

alarming stories about our young dying in State care. Now and again a particular gruesome death/murder is highlighted by the media and then forgotten. The HSE has been throwing money at the problem making it one of the most expensive systems in Europe. Staff are paid sums of money that are breathtaking and yet—oh my—how they have failed our children.

The HSE put off for ages making any information available, except on cases that came into the public arena because of bodies found, making them then fall into the Gardaí remit. Now we finally have the *Report of the Independent Child Death Review Group*. The Report was authored by child law expert and solicitor Geoffrey Shannon and Barnardos Director of Advocacy Norah Gibbons. They have established that between 2000 and 2010 there were 196 deaths of children in the HSE system. 112 were as a result of non-natural causes such as suicides, drug-overdoses, road traffic incidents or unlawful killings. No matter what one says, those figures are truly horrific.

They cannot be let there as just cruel statistics because this is a very small country. On the night the report was released, RTE 1 News at 6 dealt with the issue. There was an interview with the two authors, though I would have a difficulty with Norah Gibbons as it could be perceived that there is a conflict of interest between her authorship and her job with Barnardos, which gets money from the State to look after children and act in their interest. But the most important interview was with Fine Gael's Minister for Children and Youth Affairs Francis Fitzgerald TD. Brian Dobson asked the Minister soft questions and never once put her on the spot. He did *not* ask her if she intended to resign or her Senior, Minister for Health, Fine Gael's Dr. James Reilly TD—who was nowhere to be seen. I couldn't help but contrast this with RTE's attitude to the way it treated Church people over the years. Instead Brian Dobson almost leaned over backwards trying to be co-operative with Ms Fitzgerald who was clad in a most fetching fuchsia coloured suit.

Then it was announced by the Minister that a new Ministry for Children would be hived off from the HSE altogether and there would be a Referendum to give new Rights to the Child that over-rides family law. This (liberal) agenda is now well advanced yet there are laws guaranteeing absolute care to children in this country but more money is to be made by pretending otherwise. And of course the groups lapping up the money will continue to make a dog's meal out of helping these same children as has happened in the UK and elsewhere. But, as the media wants us to know, anything is better than the old Catholic Church. QED.

Julianne Herlihy ©

## Film Review

### Desmond Bell's *Frank Ryan*

Desmond Bell's film, *The Enigma Of Frank Ryan*, begins with Ryan experiencing an RAF bombing raid on Berlin in a late stage of World War 2. The story of how he got there is told in a series of flashbacks connected with his telling of the story to German Military Intelligence. He is being recorded by a German recording machine, the Grundig, which went on to become one of the technological marvels for the post-1945 generation of the world. For the most part Ryan replied to questions put to him by his handler, but on one occasion the machine was left with him overnight, so that he might give an account of aspects of his life which his handler did not wish to be known that he had heard. The point of this seemed to be that the Gestapo did not know about Ryan's activities in the Spanish Civil War, and that it was important that they did not find out. This presumed ignorance of the Gestapo came up a number of times. It seems improbable to me that the Gestapo did not know of Ryan's Spanish activities, or that they could not have found out easily if they sensed that information was being withheld from them.

The Gestapo were the Special Branch of the police of Nazi Germany. If they exercised a general intimidating influence, that is what police forces do. They could scarcely function as police forces if they did not do so. And, if they tortured suspects and subversives, then, judging by all the Hollywood or Ealing films in which they have been represented, what they did is only what guardians of the peace in democracies now do openly, especially in the foremost democracy, the United States—the democracy on which the maintenance of Democracy as an element in the structure of the world is now held to depend.

Ryan was held (as a free agent) by Military Intelligence, the *Abwehr*, commanded by Admiral Canaris. Military Intelligence was a slightly detached, slightly subversive component of the Nazi regime. Ryan was under its protection.

The reason he was taken to Germany—the reason he was rescued from a Fascist prison in Spain—was to go on a mission to Ireland with Sean Russell. One of the interesting scenes in the film showed Veessenmayer, the SS Officer in the Foreign Office who had responsibility for this mission, explaining about the many resistance groups with which they had

contact. He was standing by a set of about fifty pigeon holes, each holding information about a possible ally. Most of them, he said, would turn out to be useless. The thing was to discover which would be usable.

