: in other words by increasing the absolute as opposed to the relative surplus value. Thus, in this sense the transition or what Marx described as the era of primitive accumulation was less the accumulation of money than the creation of the social relations of capitalist development.

#### I. THE CONFLICT BETWEEN LORD AND PEASANT IN THE DESTRUCTION OF FEUDALISM.

The origins of feudalism in Britain date back to the demise of the Roman colony there. The Roman Empire, through its military apparatus, had imposed a degree of centralization and unification within the territories it controlled. After its breakup in the early Middle Ages, this centralized authority which had tied most of Western Europe together, disintegrated. In its aftermath was left a multiplicity of parcelized statelets each operating in a more or less autonomous manner. The basic unit of the feudal system was the manor. Around this nucleus a subject peasantry cultivated the soil, the surplus from which was appropriated by

the Lord or vassel. Around this basic structure a complex social system developed the chief characteristic of which was its ecclesiastical nature [1].

Brenner's and Dobb's argument now is that within this feudal system, a basic contradiction between landlords and serfs or peasantry was developing which was eventually to undermine the whole system and to create the conditions for capitalist development. The resolution of this contradiction in England involved the gradual commercialization and demilitarization of the English landed aristocracy, the enclosure of land and the expulsion of the peasantry. It involved the centralization of state structures and the usurpation of ecclesiastical authority. As against this Sweezy and others argue that it was the prior expansion of trade, first after the Crusades and later after the colonization of the Americas, which lead to the dissolution of feudalism by offering an escape route for oppressed peasants: "the rise of towns, which were the centres and breeders of exchange economy, opened up to the servile population of the countryside the prospect of a freer and better life"(1976:43).

#### 1. Growth of the cash nexus and peasant power.

Until the early middle ages no significant economic developments had taken place since the end of the Neolithic revolution, circa 2500 B.C. Society then suddenly began to find its way out of this impasse. The water wheel began to be applied to a number of industrial processes. Sailing, printing, spinning and agriculture were all revolutionized. Indeed the Middle Ages,

suggests one writer, "introduced machinery into Europe on a scale no civilization had previously known"(Gimpel 1976:1) The extent of this revolution can be gauged partly from its effect on the population which is estimated to have doubled between 1000 and 1300 A.D (Hunt& Sherman 1981:13). Its impact upon relations between Lord and serf was complex. The general increase in output made a larger surplus available to the Lords. This promoted commercialization and the consumption of luxury goods, spices etc, which were available as a result of the crusades.

This increase in commercialization lead to a substitution of money rents for labour services required of the serf or a "commutation of dues" as it is called. It also increased the demand for English wool, "the most sought after wool in Europe"(Gimpel 1975:46), which competed with serfs for use of land and thus placed the nobility in a strong position relative to the serfs.As the population increased there was an increase in the demand and the price of food due to demand and a lowering of the price of labour due to its abundance. An increase in the overall wealth therefore, was combined with an immiseration of a large section of the population. This circumstance more than any accounts for the devastation of the Black Plague which in 1348 claimed an average of 40% of the population of Europe (Gimpel 1975:211).

The century following the plague was something of a golden age for those who survived. The population was virtually halved and the stock of capital doubled. The price of wheat was halved in some areas while the price of labour was increased which meant a

significant increase in incomes (Abel 1968:216). This high cost of labour combined with the low cost of food considerably strengthened the position of serfs as against landlords. This situation prompted the feudal class to use its military superiority to re-impose feudal conditions. Such a reaction was indeed tried all over feudal Europe and the frequency of peasant rebellion during this time is a testimony to this. One of the most famous of such rebellions was the 1381 peasant uprising in England. "Things cannot go well in England" proclaimed John Ball "til everything be made common".

Although the peasants were defeated feudalism was only reimposed in certain parts of Europe, mostly in the East. The reason for this is a matter of debate. Robert Brenner argues that this reaction failed in Western Europe in general because of the entrenched position of the peasantry there. No doubt other factors were involved here such as the low population in England. However the major factor, as Brenner and Dobb see it, was that because landlords were unable to increase the surplus appropriated from peasants by tying them to the land, they instead opted to increase their income through an increase in productivity. In Eastern Europe, on the other hand, landlord dominance led precisely to a second serfdom because landlords were in a position to squeeze more out of peasants through an increase in absolute surplus value. While the market principle therefore was related to the decline of serfdom in the West, in Eastern Europe, by contrast, an established market in the West allowed the production of a single crop from a Latifundist type



economy: a second serfdom.

In England a number of factors converged which explain its precocious development. Firstly there was the demand for English wool on the continent, the most sought after wool in Europe, which made sheep farming a lucrative enterprise. Sheep farming was however a land extensive and labour extensive enterprise which required the enclosure of land formerly used for communal grazing. The landed upper classes in England, unlike their European counterparts, "wanted, not men, but land for sheep raising"(Moore 1966:460). This was made possible in England firstly because the population had been reduced from 4 to 2.5 million as a result of the plague (Hunt&Sherman 1981:18). Secondly, England being an island, a numerous peasantry was less important for defence purposes than on the continent where the build up of troop-strength was an indispensable condition of survival for Renaissance monarchies. This absence of a standing army meant also that "taxation was relatively light by the standards of the continent where crown and aristocracy combined to lay heavy burdens on the peasantry" (Hill 1969:101).

## II. THE ABSOLUTIST STATE

Ultimately however the transformation of feudal relationships in England required the conversion of the political and juristictional relationships of feudalism into purely economic ones. This involved the enforcement of a new concept of private property and the right to enclose common land. In place of the rights and duties of feudalism, the creation of landed

proprietorship in England reduced the relationship between Lord and peasant to a purely monetary one. Private property in land enabled the owner to devote it to the most profitable use which was at this time sheep rearing. This new relationship however could only be granted and maintained by a superior authority above the lord of the manor. It was this necessity which led to a transformation of feudal relationships through a realignment of power in which feudal lords relinquished their local military power to the central monarchy, in return for more autonomous economic power. The result was as Raymond Crotty puts it, that "The price that England's feudal lords paid to be transformed from an obsolete and unprofitable feudal lordship into a profitable landed proprietorship was the creation of an absolute Tudor monarchy" (Crotty 1986:27).

#### 1. Reformation.

As things stood however the absolute sovereignty of the king himself was challenged by the church. In the Middle Ages the Church acquired about one third of all the land in England (Elton 1955:27). The church applied its literate skills to agricultural improvement and this was especially true of the Cistercians who specialized in developing marginal land. Fountains Abbey in Yorkshire is estimated to have had up to 18,000 sheep (Gimpel 1975:46). In addition to this, the church stood as a rival to the power of the state. The property titles bestowed by the monarch would have been less absolute and possibly subject to papal disapproval without the English Reformation. Henry Tudor's success in this venture resulted from the fact that the erstwhile

feudal lords, turned landed proprietors, were prepared to support him in a move which secured their own positions.

This was especially the case when Henry's costly military adventurism forced him to sell most of the church land he had confiscated. This transfer not only weakened the the power of the absolutist state in England: it also greatly strengthened the gentry who formed the main purchasers of these lands. Thus in England the landlord peasant struggle forced a gradual conversion of the aristocracy to commercial activity long before any comparable rural class in Europe. This in turn lead to a favourable taxation system and political stability. The result was an accumulation of capital in agriculture and the gradual investment of the surplus in the rural cloth industry which was contiguous with it and provided a profitable outlet for investment. It was in this way that a path was opened up from commercial farming to industry which laid the basis for the industrial revolution.

## 2. Naval Dominance.

All over Europe the late medieval period was an age of chaos resulting from the erosion of feudal ties. Out of this chaos emerged, as in England, an absolute monarchy which overcame feudal particularism. The consolidation of the new monarchies of Henry II in France, Ferdinand and Isabella in Spain, and Maximillian in Austria was an important step on the road to territorial integration and the creation of a centralized state. The difference with England was that whereas there the absolutist

state was in a sense a compensation for the disappearance of serfdom, in other areas, such as Austria, it represented the consolidation of serfdom. This development, combined with the communications revolution, saw the first phase of colonial expansion and the creation of European empires in Asia and America, with Spain becoming the dominant European power.

With the communications revolution, naval strength now superseded territorial armies as the principal mode of aggression and England's isolated position no longer ensured safety from invasion. It was only after the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 that security was temporarily ensured and with it dominance of the high seas. English naval dominance in Europe was to have important consequences over the next few centuries. For as Perry Anderson points out, "while the army always remained a single purpose institution, the navy was by its nature a dual instrument, bracketed not only on war, but on trade" (1974:134). The fact that the British navy was not only an instrument of military aggression but that these same vessels could double as cargo ships was to be an important factor in the development of the British empire. It was not however the determining factor. If this were the case then Spain, with its vast empire, should have occupied the dominant position. The crucial factor in England was the social relations which promoted an increase in the productivity of agriculture which in turn laid the basis for the emergence of industry.

### 3. The Colony and Absolutism.

Despite the relative strengthening of the landed gentry in England as against the monarchy as a result of the Reformation, the monarchy nevertheless retained a powerful position. The Tudor state in England had through its attempt to consolidate its power speeded up territorial integration and by centralizing economic institutions contributed significantly to economic development. It thus contributed to the development of a bourgeoisie whose interests would eventually be opposed to those of the Tudor state. The position of the monarchy was considerably strengthened by the revenue which the crown received from undertakers and merchant companies on the colonies. This revenue enabled the king to maintain an army which he would otherwise have been unable to do given his inability to levy enough tax. This growing strength of the monarchy at home, combined with the resurgence of Catholicism on the continent, threatened to undo the whole Reformation settlement in England. The fragile consensus broke down in 1642 when the landed gentry under the leadership of Oliver Cromwell deposed the king and established the supremacy of parliament.

### III. THE FIRST BOURGEOIS STATE

The outcome of the civil war in England was to strengthen greatly the power of parliament in England and hence the landed and mercantile interest who controlled it. The power of merchant capital in England now made possible a coherent economic policy where one had not existed previously. The external aspect of this policy involved the creation of an international empire and the defeat of other rival European powers. Internally it involved the

consolidation of the British state and the creation of an economic infrastructure, communications and other services. This interaction between the expansion of overseas trade and the commercialization of the British economy, which eventually stimulated the growth of manufacturing in Britain and an accumulation of capital in agriculture and industry was itself the result of a prior transformation of the social relations.

#### 1. Mercantilism.

The central preoccupation of mercantilism was the question of the balance of trade. If a nation's exports exceeded its imports then it was believed a nation would grow rich by virtue of the influx of bullion that would result. Out of this concept emerged a series of policies enforced by parliament which were designed to protect native interests from cheap imports and to foster exports. Among these the Cattle Acts of 1663-1666, the Wollen Act of 1699 and the Navigation Acts of 1650 and 1651 were some of the most important. The former two acts were designed to protect the interests of producers in England against cheap imports from Ireland which, according to a contemporary, "brought down the price of both our home-bred cattle and our land"(Crotty 1966:41).

The Navigation Act, which Adam Smith was to call the wisest of all commercial regulations, laid down that colonies should be subordinated to parliament and that trade with the colonies should be monopolized by English shipping. These acts, says Christopher Hill, represented the victory of a national trading interest over the separate interests and privileges of the

companies which had previously represented English interests(1969:157). Supremacy on the high seas now became a primary objective and the victory over the Dutch in the wars of 1652-1674 laid the foundation for the establishment of English territorial power in India. Naval supremacy further enabled Britain to gain control of the slave trade and it was to this trade that Liverpool and Bristol originally owed their prosperity.

## 2. Social Relations of Agricultural Modernization.

Nevertheless, as the experience of Spain showed, the influx of wealth from abroad is not in itself a guarantee of capital accumulation. "The common denominator of those development paths successful in the long run", says Dieter Senghaas, "was broad-based agricultural modernization with its interrelated industrialization, both of which supplied the basis for an opening up of the domestic market" (1985:57). For an indigenous industrial revolution to occur agriculture had to produce both enough food for a growing urban population while shedding labour to industry and also produce raw materials for industrial processing. This in turn required the establishment of social relations conducive to capital accumulation: social relations that is which encouraged an increase in agricultural productivity and not simply an increase in absolute output.

It was this process whereby the social relations conducive to capitalist development were created, that Marx called primitive Accumulation. "The process which creates the capital-relation can be nothing other than the process which divorces the worker from

the ownership of the conditions of his own labour; it is a process which operates two transformations, whereby the social means of subsistence are turned into capital, and the immediate producers are turned into wage labourers (Marx 1976:874). In places where this transformation occurred such as England, Catalonia, Bohemia and the Netherlands, industrial development followed. In places where it did not occur such as Ireland, Hungary, and Transylvania no development took place.

Prior to the eighteenth century the level of agricultural productivity had not allowed extensive industrialization. The average worker produced foodstuffs roughly 25% in excess of family consumption which meant that the most developed society still had to keep 75% to 80% of its workforce employed in agriculture (Bairoch 1969). In England this situation changed rapidly in the early eighteenth century. The immediate reason for this change lies in the recent application, in relatively sparsely populated England, of techniques which had been developed in densely populated Holland; "the Mecca of agricultural experts". These methods could be applied profitably in England because much of the land had been cleared by enclosure which in turn had created a demand for agricultural products from the increasing urban population. The independence of the English farmer further meant that accumulation was not stifled by crippling taxes. Thus, between 1700 and 1800, productivity per agricultural worker in England increased by 100% (Bairoch 1969:492).



### 3. Transition to Manufacture.

This modernization of agriculture now stimulated other supporting services particularly the production of iron. And as a result of this increased demand from agriculture the major technical innovation in the iron industry came to be introduced, the use of coal instead of wood as the basic combustible for blast-furnaces. Demand ultimately reduced the cost and without the low cost of iron it would have been impossible to extend widely the use of machines to increase the productivity of manufacture. This was especially so in the manufacture of those materials which lent themselves to mechanical treatment such as cotton. The increase in the productivity of agriculture therefore gave a stimulus to industrial production which in turn stimulated agriculture. It was here in this metabolic process between agriculture and industry that the industrial revolution developed. P. Mantoux, investigating the origins of textile industrialists confirms this: "most of them came from the countryside; they came from that half-industrial, half-agricultural class that till then formed a notable, perhaps a majority of the English population"(Bairoch 1969:492).

An understanding of this contrast between the simple commercialization of society and the transformation of social relations is fundamental to understanding the problem of the transition. This involves distinguishing between causes and effects, how factors which can appear to be determining change are themselves symptoms of a more fundamental change. The emergence of international trading and the increasing

commercialization of English society from the fifteenth to the Seventeenth century had increased greatly the percentage of that which was produced which entered the market and decreased the percentage produced purely for subsistence. It had increased the use of money as a medium of exchange and it had also increased the power of merchants and commercial farmers in society. The commercialization of English agriculture around the production of wool had meant that land had to be cleared of peasants to make way for sheep. This involved the breakup of the local subsistence economy and its replacement by one based upon a monetary relationship. This commercialization involved the creation of a modern state infrastructure which could represent the interests of the propertied class. The nature of commercialization in England was such that agriculture became the basis for manufacturing agricultural products and thus a cycle of production developed. The crucial factor however is that this itself was a result of the earlier revolution in social relations. It was this which created both the necessity and the possibility of increasing agricultural productivity.

#### IV. THE ROLE OF SURPLUS TRANSFER FROM THE COLONIES IN THE EARLY EXPANSION OF CAPITALISM.

The question now arises as to what extent extraction of surplus from the colonies was a necessary aspect of this expansion. Gunder Frank argues that capitalism is by definition a system of transferring wealth from one area or country to another through a chain of metropolis satellite relations: "Each of these

connections between satellite and metropolis is in general a channel through which the centre appropriates part of the economic surplus of the satellites...the economic surplus from each of the minor and major satellites gravitates up or into the capitalist world's metropolitan centre"(1971:44). Certainly, if imports and exports are any indication then their role would seem to have been crucial. Between 1700 and 1780 British imports of cotton increased from approximately one million to approximately thirty two million pounds. In two decades alone, between 1750 and 1770, the export of British cotton goods increased tenfold(Hill 1969:253).

The success of this policy of increasing imports of raw materials and increasing exports of manufactured goods depended upon the absence of rival industries on the colonies supplying the home market. This depended on the ability of the emerging industrialists in England to control the state. We have already seen how, in relation to the Navigation laws, the English ruling class used the state to pursue its own economic interests. British policy everywhere attempted to suppress rivals on the colonies and the various restrictions imposed on Irish industry can be understood in this context. "The rise of the British economy", says Hill, "was based historically on the conscious and successful application of strength"(1969:232).

The question remains to be answered however whether this colonial expansion was the cause or the result of economic development in England. A comparison between British and French or Spanish foreign policy shows clearly that different forms of

colonial expansion were related to different internal class relations. The form of colonial policy reflected very much the dominant economic interests within each country. In England colonial policy had always reflected the interests of manufacturers as well as merchants. Unlike Spain or France the development of the English economy was not dependent upon a continuous extraction of goods and wealth from overseas. "What distinguishes English development from those in other places" says Brenner "was the continuity of industrial growth throughout the period, in the face of stagnating, even declining overseas markets"(1977:76).

An example of the importance of class relations in economic development was the exchange with France of Guadeloupe for Canada at the Peace of Paris in 1673. With the development of manufacture, new political and economic interests began to express themselves in state policy. "The Peace of Paris was a turning point in English colonial policy; henceforth greater stress was laid on colonies as markets than as sources of supply"(Hill 1969:233). The textile manufacturers rightly saw the advantages of Canada as a market over the slave based sugar plantations of the West Indies. In other words colonial expansion only caused development in Britain because the class relations in Britain has determined that colonial expansion would take a certain form; namely the exchange of raw materials for manufactured goods. However once colonial expansion did take place, its effect upon the social formation in Britain was extremely important. This can be seen in relation to the

transition to the politics of industrial society.

V. THE COMPACT OF ARISTOCRACY AND BOURGEOISE:  
CIVIL SOCIETY AND LIBERALISM IN BRITAIN

The ease with which this transition to fully fledged capitalism occurred in Britain, in contrast to France where a revolution was needed, has lead to speculation about the political circumstances obtaining there and their implications for later developments. For Marxists at any rate, Britain presents a problem in that the scenario pictured in the Communist Manifesto for the Bourgeois revolution was not as clear as elsewhere. Marx had suggested that the development of the bourgeoisie necessarily involved a conflict with the aristocracy leading to their eventual overthrow. We saw that something like this occurred in England in 1642. The extent to which this actually involved a defeat of the aristocracy is a matter of debate however.

Capitalism in Britain, due to its priority was distinct, argues Tom Nairn, "it is a case, and really the only case, where oligarchy engendered democracy through an organic social strategy that preserved its own nature"(1977:35). This is explained by reference to a complex of circumstances, internal and external, which made it possible. Due to the existence of a large empire the potential conflict between merchant and industrial capital never came to a head and thus the peculiar aristocratic character of British capitalism was maintained. The commercial character of English agriculture had created a community of interests between landlords and bourgeoisie. "A very important instance of

convergent interests between major segments of the landed aristocracy and the upper ranks of the town dwellers occurred in Tudor and Stuart England" argues Barrington Moore (1966:424).

The existence of an empire had made it possible for merchant capital to co-exist successfully with the industrial bourgeoisie. This inevitably left its stamp on the character of British politics. The compact between merchant and industrial capital obviated the necessity of popular mobilization against aristocracy such as occurred in France. This enabled political liberalism to become established in Britain long before other countries. The price that Britain was later to pay for forgoing this revolution, argues Anderson, was the preservation of a landed aristocracy and a financial oligarchy whose interests were never quite those of an industrial bourgeoisie. This separation of the financial and industrial sectors he argues, meant that "The city did not raise venture capital for investment in provincial manufacturing. Its strictly banking functions were effectively divorced from the accumulation of industrial capital" (1987:34). This persistence of the aristocracy within the social formation in Britain was to have important implications for relations with Ireland.

To sum up then, the transition it must be stressed, depended upon a number of factors. It depended on a unified home market protected from cheap foreign imports. It depended upon the availability of cheap raw materials. It depended upon an increase in the productivity of agriculture which could provide a surplus to feed those released from agriculture working in industry and

supply raw materials for industry. This in turn depended upon the free mobility of labour. Where labour was tied to the land there was no compulsion to increase productivity through capital accumulation, while free mobility also ensured a supply of surplus labour for industry. It depended upon the presence of competition to enable the law of value to operate. In other words as Dieter Senghaas points out "Whether individual factors promoted or retarded development depended crucially on the socio-structural and institutional context within which they operated" (1985:58). This goes for the role of natural resources, population, territorial integration, infrastructure, foreign investment etc. Without these prior social conditions the transition to the capitalist mode of production would not have been possible.

It was the manner in which these conditions combined which brought into being the capitalist mode of production proper. Once the social conditions for the development of capitalism had been created, the accumulation of capital was a necessary consequence. It is important to keep in mind before we go on to consider the question of colonialism that the conditions for the expansion of capitalism were made possible by a prior revolution in the social relations of society. The accumulation of capital in Britain now created the conditions for the commercialization of society internationally. Goods from British and later European factories could flood the world. This however was no guarantee that capitalism would develop. We saw that in relation to the transition from feudalism to capitalism the flood of wealth from

the colonies and commercialization did not cause this transition in Spain. This debate has relevance for the question of the possibility of a transition to capitalism on the colonies, a problem to which we must now turn.



### CHAPTER 3.

#### COLONIAL SOCIETY AND THE PROBLEM OF THE TRANSITION

If Henry the II had or could have brought over all the people of Ireland into England, declining the benefit of their Land; he had fortified, beautified and enriched England, and done real Kindness to the Irish. But the same work is near four times as hard now as then; but it could be done even now with advantage to all parties...If an exchange were made of but about 200,000 Irish and the like number of British brought over in their rooms, then the natural strength of the British would be equal to that of the Irish; but their political and artificial strength three times as great; and so voicable, that the Irish would never stir upon a National or Religious account.

WILLIAM PETTY: The Political Anatomy of Ireland(1690)

Aisling ghear do dhearcas fein  
ar leaba's me go lagbhrioch  
an ainm sheimh darbh ainm Eire  
ag teacht im ghaor ar marcaiocht,  
a suile glas, a cul tiubh casta,  
a com ba gheal's a maili  
da mhaiomh go raibh ag tíoht 'na gar  
a diogras, Mac an Cheannai.

Aogan O Rathaille: Mac an Cheannai

#### I. THE MODE OF PRODUCTION IN GAELIC CLAN SOCIETY

For reasons not fully known, the Roman empire never extended to Ireland and this was a factor which was to have far reaching implications for the development of Irish society. Feudalism, the socio-economic system which developed out of the collapse of the Roman empire, never really developed in Ireland. The initial invasion of Ireland by the Anglo-Normans had established, in the long term, a weak and regionally isolated feudal regime which over time either retreated or became partially assimilated into native society. Gaelic clan society had consolidated itself by

the time of colonization. An understanding of the nature of this society in terms of its dominant mode of production at the time of colonization is essential if we are to understand later developments. We saw that the transition from feudalism to capitalism in England resulted from the outcome of a class conflict within the feudal mode which created the social relations of capitalist society.

The question in relation to Ireland then is why a similar conflict did not create the social relations of capitalist society there. The scientific study of Irish society during this time in terms of political economy has hardly yet begun. There has as yet been no serious attempt to construct an anthropological model of Gaelic economy and society during this era. Any characterization of this society therefore in terms of a mode of production is bound to be controversial. Rey's (1975) concept of a lineage mode of production seems to approximate closest to the actual social structure of Gaelic society.

#### 1. The Clan.

The basic unit of Irish society was the clan, defined as "a patrilineal descent group forming a definite corporate entity with political and legal functions" (Nicholls 1972:8). The clan occupied a particular area called an "oireacht" which referred both to the territory and the people occupying it. Membership of the clan was conferred by descent and an important aspect of this system was the expansion of the clan when the leader died. Because the lineage system was based on extended kinship rather

than on property as such, it differed totally from feudalism. The greater part of the humbler classes belonged to no clan, but were nevertheless subject to exactions or tribute by one or more clans. The system of land tenure known as Irish gavelkind meant that "the unit of proprietorship was not the individual as such but the family group viewed as a corporation and the consequent fact that the holdings of the various members of the group were liable to redistribution from time to time"(Nicholls 1972:59).

## 2. Property.

This shifting of shares was a strong disincentive to the holder to improve his holding. With no system of tenant right property was insecure and as Senghaas reminds us: "the establishment of security of ownership and tenure, (property rights)- belonged (and still belong) among the fundamental prerequisites for the production of an increased agricultural surplus" (1985:54). A result of this was that agriculture was in a primitive state with such distinctive practices as ploughing by means of the draught animal's tail. This backwardness was no doubt contributed to by the insecurity generated by the expansion of the clan system and the struggles this gave rise to. The predominance of pastoralism and the practice of cattle raiding were also related to this.

Factionalism in general prevented any centralization or commercialization of the economy. The country was heavily wooded, communications were difficult, bridges were rare, and the use of the wheel-less slide car common. Towns were few and trade was confined mainly to the export of hides and the import of luxury

goods. What towns there were, existed in an uneasy relationship with the countryside. "Many Gaelic lords demanded a black rent or a share in the custom from towns situated near their lordship. Others ruthlessly preyed on travelling merchants who often had to pay protection money" (O'Dowd 1986:131).

### 3. Church.

Perhaps in no respect did Irish society differ from Feudalism more than in the area of religion. The clan system uniquely survived religious conversion without political centralization: the church adapted to the local social order by abandoning episcopal authority for monastic organization. In Ireland, as Nicholls points out, "Christianity does not seem to have been more than a religion, whereas in the remainder of Christendom, both Latin and Orthodox, it became a whole social system" (1972:3). In no field is this more apparent than in that of marriage. Right down to the Elizabethan conquest secular marriage remained the norm. This separation was a necessity within the lineage mode as the clan practice of marrying kinfolk was forbidden by the church.

This has important implications for, as John Hall points out, the church under feudalism, by its attacks on concubinage, marriage between close affines and so on, created a situation in which the family became detached from the larger kinship system, nuclearised and thereby in a position whereby primogeniture could operate and land could be granted to the church (1985:131). In other areas too the church was absorbed into the system. The clerical profession like others in Gaelic society was hereditary:

John O'Grady Archbishop of Cashel 1332-1335 was the father of John O'Grady Archbishop of Tuam 1365-1371. Similarly the inauguration rituals of Irish chiefs were of purely pre-Christian character(Nicholls 1972:93).

## II. SURRENDER AND REGRANT: ENGLISH PROPERTY AND IRISH LAND.

The developing international situation during the sixteenth century forced the Tudor monarchy to reconsider its relatively weak position in Ireland. This position gave currency to the dictum of the time "he who would England win, let him in Ireland first begin". Incapable of a successful invasion of the continent, the Tudors attempted to secure their other flank by throwing their army against "the King's Irish enemies" in an attempt to colonize what was perhaps the most archaic society on the continent: "The last of the children of Europe", in Francis Bacon's phrase. The social formation which resulted from this encounter bore the imprint of both societies. The establishment of an English colony in Ireland involved a contradiction in that while it ostensibly attempted to reproduce a replica of the English social system in Ireland, the results were in fact totally different. In three key areas, economic, political and religious, the colonial society which emerged from colonization differed from that in England. While the transition to capitalism occurred in Britain, the consolidation of colonial society was preventing such a transition in Ireland.

On the eve of colonization then, clan society in Ireland differed in fundamental ways from the social formation in

England. Both societies were based on different concepts of property; private property in England versus clan property in Ireland. This gave rise to two fundamentally different systems of social relations which in turn determined very different political systems. The conflict between peasants and lords within the feudal system which gave rise to an increase in agricultural productivity and the centralization of state power was not a feature of Gaelic clan society, which had a low productivity and was politically fragmented.

#### 1. Commercialization of Agriculture.

Economically the colonization involved the extension of the market and the replacement of subsistence farming more and more by production for the market. The colonization itself was largely the work of private adventurers in search of a good return on their investment. Indeed such was believed to be the wealth of the country that Francis Bacon argued that "no usurer is so sure in seventeen years space to double his principal and interest upon interest, as that kingdom is within the same time to double the stock of both wealth and people"(Anderson 1974:131). An important aspect of this was the imposition of the institution of private property through the system of "Surrender and Regrant". "To make a commonweal in Ireland", argued Sir John Davies, necessitated establishing "lawful patrimony to the end the might have lawful heirs"(Hill 1985:35). This enabled the right of the individual to profit to come before the rights of the larger social group. In this way, it was believed the productivity of agriculture would be increased and thereby the general wealth of

society. By 1640 it is estimated that the total land of the country was divided between 6,000 proprietors (Clarke 1976:170). An aspect of this commercialization was the creation of towns and markets, indeed as Louis Cullen observed "most Irish villages can trace their origin to this period"(1981:61).

The effects of this system were soon apparent. While in 1600 Ireland's exports were "among the most unsophisticated in Europe"(Cullen 1981:25), by 1640 some 45,000 cattle and 35,000 sheep were being exported annually (Clarke 1976:178) and similarly with other raw materials. The growth of the iron and shipbuilding industries was increasing home timber consumption and causing alarm in England. One of the most immediately exploitable resources in Ireland was timber. Walter Raleigh, one of the early colonizers initiated a large-scale trade in the timber of the Blackwater woods where he had an estate (Quinn 1973:118). This commercialization was made possible by a new system of social relations in which society was divided into carpetbagger estate owners from England, on the one hand and native Irish tenants on the other. This however in no way signified a rise in the productivity of Irish agriculture. Instead it simply lead to a greater amount of that which was being produced being sold on the market.

This new system of social relations, however, differed radically from the system of free labour which was developing in England. In the context of the expansion of the European empires during the seventeenth century this was not unusual. As John Taylor points out: "The major economic effect of penetration

under merchants' capital [mercantilism] is the reinforcement of already existing forms of extra-economic coercion in agricultural production in the non-capitalist mode of production (1979:187). Indeed the new situation in Ireland had less in common with England than it had with the estate system of Eastern Europe a fact which is supported by de Maddelena who argues that the Irish estate system with its strongly repressive aspects "in many ways resembled that in the Grunderrschaft territories east of the Elbe"(1974:300).

This of course leads us back to the debate about the relative importance of commercialization or class struggle in the transition to capitalism. The increased production for the market was undoubtedly connected with the transformation of the social relations in Irish society the question remained to be answered however whether this would by itself lead to development similar to that which had occurred in England. Marx himself was in no doubt as to the answer to this question. "On the one hand", he argued, "all development of merchant capital tends to give production more and more the character of production for exchange value and to turn products more and more into commodities. Yet its development...is incapable by itself of promoting and explaining the transition from one mode of production to another"(1972:327).

## 2. The Crown, Catholicism and Military Conquest.

While the colonization of Ireland was initially undertaken by private adventurers the wealth generated there nevertheless



benefitted the Monarchy in England. The relative power of the gentry had, as we said earlier, reduced the Crown's power to overtax. This in turn had prevented the king from maintaining a large army and thereby wielding absolute power. The revenue received from Ireland now placed the king in a more powerful position. Wentworth was building up an army in Ireland whose ultimate allegiance was in question. On the Continent the advance of the cause of Catholicism left Britain more isolated and this was combined with Charles' own doubtful religious position. Matters came to a head with the 1641 rebellion in Ireland when neither king nor parliament would trust each other with command of the army and in the struggle which followed Charles was deposed.

The end of the European war in 1648 made it essential to settle the question in Ireland. Cromwell who had, in the words of Andrew Marvel, "Cast the kingdom old\ into another mold", landed in 1649 to "maintain the lustre and glory of English liberty" (Hill 1985:43). Ireland proved vitally important for England as a source of plundered wealth. The vast land fund available after the expropriation of the Irish paid not only the adventurers but also the army and it was this strong army which secured the Commonwealth. The position of Ireland had now changed radically in relation to England. The victory of the Gentry in the civil war now ensured the dominance of parliament under their control. This dominance made itself felt through policy towards Ireland which was subordinated to the interests of the developing English economy.

### 3. Dualism: "Two Worlds".

Militarily the Cromwellian and Williamite campaigns secured the grip of merchant capital on Ireland. The colonial nature of the Irish situation however meant that the conditions for the development of industrial capitalism never developed due to both internal and external circumstances. An understanding of the Irish situation during this period requires an understanding of the inherent contradiction within Irish colonial society which created the circumstances for capitalist society without being able to complete the transition.

In Ireland of this time development was characterized by a peculiar unevenness in that while many of the structures of modern society were created other aspects of it remained primitive. The traditional explanation of this was in terms of the opposition of two "worlds", the Gaelic and the Saxon. More recent explanations have tended to see it in terms of a transition from pre-modern to modern society. "Few countries" says Louis Cullen "had experienced as complex a cultural change as did Ireland in the eighteenth century, and none one so compounded of elements of the archaic and the modern"(1981:24). The failure of this transition however suggests that something different was occurring.

### 4. Colonial Social Relations and Agriculture.

Modern Ireland was essentially a creation of the seventeenth century, in contrast to France and England, as Cullen observes, "where a long established pattern of stable rural settlements,

villages and fairs existed since medieval times"(1980:196). In Ireland such a pattern was only in the process of creation between 1600 and 1800" (1980:196). The institution of private property in land was completed during this time. Between 1640 and 1680 the amount of land held by new settlers almost doubled to 78% of the total (Regan 1980:4).

The extent to which this involved the expulsion of the native Irish to the less fertile areas varied from region to region depending upon the numbers of new settlers and the density of the already existing population. In general, however, its extent has been exaggerated as the expulsion order was confined mainly to Irish lords who had supported the Royalist cause. The majority of the common Irish remained on the lands where they were, working for new masters. In places where the natives were removed and the area occupied by settlers the implications were however far reaching. In those areas where settlers were most numerous, social relations approximated more closely to those in England and were likely to lead to a similar type of development. The later contrast between the north-east and the rest of Ireland dates from this circumstance.

In Ireland outside of Ulster colonization had taken the form of a creation of large estates tenanted by native Irish for the most part. The objective of these landlords was to appropriate as much rent as possible which meant exporting as much as possible of what was produced. The volume of exports did indeed increase as we showed earlier to such an extent that they conflicted with the

interests of the English Gentry who promptly enforced the Cattle and Woollen Acts. The dramatic fall in cattle prices, from forty shillings per head in 1663 to ten shillings in 1667, that this caused redirected agriculture to the provisioning trade (Crotty 1966:10).

The establishment of slave plantations in the Americas had called into being a whole new industry supplying them with food and other necessities and Ireland was heavily involved in this trade. This industry was in turn attended by a whole complex of subsidiary trades, cooperage, tanning and tallow manufacturing among others. The result was that instead of exporting 70,000 head of live cattle to England at 40s per head Ireland now exported beef to the value of 20,000 pounds more and butter worth an extra 200,000 pounds. This was combined with an extra 70,000 raw hides and 70,000 pounds worth of tallow (Crotty 1966:16).

##### 5. Eighteenth Century.

Ireland during the eighteenth century then seems to have been a relatively prosperous society. Rent rolls increased tenfold between 1670 and 1800 (Crotty 1984:42). The overall agricultural output increased dramatically and the economy was in many respects modernized. Yet the dependence of this economy on exports made it especially vulnerable to fluctuations in foreign markets and government policy; British government policy in particular. The example of the cattle acts has already been mentioned. The woolen act of 1699 prohibiting the export of woolen goods from Ireland is another example. The export of woolen goods from Ireland was opposed by, among others, the

weavers of Barnstable who pushed for restrictions so "that Irish woolen manufactures may not come cheaper to foreigners than to English nor English fall into decay by the flourishing state of Ireland" (Regan 1980:7).

Despite this fact, however, the landed interest continued to prosper and with the beginning of war on the continent and in America, the price of goods increased and thus also profits. The wealth that this new commercial economy generated created no sustained economic growth however. Instead, over the space of a few decades of the nineteenth century, the economy simply collapsed. An explanation for this can be found within the terms of the debate on the transition from pre-capitalist to capitalist society.

### III. MODERNIZATION OR UNDERDEVELOPMENT? IRELAND IN THE CONTEXT OF THE INTERNATIONAL DEBATE

The "world system" theorists Wallerstein and Gunder Frank see capitalism as a system of international exchange between the developed core and the periphery dating from the sixteenth century. Wallerstein and Frank agree with Sweezy that the origin of the capitalist system dates from the increase in commercialization and international trade during the sixteenth century. They go on to argue that exploitation of colonial economies, which dates from this time, is very much part of the development of capitalism, although it does not lead to the development of capitalism on the colony. Development in the core countries depends upon the extraction of surplus from the periphery and for this reason "The satellites remain

underdeveloped for lack of access to their own surplus"(Frank 1971:33). The only way to escape this process of underdevelopment, to invest the surplus locally, is to sever links with the international capitalist system.

#### 1. Crotty and Cullen.

The colonization of Ireland during the sixteenth century saw a dramatic increase in commercialization and production for the market. Frank is critical of the modernization position adopted by Cullen who sees this commercialization of the economy as beneficial (1972:37). Cullen starts from a position opposed to nationalist historiography by arguing that the malevolent intent claimed for English policy towards Ireland has been greatly overstated: "English policy was not...inimical in intent towards Ireland"(1972:37). He argues that the volume of output from the Irish economy was dramatically increased during this time which in turn created a commercial infrastructure approximating more closely to the European model. Frank's argument against this position is that this commercialization, while it increases the surplus produced, it does not lead to an indigenous accumulation of capital.

A somewhat similar argument to the world system theorists has formed the basis of Irish economist Raymond Crotty's work [1]. Crotty contrasts the prosperity of the eighteenth century with the century before and after it as evidence of the connection between the weakening of links with the capitalist economy and economic development. He argues that agricultural production during the time "expanded at a faster rate than it has done over

any prolonged period subsequently" (1966:15). This idea that severing the political links with capitalist countries would lead to development was a pillar of Irish nationalist philosophy as expressed by Sinn Fein in the early years of the twentieth century. The nationalist economist George O'Brien (1921) argued that because the Act of Union was the direct cause of the demise of the Irish economy, the only way to undo the damage was to establish an independent parliament and economic protection.