He pulled out one drawer and said it had to do with Indian nationalists opposed to Gandhi. I suppose that must have been Subhas Chandra Bose's group. If so, Germany never got as far as India to make use of it. It was the Japanese that Bose acted with. Japan had been forced by the USA to become a capitalist imperialist power, as the alternative to being a simple victim of Western Imperialism. Faced with an American ultimatum, backed by Britain, in 1941, which would have wrecked its economy if complied with, it attacked an American naval base in the mid-Pacific and invaded the British Empire in Asia. Bose formed his Indian National Army in alliance with Japan, but Japan was defeated before it could become operative. Nevertheless Bose remains to this day one of India's most admired men of action. In neighbouring Burma, Aung San formed a national government under Japanese protection and thoroughly undermined British rule. When Britain tried to restore its Imperial sovereignty in 1945—helped by Irish 'Anti-Fascists' like Cathal O'Shannon—it found the task was beyond its power. Churchill demanded that Aung San should be prosecuted as a war criminal, but Britain found instead that it had to recognise him as the legitimate leader of independent Burma (Myanmar, as it is now known).

If Sean Russell's group was in one of Veessenmayer's pigeon holes, then it had some good company.

I don't recall what the relationship was between Bose and Gandhi. I only know that Gandhi refused to support the British war on Germany. And, when Churchill sent a Socialist, Sir Stafford Cripps, as Imperial emissary to India to urge Nehru to support the British war effort, Nehru expected that he would be offered independence in exchange for participation in the war as an ally. But, when he found that Sir Stafford was only urging him to do his duty as a subject, he turned him down flat.

Britain then set about raising an Imperial Army in India, in defiance of the Indian national movement, Congress, as well as Bose—in defiance of all the vital political forces in India. The outcome was the catastrophic collapse of the Empire at the

end of the War, without there being a developed Indian administration capable of taking over, and religious rioting in which a million people died while the last Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, looked on, and Partition resulted.

Veesenmayer, with whom Ryan had some discussion, was a member of the SS. The SS was a kind of ruling class, or caste, in the Nazi regime. It was modelled on the English ruling class, which Hitler admired greatly, and the English Public Schools were the model for the educational system set up to produce an elite for the German state.

The German state never had a ruling class. The English state, from the beginning of its evolutionary development around 1715, was entirely the product of the ruling class. It might almost be said that throughout the 18th century and well into the 19th there was no State, only a ruling class—certainly no apparatus of State, recruited from the populace, such as we take for granted today. The construction of this State apparatus began in earnest after the 1832 reform, supervised by the ruling class. It was gradually democratised as successive strata were granted the vote. The Parliamentary franchise was fully democratised only in 1928.

Britain declared war on Germany in September 1939 without having a serious will to fight it, and effectively lost it in June 1940. After that point the defeat of Germany depended entirely on others.

Within Britain, the defeat of 1940 effectively brought a Socialist Government to power. The Tory Party was demoralised. Labour took Office under Churchill and governed at home while he conducted a heroic foreign policy which lost him most of the Empire which it was his greatest wish to preserve. On the basis of its wartime record, Labour won a crushing victory in 1945 and established the welfare state. It might also have peacefully wiped out the remnants of the ruling class. In 1948 it found it was in danger of doing so and pulled back. But the stinking rich of today are a very pale reflection of what the ruling class was. The resemblance between the ruling class remnant one sees on television and the SS as portrayed in the endlessly-repeated Anglo-American war films may therefore not be apparent. But it takes little historical investigation to discover that what the SS did for about ten years was what the English Public-School-bred ruling class did for centuries. Even in the matter of extermination, the SS emulated the English ruling class. Many weak peoples were literally exterminated

as a requirement of English progress, and it is now being discovered that the killing in the suppression of the Indian national revolt of 1857—which is usually trivialised by being called the Indian Mutiny—ran into millions. It was thought to be better for the sense of public well-being in England that the English public should not be too well informed of what was being done in its interest. The SS was of the same opinion. Himmler told his colleagues that it was necessary that what they were doing should be done for the welfare of the German people, but that it was also necessary that it should be kept secret from the German people.