A number of problems arise here. Firstly if the development of capitalism in Britain is to be attributed to the expropriation of surplus overseas how do we explain the efforts made by England to restrict trade with the colonies. Secondly, if an accumulation of capital was occurring, why was it not sustained into the nineteenth century given that the Union, as Connolly remarked, was "absolutely unaccompanied by any legislative interference with Irish industry"(n.d:44). And thirdly, why after independence did an accumulation of capital not take place leading to economic industrialization.

This takes us back to Brenner's and Dobb's criticism of Frank et al. Brenner argued that only the outcome of a class struggle which increased the productivity of agriculture by increasing relative surplus value could lead to a transition. What Crotty and Cullen share in common with the world system theorists is the failure to appreciate the relationship between the manner in which surplus is appropriated from the direct producers and the accumulation of capital. An increase in the appropriation of

absolute surplus value does not force owners to accumulate capital. And cutting the links with capitalism, which is what Crotty and Frank argue, will not necessarily change this situation. It is only after the outcome of a class struggle which frees labour, that owners in order to compete must increase the relative surplus value by accumulating capital. In Ireland then the question to be asked is whether there were any obstacles to this transformation of social relations whereby relative as opposed to absolute surplus value would be increased. The answer to this question requires a closer look at the political situation that developed in Ireland during this time.

## 2. Colonial Social Relations and Political Liberalism.

It was upon the basis of this increase in output and rent derived from it that the new colonial Anglo-Irish society was established with Dublin as its headquarters. In this century Dublin expanded to become the second city of the Empire and most of the outstanding architecture of the city dates from this era. Dublin was also the political headquarters of this new society. As the century progressed, the country became increasingly homogeneous, politically and administratively speaking. The Anglo-Irish ascendancy was a thinly scattered ruling caste. This meant that regional or shire government and provincial society after the English pattern were impossible. What developed instead was a centralized political system which eventually crystalized in the establishment of a colonial parliament in Dublin in 1782. This parliament was the representative of the small Anglican rentier class. Its position rested on its power to exclude the native



Irish from political or economic equality. For this purpose a system of laws known historically as the "Penal Laws" was established to maintain Anglican dominance.

The gradual commercialization of Irish society during the century began to place pressure on this system. The rigid exclusiveness of the colonial system clashed with the liberal demands of an increasingly complex commercial society. In other words the extension of the economic market called also for an extension of the political market. The socio-economic position of a section of the catholic population improved and with it their desire to participate in power. The development of Irish society was therefore caught in a contradiction in that its further development would have required the dissolution of the existing social relations. For this the Protestant ascendancy would have had to resign their privileged position. This, they were not prepared to do.

### 3. Colonialism, Catholicism and Liberalism.

The confessional situation created by the new colonial system contained a similar contradiction. The failure of the Reformation in Ireland has found many explanations, mostly unsatisfactory. Canny (1976) argues that the failure derived from the nature of Tudor policy and the changing international situation. While this no doubt has its importance, a much more important factor undoubtedly was the position of the church within Gaelic society prior to colonization. The principle of Cuis Regio Eius Religio could apply to a post-feudal society

where the church was an integral part of the social structure. In the clan society of Gaelic Ireland on the other hand, political conquest in no way guaranteed church conformity. The ecclesiastical administrative structure, such as it was, differed from the political one. The segmented nature of the social system furthermore made uniformity difficult. Combined with this the increasing association of the deposed Gaelic clan chiefs with the Catholic powers on the Continent reinforced the association in the minds of the colonial ascendancy between Catholicism and subversion. The continuing threat of restoration of Catholicism in England and the undoing of the Reformation and liberal society, kept alive this association until well into the eighteenth century.

However religious liberty, like political liberty, had its complications in the colony of Ireland. Protestantism in Ireland, although it was associated with the modernization of society, was also bound up with repression of Catholics. To allow religious liberty to Catholics in Ireland was a step towards equality and the destruction of the system. This placed the Catholic church in an unusual position in Ireland in that its defense of Catholics rendered it a defender of political liberty while everywhere else it was a defender of aristocracy. This religious situation became complicated as the century progressed due to the progress of liberalism on the continent and the growing strength of the Presbyterian population in Ulster. Although discrimination against Presbyterians had traditionally been a feature of political life in Ireland, their position was

nevertheless qualitatively different from that of Catholics. It was in Ulster, where development had been more intensive, that real contradictions of the colonial system became more apparent.

#### IV. SETTLER COLONIALISM IN ULSTER AND THE IMPORTANCE OF PETTY COMMODITY PRODUCTION IN THE TRANSITION

The case of the development of the North-East of Ireland during this time also provides support for the Brenner-Dobb thesis about the fundamental importance of social relations in the transition to capitalist society. The early colonization of Ulster by Scottish tenants was based on a much more favourable relationship between landlord and tenant than existed elsewhere in the country. The implications of this special relationship known as the "Ulster Custom" basically meant, as a witness to the Devon Commission put it, that "their being Protestants, with arms in their hands, gave them strong claims on their landlord" (Devon Commission 1845:483) [2]. Thus the position of the tenant being more secure in Ulster meant that an accumulation of capital was more 'lightly'. The fact that by the 1770s "the balance between landlord and tenant had swung towards the tenant" (Crawford 1980:124) favoured the modernization of agriculture. It made possible the transition to an agriculture related industry such as happened in England. Linen in Ulster was to play a role similar to that which cotton had played in England.

##### 1. Linen.

In the production of linen the technical developments facilitating centralization lagged far behind cotton which meant that the industry did not compete with British industry and did

not itself suffer severe competition. In Ireland itself the growing of flax had many advantages over commercial crops. As Conrad Gill points out "flax crops were more attractive because they were exempted by custom from tithes. Moreover it was found that flax could be rotated satisfactorily with potatoes... which were also exempted from tithes"(1925:35). The industry was not confined to the north-east. —It was as Cullen observes "far flung in the island, increasingly so as the century went by"(1972:63) However although the growing of flax was widespread "the weaving of cloth as distinct from the spinning of yarn was heavily concentrated in East-Ulster"(Clark & Donnelly 1983:144). This meant firstly that large areas of the country acted as a hinterland supplying raw materials and labour for the expanding industry in Ulster. It also meant that Ulster was involved in the most productive end of the industry.

Security of tenure in Ulster, combined with an accumulation of capital, had lead to the proletarianization of a significant section of Protestant weavers. The availability of this surplus labour population combined with the available capital meant that improving farmers could acquire a loom to put men to work manufacturing cloth. By such means, as Gill points out, "a peasant could become, in a few years time, both a substantial farmer and a substantial manufacturer"(1925:48). Only this can explain the phenomenal success of the linen industry in Ulster which outstripped other provinces despite the fact that the Linen Board spent four times as much on the industry in Leinster as it did in Ulster (Gill 1925:101). Exports grew from less than half a

million yards in 1700 to 18,000,000 by 1800.(Clarke & Donnelly 1983.144). Indeed Cullen declares it "the most remarkable instance in Europe of an export-based advance in the eighteenth century"(1972:53)

## 2. North and South Contrasted.

We have seen now that the establishment of colonial society in Ireland assumed two different forms. In the North-East the land was occupied by settlers, mostly from Scotland, and the natives moved to marginal land. In the rest of the country ownership of the land was transferred to a section of the English landed ascendancy with the native Irish remaining on as tenants. Throughout the country, the era was characterized by an increased commercialization and production for the market. Along with this went the creation of the infrastructure of modern society; roads, villages, towns and markets. Ultimately however as we saw the nature of development in the two different areas of the country diverged. In the south the increased commercialization lead to the development of a simplified social structure of Protestant landlords and Catholic tenants. This placed the Anglican landed aristocracy based in Dublin firmly in control. In the north-east the substantial settler presbyterian class existed in a somewhat different relationship with their Protestant landlords in that they enjoyed a greater security of property.

It has been argued here that the different forms of development which occurred in Ireland during this era can be traced to these different social relations. This argument derived from the debate within development theory about the relative importance of

commercialization or class struggle in the transition from pre-capitalist to capitalist society. The Irish case shows, as Brenner and Dobb argue, that the outcome of a class struggle which leads to an increase in the appropriation of relative surplus value and increased productivity is the only basis for a transition to industrial society. This contention is supported by Dieter Senghaas: "The common denominator of those development paths successful in the long run was broad-based agricultural modernization with its interrelated industrialization, both of which supplied the basis for an opening up of the domestic market"(1985:57).

The response to the increase in the price of raw materials and food in the closing decades of the eighteenth century reveals clearly the importance of social relations in the process of appropriation and accumulation. From 1750 on, with the dramatic increase in industrial production in Britain, the demand for agricultural products to feed the growing urban population rose. This demand was further stimulated by the problems of supply created by the Continental and colonial wars. The immediate effect of this was to raise the price of corn and other imported commodities into Britain. This affected both areas in the country in different ways. Under conditions of landlordism the automatic response to an increased price in corn was to increase the rent. This in turn led to an increased output of corn simply because the peasant was unable to resist landlord pressure for more rent. In the North-East however, where peasants were relatively strong the rent could not be increased indiscriminately. In this case

the other response to increased price was to increase the productivity of agriculture. This in turn led to a proletarianization of a section of the peasant class and the beginning of small scale industrialization.

#### V. THE FAILURE OF THE BOURGEOIS REVOLUTION

The political contradictions that this gave rise to must now be considered. In the North-East the development of the market and the creation of an embryonic bourgeoisie and proletariat fostered the development of political liberalism which had been so influential on the continent. The main thrust of this philosophy was the opposition to government interference in the property of the individual. Its main spokesman in Ireland was Theobald Wolfe Tone. Tone recognized that the movement to free property from feudal restrictions in Ireland would require the support of Catholics, "that the weight of the peoples scale be increased" as he himself put it(1973:122). However Tone also recognized the peculiarity of the social situation in which he was involved. He recognized the fear of the Protestant ascendancy that the entry of Catholics into the political process could undo the whole property system. He was thus prompt to reassure Protestants that concerning Catholics "The wealthy and moderate party of their own persuasion, with the whole Protestant interest, would form a barrier against invasion of property"(1973:113). The landed aristocracy were hardly reassured however by Tone's threat, in the event of lack of support elsewhere, to ultimately enlist the support of "that numerous and respectable class of the community, the men of no property"(1973:175).

As the pace of events gathered momentum towards the end of the century the position began to become clear. The entry of Catholics into the political arena through the United Irishmen was combined with the threat of invasion from France. The Protestant bourgeoisie began to reappraise the possibility of enforcing a free market situation while maintaining private property. The support of sections of the Catholic clergy for political change no doubt reinforced this fear. Matters came to a head in 1798. The outbreak of violence in the south-east and north-east was combined with a French invasion, albeit a somewhat farcical one. The Protestant bourgeoisie now withdrew en masse in support of the status quo and the poorly armed croppies, "shaking scythes at canon", were swiftly and ruthlessly crushed.

The Irish bourgeoisie therefore because of their weak position in colonial society proved incapable of repeating what their counterparts in England had done in 1642. It was this failure to transform the social relations on the island which was at the basis of the economic failure in the nineteenth century. The problem was, as Connolly rightly diagnosed later, that "the capitalist class did not feel strong enough as a class to hold the ship of state against the aristocracy on the one hand and the people on the other"(n.d:47). They had to throw their lot in with one or the other and they chose the aristocracy. As a result they went down in bankruptcy with the people.



## NOTES

[1] The criticisms made of Raymond Crotty's work here are in no way intended to detract from the importance of his overall contribution to our understanding of Irish history. His 1966 book Irish Agricultural Production, performed a "Copernican Revolution" in the study of Irish history by placing it squarely within the realm of political economy. This work defined the terms within which the study of Irish history has subsequently been studied.

[1] The meaning of the Ulster custom was explained to W.E.Montgomery as "the claim of the tenant and his heirs to continue in undisputed possession of the farm so long as the rent is paid; and in the case of ejection or in the event of a change of occupancy, whether at the wish of the landlord or the tenant, it is the sum of money the new occupier must pay to the old one for the peaceable enjoyment of his holding" (B.I.C.O. 1972.18).

## CHAPTER 4.

### CAPITALISM AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT: THE WORKSHOP OF THE WORLD AND THE AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT

Safe in their barns, these Sabine tillers sent  
Their brethren out to battle- why? for rent!  
Year after year they voted cent per cent  
Blood, sweat, and tear-rung millions, -why? for rent!  
...The peace has made one general malcontent  
Of these high-market patriots; war was rent!  
Their love of country, millions all misspent,  
How reconcile? by reconciling rent!  
And will they not repay the treasures lent?  
No: down with everything, and up with rent!  
Their good, ill, health, wealth, joy, or discontent,  
Being, end, aim, religion- rent, rent, rent!

LORD BYRON: The Age of Bronze.

For a revolution is beginning which will leave  
Ireland without a people, unless it be met  
with and conquered by a revolution which will  
leave it without landlords.

FINTAN LALOR: The Irish Felon 1847.

The contradiction between the world-unifying  
and world-fragmenting tendencies of capitalism  
has been a central dynamic of world politics  
for half a millenium. Nationalism...is the  
ideological offspring of this contradiction.

JOHN EHRENREICH (1983)

#### I. COMPETITION AND ACCUMULATION: THE WORKSHOP

Once the conditions for capitalist development had been created  
in Britain an accumulation of capital and the expansion of the  
forces of production necessarily followed. It was the manner in  
which these conditions combined which brought into being the  
capitalist mode of production proper. Once the social conditions  
for the development of capitalism had been created, the  
accumulation of capital was a necessary consequence. Capital had  
to be accumulated because otherwise competition would put the

producer out of business. In order to understand this better we must know something about the law of value in capitalist society.

In circumstances of capitalist competition the value of a commodity is determined by the amount of socially necessary labour involved in its production. By this is meant the quantity of labour necessary under average conditions of labour productivity. The productivity of labour, output per man-hour, is determined by the ratio of capital to labour or the organic composition of capital in Marxist terms. In the production process two elements of capital are combined. Constant capital refers to that portion of the value of machinery and materials used up in production and added to the value of materials. Variable capital refers to labour power which in the process of production produced the equivalent of its own value plus a surplus value. It produces a surplus value because the labourer in the production process earns his wage in a fraction of the working day: the exact amount depending on the relative bargaining power of capital and labour. The emergence of the capitalist mode of production sees the reinvestment of the part of the surplus generated in production back into the expansion of production.

The crucial aspect of this for the expansion of the capitalist mode of production is that under circumstances of competition the surplus value appropriated by the capitalist cannot be entirely withdrawn from the production process. In order to survive the capitalist must compete. In order to compete costs must be

reduced and output increased. This can be done either by increasing the ratio of capital to labour, by driving down wages or by extending the working day. All this requires the power of the state to achieve, both to ensure the operation of the market and to protect the interests of capitalists. The superior productivity of capitalist methods soon forces out of existence those pre-capitalist modes which are unable to compete. Similarly uncompetitive capitalists are forced out for the same reasons.

This competitive drive of capitalism creates different levels and areas of productivity. There is thus a tendency as capital accumulates, towards a greater concentration and centralization of production: a greater output is achieved by fewer firms and a greater quantity of capital is in the hands of a fewer number of capitalists. In Britain, as we have already said, it fostered the growth of a manufacturing sector geared towards export. In combination with this was created a powerful mercantile and financial sector involved in import and export. The availability of this vast source of raw materials and market for manufactured goods although not responsible for the emergence of capitalism was crucial as we shall see for the later development of British capitalism.

#### 1. Cotton, Capitalism and Empire.

Although in the context of world history laissez-faire seems less the norm than a brief aberration from a norm of government regulation of the economy, the label nevertheless has some relevance in the British case. The detailed division of labour

which Smith rightly regarded as the source of greater productivity was developed first in Britain and there in the cotton industry. Between 1750 and 1770 alone British cotton exports increased tenfold (Hobsbawm 1969:57). The cotton industry was to be the main motor of British capitalism for the next century and its development mirrored in a manner the development of the entire economy.

The greatest of the early cotton industrialists Robert Peel was the quintessential English capitalist. The Peel's were a family of yeoman peasants who like others from Lancashire combined farming and domestic textile production. Sir Robert's father moved into the town of Blackburn to establish a calico-printing firm was to make him a prosperous merchant, made his son a captain of industry and his grandson a Prime Minister.

By 1815, cotton exports constituted 40% of entire British exports (Lilley 1970:224). Thus there was a continuity between the development of industrial capitalism and the pre-industrial era. The development of capitalism in Britain exhibited a number of characteristics which were the sine qua non of capital accumulation. Firstly, there was the modernization of agriculture supplying not only food but also raw materials for industry. Secondly there was the role of the state creating the conditions internationally for capital accumulation and regulating British society internally to facilitate development. For while the industry was for a time the best in the world, "it ended" says Eric Hobsbawm "as it had begun by relying not on its competitive

superiority but on a monopoly of the colonial and underdeveloped markets.(1969:58).

## 2.Railways.

As in the previous century the expansion of textiles gave a boost to other industries, most notably iron and coal. Between the years 1830 and 1850 the output of coal in Britain rose from 16 million tons to 49 million, while iron output rose from 600,000 to 2 million tons (Hobsbawm 1969:71). Profits for industrialists were huge. In the twenty years following 1820 the net output of industry grew by about 40% while its wages bill increased by 5% (ibid:69). The scene was now set for Britain to become "the workshop of the world". In no area was the international impact of British industry so great as in the construction of railways which during this period tied the world together into one giant network. Between 1830 and 1850 some six thousand miles of railways were opened in Britain alone. World railway construction followed at an even more frantic pace. Between 1840 and 1870 roughly 100,000 miles of railway was constructed in Europe and roughly the same in America; "the railways were built to a large extent with British capital, British materials and equipment, and often by British contractors." (ibid:115).

## 3. Laissez Faire.

The superiority of British industry at this stage made a policy of free trade a practical one. Britain was the epicentre of the international expansion of capitalism, the "demiurge of the bourgeois cosmos" as Marx called it (1973:130). By 1860, Britain,

with only 2% of the world's population, accounted for 45% of the world's industrial production (Senghaas 1985:18). The fact that it was contributing to the industrialization of other countries was not a necessary part of this expansion. This depended on the mode of production dominant in the society which capitalism came into contact with. In the meantime British society was itself totally transformed as it became predominantly urbanized and proletarianized. For example in 1850 there were 200,000 coalminers, by 1914 there were 1.2 million (Hobsbawm 1969:116). The population of Britain doubled from 9 to 18 million between 1800 and 1850, and doubled again to 36 million by 1900 (Williams 1973:217).

The consequences of this were however that Britain was creating potential competitors through its own expansion. Whether British industry would remain more competitive depended both upon what happened in Britain and abroad. It depended firstly on whether British capital would be invested in increasing the productivity of British industry. This in turn was related to the capacity of other developing countries to respond to British competition through capital accumulation. As the rate of profit began its cyclical fall after 1870 and a twenty year deflation reduced the price level by one third, British industry should have entered a crisis. Britain escaped from this crisis as Hobsbawm observes "not by modernizing her economy, but by exploiting the remaining possibilities of her traditional situation"(1969:151). An indication of this is given by the fact that while exports to underdeveloped countries in 1820 stood at 32%, by 1900 they had

reached 86%. (Hobsbawm 1969:135).

#### 4. Liberalism.

Politically the embodiment of the compact in the British social formation between commercialized aristocracy and industrialists was the Liberal party. The unique nature of the development of capitalism in Britain, its priority and the existence of the empire, had obviated the necessity, Nairn (1977) argues, of mobilizing against the landed aristocracy. The result was that the party of the bourgeoisie, the Liberal party, combined within its ranks interests which were ultimately contradictory. Everything from Irish landlords, to Cobdenite free traders, to Ricardian socialists supported it at one time or another. It was this compact which allowed the early development of the institutions of civil society in Britain.

One result of this was that the radical democratic ideology of the Liberals prevented a strong socialist party from emerging in Britain until the twentieth century. It also managed to incorporate Irish nationalist politics into it through its more democratic but non-socialist position. The Liberal party traditionally stood against landlordism and imperialism but they stood firmly for private property. The end of laissez faire capitalism in the late nineteenth century and the beginning of imperialism finally shattered this compact within British politics. A cleavage now opened up in British politics between a socialist and a capitalist party. Private property and imperialism ranged on one side against democracy and the



abolition of property on the other. It was now increasingly more difficult to incorporate Irish nationalist politics within this system.

## II. THE AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT: DESCRIPTION

Despite the prediction of Marx that "the country that is most developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future"(1976:91), the fact remains that the capitalist mode of production did not extend itself globally even if its influence did. Ireland in the nineteenth century provides a good site for analysing why this was the case. Ireland was of course the first British colony and its subsequent experience can only be understood in this context. The beginning of the industrial revolution in Britain coincided with the movement towards free trade with Ireland after a century of restrictions on Irish imports. This was followed by political union in 1800 after which the Irish economy was exposed to the full blast of competition from British industry.

From the perspective of classical political economy this should have led to the development of capitalism in Ireland. The operation of the market should have increased the productivity of agriculture and industry by forcing them to accumulate capital and thereby lead to the development of the capitalist mode of production. Instead of this however occurred the catastrophe of the famine and later in the century the creation of peasant proprietorship, developments which seemed to run totally counter to the logic of capitalist development.

Explanations for the failure of this transition to capitalism usually centre on the debate about the land question and the relative merits of Landlords and tenants, or in other words British capitalism and the Irish tenant. On the one hand, nationalists usually attributed the inefficiency of Irish agriculture to rackrenting landlords who, it is alleged, appropriated the surplus and exported it overseas. This is a variation of Frank's and Sweezy's argument that underdevelopment is the result of the expropriation of the surplus produced. On the other hand, political economists attributed it to fragmentation of holdings and the resistance of peasants to the imperative of the market. Peasants, it was argued were opposed to the entrepreneurial attitude necessary for the development of capitalism. "The two deficiencies in Ireland", argued Hutches Trower in a letter to David Ricardo in 1822, "are want of capital and want of industry. By destroying small tenancies you will obtain both"(Winstanley 1984:33).

Before taking an overview of the Irish situation some important points should be recalled about the question of the transition from pre-capitalist to capitalist mode of production. The debate centres on the difference between those on the one hand who suggest that the increased commercialization of society, an increase in production for the market will inevitably lead to an accumulation of capital and the transition to capitalism. On the other hand it is argued that increased commercialization or production for the market is no guarantee of transition. It can instead lead simply to an increase in absolute surplus value

being produced without any increase in the productivity of agriculture, which is so necessary for the transition. The real transition will only occur if the class relations are such that an increase in agricultural productivity is the only option open for those wishing to continue in agriculture.

#### 1. Agricultural Involution.

One of the more unusual aspects of the era of laissez faire capitalism in Ireland was the demographic change. The population doubled between 1750 and 1800, doubled again by 1845 but by 1900 it was back to the 1800 figure (Clark & Donnelly 1983:26) [1]. The explanation of this phenomenon takes us to the heart of the agricultural system in Ireland. With the urbanization in Britain which accompanied the industrial revolution the demand for agricultural products grew. The Continental wars which coincided with this inevitably drove up the price of corn in Britain. The price of wheat doubled between 1770 and 1810. (Crotty:1966.) Ireland's integration into, and dependence on, the British economy by this stage meant that the repercussions of changes in the British economy would be felt directly in Ireland. The immediate effect of this in Ireland was to encourage the growing of wheat as against pasture.

Two possibilities lay open here. Either corn could be grown with the use of hired labour on extensive holdings or it could be grown on peasant plots with the use of family labour. This latter option was the one adopted in Ireland. The move to corn growing coincided with an explosive increase in the rural population. As

the population increased competition for land became more intense. This competition increased the pressure for subdivision of holdings as new family units were established and it inevitably drove up rents. This meant in effect that a greater percentage of that which was produced on any holding went towards the rent, and a smaller percentage went towards subsistence.

The increased cultivation of the potato facilitated this contraction. Because it could act as a rotation crop and a subsistence crop the potato was ideally suited to this task. On a small plot of land a tenant could grow potatoes for subsistence and corn for the rent and perhaps engage in cottage industry as a way of supplementing the diet. The precariousness of this system was exacerbated by the fact that competition from British industry was inexorably destroying whatever native industry there was. While the Irish woolen industry in the eighteenth century was self sufficient, by 1838 it only provided 14% of the home market (Cullen 1972:108). This forced people back on potatoes as the only source of subsistence and the frequency of minor famines prior to 1845 showed the dangers of this [2].

## 2. "Up Horn, Down Corn"

This situation in itself boded ill for the Irish peasant but the factor which was eventually to undermine the system was the fall in the price of corn after 1815 due to the cessation of the Napoleonic wars. Between 1812-1815 and 1836-1840 the average price of wheat dropped from 210 pence per cwt to 165 pence (Crotty 1966:35). As the population increased, the struggle for land was, as Nassau Senior put it, "like the struggle to buy

bread in a besieged town"(Mansergh 1975:53). This decrease in price combined with increased rents due to competition for land meant that a much larger output was needed to simply maintain a stable living standard. In fact, exports of grain and flour doubled in the 1820s (Cullen:1972.109) so that by the 1830s, Ireland was exporting 400,000 tons annually.(Drake:1968.68). The fall in the wheat price coincided with a rise in meat price which made pasture farming a more profitable occupation relative to corn growing.

As pasture was a land extensive and labour extensive form of agriculture its gradual expansion came up against the problem of the surplus rural population created by corn growing. This problem was eventually solved by the famine and emigration which by de-populating the countryside opened the way for the consolidation of holdings. Between 1850 and 1910 the area under tillage halved (Kennedy:1981:181), while in roughly the same period the numbers of cattle exported more than quadrupled.(Jones:1983.376). As part of this process holdings were consolidated. Between 1851 and 1861 the total number of farms fell by 120,000 while the number of farms of over 15 acres actually increased, indicating a consolidation of holdings (Marx:1976.854).

### 3. Recovery.

The decades following the famine were a time of prosperity for Irish farming as the rise in rents fell well behind the rise in profits. Between 1850 and the 1970s farmers profits are estimated

to have increased by as much as 77% (Clark & Donnelly 1983:277) [3]. One indication of this prosperity was the increase in bank branches from 170 in 1845 to 569 in 1880 (Lee 1972:12). This itself coincided with a fourfold increase in bank deposits in roughly the same period (Winstanley 1984.9). Irish society in general became much more commercialized during this era. A new network of retail outlets sprang up around the country which laid the basis for a new relationship between town and country. Between 1850 and 1914 there was a fivefold increase in imports (Lee 1973:14), mostly connected with the prosperity in farming. The stage was now set for the final assault on landlordism. The agricultural crisis of the early 1880s was the scene for this. The flood of cheap agricultural products from the colonies caused a sharp drop in the price of home products. The land question for the first time moved to the centre of Irish nationalist politics and with it the "strong" farmer and shopkeeper. The series of land acts which followed this removed the landlord in reality if not in mythology from centre stage.

### III. THE AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT: EXPLANATIONS

A number of broad trends can be discerned here in the course of the nineteenth century. Firstly there is the rise and fall in population and the increase and decline in tillage connected to that. Secondly there is the change in the composition of the social structure resulting from depopulation. For example, as Larkin has pointed out, while in 1845 farmers of over 30 acres, who he labels the "nation-forming class", constituted one-seventh of the population, by 1900 they constituted one-third (1984:100).

In other words the agricultural crisis effectively wiped out a substantial section of the labouring class. Following from this there was the destruction of Landlordism and the creation of peasant proprietorship. This transformation was to have important implications not only for the economy but politically as well.

#### 1. The Nationalist View.

The traditional nationalist view of nineteenth century Agrarian history saw it as a struggle between Irish tenants and English landlords for the land of Ireland. Michael Davitt's depiction of Landlords as "a brood of cormorant vampires that has sucked the life blood out of the country" (Winstanley 1984:18) sums up the nationalist view of the situation. From this perspective the Land War of the 1880s represented the final battle in a 300 year struggle to repossess the land. The darkest iniquity of this system and a major turning point was undoubtedly the Great Famine which occurred while Ireland was exporting food; something which could not have happened, so it was suggested, if the people themselves owned the land.

The first serious challenge to this theory was Crotty's seminal study of Irish agricultural history published in 1966. Crotty's major argument was that "The Great Famine was not a true watershed in Irish social and economic history; rather the change in demand conditions on the British market which was heralded by the battle of Waterloo represented such a watershed" (1966:64). An inversion was now underway in Irish historiography in line with the opposition to nationalism the conclusion of which was that the peasant and not the landlord was seen as the major

obstacle to development. Low rents and not rackrents by "encouraging complacency and reducing their need to become more competitive" retarded economic progress, argues Winstanley (1984:21). Indeed Solow maintains that with the creation of peasant proprietorship "the Irish sacrificed economic progress on the altar of Irish nationalism" (1971:204).

## 2. Political Economy

The idea that peasant agriculture and the requirements of capitalist development are incompatible has been accepted traditionally [4]. The conventional wisdom of political economy in the nineteenth century was that small units of production were incompatible with high productivity. This contention flowed from an extension to the realm of agriculture of Smith's eulogy on the division of labour in industry. The example of the British situation itself also seemed to support this. John Stuart Mill, for example argued that the tenurial system of inheritance in Ireland leading to subdivision was the source of the poverty of the country; "By these means the land has been prevented from passing out of the hands of the idle into those of the industrious" (1967:689).

A similar broadside at the peasant was delivered by the Chancellor of the Exchequer Charles Wood, "I do not expect to see much improvement in Ireland" declared he "til parties buy land for investment meaning to improve it and make it pay"(Lee:1973:36). The Encumbered Estates Act of 1849 was established to facilitate this process of transferring the land



into the hands of those who would increase the surplus. A more recent example of this contrast between peasant and capitalist agriculture is the work of the Russian Economist A V Chayanov. Chayanov's argument basically was that peasants, unlike capitalists, aim to maintain a constant level of well-being. Once the peasants income rises above a certain level the work rate decreases "the annual intensity of labour declines under the influence of better pay"(1966:80).

### 3. Modernization.

A variation on this distinction between capitalist or modern and pre-modern forms of agriculture has been taken up again in contemporary Irish historiography as an explanation of the crisis in agriculture. Oliver McDonagh for example argues that "two world pictures..were in collision whenever property, and in particular landed property, was being considered"(1983:34). One concept, the market model, saw land as capital from which a certain profit was expected. The other concept, the communal view dominant in Ireland saw land primarily as a means of support and reproduction.

Another variation on this argument is the dual economy thesis of Lynch and Vaizey(1961) and supported by Solow (1981). These authors argued that the efficiency of the economy was retarded by a large self-sufficient peasant sector [5]. The backwardness of agriculture in Ireland is judged to have resulted from this lack of a modern capitalist approach to land. The traditional nationalist argument that development was retarded by the extraction of surplus is rejected in view of the amount of

capital deposited in banks during this era which was not profitably invested. As Joe Lee put it, the failure to develop was less the lack of mineral than mental wealth (1973:35). From this perspective the intensity of agrarian strife and the eventual victory in the land war were a retrogressive step.

#### 4. Underdevelopment.

Placing these arguments within the general debate on the transition we can see that the traditional nationalist interpretation bears some resemblance to the Frank-Sweezy thesis. This argument was basically that the cause of underdevelopment lies in the impoverishment of peasants and the drain of surplus from the colony, in the Irish case via absentee landlords, which deprives the colony of the means to accumulate capital. On the other hand the modernization thesis bears a close resemblance to the classical political economy approach. The argument here is that peasant proprietorship and more particularly peasant mentality retarded the accumulation of capital in agriculture. Small farms were not suitable to the application of machinery to production and peasants themselves resisted the pressure from the market to modernize agriculture. They could do this by retreating from production for the market into subsistence agriculture.

Both theories contain an element of truth. The impoverishment of the Irish peasant during the nineteenth century is a fact universally acknowledged. The drain of capital and labour out of the economy is similarly difficult to refute. On the other hand the growth of a significant prosperous farming class during the

century is well established, while the failure of this class to reinvest the considerable capital at its disposal is an evident fact. With regard to the market, it is difficult to argue, if we consider the oscillations in production, that Irish peasants were not responsive to the market. They seem in fact to have been remarkably responsive to it and Irish society was relatively well commercialized. The Irish peasant was, says O'Neill, "however reluctant, the most market-oriented peasant in Europe"(1984:34). Despite this, however, peasants gained control of a considerable section of the land and the productivity of agriculture did not increase. In other words the want of capital did not obstruct the transition any more than did the lack of the market or a market mentality. The development of the agricultural economy in Ireland then during the nineteenth century exhibits characteristics which seem contradictory within both of the conventional interpretations.

This brings us back to the Dobb-Brenner thesis about the transition. Following Marx they argue that the independent development of merchant capital can not by itself bring about the transition: "all development of merchant capital tends to give production more and more the character of production for exchange value and to turn products more and more into commodities. Yet its development..is incapable by itself of promoting and explaining the transition from one mode of production to another"(Marx 1972:327). Brenner showed in his analysis of the transition that the crucial factor was the class relations which determined whether in response to the market the absolute or

relative surplus value would be increased.

The Irish case shows clearly that the strategy of increasing the absolute surplus value from peasants was adopted when market conditions were favourable. This stalemate was the basis upon which other factors retarding development rested. It tied labour to the land and created a pool of cheap surplus labour which in turn retarded mechanization. The most appropriate form of farming for these social relations was in fact drystock. The production of beef could then be divided between the labour intensive aspect of calf rearing on the smaller holdings in the West and the labour extensive fattening aspect on the large holdings in the Midlands and East. This economy became the basis for the division of the country into distinct regions pursuing different aspects of a single process. The apparent contradictions between the communal and the commercial aspects of the Irish economy become much more intelligible now within this context. In an underdeveloped economy like Ireland the modern commercial sector of large landholders and merchants depended on a smallholding communal sector for their existence. These two sectors existed in tension as each sought to increase its share of the surplus. The only way this system could be transcended was through some form of revolution in the social relations.

#### IV. UNDERDEVELOPMENT AND THE DUAL STRUCTURE THE SOCIO-POLITICAL ASPECT

An important part of the functioning of this economy was the establishment of an advanced infrastructure which could facilitate the extraction of agricultural produce and the

distribution of manufactured goods. The contrast between the development of the state and the economy is revealing here. An expanding state apparatus, which by the standards of the time was "more than was being attempted in most of Western Europe" (O'Tuathaigh:1972:115) was accompanied by a systematic deindustrialization of the economy. Oliver Mc Donagh argues that: "In contrast to the British, Irish government was remarkable for the extent to which centralization, uniformity, inspection and professionalism spread throughout the system before 1850" (1977:41). The elementary school system, established in 1831, preceded the British one, so that Ireland was "already a remarkably literate society by 1841" (Lee 1973:13), while by 1881 there was 74% literacy (Hoppen 1984:457). The police force was also highly centralized: "Strong Measures" are visible in every corner of the country", Fredrich Engels commented in a letter in 1856, "the government meddles with everything, of so called self-government there is not a trace." (1956:112).

#### 1. Railways.

The classic example of this uneven development was the development of the railways. The first line in Ireland, from Dublin to Kingstown was completed in 1834. By 1850 there were 475 miles and by 1872, 2000 miles. (Lee:1973:13). Ireland was now more closely integrated into the developing capitalist system than at any time previously. In 1850 goods travelling from Galway to Dublin took four to five days; by 1851 it took only five hours (Lee 1968:87). This meant in effect that the extraction of agricultural products and the distribution of manufactured goods

was made much easier. It meant also that troops could be dispatched much quicker to put down peasant rebellion. The dual role which the navy historically played was now assumed by the railway. "Victory is the beautiful bright-coloured flower." Churchill later observed, but, "Transport is the stem without which it could never have blossomed."(Strage 1977:282).

## 2. Nationalism: The Political Janus.

The analysis of Irish politics during the nineteenth century reveals a similar dichotomy between the modern and the traditional. Tom Nairn has argued that nationalism is "the pathology of modern developmental history" (1977:359). The nature of capitalist development is uneven and by creating areas of different levels of productivity, places areas and countries at a disadvantage. The popular response to this has been a massive popular or national mobilization to right the balance. This inevitably involved a contradiction, for as Nairn rightly points out, nations had to mobilize against "progress" in order to progress themselves: "They had to contest the concrete form in which (so to speak) progress had taken them by the throat, even as they set out to progress themselves" (1977:339). In other words capitalism itself had to be challenged before capitalism could be established in Ireland. Needless to say the implications of this reculer pour mieux sauter were all too evident later in Irish history.

The nationalist view of Irish politics in the nineteenth century was of the gradual development of a strong nationalist movement which laid the basis for independence in the next

century. The two major figures in this struggle were O'Connell and Parnell; the latter's success being derived from the unification of the political with the land question. Recent revisions of this theory have attempted to undermine its monolithic view of Irish politics by highlighting the class differences within Irish society. Samuel Clark (1978) has attempted to show how the character of politics changed significantly during the nineteenth century due to changes in the class structure of rural society.

### 3. Dualism: A Question of Evolution?

Historians at this stage have traditionally come up against the problem of whether class or community concepts are more applicable to the Irish situation since the society seemed to exhibit both characteristics simultaneously. This problem is usually resolved by using the concept of transition. The presence of both class and communal features is accounted for by reference to the evolution from traditional to modern. This approach focuses on the evolution of political methods towards a more modern form. Tom Garvin (1981) sees Nineteenth century Irish politics in terms of a transition from the traditional to the modern. The politics of traditional society is local in nature, based on communal or kinship ties and often violent; its typical collective manifestation being the secret society. In contrast to this is the emerging mass political organization of the Repeal Movement lead by Daniel O'Connell . This form of political movement was national in outlook and utilized the resources of parliamentary democracy to achieve its ends.