Desmond Bell is to be commended for presenting Veesenmayer as a human being of the English Public Schoolboy type.

The showing of the film on 3rd June, in the Queen's Film Theatre, Belfast, as part of the Belfast Festival, was followed by a discussion about it with the audience.

Feargal McGarry, author of a pamphlet on Ryan, a book on the Irish in the Spanish Civil War, and a contribution to the Oxford University project of *Re-Writing Irish History* with a book on 1916, was, as Historical Consultant on the film, on the platform along with Bell. In the film Ryan is shown questioning his German friend, Clissman, about the Camps, and Clissman is shown looking evasive and advising Ryan that that was a subject best avoided. A question was asked about the authenticity of this scene. McGarry replied, as far as I recall, that, while there was no documentary evidence that Ryan knew about the Camps, it was a reasonable presumption that he could have known.

I think that is an unreasonable presumption. Irish revisionists who condemn Irish neutrality seem to take it to be self-evident that, not only did the German public know, but that the Irish Government knew and chose to keep quiet. I have been on the look-out for evidence one way or another for almost fifty years, and all I can say with reasonable certainty is that the British Government knew about the systematic extermination of Jews but chose not to make it a war issue. The extermination was conducted in Poland and the Ukraine. But the Polish Resistance, which got to know of the exterminations, went to a lot of trouble to carry the information to Whitehall. But Whitehall already knew because it broken the most secret German codes and was very much better informed than the German public. It did not act on its knowledge, or reveal it and make it a war issue, lest it affront domestic anti-Semitism.

A Hungarian Jew who survived and became a Rabbi in England, Hugo Gryn, was a popular broadcaster on BBC Radio. About 15 years ago I heard him describe the round-up of the Hungarian Jews in 1944. He said they had no idea what was in store for them. If what was being done in the camps was not known on the Jewish grapevine, it is a very rash assumption that it was widely known in Germany.

Systematic extermination was undertaken in the Baltic/Polish Ukrainian hinterland of the War with Russia. Those were areas where popular anti-Semitism merged with anti-Communism and there was popular participation in the exterminations. During the three years of the extermination campaign the German population had more pressing things to think about. So I think that was a false note in a film that had many good notes.

All readers may not be familiar with the outline of Ryan's career. He joined the IRA at the tail-end of the War of Independence. During the 1920s the IRA had a function as part of the anti-Treaty movement in the South. Its existential problems became after Fianna Fail came to power in 1932 and started breaking the Treaty.

I'm sure that the existence of the IRA in unofficial alliance with Fianna Fail played a part in ensuring a peaceful transition from Treatyite to anti-Treatyite government in 1932. In 1933 the defeated anti-Treatyites remade themselves into a Fascist Party, Fine Gael, and organised a mass Fascist movement, the Blueshirts. The rationale of Fine Gael Fascism was that the IRA was Communist, that Fianna Fail was dependent on IRA support, and that the IRA was biding its time, letting the situation ripen for a take-over. When the moment was right De Valera would be discarded, as Kerensky was discarded by Lenin in 1917, and a Communist regime would be established. Some very intelligent and respectable people, including eminent academics, held that view.

Holding such a view, they would have been justified in refusing to vacate Office in 1932. I assume that they did so because otherwise they would have found themselves engaged in an authentic civil war—as distinct from the bogus affair brought about by Britain in 1922-23—with all the vital forces of the country aroused against them.

So they conceded power and then organised a Fascist movement to prevent the IRA/Communist ousting of De Valera. It was an odd situation.

The IRA was then active for a period in

the curbing of the Blueshirt development. Some of its members, represented in the film by Sean Russell, soon felt that they had done enough for Fianna Fail while getting nothing in return and wanted to go into outright opposition to the 26 County State. Others wanted the IRA to develop a kind of socialist programme. Ryan belonged to this tendency. A parting of the ways came about. Ryan and his colleagues formed the Republican Congress while Russell held to an anti-Treaty policy focussed on Partition.

With Fianna Fail operating a *de facto* Republican social policy in Government there was no ground for a Congress development.

In 1936 an elected Republican Government in Spain was challenged by a military insurrection led by General Franco. The situation was complex but was soon simplified down to a battle between Communism and Fascism. General O'Duffy, Fascist President of Fine Gael at its foundation and leader of the Blueshirt movement, took a Brigade to Spain to fight the Communists. Ryan too went to Spain with a contingent of Left Republicans and fought as part of the International Brigades organised by the Communist International.

The Fascists won in Spain. Ryan was taken prisoner. He was subjected to particularly harsh treatment by Franco at the urging of the Irish Fascists.

Britain declared war on Germany about six months after the end of the Spanish Civil War. It did so purportedly in defence of Poland, to which it had given a guarantee of military support. It did not fire a shot at the Germans or drop a bomb on them during the German/Polish War, but it set about working up its declared war on Germany into a World War. And Sean Russell, who had declared war on Britain before Britain declared war on Germany, and carried out a number of operations in England, went to Germany in search of arms after the British declaration of war.

In the film, Ryan is shown in a Spanish prison reading a newspaper account of Russell's bombing campaign in England, and being disgusted with it to the extent of saying that he was tempted to become an informer against the IRA.

Britain did not prosecute its declared war on Germany. Nine months after being subjected to the declaration of war, Germany responded to it. Unexpectedly it broke through the British and French Armies in May--June 1940 and swept along Northern and Western France,

bringing it to the Spanish border.

At that point the Irish Government, which had been making representations to Franco on behalf of Ryan, authorised its Ambassador in Spain, Leopold Kerney to make an approach to the Germans to use their influence with Franco to release Ryan. Franco would not release him, but he agreed that the Germans might rescue him. So the Germans came and whisked him out of his cell and carted him off, watched by a Machiavellian Kerney, impressively played by Niall Cusack.

I don't know if Bell intended to suggest that it was Russell's bombing campaign in England that caused Veessenmayer to think that Irish Republicanism was not one of the worthless items in his card index files, and that this led to the 'rescue' of Ryan.

A couple of weeks after his 'rescue' Ryan went on a submarine trip to Ireland with Russell. Russell died on the submarine of a burst appendix and Ryan, who apparently knew nothing of the mission, returned to Germany. And that is the end of the story.

The film ends abruptly with a caption telling us that Ryan died in Berlin in 1944 and that Fascism was defeated in 1945.

But of course Fascism was not defeated in 1945. The Fascism against which Ryan had fought established a very successful regime in Spain and, in the course of the next thirty years, created modern Spain and organised an orderly transition to democracy under a constitutional monarch. And, by its armed neutrality in the British/German segment of the World War, it saved Britain from the need to make a settlement. If it had joined Germany in the War, Britain would probably have been disabled by loss of Gibraltar.

In making this film Bell made his way through ideologically difficult terrain without resorting to caricature. But there is one very great flaw in it. The actual Irish Fascist movement is missing from the film, and I think an innocent viewer would have taken Russell to represent Irish Fascism.

I would have asked about this in the post-showing discussion. It is almost twenty years since I did anything in Belfast and I thought I would be unknown and might therefore be able to ask a question. Being short-sighted I sat in the front row. The panel were about ten feet in front of me. I don't think it's possible not to notice somebody ten feet in front of you raising his hand four times, but somehow they managed it—though none of the three

panelists were personally known to me. So it seems that I am still far from being unknown in Belfast.

I don't think the existence of actual Fascism in Ireland then was any more unnoticeable than was my existence with my hand up in the front row of the Queen's Film Theatre. And it had a direct bearing on the course of events being described. But for its influence, Ryan might have been released from Spanish captivity and come home.