Unfortunately however this transition was never fully completed with the result, as Garvin sees it, that Irish politics came to exhibit a peculiar combination of the modern and traditional. He explains this by reference to the fact that in Ireland by contrast with other European countries, political mobilization preceded industrialization. "This experience of early state-building and "premature" mobilization", he argues, "is a central determinant of the countries subsequent political development. The country shifted directly from subsistence farm to commercial farm economy with no intervening phase of industrialization, and the resulting political parties and ideologies echoed feudal and peasant loyalties and political perspectives".(1981:44).

Oliver Mac Donagh (1977), from a similar theoretical orientation, attempts to situate Irish nationalist politics along the axis of European political evolution. The three major stages along this way he sees as, the Enlightenment, Romanticism and Jacobinism. In Irish nationalist political terms the parliamentary tradition represents the Enlightenment; cultural nationalism stands for Romanticism; and Fenianism and Jacobinism are synonymous. In the passage from the traditional to the modern, all societies go through a process of shedding the more primitive Romantic and Jacobinist tendencies to give way to the Enlightenment. It was in effect the failure of the Enlightenment to consolidate its dominance on Irish culture which allowed for the persistence of what he considers primitive elements; "The



roots of the rejection of modernization and the simultaneous search for and cultivation of the primitive and elemental in Irish life are to be found in the Romanticism of the 1840s" (1977:154).

The problem here once more is that the modernization model is unable to incorporate change other than the evolution of the modern out of the traditional. Thus while they both recognize the difference of the Irish situation in terms of the sequence of mobilization and industrialization, they have no concept of the specificity of the situation and see it instead as locked in a transition. We saw already how the development of industrial society fosters the growth of a strong civil society in the form of popular institutions which act as a corps intermediaire between the state and the people. Such groups set limits to state power and further the interests of their members. In a country like Ireland however, the economic basis for this type of development did not exist. Ireland's economic underdevelopment retarded the development of collectivist groups competing within the political system. Instead the division of the economy into a developed state infrastructure on the one hand, and a low productivity peasant economy on the other, laid the basis for two very different forms of political organization. It is a mistake in this sense to see parliamentary nationalism as an evolution out of the secret society. They were instead part of the same process of colonial underdevelopment occurring in Ireland through the century. This had important implications for the later development of democratic politics.

#### 4. Dualism: A Question of Civil Society.

Nicos Mouzelis has addressed this problem of the transition to mass politics in what is termed the semi-periphery; Greece, Argentina and Chile. Mouzelis argument is that the absence of a strong civil society in underdeveloped countries enables the masses to be incorporated more easily into the project of the native bourgeoisie; "given that the demise of oligarchic parliamentarism occurred in a predominantly pre-industrial context..the new participants were brought into the political game in a more dependent\vertical manner, through populist and clientelistic means" (1986:72). Mouzelis argues that the greater the commercialization of the peasant economy the greater is the dependence of peasants on bourgeois political and economic institutions and the more easy it is to incorporate them into those institutions (1976:98).

The case of the Land War of 1879-1886 is of relevance here. In opposition to the nationalist view of the community wide involvement in the struggle, Paul Bew (1978) argues that the conflict of interests between small western farmers and large eastern ones represented a fundamental class division. Despite this, however, the outcome of the struggle favoured the larger farmers. In terms of Mouzelis' theory this becomes much more intelligible. The commercialized small farmers of the West despite their different economic interests were easily incorporated into the political project of larger farmers and merchants.

The ability of the Irish nationalist movement to incorporate these contradictions was the basis of its mass appeal. Nationalist politics was a symptom of the fact that Ireland was an underdeveloped country. This is to say that it combined an advanced infrastructure of administration and communications with a low productivity peasant economy. Because of this Irish society combined both elements of peasant and class society or industrial society. It was this economic underdevelopment which was at the basis of the problematic nature of Irish nationalist politics. The irony was of course that in order to lay the basis for developing beyond the underdeveloped stage, the pre-industrial characteristics were eulogized in order to mobilize the mass of the people. Nationalist politics then found itself in the position of promoting ideals which in a sense it was ultimately dedicated to destroying.

#### 5. Catholic Church

In a sense the Catholic Church in the nineteenth century was caught in a similar contradiction. The close connection between national identity and catholicism is something which has been universally acknowledged by historians and sociologists. This, it was held, was the result of the oppression of Catholics which created a strong sense of collective identity. Characteristically enough revisionist historiography has sought to stand this picture on its head. There is no shortage of evidence indicating the support of the Church for the British regime. "If we were freed from the disabilities under which we labour" Bishop Doyle (JKL) assured the government, "we have no mind, and

no thought, and no will but that which would lead us to incorporate ourselves most fully and essentially with this great kingdom"(Strauss 1951:90)

The question of the church in retarding economic development has already been commented upon as a negative influence. Emmet Larkin (1967) for example has claimed that between the years 1850 to 1900, the Church absorbed 15% of the surplus available over subsistence for the Catholic population (1976:34). This no doubt explains how the Church was able to undertake the huge building programme during the century which created its modern corporate identity. Between the years 1800 and 1863 some 1,805 churches, 217 convents and 40 colleges were built. (Larkin:1976:19). This however would not necessarily imply a negative influence on economic development. Liam Kennedy (1978) for example has argued that the church building programme can be considered to have made a contribution to economic development. However the real question for our purpose is the question of the extent to which the church contributed to the maintenance of the social relations.

The position of the Catholic church in Ireland derived, as we suggested in Chapter I, from the historical emergence of underdevelopment. Underdevelopment, as Mouzelis points out, retards the development of civil society. In Ireland the only developed institution which had historically represented the mass of the people was the church. It was no coincidence that the first great mobilization in the country was around the issue of Catholic emancipation. The Church's power then derived from the

weakness of other civic institutions and was symptomatic of the contradictory nature of underdevelopment. The contradiction of underdevelopment as we showed was that society became more and more commercialized and integrated into the capitalist system without ever crossing over into capitalist social relations. The Church in a sense depended on the maintenance of this system and embodied the contradictions of it. The extent to which the church sustained this contradiction while suppressing conflict which could have resolved it can be gauged from Gavan Duffy's observation that "No priests in politics would set up Ribbon Lodges again" (Strauss 1951:148).

Education is a good example. On the one hand the church's influence in this made it the agency through which colonization was carried out, especially in the area of the language. On the other hand however by welding together a sense of collective identity different from Protestant Britain it was a major element in the nationalist movement. The church attempted to hold its position between, on the one hand, British liberalism and on the other hand, militant Irish Republicanism. The triumph of either of these threatened ultimately to undermine its intermediary position. Thus the Catholic Church in its mediating role, actually served to maintain the social relations which were necessary to be changed before any development could take place.

V.

#### ULSTER

The contradictions of the colonial situation were no less evident in development of the north-east despite the greater industrial development there. That development as we showed in

Chapter 3, resulted from different social relations which facilitated a modernization of agriculture there. The subdivision of holdings, which was a feature of agriculture elsewhere in Ireland, was absent in the north-east as was intense agrarian strife. This no doubt was connected with the fact that emigration was heaviest from this area. Another factor undoubtedly was the availability of artisan employment for marginalized peasants. Upon that basis a transition was made to the cloth industry which was to be the backbone of industrialization in the province.

#### 1. Industrialization.

The figures for industrialization and urbanization are impressive in comparison to the rest of the country. During the first half of the nineteenth century Belfast's population increased fivefold, reaching 100,000 by 1850. It was the introduction of the cotton industry which caused the initial expansion around Belfast. Control of production was in the hands of industrialists and its expansion attracted large numbers of workers from the province and beyond. Around this manufacturing industry sprang up an engineering industry based on the production of cotton machines. The prosperity of the cotton industry did not last due to the post Napoleonic depression and the severity of competition from Lancashire. However it provided a model for the reorganization of the linen industry which quickly superseded artisan forms of production. So rapid was its expansion that while in 1846 there were an estimated 1,000 factory hands in the city, by 1875 there were some 60,000 (Gibbon 1975:16).

In the 1850s Belfast acquired its second major industry, iron ship-building. There are many explanations for the rise of this industry in Belfast. Lee (1973:17) holds that entrepreneurship was at the basis of the industry's prosperity and contrasts the situation in the rest of Ireland unfavourably with this. Crotty seems to come closer to the truth in attributing the success of the industry to the ability of capitalists to carry out continuous alterations in work practices. "The new city of Belfast, uncluttered with accretions of either urban sprawl or of craft regulation or tradition, offered both the space and the freedom to apply newly acquired local engineering skills to the highly innovative business of building iron ships" (1986:53).

On the basis of the needs of the linen and ship-building industries a host of smaller industrial concerns sprang up, making spinning machines, scutching and hackling equipment, steam engines and ropes. In this climate of expansion, local capital was reinvested and the concentration and centralization of capital became a dominant economic trend. Before the first world war, Belfast had a population approaching 400,000 and had already outstripped Dublin as the largest city in the country (Lee 1973:9). While in terms of the country in general, Ulster with 28% of the population had 42% of the industrial workers (Parson 1980:77).

## 2. No Home Rule.

This economic development was the basis of a political development which differed significantly from that in the South.

It was a pillar of nationalist political history that Unionism or Loyalism was an ideological weapon whereby the Protestants of Ulster were duped into compliance with British imperialism. Superficially there seems to be little basis for accepting this. The working class which had developed in Belfast seemed to have had little in common with land-hungry peasants in the rest of the country which would have induced them into an alliance. On the other hand they seemed to have had everything to gain from the Union with Britain since this seemed to be mainly responsible for the industrialization of the province. Working class militancy and not nationalism seemed to promote the interests of the working class.

Beneath this exterior, however, the true colonial nature of the society asserted itself. Fear of the Catholic enemy was an important unifying factor which facilitated innovation and adaptation in industry. These were easier to achieve when their costs fell mainly on Catholics. When trade declined or when innovation caused lay-offs, Catholics workers could be fired and the security of Protestant workers guaranteed. Like Nationalism then Loyalism involved a contradiction for its supporters. The contradiction of nationalism, as we said, was that the demands of economic development were incompatible with the interests of farmers and merchants who supported it. For Protestant workers the demands of socialism were ultimately incompatible with Unionism and imperialism. The short term interest may have been served by Unionism but its long term result was the Somme and sectarian conflict.



## NOTES

[1] The uniqueness of Irish demographic trends has given rise to a lively debate as to its likely cause or causes. The first serious study was by Connell (1950). He began by criticizing the accepted link between population growth and a lower mortality rate. He argued instead that increased fertility rate caused by a lower marriage age was the important factor. This lower marriage age was related to lack of foresight connected with impoverishment and was facilitated by the cultivation of the potato which could sustain an increasing population (p57-59).

Crotty (1966) argues against Connell's idea that poverty was the explanation. Instead he claims that "the proximate cause of the accelerated growth of population in Ireland after 1760 was the extension of the potato and tillage acreage in response to the increased British demand for food" (1966.31). The extension of tillage promoted subdivision of holdings which in turn enabled young couples to begin new family units while the potato enabled them to survive on increasingly small plots.

A number of points can be made about this general debate. Firstly the population explosion was not confined to Ireland but was a European if not a world wide phenomenon during this time. Armengaud (1970) argues that in a historical context: "Increases on this scale were quite unprecedented" (1970.22). The real question then is ultimately not the population increase itself but rather the institutional context within which it took place.

Within the context of industrialization, population increase was a necessary development. But as Cullen rightly points out: "accelerated population growth added to the social problem if it took place at a time when domestic industry was precarious. And this in fact proved to be the position in much of rural Ireland in the first half of the nineteenth century" (1972.119). This collapse of domestic industry was combined with a move to pasture which placed a barrier in the way of a further population expansion and was causing a population decrease even before the famine.

The relationship between demographic expansion and commercialized agriculture in Ireland shows some striking parallels with nineteenth century Java as explained by Clifford Geertz. Geertz explains this explosive population growth by reference to the combination of a subsistence and a commercial agriculture in a system which he calls agricultural involution. Subsistence rice growing (Sawah) provided the population and therefore labour increase upon which an increase in sugar output from plantations was made possible.

"As there was virtually no variation in capital inputs in sawah agriculture from one part of the island to another, aside from irrigation works, the greater efficiency in cultivation derived almost entirely from a greater intensification of labour - an intensification made both possible and necessary by the increasing

population...The concentrative, inflatable quality of sawah, its labour-absorbing capacity, was an almost ideal (in an ecological, not a social sense) complement to capital-intensive sugar growing...High level densities are offset by greater labour inputs into the same productive system, but output per head (or per mouth) remains more or less constant from region to region. (1971.320-321)

The difference between Java and Ireland of course is that whereas in Java the population continued to expand from 7 million in 1830 to 28 million by 1900, In Ireland the initial figure was halved during the same period. The explanation for this lies in the fact that in Java the same economy remained in place right up to recent times whereas in Ireland the move to pasture undermined the basis upon which the increase was taking place.

[2] It was during this era that the pig became important in Irish peasant life. A German traveller J.G.Kohl had never seen so many pigs in any other country "except perhaps in Wallachia; but the Wallacian pigs, feeding in the woods, are a much wilder race than the Irish pigs, which are literally the inmates of their master's home...What the horse is to the Arab, or the dog to the Greenlander, the pig is to the Irishman" and why? "The pig it is must pay the rent" is a speech you may hear repeated hundreds of times!" Quoted in Mansergh (1975.53). Crotty (1966) argued that an exact correlation could be made between the increase in population and the increase in pig numbers. The potato which was the basis of the population increase doubled as a food for pigs (16-20).

[3] "In the growth of a country with two economies, one capitalist and the other subsistence, the primacy of the maritime capitalist economy with a heavy bias towards exports is a well established historical phenomenon. The problem is to explain the lack of contact between the two." Lynch and Vaisey, Guinness's Brewery in the Irish Economy 1759 1876 (1960). Quoted in Lee (1971.193)

[4] The peasant question as it has been called can be looked at from a number of different angles. From the point of view of production for Marxists as for Liberal economists, large-scale production was destined to make peasant production unviable. As Engels said of the peasants "their position is absolutely hopeless as long as capitalism holds sway...capitalist large-scale production is absolutely sure to run over their impotent antiquated system of small production as a train runs over a pushcart." (Engels 1976.23).

From a political viewpoint, peasants presented an equally difficult problem. In England, the country which was the basis of Marx' study of the transition, the peasant question had been solved: "it had no peasants" as Eric Hobsbawm pointed out (1969.3). However in other European countries, France for example, the large number of peasants presented a potential

obstacle to the establishment of bourgeois society. Marx attributed the failure of the 1848 revolution in France to the role of the peasantry in supporting Louis Bonaparte.

"the Bonaparte dynasty represents the conservative, not the revolutionary peasant: the peasant who wants to consolidate the condition of his social existence, the smallholding, not the peasant who strikes out beyond it. It does not represent the country people who want to overthrow the old order by their own energies, in alliance with the towns, but the precise opposite, those who are gloomily enclosed within this old order and want to see themselves and their smallholdings saved" (Marx 1973.240).

If the peasantry could have such an important impact on events in relatively advanced France then its influence was destined to be all the greater in those countries where the native bourgeoisie was relatively weak. Such was the case in Russia where the solution of the peasant question became all important for the success of the revolution. Trotsky gave a characteristically concise summary of the position when he observed that: "In order to realize the Soviet State there was required the drawing together and mutual penetration of two factors belonging to completely different historical species: a peasant war - that is, a movement characteristic of the dawn of bourgeois development- and a proletarian insurrection, the movement signaling its decline" (Mitranyl961.80).

The role of the peasants in expropriating landlords was a crucial part of success of the October revolution. However once peasants were in possession of property they were in no mind to hand over its control to the state for the purpose of establishing socialism. As a result peasants simply cut down the area of land they sowed and ate more of what they did produce, thus starving the towns of grain. This made the requisitioning of grain necessary under the policy called War Communism. However after nine years of war and civil war (1914-1923) which had devastated Russian industry there were simply no consumer goods for which peasants could exchange their grain and requisitioning was not feasible in the long-term. The aim of the New Economic Policy (NEP) was to restore the grain supply by allowing a free market, and thereby expanding the production of consumer goods. The wisdom of this move was challenged, especially by Trotsky who saw that it could strengthen the position of the rich peasants (Kulaks) and form the basis for a counter revolution. The crash-collectivization programme initiated by Stalin in the late twenties finished the peasant question in Russia. See E.H. Carr (1966) for the definitive account.

With regard to Ireland the contradictions of the peasant question apply in an even more acute form. Marx recognized that the land-hunger of Irish peasants could act as a lever whereby

the the landed aristocracy in Britain could be undermined: "Ireland is the bulwark of English Landlordism. If it fell in Ireland it would fall in England" (1971:161). He believed it would fall in Ireland because in Ireland the question of social justice, the redistribution of land, was also a national question since the land was owned, nominally at least, by English Landlords. Marx was under no illusion that this would lead automatically to socialism however. He shared Engels view that "A purely socialist movement cannot be expected in Ireland for a considerable time. People there want first of all to become peasants owning a plot of land, and after they have achieved that mortgages will appear on the scene and they will be ruined once more" (1971:343). Trotsky's summary of the contradictory role of the peasantry provides a good insight into the uneven or underdeveloped nature of the Irish situation. Ireland seemed to combine several historical eras into one movement, nationalism.

## CHAPTER 5

### FINANCE CAPITAL AND PEASANT PROPRIETORSHIP

What has happened in Europe since the war [1914-1918] has been a vast victory for the peasants, and therefore a vast defeat both for the Communists and the capitalists....In a sort of awful silence the peasantries have fought one vast and voiceless pitched battle with Bolshevism and its twin brother, which is Big Business, and the peasantries have won.

G.K. CHESTERTON (1922) [1].

#### I. ACCUMULATION: DECLINE OF BRITAIN AND RISE OF GERMANY

Imperialism, it need hardly be said was not a new thing for Britain. What was new was the end of the virtual British monopoly of the underdeveloped world, and the consequent necessity to mark out regions of imperial influence formally against potential competitors. The pace of accumulation of capital in Britain was not sustained into the twentieth century and Britain was to be surpassed towards the end of the century as the leading industrial power by both Germany and the United States. This decline was to have important implications for the colonial territories, not least Ireland.

##### 1. Entrepreneurial Ethos or Production Relations.

As the decline continued into the twentieth century explanations have been put forward to account for it. From the classical viewpoint the decline is accounted for in terms of the demise of the entrepreneurial spirit; "the British disease" as it has become known (Weiner 1981). Against this Anderson (1987) and Nairn (1977) argue that the decline is to be accounted for in terms of the original formation of capitalism in Britain which

involved an alliance between bourgeois and merchant capital in the creation of the empire.

The existence of a vast empire under British domination meant that the logic of capitalist development was never allowed to operate to its full extent. The accumulation of capital under conditions of competition inevitably means a fall in the rate of profit. The rise of mass workers movements pressing for better wages plus rivalry between industries ensures this. The response to this usually takes the form of a concentration and centralization of production which increases the productivity of industry. In Britain this fall in profit could be offset by reliance on the colonies but the long term result was a fall in the productivity of British industry relative to other capitalist countries. Furthermore the City was not forced to raise the venture capital necessary for the expansion of industry.

## 2. Lenin: Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism

The basic characteristics of the era of imperialism, as it is called, were outlined by V.I. Lenin in his most famous pamphlet Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism (1917). These were (1) The concentration of production and capital developed so highly that it creates monopolies. (2) The fusion of banking with industrial capital with the creation of Finance Capital. (3) The export of capital as distinguished from the export of commodities. (4) The formation of international capitalist monopolies sharing the world market among themselves. (5) The territorial division of the world among the capitalist powers (1917.84).

The contrast between Britain and Germany provides a good example. Between 1880 and 1914 Britains' share of foreign trade dropped from 41% to 30% while during the same period Germanys' increased from 19% to 26% (Milward and Saul 1977:473). This period of sea change in the relationship between the "big powers" inevitably lead to a protracted conflict in Europe over a 40 year period from 1914 to 1945, as had the emergence of British dominance a century earlier. It also lead, as a side effect of this, to a process of colonization and decolonization as the emerging powers sought to undermine the influence of the established powers and to establish their own influence. Within this context the secession of southern Ireland from the United Kingdom becomes more intelligible. Before looking at this period in Irish history the socio-economic parameters of the international situation must be clearly staked out.

### 3. Banking: Concentration and Centralization.

As an indication of the trend of capitalist development in general, Lenin's schema was accurate particularly in relation to Germany. It was less accurate in relation to Britain, as Fieldhouse (1961) pointed out, simply because Britain was becoming less and less the typical capitalist country. Firstly with regard to concentration and centralization Britain lagged behind Germany, especially in the vital electronics and metallurgy industries. Between 1900 and 1912, 28 different companies in the German electrical industry merged into one (Lenin:1917:65). Nothing like this occurred in Britain.

The large amounts of money that this concentration and centralization of production required inevitably involved the Banks, and here again Germany differed from Britain. "There can be no doubt" argued Rudolf Hilferding contrasting England with Germany "that the different course of development taken by the banking system in England, which gives banks far less influence over industry, is one cause of the greater difficulty of cartelization in England" (1981:408). In Germany as one historian put it "the industrialists set out to conquer the credit establishments"(Gille:1970:285). George Siemens who eventually became head of the Deutsche bank was one industrialist who succeeded. This contrasted sharply with Britain, where the strictly banking functions of the City were effectively divorced from the accumulation of industrial capital. As Perry Anderson puts it: "the capital of world finance never witnessed the world of finance capital".(1986:44) As Britain withdrew from international competition her services as the world's shipper, trader and banker became more important. Vast sums of capital were exported to the colonies instead of being invested at home. British overseas investments increased fivefold between 1871-1911.(J.O'Connor 1970:109). This slowed down capital accumulation at home and thereby slowed down the uneven development of Ireland.

#### 4. Eastern Europe as a Colony.

These two factors, the concentration and centralization of production and Finance Capital provided the basis upon which later developments can be explained. The concentration of capital



in Germany and also France gave them a lead in productivity in Europe and this lead provided the basis for their penetration of Eastern Europe and Russia. The early industrialization of Russia for example was largely a German creation, Hoecht opened their first chemicals factory in Moscow in 1885. Likewise the Warsaw steelworks was another German creation (Milward & Saul 1977:62). Indeed 35% of Germanys' agricultural machinery exports went to Russia in return for which Germany imported vast quantities of Russian wheat (ibid:477).

This exchange of agricultural products for manufactured goods was in fact laying the basis for a colonial relationship between Germany and Russia similar to what had happened already between Britain and Ireland. The situation in south eastern Europe was something similar. Huge loans were floated by the German, French and British governments to Romania, Bulgaria, and Turkey in return for purchasing manufactured goods which were often of little long-term benefit. This left these countries under an intolerable burden of debt, created national antagonisms and lead eventually to war in 1914. Indeed Turkey became so indebted to French banks that their power in that country has been compared to the farmers-general of taxes in eighteenth century France (ibid:501). Only in Russia, where the revolution enabled them to sever the connection with imperialism, was development eventually possible during this era. It was the antagonism caused by this imperialist penetration of Eastern Europe by Germany which was at the basis of the European conflict up to 1945.

It was for long a pillar of nationalist ideology that the Land Acts and the creation of peasant proprietorship represented the triumph of the Irish people over British imperialism. Such a view was even expressed by Joe Lee, otherwise the bete noir of nationalism, arguing that with regard to land and religion "England conceded defeat in these two crucial areas" (1973:139). This view however has undergone a considerable revision, if not total inversion in recent times. Indeed Solow goes so far as to argue that in this respect "the Irish sacrificed economic progress on the altar of Irish nationalism (1971:264). What then are the implications of the development of imperialism for the development of underdevelopment, and especially agriculture? The flood of cheap agricultural commodities from the colonies as we said earlier spelled the end of Landlordism in Ireland. The question which poses itself now is how peasant proprietorship could have survived at all in the era of imperialism and why when it did survive that it did not provide the basis for an indigenous industrial development.

#### 1. Accumulation and Differentiation.

We argued earlier that the transition from an agricultural to an industrial economy depended upon an accumulation of capital in agriculture creating a larger surplus with fewer workers which could provide the materials for an industrial development. This accumulation of capital in agriculture meant a concentration of small holdings into large ones and the transformation of peasants

into wage labourers. In other words the industrialization of agriculture.

Lenin in his The Development of Capitalism in Russia (1899) using the concept of "differentiation" argued that such a process was occurring in Russia. As Lenin saw it the pressure of the market was making it impossible for the smaller peasants to survive competition with the larger farmers so that they would eventually sell out and work for a wage. The validity of this explanation depends on whether the principles of political economy apply to peasant agriculture. One Russian economist A.V.Chayanov argued that they did not. Chayanov, writing in the 1920s, argued firstly that statistics gave no indication of the rapid change Lenin was referring to. Instead he argued that "The dynamic processes of agricultural proletarianization and concentration of production, leading to large scale agricultural production units based on hired labour, are developing throughout the world, and in the USSR in particular, at a rate much slower than was expected at the end of the nineteenth century".(1966:257). Chayanov's explanation for this was that peasants, unlike capitalists, aim to maintain a constant level of well-being and not to increase it constantly. The intensity of the peasants labour then, he argued, will simply decline under the influence of better pay.

## 2. Obstacles to Differentiation.

Chayanov's argument is of course as we saw a variation of the nineteenth century distinction between peasant and capitalist agriculture. Capitalist agriculture operates under the dictates

of the market whereas peasant agriculture is concerned primarily with subsistence. The development of agriculture in Ireland however differs from either of these scenarios. Irish agriculture was commercialized but it resulted in neither an accumulation of capital or a proletarianization of peasants.

It was a somewhat similar problem which Karl Kautsky set out to explain in The Agrarian Question (1899). Kautsky noted that instead of a uniform concentration of land in the hands of capitalist farmers, a combined process of concentration and fragmentation was occurring. Due to the crisis in agriculture in the era of imperialism farmers could not afford to pay wages necessary to keep labourers from migrating to the industrial centres. The state in this case stepped in and settled peasants on small holdings on which they would be unable to independently reproduce themselves without supplementing their incomes with work on larger farms. The British smallholding act of 1892 had precisely this objective in view and its fruits can be seen in the programme of cottage construction carried out in the early years of the century in Ireland. This process of concentration and fragmentation can furthermore be seen geographically in Ireland in the contrast between East and West. This is to say that the division between regions of different productivity which was created during the nineteenth century was reproduced into the era of finance capital. It was this division which provided the basis later for a politics of peasant radicalism which had its source in peasant discontent in the West.

In the circumstances of the imperialist phase of capitalism in Europe then the fall in profit retarded the accumulation of capital in agriculture. The capitalist had to consider the prevailing rate of profit in the economy whereas the peasant reckoned only his livelihood. However, as Kautsky noted, certain agricultural activities could be industrialized without actually expropriating the peasantry themselves. By taking hold of certain production processes previously located on farms, (butter, milk, meat) they could be industrialized without proletarianizing peasants. This was precisely the role played by cooperatives in Ireland in the early decades of the century; centralizing capital without centralizing farms giving us "capitalism without capitalists" as Djurfeldt puts it (1982:146). This explains the fact that while in 1889 there was only one cooperative creamery in Ireland by 1904 there were 200 (Kennedy:1978:50).

### 3. Failure of Accumulation.

Agriculture in Ireland then during the era of imperialism made the transition to finance capitalist style production not by expropriating peasants but by actually creating peasant proprietorship. This however did not lead to the development of the capitalist mode of production. Cheap labour firstly retarded the mechanization of production methods: a prerequisite for development. Furthermore there was no urban bourgeois class strong enough to subordinate the interests of farmers to those of industry. Indeed even to this day farmers have been able to prevent the state from appropriating the agricultural surplus for

productive purposes.

The prosperity of Irish banking during this time, which doubled its amount on deposit between 1877 and 1913 is a good indication of the surplus capital available but not being invested in Ireland (Lee 1972:11). Indeed the size of foreign investments of Irish natives at the time of independence has been estimated at 250 million pounds (Cullen 1972:169) as against a total national income of 165 million.(Meenan 1970:58). This transfer of the surplus abroad, while it has been given as the cause of underdevelopment, was itself a symptom of the production relations in Irish society, and provides a good example of how the conditions of underdevelopment were reproduced in the Irish economy during this time.

The movement to independence and the change to a regime of import substitution after 1932 did not alter this in any significant way. Agriculture continued to be geared almost totally to supplying the British market with cheap meat and dairy products. This form of low productivity agriculture necessitated minimizing the cost of owning land which meant minimal taxation. To change this situation, to divert the surplus in agriculture into productive use, would have required a revolution in the social relations. The unrest which the peasant question generated in Ireland was a crucial element in the struggle for independence. The programme of land distribution under Finance capitalism created the conditions for a form of rural radicalism which was to provide the basis for the communal philosophy which was a major impetus behind the struggle for independence. Rumpf's

research into the independence struggle confirms the importance of the social structure which developed around cooperative dairy farming. "The preconditions for co-operative dairy organization are developed dairy farming, combined with a fair degree of rural wealth, community spirit, and organization. It seems, therefore, that these factors had to be present in a farming community in order to stimulate active participation in the national struggle"(1977:49).

### III. POLITICS, TRADITIONAL AND MODERN: NATIONALISM AND SOCIALISM

Politically the era of imperialism in Ireland is dominated by the partition of the island into Irish Free State and the state of Northern Ireland. The establishment of these two states are believed to represent the triumph of nationalism and Unionism respectively. Political developments in Ireland during this time are generally interpreted within the context of these two movements and developments since then are believed to have been determined by the nature of the political settlement of 1920-1922. A common way of looking at developments during this time has been in terms of the opposition of Nationalism and Unionism to socialism, or in other words the politics of pre-modern versus modern society. According to this interpretation the national and socialist movements co-existed uneasily in Ireland up to 1914-1916 when the upsurge of nationalist and imperialist sentiment eventually submerged them.

Erhard Rumpf expressed this view succinctly in his claim that "If 1913 marked the beginning, then 1916 marked the end of social

revolution in Dublin"(1977:20). Indeed this author's work has prompted a whole new effort to uncover the class basis of politics during the early years of the century. Rumpf concluded that while there was evidence of a social division underlying the civil war it had more of a geographical and a cultural element than a purely class one: "the split between the pragmatism of the Free Staters and the romantic idealism of the Republicans did coincide with certain lines of social division within the population. The small farmers of the West owed the preservation of their traditional Gaelic outlook to a remote situation and economic backwardness"(1977:61-62)

#### 1. Cultural Nationalism.

One popular way of treating this distinction between nationalism or Unionism and socialism in the political history of this era is the contrast between the cultural movements and the economic. The beginning of this new political mood in Ireland is usually dated from the fall of Parnell: "all that stir of thought which prepared for the Anglo-Irish war", remembered Yeats "began when Parnell fell from power in 1891. A disillusioned and embittered Ireland turned from Parliamentary politics" (1970:195).

From this time it is argued, the monolithic nationalist party disintegrated. In its place a number of quasi-political cultural movements developed into which Irish people invested their energies. Among these was the Gaelic Athletic Association founded in 1884, the Gaelic League (1893), the Abbey Theatre (1904) and



Sinn Fein (1905). These movements found a collective voice for their aspirations, it is suggested, in the "Irish Ireland" movement which Terence Brown argues was "a reactionary expression of the deep conservatism of mind that governed public attitudes during the period" (1981.67). Tom Garvin supports this thesis about the divisive nature of cultural nationalism, arguing that it sowed "the seeds of cultural apartheid"(1981.102).

Connected up with what is seen as the backward nature of cultural nationalism is undoubtedly the military tradition and one of the milestones of modernization is judged to have been the peaceful transfer of power in 1932 from Free Staters to Republicans. The thrust of this criticism of cultural nationalism is twofold. On the one hand it is seen to represent a rejection of internationalism and the beginning of a xenophobia which dominated cultural life in the country. It is also criticized in that by overlooking the class differences within the society it acted as an ideological weapon of the ruling classes to legitimize their position, and that this situation persists up to the present day. In support of this viewpoint Maurice Goldring argues that "the priveleged ideological weapon of those who were frightened by the new social forces was the outdated ideology of a green Ireland"(1987.67)

## 2. Class Struggle.

As against this cultural nationalism, the militancy of Irish trade unions in the early years of the century is contrasted. Indeed Irish socialism had in its leader James Connolly a figure of international standing. Subsequent research has established

that the social revolution if it ended in Dublin in 1916 did not end in the rest of the country. As the work of O'Connor (1980) Milotte (1984) and others have shown that the trade union movement and rural radicalism contributed in no small way to the eventual establishment of the new state. In the light of this evidence it becomes even more difficult to account for the failure of a labour movement to emerge in the post-independence era.

The dominance of syndicalism in the labour movement and the absence of a strong party has often been given as an explanation. This has been connected with the failure of Labour to stand in the crucial 1918 election. O'Connor (1980) rejects this charge of syndicalism and argues instead that parliamentarism at a time when labour was under attack from the forces of the Free State was the major problem. Garvin (1974) uses a model the East\West gradient developed by Rumpf to explain the emergence of Fianna Fail which he sees as the most important factor in determining later developments. His argument is that Fianna Fail was a product of the Irish periphery where politics was less class based and that the character of later Irish politics was determined by the "invasion" of the centre by this populist style politics. Thus "Irish politics during the period since 1932 offers an example of a periphery-dominated centre" (1974:310).

### 3. Underdevelopment: Class and Community.

The dichotomy between the modern and the traditional then which characterized the understanding of Irish political development

during the nineteenth century continues on into political analyses of the present century. This results from attempting to understand the Irish situation in terms of political development in the developed capitalist countries. However as we saw for the nineteenth century the socio-economic conditions which provided the basis for politics in capitalist society were absent in Ireland. Those institutions of civil society which were the product of an industrial infrastructure, provided the basis for socialist and capitalist political parties.

In Ireland that industrial infrastructure was absent. Instead the country was socio-economically underdeveloped. This is to say that an export based low productivity peasant agriculture was combined with a developed infrastructure of merchant capital. The political institutions which emerged in Ireland reflected this combination which was not transitional but a system in its own right. The combination of nationalism and socialism within Irish political parties is one such feature of politics in the underdeveloped country. The social basis for this politics was peasant radicalism. The essential contradiction within peasant radicalism was a faith in the institution of private property combined with an opposition to the capitalist market. "They all want competition without the lethal effects of competition" as Marx put it: "They all want the impossible, namely the conditions of bourgeois existence without the necessary consequences of those conditions." (Marx & Engels 1956:48). It was this which laid the basis for a kind of populist politics which claimed to reconcile the best elements of socialism and

capitalism [2]. Undoubtedly there was a substantial urban element which had helped "to wind the clock" as Yeats put it. However as Strauss has rightly pointed out they were the men in the shops more than the men in the workshops (Strauss 1951:145).

#### IV. IRISH NATIONALISM AND BRITISH LIBERALISM

##### 1. Peasant Property versus Capitalism and Socialism.

The contradictions within the Irish nationalist political movement became apparent, as Strauss (1951) showed, once Liberalism in Britain began to break up towards the end of the nineteenth century. An Irish nationalist party representing the interests of merchants and farmers and dedicated to the cause of independence could no more support the imperialism of the Tories than it could support the socialism of Labour. It was agreed by political activists of all shades that severing the connection with Britain was a necessary prerequisite for development. In order to achieve this a mass cross-class mobilization was necessary. A purely working class movement could not achieve independence and without independence the social basis for socialism was not possible in Ireland. The cultural movement was a necessary aspect of this mobilization and should not be seen as something detachable from it.

Why then did economic development not follow independence? It did not emerge because independence did not alter the social relations under which the surplus produced in agriculture was appropriated. Only a change in the manner in which the surplus was appropriated would have lead to capital accumulation.

Underdevelopment persisted because the social relations retarding the accumulation of capital persisted. It was these social relations which laid the basis for a populist style politics, neither socialist nor capitalist.

## 2. Vocationalism: Politics of Incorporation

In this context Mouzelis' theory about the transition to post-oligarchic politics becomes relevant. The argument was that in the underdeveloped country the absence of autonomous civil institutions made the incorporation of the masses into the political project of the ruling classes easier. Building on Huntington (1968) he argues that this lead to oscillations from wild democracy to authoritarianism. Although Ireland in many respects was similar to those countries socially and economically, it nevertheless has differed significantly politically in that parliamentary democracy continued. One explanation for this is offered by McDonagh who argues that the parliamentary tradition was too established to allow the emergence of a dictatorship: "the mass of the Irish people had been too long pupils in the school of English liberalism to countenance political philosophies of might" (1977:113).

This is hardly a convincing explanation in view of the suspension of democracy during much of the twenties. A more fruitful line of inquiry is suggested by Mouzelis approach. If the mode of incorporation was such that the demands of discontented groups could be either determined by or incorporated within the system then the resort to authoritarianism would be unnecessary. Such a system of incorporation was to be found in the

ideology of vocationalism or corporatism which came to dominate political debate in Ireland in the thirties. This leads directly to the role of the Catholic Church in this crucial phase of Irish history.

## V. CATHOLIC CHURCH

### 1. The Parnellite Compact.

The influence of the Catholic Church on Irish politics dates back well into the nineteenth century. The first great political mobilization in Ireland was around the issue of Catholic Emancipation. However Larkin (1975) argues that the crucial period politically were the years 1879-1886. During these years he argues the nationalist movement first found embodiment in a mass political party. This involved a compact between the Catholic Church and the Party about spheres of influence. This constitutional balance later became basic to the functioning of the Irish political system. The Church became in Mouzelis term a corp intermediare between the people and the state. Thus argues Mc Donagh:

"What later saved the Irish state, both during and after the fall and death of Parnell, from the tyranny of either the leader, the party or even the majority was that in the last analysis the bishops had enough real power and influence in the country to resist effectively any attempt by either the party or the leader to impose its will unilaterally on others in the consensus" (1975:1267).