I suppose the film was made with public money, and that depicting the Fascist origins of Fine Gael was therefore out of the question. Fine Gael dominated Irish academia in that period, and for a generation after 1945. When it reverted to the orthodox Parliamentary system maintained by Fianna Fail it falsified the historical record with regard to its origins (as 'Official Republicanism' has done with regard to its lunatic terrorism of the 1970s since its entry into the corridors of power), and would not react kindly to being reminded of them. But it no longer dominates academia. Dominance has passed to a generation of historians shaped by Oxford and Cambridge and made influential by British patronage. It seems, however, that 'revisionism' has been advised that Fine Gael's post-Fascist story about itself in the 1930s is not to be revised. And so we get Sean Russell, the purely Republican military leader who would have no truck with social ideologies, being used as a scapegoat for the actual Fascism of the time.

In one strange scene set in the mid-thirties he is shown giving an ultimatum to Ryan, which led to a decisive parting of the ways between them, while flicking food into a goldfish pond. It somehow put one in mind of Dr. No—even though they were goldfish, not piranha.

In another scene the Russellites are shown preventing a Northern group of Congress Republicans from taking part in the Bodinstown event because they were Protestants. My understanding was that the fracas happened because the Congress had not abided by an agreement that the rival groups should not display banners. But I am probably wrong. After writing a pamphlet about the Congress a long time ago, I lost interest in it—and likewise with Mellow's *Jail Notes* after I had published them, I think for the first time. It seemed to me that there was little social Republican space remaining to be worked on after Fianna Fail got going, and there was certainly no social revolution to be made against Fianna Fail, which in those times was the national party by virtue of carrying

the bulk of the middle to lower section of society with it in an effort that was generally felt to be worthwhile.

I grew up in a constituency where there were safe Fianna Fail and Labour seats and the third seat was in contention between Fianna Fail and Labour. Fianna Fail was responsive to pressure from the Left, but the prospects of its being overthrown by a Left movement against it were nil. But pure and simple Republicanism was far from being despised. Brian O'Higgins' publications—which have no equivalent today—kept people in mind of what it was all about, and they made sure to remind themselves of it at the appropriate season.

The last major Republican event that happened while I was still living in Slieve Luacra was the very pure and simple invasion of the North in 1956 (which had been fuelled by the enthusiasm generated by Fine Gael's return to Republicanism in 1948). The general response was one of approval because what was going on in the North was a disgrace. I don't recall any expectation that it would lead to the ending of Partition. But, because of the condition of the North, it was a good thing to have done.

Political science does not understand such attitudes. And the Dublin Establishment of the past generation deplures them.

The media mouthpiece of the post-1970 Dublin Establishment, John Bowman (who in his radio archive on June 17th regurgitated the nonsense that "*The Emergency*" was the Irish name for the 2nd World War), when he was Chairman of *Questions & Answers* regularly interjected with a reminder of Russell's collaboration with the Nazis.

Russell went to Germany for guns without being a Nazi, as he had gone to Russia without being a Bolshevik. He stood on his own ground as an Irish Republican. He did not concern himself with what the world was doing to itself. His concern was with what Britain was doing in Northern Ireland. And, if he took it that what was going on in the North was simply the result of Partition as such, rather than the result of the perverse mode of government imposed by Britain along with Partition and as the means of enacting and sustaining it, he was only taking it as it was generally taken. And, however one takes it, the fact stands that Northern Ireland was a disgrace and that the cause of it was Britain.

Russell, a Volunteer since the foundation of the Volunteers in 1913, took part

in the Rising, the War of Independence and the Civil War. He stood for the Republic pure and simple. That is to say, he stood for the independent statehood of the nation without going into the matter of how it should be governed. That now seems to be treated as a disreputable position with regard to Ireland, though the assertion of an unconditional write to independence is otherwise the norm. And, if he took the island to be the nation, that was nothing unusual. When, thirty years after Russell's declaration of war, I questioned the equation between the island the nation, I was treated as a kind of traitor.

Russell went to Germany as an unconditional Republican after Britain had declared war on Germany, and expected assistance from the Germans if they were serious about the war. His position was clear.

He met Ryan, who found himself in Germany as an accidental consequence of having departed from pure and simple Republicanism by taking part in the class war. Republicanism based on class war had little scope for development in Southern Ireland after Fianna Fail had established an effective class compromise—and the prospect of shifting the Protestant industrial class in the North away from Unionism by class slogans was always illusory.