## 2. A State Within A State.

Any analysis of political and cultural debate in these early decades of the century confirms the importance of the Catholic Church. In a century of cataclysmic change the Church was one of the few institutions which had maintained a continuity with the past. Indeed Terence Brown rightly remarks on the problem of "the lack of immediately obvious marks of Irish identity apart from a devout, loyal Catholicism"(1981:29). The role of the Church in the educational system is undoubtedly a crucial factor here. Not only was the access to a wide range of ideas closed off by the church but perhaps more importantly clerics often set the terms of debate on crucial issues; they created the intellectual climate.

An example of this intermediary role of the church was the establishment of Muintir na Tire. This association was founded in 1931 by Canon John Hayes of Bansha Co Tipperary. It is to this organization that much of the responsibility for the rural electrification scheme must go. It also promoted local industry and the establishment of leisure facilities. However the principles of its charter indicate clearly its political orientation. It aimed "to unite the rural communities of Ireland on the Leo XIII principle that there must exist friendly relations between master and man; that it is a mistake to assume that class is hostile to class, that well-to-do and working men are intended by nature to live in mutual conflict" (Hickey & Doherty 1980:377).

It was perhaps not surprising in the international context that Pearse should have framed the 1916 insurrection in religious terms. What is more surprising and ultimately more important was that even the Labour party operated within the parameters of Irish Catholicism. The 1934 Labour Party conference undertook to "strictly oppose any attempt to introduce anti-Christian communist doctrine into the movement" (Rumpf:1977:94). The censorship and divorce debates of the 1920s were undoubtedly part of this gradual process of religious domination of political debate. The new Constitution of 1938 was the culmination of this process of the establishment of the Church as a state within a state.



NOTES

[1]. The quotation is taken from David Mitraný Marx Against The Peasant, New York: Collier Books, (1961:131).

[2]. Whenever predominantly peasant societies have been confronted with the possibility of industrialization, "populist" ideas seem to come to the fore. These ideas usually confront industrialization and urbanization with an alternative vision of development, focussing on small-scale enterprise, peasant agriculture and a world of villages rather than cities. These ideas became particularly important in Eastern Europe in the early decades of the century. In Bulgaria the Bulgarian Agrarian Union (BANU) with its charismatic leader Stamboliiski won a landslide victory in the election of 1923 on the basis of an agrarian populist programme. Stamboliiski was subsequently assassinated however and the power of the peasant party curtailed. See Nicos Mouzelis (1986).

## CHAPTER 6.

### GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT: PLANNING THE TRANSITION WITH "DEPENDENT INDUSTRIALIZATION" AND THE QUESTION OF NATIONALISM

The national bourgeoisie of the under-developed country is not engaged in production, nor in invention, nor building, nor labour; it is completely canalized into activities of an intermediary type. Its innermost vocation seems to be to keep in the running and to be part of the racket...But this same lucrative role, this cheap-jack's function this meanness of outlook and this absence of all ambition symbolize the incapability of the national middle class to fulfill its historic role of bourgeoisie.

FRANZ FANON: The Wretched of The Earth

Falstaff: I can get no remedy against this consumption of the purse: borrowing only lingers it out, but the disease is incurable.

KING HENRY IV, PART II

Emigration is the voice of a nation that has fallen silent.

HEINRICH MANN.

#### I. GLOBAL PLANNING: THE INSTITUTIONS

In Europe the same problem which had lead to the first imperialist war began to reappear again in the 1930s. The expansion of the German economy into Eastern Europe came into conflict with the interests of nation-states. German industry needed an investment outlet for capital which could not be invested in Western Europe. This eventually lead to an international conflict as the other imperialist powers sought to maintain their position against Germany.

Already in 1944, before the war was ended the imperialist countries had met at Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, to establish a new post-war economic order. The two most important institutions established were The International Monetary Fund and The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (later The World Bank). The aims as outlined by the International Monetary Fund were: "to promote international monetary cooperation; to facilitate the expansion of international trade...; to promote exchange stability...; to assist in the multilateralization of payments and in the elimination of foreign exchange restrictions on current transactions"(Hayter 1971.34). The basic idea therefore was to overcome those restrictions which had retarded the accumulation of capital internationally, previous to this. This lead however to significant changes in the nature of imperialist control which we must understand.

These new changes were (1) The further concentration and centralization of capital in the creation of giant multinational corporations. Since the war, for example, the share of the 200 largest corporations in American manufacturing has increased from 45% to 60% (Hunt and Sherman 1981.303). (2) The substitution of state capital for private investment, by means of loans and aid which is strategically designed to benefit the donor country. (3) the increased collaboration between local and foreign capital by mobilizing local savings. (4) A shift in the composition of foreign investments against primary commodity sectors and in favour of manufacturing and related activities. (5) A decline in national rivalries through the creation of free trading zones,

policed by the imperialist countries. All these factors manifest themselves in the post-war expansion of capitalism but the aim for which they were designed, the absorption of economic surplus and the maintenance of high profits was only temporarily achieved.

I started out this work by arguing that contemporary Ireland exhibits many characteristics which have been taken to be evidence of modernization but instead are a product of the process of underdevelopment. The earlier chapters traced the origins and cause of this through history. We must now look at the contemporary situation in more depth. Our main concern, in line with the question of the transition, is to see whether the social relations for capital accumulation have been or are in the process of creation.

## II. IRELAND: THE INSTITUTIONS OF PLANNED DEVELOPMENT

While an international recovery was underway in the early fifties elsewhere, Ireland was experiencing a severe economic and social crisis. Irish GNP between 1953 and 1963 had increased 2% per annum as against a 5% increase in the OEEC countries (Crotty 1966:164). The basic explanation for that crisis at the time was, as we said, that protection had prevented the free market from ensuring the most efficient use of resources through competition. Behind tariff barriers, so the interpretation went, a whole culture of "subsidies, feather-bedding and back-scratching" existed. Irish agriculture was particularly inefficient and any hope of building a native industrial base depended upon increasing the productivity of that sector. Dependence on the

British market was believed to be the underlying problem here and when the possibility of Britain joining the EEC was mooted, the decision to seek membership was supported by the major parties.

Within the context of economic change in Ireland the year of 1958 is the annus mirabilis of recent Irish history. In that year, so the story goes, the old policy of import substitution was finally abandoned and a new more forward looking policy of export lead growth was adopted. The Sinn Fein myth as Patrick Lynch called it, the "unfounded dogma which identified political independence with national self-sufficiency" (Chubb & Lynch 1969:130) was finally laid to rest. The credit for this change is given to the publication of a Department of Finance report, Economic Development, penned by the then secretary Kenneth Whitaker.

We already saw how one of the major elements of the post-war economic expansion was the idea of government intervention in the regulation of the market. Long-term plans for development became the order of the day. The Organization for European Economic Cooperation was established after the war and Ireland was strongly pressured to join. A number of state sponsored agencies were also established, the IDA, Coras Trachtala etc in line with contemporary ideas about the importance of state planning. All this meant an increase in the size of the state in terms of numbers employed and money spent. We saw earlier how between 1960 and 1980 public service employment expanded by 62% (Rothman & O'Connell 1982:67), while the ratio of state expenditure

(current and capital) rose from 27% to 42% between 1958 and 1972. This increased involvement of the state was to be an important factor in the smooth transition from the import substitution regime to entry into the EEC.

An important part of this new development was the increased involvement of the state in economic planning. "I think we must now accept...at least for the transition period" argued Sean Lemass in 1961 "the planning of national economic expansion in a more definite and detailed way than we have hitherto attempted" (Bew & Patterson 1982:167). Lemass here was simply echoing the economic orthodoxy of his day. To a large extent the economic development which occurred during the sixties has been attributed to this new approach to economic problems. Joe Lee along with Garret Fitzgerald and other pundits made careers for themselves out of identifying planning and economic development with individual initiative. Lee attributed economic development to a "small number of patriotic individuals" like Lemass and Whitaker whose policy "of opening up the economy and importing the entrepreneurial talent so sadly missing at home helped to pull the country out of the debilitating depression of the nineteen fifties" (1986:162).

Behind this rather bland assertion however, certain subterranean movements were shifting the centre of gravity of Irish politics. Even the myopic Dr Fitzgerald sensed in 1965 that there was developing "a vocational-bureaucratic system of government whose centre of gravity has shifted away from the politicians towards the civil service and vocational bodies" (Bew

& Patterson 1982:145). The growth of corporate bodies around the state was one way in which this change was effected. The manner in which the small farmer constituency was incorporated into the new system, often against its own interests, is a good example of how the new system operated.

### III. IRISH AGRICULTURE: THE WHITE REVOLUTION

The changes in Irish agriculture which followed in the sixties and seventies were dramatic. Between 1958 and 1980 employment in agriculture as a percentage of total employment dropped from 38% to 19% (Blackwell 1982:47). Agricultural policy during this time attempted to direct more farmers into intensive dairy production. The guaranteed prices for dairy products in the EEC was expected to be especially suited to the needs of small-scale farming units common in Ireland. Between 1970 and 1975 the number of dairy cows in the Republic increased at a faster than average rate for the EEC, while between 1975 and 1978 alone the annual increase in yield was more than twice that of the EEC. The fact remained however that despite this increase, Irish cows were still at the bottom of the milk-yield table (Tovey 1982:69).

Other more ominous trends have also been visible. While there has been an increase in the amount of milk produced there has been a continuous decline in the number of small producers. Between 1976 and 1979 the number of suppliers decreased from 74,735 to 71,148 (Tovey 1982:70). This decline in small producers was originally thought to follow from a concentration of smaller holdings into more viable ones. However land ownership in Ireland

continues to be as immobile as ever despite the economic crisis. Since the second World War Ireland has had the lowest rate of change in farm numbers in Europe (Duffy 1980.98). The migration process then which reduced the numbers employed in agriculture consisted of a depopulation of households rather than a depletion in house numbers. The irony of all this then was, as Tovey points out, that "during a period of expansion of a form of agricultural production promoted as most suited to the circumstances of small producers, these producers have been progressively marginalized within the industry (1982.71).

#### 1. Dualism: Peasant Mentality or Logic of Underdevelopment?

The conventional explanation for this failure of Irish agriculture is usually framed in terms of a peasant attitude. In a study commissioned by the agricultural institute, Kelleher and O'Hara interpret the problem in terms of a "dualism" in Irish agriculture: a low-income, low-productivity sector combined with a dynamic expanding sector. Modern farmers have the entrepreneurial capacity necessary to expand whereas traditional farmers are apathetic and closed to new ideas; "Individual farmers have varying capacities to adapt to change, and those unable to meet the challenge fall behind" (1978.15). The low-income farming sector in the West then are part of a traditional world which has failed to become fully integrated into the modern world.

The explanation of the marginalization of small farmers in terms of a traditional orientation towards agriculture misses the fact that this marginalization resulted precisely from a closer



integration into the international economy. With the gradual dismantling of the Common Agricultural Policy Irish agriculture has in recent years been subject to the same conditions of production that Irish industry has been subject to for some years before. As the price supports are systematically withdrawn in circumstances of open competition, the profit margins are decreased. In this situation only those with access to capital can increase their productivity.

## 2. Green Revolution

This situation in Ireland resembles somewhat the circumstances which surrounded the Green Revolution in the Third World. The Green Revolution was that part of the modernization movement concerned with the question of Agriculture. The basic idea behind it was that the way out of the Agriculture crisis in Underdeveloped countries was to increase output through an application of capital and technology. The ultimate effect of this however was to increase the dependence of the producers on capital inputs which only those who already had access to capital could afford. For the small producer this ultimately meant marginalization within an expanding capitalist agriculture. The situation in Irish agriculture is something similar. Development policies which promote the use of industrial technology and finance capital to increase productivity have different impacts on producers with different resources. The Irish farmer who wishes to join the 1,000 gallon cow brigade will require a level of investment which only the big producers can have access to.

### 3. Marginalization or Accumulation?

The logical outcome of this would seem to be a rapid centralization of holdings into more viable ones. The high level of debt and the general uncertainty however makes the larger farmers unwilling to expand. Changes in market prices do not exert enough pressure on them to leave farming. The Disadvantaged Areas Scheme on the other hand actually serves to maintain the system by supporting non-viable farmers with grants. In this situation small farmers may withdraw from or be made marginal to commercial agriculture, without necessarily giving up their ownership of land. Combined with this the division of labour between big and small farmers is roughly defined on a regional basis. The consolidation of small farms then in the west would have to take place through a differentiation among these farms themselves. The deep depression into which these groups have languished virtually rules this out. We have a situation in Irish agriculture then not unlike the situation at the turn of the century, which illustrates the extent to which nothing really has changed.

This brings us back to the question of the relative importance of the market in the transition to capitalism. The question which must be answered here is whether developments during the post-war period did anything to transform the social relations of Irish agriculture. The land tenure system since the creation of peasant proprietorship was based on a hierarchical division of labour on a regional basis between small and large farmers. The political dominance of large farmers enabled taxation on property, the cost

of land ownership, to be minimized. This reduced the need for reinvestment and encouraged low productivity beef production. The profitability of this in turn required access to the British market which meant free trade. Free trade meant inadequate tariff protection for native industry and the free mobility of scarce capital needed by Irish industry out of the country. The point here is then that the movement towards entry into the EEC was in no way a departure from this system and because of this its results were destined not to be any better.

The idea that a closer integration into the capitalist market would result in an accumulation of capital in farming has a long history in Ireland, as we have seen. The arguments for entry into the EEC were based on similar reasoning. However this modernization of agriculture depends as we saw upon the creation of an agri-industry supplying agriculture with inputs. In the circumstances of Irish agriculture inputs were reduced to a minimum and the power to utilize the surplus from agriculture was not available. The capital required to initiate an industrialization programme had to be sought elsewhere and this also had its problems.

#### IV. INDUSTRIALIZATION BY INVITATION!

The fortunes of the industrial sector during this time were no less ambiguous than those of agriculture. The post-war expansion of capitalism as we saw involved a massive export of capital from the capitalist world in the form of aid and the closer integration of all economies into the international system. This

policy, administered by the Bretton Woods institutions, first made its appearance with Marshall Aid. Contrary to popular belief Ireland did receive Marshall aid. By 1950 Ireland had received \$150 million (Lyons 1973:589). However: "Before any dollars were committed, negotiations took place about the preconditions which would make Ireland "worthy" of aid.... In particular, grants depended on efforts to make currency freely convertible, to liberalize trade and to integrate into the European economy." (O'Hearn:1986.3-4). Measures to proceed in this direction were soon adopted by the administration. Ireland joined the Organization for European Economic Cooperation. The I.D.A. was established in 1949: a "dollar exports advisory committee" in 1950: an export board (Coras Trachtala) in 1951. The Finance Acts of 1956, 1957 and 1958 changed the laws relating to the repatriation of profits, while Ireland joined the IMF and World Bank in 1957. The new economic regime was therefore well in place before the publication of Economic Development.

The main aim of the above institutions was to make Ireland an attractive location for the establishment of branches of multinational industries. Attractive financial inducements in the form of capital grants and tax-free periods were part of this programme. Indeed according to the European Commission for Europe these incentives went "further than those of any other country in Europe in encouraging export industries and attracting private capital for this purpose" (Long 1976:67). Perhaps the most important change in the nature of capitalist expansion was the shift away from investment in raw materials production to an

investment in manufacturing, a factor which has misled many into identifying this development with the establishment of the capitalist mode of production. It has been estimated that between 1929 and 1968 the percentage of American foreign investment in manufacturing rose from 7% to 34% (Cardoso 1972.89). This change is reflected in Ireland where in 1977 foreign manufacturing companies employed about 80,000 workers out of a total employment of 200,000 in manufacturing industry (Walsh 1980.60). While Irish manufactured exports as a percentage of the total rose from 17.1% to 54.5% between 1958 and 1980 (Wickham 1983.165).

#### 1. Planning the Foreign Sector?

However as the slowdown in the international accumulation of capital set in, the real nature of Ireland's position became apparent. The multinational branches established tend to have what are called, low multiplier effects. "Little spinoff has occurred from multinationals in Ireland" the Telesis Report observed (1982.127). This is to say that they import the bulk of their input and export the bulk of their output. Hence they have no organic ties in the economy and tend to form "modern" enclaves within the traditional society. The attraction of this type of multinational investment tends to divert scarce local resources into activities which are in the long term little use to the economy since most of the production is export oriented. They supply only about one-third of the capital necessary to set-up and are thus in competition with local industry for the rest (Kelly 1984.17). Because of the tax holidays they are guaranteed on undertaking the investment, the huge profits which these

corporations amass cannot be put to productive use in the country. In the period 1975-76 profits for US firms in Ireland were estimated to have been nearly three times the world average (Walsh 1980:70). The free-trade environment which they dictate has caused a precipitous decline in traditional industries. Since this sector produces mainly for the domestic market the result is not only a decline in net jobs but also increased imports. On top of all this the government is virtually powerless to alter the situation through planning because, as O'Hearn rightly remarks "the foreign sector is precisely the sector which cannot be effectively planned" (O'Hearn 1986:11).

## 2. Mining

Foreign investment in Irish mining is a classic example of the multinational strategy. A number of internationally significantly mines were opened up by North American companies in the 1960s and 1970s. The Irish Resources Study Group pointed out: "Ireland now possesses the largest zinc\lead mines in the world at Navan, the largest underground zinc mine in Europe at Silvermines, the largest producing lead mine in Europe at Tynagh, the fifth largest mercury mine in the world, one of the most important sources of manganese in Europe and the most profitable barytes deposit in the world." (Long 1976:62). This gave the lie to the common view, expressed by Patrick Lynch, that it was the lack of mineral resources which prevented industrialization (Chubb & Lynch 1969:131).

The output of these mines, however, instead of being processed in Ireland, has been exported to the West European industrialized

countries for smelting and processing, thus reproducing the cycle of underdevelopment through the export of raw materials. But while the smelting of indigenous resources is avoided, a giant alumina smelter has recently been constructed on the Shannon estuary to process raw materials coming from the Caribbean. This illustrates the strategy whereby corporations distribute different segments of a sequential process among various countries as a hedge against government intervention. Crotty has shown how the various measures taken to attract the AAC to Ireland, by increasing the cost of labour, materials, fuel etc, has cost the country many more jobs than it has created (1985.95).

### 3. The National Debt: The Cost of Underdevelopment

The full reckoning with the results of a reliance on foreign investment is now being faced. It is in the crisis of the public finances that this problem is clearly illustrated. In Ireland there seems no remedy against the consumption of the purse. Between 1981 and 1986 alone, the burden of national debt doubled. Much of the controversy surrounding this has focussed on current spending. Total current spending rose from 4,792 million pounds in 1981 to 8,105 by 1986, while over roughly the same period the current budget deficit increased from 819 billion to 1,395 billion pounds. In this time the proportion of GNP allocated to current government spending rose from 45% to almost 50% (Tansey 1987). The current budget deficit has risen from zero in 1970 to 8% of GNP by 1980 (Kelly 1984.18). It would seem then on the

surface that economic experts are correct when they berate us for "living beyond our means".