The rise of Treatyite Fascism in Ireland, and its active support for the insurrection against the Spanish Republic that was seen as being strongly Socialist in tendency, seems to have been what led Ryan to Spain. There was a kind of displacement to Spain of a conflict which had no scope for development in Ireland after Fianna Fail had enacted a functional social compromise.

Simple class antagonism is not a possible mode of social existence. A class compromise of one kind or another must be made. The Great War, launched by Britain in 1914, broke the evolving culture of Europe and set the social elements in free antagonism with one another. In Russia a working class ascendancy was established in the form of a Socialist dictatorship. In Italy a capitalist ascendancy was established by the Fascist movement acting in place of the liberal bourgeoisie, which was incapable of acting effectively on its own behalf within the political forms of Parliamentary democracy. It was widely recognised in Western liberal circles that Fascism was a form of class compromise that warded off Communism.

The Free State Government of 1922-32 acted in a blunt authoritarian manner that

might have generated fundamental social antagonisms that made society dysfunctional, but in 1932-3 Fianna Fail quickly established the functional compromise that deprived Treatyite Fascism of a realisable object.

It seemed to me that in Spain the outcome was determined by the political effectiveness of the internal forces rather than by the outside interventions. And Ryan found himself stranded in a Spanish prison at the end of it because of the influence used against him by the Irish Fascists, who are conjured away in the film. He was released into German hands by means for which he was in no way responsible, at a moment when England's reckless launching of another world war had put Nazi Germany in control of France. Within weeks he was put on a boat for Ireland with Russell—against whom any charge of being a Fascist collaborator would be absurd—and he returned to Germany when Russell died *en route*.

Feargal McGarry describes him as a Fascist collaborator, apparently because he did not take the dingy to the Kerry coast when Russell died.

There were actual Fascists in Ireland in those days, but the focus is on an alleged collaborator.

Treatyite Fascism withered in the course of the War through supporting Neutrality. The outstanding figure who did not support neutrality was John Dillon. He wanted Ireland to make itself available to Britain. And we have Elizabeth Bowen's word for it that Dillon as a Fascist.

And then there was Northern Ireland. What was Northern Ireland? I have described it as an undemocratically-governed region of the British state, but the prevailing opinion is that it was itself a state. If it is taken to be a state, I can see no substantial grounds for disagreeing with the view of thoughtful Northern nationalists at the time that it was Fascist. And McGarry, as one would expect from a contributor to the *Oxford Re-Writing Of Irish History*, does seem to regard it as a state.

In the discussion following the showing of the film, McGarry played around with the word *collaborator*. He said it did not always have the meaning, or the overtones, that it has now. Maybe so. But, when he characterised Ryan as a collaborator, he did not indicate that he was using the word in some archaic sense.

If one looks for collaborators with Nazism, in the sense of people who supported it actively and helped to establish

it as a major Power, then one should give pride of place to Britain, the guarantor of the Versailles restrictions on Germany, which helped Hitler to break those restrictions. It allowed the militarisation of the Rhineland, made a Naval Agreement giving Hitler the right to construct a Navy, allowed Conscription for a standing Army etc., culminating in the gift to Hitler of the Sudetenland. None of this was "appeasement", which carries the meaning of conciliating a Great Power. Hitler was not the leader of a powerful state in 1933. He became so only in 1938, after five years of active English support.

English policy in 1938-9 makes a kind of sense if one assumes that Nazi Germany was being prepared for action against Russia in a scheme which miscarried. It is hard to find any other sense to it.

McGarry mentioned the German/Russian Pact of August 1939 as something which perhaps helped to explain Ryan's collaboration.

Britain has always acted internationally in pursuit of its interests as a state, regardless of the prevailing ideology of the moment, but its apologists profess astonishment at the agreement made by Germany and Russia in 1939. It was unprincipled of them of them not to be so locked into their ideologies as to be incapable of defensive manoeuvre when they were being manoeuvred into war against each other.

Fascism was the saviour of Central Europe from Communism and Fascist Germany had been built up into a Great Power so that it might realise its full destiny by destroying communism at its source, and then, instead of acting as an ideological robot, it responds to overtures from the ideological enemy for a Non-Aggression Pact, throwing the British position into disarray, and bringing about the fiasco of September 1939-May 1940.