However during the same period Ireland has experienced a phenomenal growth in capital formation. In the nineteen sixties it averaged 20% of GNP and has since risen to 50% (Kelly 1984.18). Since this capital programme is financed by borrowing, the level of national debt has increased accordingly from 66% of GNP in the early seventies to 135% by 1986 (Tansey 1987). The reasoning behind this was that capital investment would increase productivity which would in turn increase revenue. Forced industrialization, it was believed, could provide the basis for increased spending. Since the multinationals were the major actors in this drama they received the benefits of this increased capital expenditure. It was precisely the failure of this industrial strategy and not current spending which is at the root of the debt crisis. The revenue base has shrunk due to the collapse of industry while the expenditure ceiling has widened due to an increase in welfare recipients. Even in spite of this spending on these services has not risen as a proportion of GNP. In fact as Tansey observes "all the rise in current government spending as a proportion of GNP has been accounted for by the rising cost of servicing the governments debt" (Tansey 1987). In other words the debt which was originally created through the multinational development strategy has been shifted on to the taxpayer in the form of interest payments.



### 1. Creating the "Achieving Society"

Only within the context of the international problem of underdevelopment does this problem in Ireland make any sense. The response to the economic crisis to date still seems to be confined within the modernization\nationalist terms of debate. Joe Lee has been a consistent advocate of the modernization solution in his advocacy of initiative and entrepreneurship: "few even of our best people are achieving their full potential" (1986:158). And this, despite the fact that as far back as 1942 the foremost bourgeois economist Joseph Schumpeter had pronounced "The obsolescence of the Entrepreneurial Function" (Schumpeter 1942). Beyond this assertion however Professor Lee is unable to come up with anything more than platitudes about the importance of talent and initiative: "Too many of our institutional structures...give a built-in advantage to the limpets, enabling them to thwart initiative" (Lee 1986:158). Behind all this of course is the fundamental faith in the transformative capacity of the market. The function of planning from this viewpoint is to facilitate the efficient operation of the market, in labour as well as capital.

### 2. Back to Nationalism

Ironically enough the foremost nationalist economist, Raymond Crotty, ends up with a somewhat similar conclusion. Crotty's intervention in the current crisis can be understood in terms of the problem of the authentic national bourgeoisie. The central

question here is, how can an indigenous industrial sector be created with an independent development dynamic? Crotty's main argument is that the outflow of the surplus from the country, in the form of debt servicing and export of capital, retards the process of accumulation at home. He argues furthermore that the production factors, land, labour and capital are incorrectly priced due to the historical conditions of colonialism which distorted the operation of the market through monopoly (1986:115). He concludes from this that an accumulation of capital leading to industrialization can only take place through a lifting of government regulation of the market internally, combined with some form of detachment from the international capitalist system.

### 3. The Ultimate Problem: The Social Relations of Underdevelopment

The fundamental problem here is of course the failure to recognize the relationship between the social relations and conditions of accumulation. Both Crotty and Lee fail to recognize that the accumulation of capital is not simply a question of management but one of the relations between classes in society. Underdevelopment is determined, as Ben Fine rightly remarks, "not upon the forms it assumes--such as technological gaps and shortage of surplus available for accumulation--but on the obstacles to the transition both from pre-capitalist to capitalist relations of production and from a formal to a real subsumption of capital to labour" (Fine 1978:94). The conditions under which the surplus is appropriated in Ireland today are largely those of petty commodity production. Only when the social

relations themselves are transformed will a process of capital accumulation begin.

VI. THE POLITICS OF "DEPENDENT INDUSTRIALIZATION":  
STATE CLIENTELISM AND POLITICAL INCORPORATION

In view of the dislocation that economic changes have occasioned in Ireland over the past few decades the political consensus which has been maintained looks remarkable. It seemed legitimate to expect that with the social changes which were occurring, Irish politics would come to resemble "normal" European politics. The "catch-all" parties however have still been able to maintain their position. Voting patterns, as Mart Bax pointed out seem to be remarkably stable from generation to generation: "Their parents before them voted for the party and they vote the same ticket." (Bax 1976:72). The truth of this is evidenced by the fact that the two major parties can still command up to 83% of electoral support [1].

1. Cultural Explanation

The explanation for this remarkable continuity usually takes the form of either a cultural or a class analysis. Of the former the most influential have been Arensberg and Kimball (1968) and Rumpf (1977) whose influence can be traced to several others including Garvin (1974) and Bax (1972). The idea common to these works is that the divisions within the political system are the result of historical cleavages in society, linguistic, distance from the centre, suffrage extension, urbanization etc. On this

basis Tom Garvin argues that "the division between the two parties actually reflects a profound distinction in Irish society, a distinction between those who, for class, cultural or other reasons, assume a natural affinity between Ireland and Britain and those who do not" (1981:135). Paul Sacks from a similar perspective argues that politics in Ireland reflects the dominance of the peasant mentality in the country at large: "It is the countryman's set of ideas about the nature of the political process" he argues "that makes machine politics possible in Ireland" (Sacks 1976:7).

## 2. Class Explanation

As opposed to this, attempts have been made to explain the power of the two major parties in terms of class interest. James Wickham argues the crucial factor here is the ability of the Fianna Fail party to represent integration into the international economy as being in the national interest. He discusses this within the general context of what he calls "the politics of dependent industrialization" the nature of which retards the development of workers movements (Wickham 1980). Another variant of this argument is that of Bew and Patterson (1982). They argue that the crucial political development in the post-war period resulted from the economic transformation away from raw material production to manufacturing. This transition was effected peacefully due to the ability of Fianna Fail, and Lemass in particular, to skillfully manage bourgeois factions by separating the issue of foreign capital from that of moves towards free trade (1982:193).

### 3. State Incorporation

It can be fairly accepted I think that the conditions for some change in the Irish political system have been in place for some time. This is to say that the evidence shows that significant sections of the population vote for parties which do not represent their interests. The question to be answered then is why alternative movements have not been successful in building up a popular opposition. The argument that the political system is somehow suited to a peasant mentality in the country can be dismissed in view of the ever increasing urbanization. It may be that this direct attention to political parties places rather too much emphasis upon the political party and not enough emphasis upon the state itself. The increasing influence of the state has already been mentioned in relation to economic developments. Within the theoretical framework of incorporation which Nicos Mouzelis has developed, the role of the state in incorporating conflicts within the existing system can be explained. This role of the burgeoning state in the post-war decades, despite the changes, displays a marked continuity with the past.

Before looking at the the role of the state in Ireland, some questions about the state as an institution should be raised. The assertion of Marx that "The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie" (1973.69) leaves unanswered the question of how this is actually achieved. Nicos Poulantzas argues that the capitalist state simultaneously organizes the dominant classes and

disorganizes the dominated classes. One of the ways in which it does this is through the creation of a consensus around projects which serve the interests of the dominant classes. The state: "has the precise function of hiding the real contradictions and of reconstituting on an imaginary level a relatively coherent discourse which serves as the horizon of the agents experience"(1973:207). Looking at the role of the Irish state in this period provides an illustration of this.

#### 4. The Agricultural Sector

We saw earlier how the politics of land distribution played such an important part in the development of the Irish political system. The Ireland that was dreamed of was the Ireland of the peasant holding. The extent to which the smallholder gained from the policies of successive regimes, is however debatable. I have already argued, after Mouzelis, that this political development involved the transference of patronage from landlords to the state and the incorporation of the peasant masses into the new system. The success of this system can be judged from the fact that, except for the emergence of Clann na Talmhan in the thirties, no major peasant party emerged as an opposition [2]. The failure of Irish peasants to formulate an alternative development policy was explained, after Mouzelis, by reference to the extent to which Irish peasants were integrated into the capitalist economy. The peasants "were brought into the political game in a more dependent/vertical manner, through populist and clientelistic means"(1986.72). The transition to political independence then saw a shift from an oligarchic form

of patronage to a more centralized bureaucratic form. In line with the shift from political to state control of the economy, the new form of incorporation shifted on to the state level.

The increased involvement of the state in agriculture has continued the practice of incorporation. The Irish Farmers Association (IFA) has, since its foundation in the fifties with the support of government agencies like ACOT, presented itself as the representative of all Irish farmers, or the " agricultural sector" as it is called. Its organizational structure does not recognize differences among its members in terms of access to capital or land. However through the pages of the Irish Farmers' Journal as well as through its policies, it has been one of the strongest proponents of capital-intensive commercial farming. Despite the fact that these policies have lead to the marginalization of many small producers, the IFA's continued ability to mobilize large numbers of farmers in support of its policies is evidence of its incorporative capacity.

##### 5. The Unions

Another aspect of this process of state clientelism was the incorporation of the trade union movement into the planning process. Economic Development (1958) had called for more joint consultation between unions, employers and the state. The National Industrial and Economic Council (NIEC) and the National Employer Labour Conference (ELC) were to be important institutions in this process. The theme of wage restraint very soon came to dominate the proceedings of these institutions. Bill

Roche has shown how these state bodies through the ideology of "social partnership" created a "pragmatic acknowledgement" that "within the prevailing political economy, pay restraint was a prerequisite of economic expansion, and further that it required the imposition of controls on pay determination" (Roche 1982:65). This culminated in the so-called National Understanding of the nineteen seventies in which the autonomy of the workers movement from the actions of the state was effectively abolished. Clientelism in Ireland then was less a function of the peasant mentality peculiar to Ireland than an example of what Mouzelis has described as a shift to "a more centralized party oriented clientelism" (1986:48)

VII. NATIONALISM: ECONOMIC DEPENDENCE  
AND POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE

An issue centrally related to the question of clientelism in Irish politics is the question of nationalism. It was ironic that at a time when the national question had become marginal in the Republic for the first time, it should have exploded with such force in the North. It has been a truism of modernization theory that nationalism is a sentiment of pre-modern society. The economic development of the nineteen sixties undoubtedly undermined the social basis of Irish nationalism not to mention its ideology. The whole idea of imperialism and partition as obstacles to development seemed unrealistic. The idea that economic development was retarded by foreign interference seemed totally misguided since it was foreign intervention itself which seemed to have caused development. The turning point in this



attitude to nationalism was undoubtedly the historic meeting between Sean Lemass and Terence O'Neill in 1966. This meeting seemed to signal the beginning of a political realism in the country which understood the importance of economic welfare over anachronistic nationalist shibboleths. "We recognize that the Government and Parliament there exist with the support of the majority of the people in the Six County area" said Lemass, going on to assure that "We see it functioning within its powers and we are prepared to stand over the proposal that they should continue to function within those powers" (Probert 1978:91).

Political commentators in the Republic have, since the early sixties, ritually pronounced the end of nationalism in Irish politics. Sean Lemass was of course the arch pragmatist in this sense, one of the twentieth century men in the sense David Thornly described them. The halcyon days of the sixties however then gave way to the "me decade" of the seventies. Tough measures were called for and Charles.J.Haughey came to power amidst the general feeling that "If these the times,/ then this must be the man". However the clientelist tradition lived on under Mr Haughey's reign and real class politics had to wait. It had to await the emergence of The Progressive Democrats in the election of 1987 for this to finally occur. The stridency with which the gospel of privatization was now proclaimed was music to the ears of those yearning after a normal world. Fianna Fail of course have since upstaged the others by seemingly ditching its populist policy. However the sinking of nationalism out of sight seems in no way to have alleviated the economic problem. Nor does it seem

to be leading to the emergence of an alternative socialist party.

Nationalism of course means many things to many people but the political expression of the nationalist position in Ireland at present is undoubtedly Sinn Fein. The Sinn Fein policy was expressed by the then leader of the party Ruari O Bradaigh in 1973 as Comhar na gComharsan. This philosophy is based "on the right of worker-ownership and is native Irish as well as being co-operative or distributive in character" (Purdie 1980:85). The political evolution of Sinn Fein leftward since those years illustrates the problems confronting this nationalist view of economic development. We already looked at this problem in relation to the work of Raymond Crotty. The problem is basically that the structural contradictions within the Irish economy make the idea of a communal or cross class alliance in economic development non-sensical. It is every bit as non-sensical as the idea that integration into the capitalist system could lead to development.

#### 1. Conor Cruise O'Brien and The British New Left

One of the most vociferous opponents of nationalism in the Republic over the past two decades has been Conor Cruise O'Brien. Speaking from a first hand involvement in the post-war decolonization process, O'Brien from early on set about challenging the view that the conflict in Northern Ireland had anything to do with colonialism. One aspect of O'Brien's criticism is directed against those left nationalists who see imperialism as the obstacle to economic development both North and South. Indeed he went on to invert the argument by asserting

that Irish nationalism was itself a colonial sentiment in its claims on the North. Underneath the veneer of academic objectivity O'Brien's argument can be fairly situated within the terms of the modernization debate about the conditions for economic development. O'Brien's argument reduces basically to the contention that social and economic development have little to do with class or national struggle and much more to do with good management. This argument holds basically that the conditions for the development of bourgeois society lie in the accumulation of capital and that this accumulation will proceed with the operation of the market.

Dr O'Brien has found a rather unlikely bedfellow here in the person of the British New Left Marxist Tom Nairn who quotes O'Brien approvingly. Nairn argues that the partition of the country in no way hinders the accumulation of capital. What retards that is the development of a strong bourgeoisie and this is possible within the confines of the two states in Ireland. The nationalism of a united Ireland in the North, and likewise in the the South, actually inhibits the growth of "socialist politics" by perpetuating divisions within the working class and by driving Protestant workers into the hands of their Orange bosses, and in the South, Catholic workers into the hands of nationalist bosses (Nairn 1977:232). The ultimate outcome of civil strife would, Nairn agrees with O'Brien, result in a worse form of Falangist type atavism than existed previously (1977:238). Nairn on the other hand argues that bourgeois society in the North contains the conditions for the continued accumulation of capital which

would so alter the economic structure of the Northern Ireland economy as to make sectarianism unworkable. Similarly in the Republic the coalition government of 1973 is seen to have been a milestone in the emergence of the bourgeoisie.

The question to be answered here is whether the resolution of the national question, in the sense of ending partition, is a precondition of social and economic development? Or does a preoccupation with this question, as Nairn and O'Brien seem to suggest, simply retard the process of development? With regard to the Republic firstly, considering that the recent economic decline coincided with national quietism, nationalism can hardly be blamed. With regard to the North on the other hand, the economic decline of that province had begun long before the recent Troubles began. On the question of whether nationalism can contribute to economic development on the other hand we should reconsider briefly the whole debate about the conditions for economic development.

I have been arguing here that a condition of economic development historically was the creation of the social conditions for capital accumulation. The creation of these conditions was originally the task of the native bourgeoisie as we saw in relation to Britain and Germany. However we saw that in the case of colonial Ireland, except for the North-East, the conditions of capital accumulation did not exist and the native bourgeoisie were unable to create them. With the development of monopoly capitalism the position of the national bourgeoisie in

the underdeveloped countries became even more precarious. Any major structural reform of the property system inevitably encroached on the interests of foreign capital. The bourgeoisie were unable to lay the basis for economic development and the case of Chile showed what happened when it was attempted. Instead, the social relations of underdevelopment have persisted into present times. These social relations are based on a low productivity agricultural sector and a merchant trading industrial sector. The reproduction of this system depends upon dependent integration into the capitalist system. The ideology of planning here had an extremely important function in relation to nationalism. Its essential function was to separate the issue of economic development from that of political independence.

Any attempt to change this system will involve challenging the property system on which it is based. Since the Irish economic system is so integrated into the international system with all forms of commitments, any challenge to the property system will have an international and thus a national dimension. There would be strong moves to prevent it, internally and externally. In Ireland therefore, to paraphrase Marx, the social question is a national question. The issue of partition is central here. British occupation of the Northern province represents an important bridgehead for imperialism. The logical destination of the struggle in the North is undoubtedly some form of "united Ireland".

However, an Ireland which could accommodate the brethren from the North would have to be quite different than today. A social

upheaval stands between here and there: one which could lay the conditions for development. The national bourgeoisie at the moment is engaged in an effort to smooth over this contradiction through its latest Anglo-Irish accord. It is significant that this deal was accompanied by American "aid" to the tune of \$500 million. The determination of the imperialist powers to crush Sinn Fein lends weight to the contention that capitalist imperialism along with the national bourgeoisie has a direct interest in maintaining underdevelopment in Ireland.

#### VIII. THE CATHOLIC CHURCH: SETTING THE TERMS OF THE DEBATE

Nowhere is the inability of the national bourgeoisie to transform the social relations more evident than in its relation to the Catholic Church. The continuing power of the Catholic Church and its ability to appeal to the traditional constituency of the "family" points to the extraordinary permanence of the basic petty bourgeois social relations. One of the most extraordinary aspects of the post-war era in religious terms was the reign of John Charles McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin 1940-1972. The post-war era in religious terms was marked by the Vatican Council reforms in the 1960s. Although these reforms have been heralded from the perspective of the liturgy, their importance in the long run may be seen more from their effect on the form of bureaucratic control. Certainly the corporate tradition suffered little during this time. Under the direction of the redoubtable Archbishop, thirty-four churches were built and twenty-six new parishes formed in Dublin between the years

1940 and 1965 (Brown 1981:221). Indeed the era ended as it began with the capitulation of the government in the face of Church resistance.

This emphasis upon church-going, of course, leaves out of the picture the extent to which the church is part of the very functioning of society. Hospitals, social services and education are only some of the areas in which the church occupies the role of the state. One of the most important aspects of the change in the sixties was transition in the form of clerical control of education, the success of which became evident in the two referenda. Most of the study of Irish Catholicism from the modernization perspective has concentrated on the liberalization of the Church's teaching on sexual morality. The extent to which people heeded church teaching on this matter was believed to be a measure of Church influence. Although the Church through a 1975 pastoral letter condemned "the contraceptive mentality" it was nevertheless felt, as Terence Brown expressed it, that "A major proportion of the younger generation were prepared in the 1970s to base their moral perceptions on things other than the Church's official teaching"(Brown 1981:303).

This rather instrumentalist view of the role of the Irish Catholic Church fails to comprehend the extent to which the church defines the terms within which intellectual debate takes place in the country and therefore predetermines the outcome. This fact was quite evident up to the sixties in that most "serious" social and economic debate was conducted through the pages of Catholic journals such as The Furrow, Doctrine and Life,

Christus Rex and Studies. When this is recognized it comes as no surprise that Dr Whitaker could conclude what is considered the most important document of the era, Economic Development, with the reassurance that it was "a contribution, in the spirit advocated by the Bishop of Clonfert, towards a working out of the national good in the economic sphere" (Chubb & Lynch 1969:109). The question remains what effect this had on maintaining the existing social relations and in what, if any, is the new form of influence. From the perspective of a School of Communications there can be little doubt that this influence is still particularly strong. The example of the divorce referendum provides an illustration not because of its intrinsic importance but for the extent to which the debate became one not between the Church and those opposed to it but a debate within the Church itself. The interest of the Church became coextensive with society.



## NOTES

[1] In the general election of February 1987, Fianna Fail received 44%, Fine Gael received 27.1% and The Progressive Democrats got 11.9%. Out of 166 seats these three parties together got 146. See Richard Sinnott, "The General Election in The Republic of Ireland 17 Feb 1987, in IRISH POLITICAL STUDIES vol 2 1987.

[2]. -Clann na Talmhan won 14 seats in the 1943 election but thereafter declined steadily→

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