When Ryan was whisked out of his Spanish prison, Britain had withdrawn its Army from its War, and independent reports say that there was relief in England that the danger of another war of masses of infantry had receded.

Ryan must have acquired a pro-Russian orientation in Spain, where Russia was the only Power that stood by the Republic. He emerged into a world in which the ideological forces that had been in conflict in Spain had undertaken not to make war on each other. Both were making peace propaganda. Only England was at war—trying to spread the war so others would fight it. Ireland, like most of the world was neutral. And I don't know where the

The following letter appeared in the *Irish Times*, 28th June

## That Handshake!

Two newspapers with long imperialist traditions, The *Irish Times* (June 26th) and the *Times* of June 27th, carried cartoons of a be-gloved Queen Elizabeth shaking hands with a bloody-handed Martin McGuinness.

What bloody nonsense is this? When McGuinness was a young child the queen's agents were up to their necks in blood: in Kenya alone during the first eight years of her reign they hanged over 1,100 Africans after farcical trials.

All the perfumes of Arabia could not sweeten such episodes. Perhaps Lady Macbeth's failure to wash the bloodstains from her hands accounts for the tradition of later queens always wearing gloves in public.

Donal Kennedy

morality comes from which says that most of the world was wrong, and that Ireland—kept unarmed by Britain, and with a section of its nationality being tormented within a region of the British state in a system that those who suffered under it described as Fascist—should have handed itself back to Britain for use in the war that Britain had bungled, and had never made any serious preparation to fight.

If actions are not judged in the circumstances in which they are undertaken, historical understanding is discarded and is replaced by mythologies spun by the victors—as is done by McGarry.

Eoin O Broin of Sinn Fein was on the platform for the post-showing discussion to give a contemporary Republican comment on the film and the events it depicted. He disagreed with the practice of taking your enemy's enemy for a friend. He questioned whether the United Irish had been wise to invite French assistance. Would a French despotism really have been any better than the British? It was strange hearing this echo of Conor Cruise O'Brien from a Sinn Fein speaker.

What would French despotism have consisted of? A bourgeoisification of the country by the action of the peasantry and a section of the urban middle class, acting against the aristocracy under French protection, I assume. And if, when that reform was accomplished, there was friction between the Irish Republicans and the French, and France had insisted on having its way, that oppression would have been utterly different from the oppression actually suffered at the hands of Britain during the 19th century. And Ireland would have been normalised as a European country. France was defeated by Britain in a 22-year war, but the foundations of modern Europe were laid by France (Revolutionary and Napoleonic) during those years.

The strength of the Provos is that they are the specific product of the Northern Ireland system wantonly set up by Britain in 1921 as a means of enacting and continuing Partition. Their effectiveness is provincial. Danny Morrison once said that, if they were given a fair deal, they would out-revise the revisionists, and that is certainly the tendency of the moment in the South. Some old-fashioned pure and simple Republicanism would be welcome now.

A final word on the film. The scenes between Ryan and Rosamund Jacob are awkwardly poised between token romance and pornography, being neither one nor the other. The purpose seems to have been to make some point about Catholic inhibitions in sex matters, but what the point was I cannot say. It all just seemed out of place. And Ryan in Germany is shown as living a solitary life, which I understand was far from being the case. He lived a sociable life while waiting to see what the outcome would be. And why shouldn't he? It was not he who threw the world into flux.

A few months ago John Gray, a kind of *Guardian* philosopher, did a daring think-piece on BBC Radio. *What if* Halifax had replaced Chamberlain in May 1940 instead of Churchill? It came close to happening. The awful result would probably have been a settlement with Germany. Unthinkable. But wait a minute! Wasn't it the continuation of the War by spreading the War after the defeat in France that led to the extermination of the Jews etc! Having raised that daring thought, Gray rushed on to say that all of those things would have happened anyway because Hitler said he would do them and he was a man of his word.

It is a comforting thought, though not a realistic one, that it would all have happened anyway

Brendan Clifford