Europe as a Construction of the Human Mind: The example of the Irish Catholic Church's Understanding of Europe in the Late 1950's – Early 1960's

Pauline BEAUGÉ de LA ROQUE

On 1 January 1973 Ireland became a member of the European Communities, more than a decade after its first attempt to join. It was definitely its most important foreign and economic policy development since its independence from Britain in the 1920s. From the very beginning Ireland was regarded as a very enthusiastic member, a reputation that remained constant up to the first Nice Treaty referendum in 2001. However, such an enthusiastic and positive attitude had not always been the norm as over the immediate post-war period Europe remained a purely intellectual concept in the Irish collective mind.[1] This article analyses the Irish Catholic Church's particular stance towards Europe before and at the time when Taoiseach Sean Lemass's government decided to look towards the European Continent (1961).

The point of departure for this article is that Europe is not referred as a territory but more, as Bo Stråth wrote, as "an idea and normative centre".[2] Europe would be a discourse that some attempt to translate into a political and ideological project. Furthermore because of its very subjective geography, Europe definitely has fluctuating concrete and imaginative boundaries.[3] Thus Europe would primarily be a construction of the human mind, a constructed image; consequently the existence of a multiplicity of Europes could be observed. Representations of Europe are constructed within specific cultural and political backgrounds and mostly depend on feelings, emotions, symbols and systems of values. Such constructions would be the interpretations of situations in specific contexts and may lead to various types of interpretations. This article will make the attempt to deconstruct a construction of the mind. Thus we will observe that there is a sharp demarcation between Europe and the Irish Catholic Church in the late 1950s and early 1960s. We will understand that, at this very early stage of the membership process, Europe is seen in the mirror as an Other. In this way, as Bo Stråth wrote about Great-Britain and Europe, we will recognize that Europe will emerge as the Other from within, as Ireland does not include itself and seems willing to remain outside.[4]

The Europe(s) this article is going to focus on is/are the various Europe(s) the Irish Catholic Church decided to turn its attention to. Europe is loaded with many meanings. However, Europe – as it is understood by the Irish Catholic Church – is

1. M.-C. CONSIDÈRE-CHARON, *Irlande, une singulière intégration*, Economica, Paris, 2002, p.22.
2. B. STRÅTH (ed.); *Europe and the Other and Europe as the Other*, PIE- Peter Lang, Bruxelles, 2001, p.14.
3. Geography does not seem to be able to offer unanimous borders, chiefly when one considers the Eastern side of Europe. The tricky case of Turkey epitomizes the issue quite well.
4. B. STRÅTH (ed.), op.cit., p.15.

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mainly Western Europe and it emerges a parallel concept to European Christianity. If in many circumstances "Europe" began on the other side of the Continent, we can note that Great-Britain is not totally excluded of the Catholic Irish European object. Indeed, it is to be underlined that Ireland does exclude itself from Europe when considering all the countries which took part into the Second World War. In this case, Great-Britain, as the others, is fully part of Europe as it had to go through the same deep society transformations. It is particularly striking when analyzing the constructed opposition between "innocent Ireland" and "immoral Europe".

The theme of Catholicism is central here: On the one hand, the Catholic Church has been a central political and economic actor in Europe from the very beginning of the Nation-State. As a religious organization it was often seen as having deeper goals than any other political players. The Church claimed not only to have a special duty to foster peace and comity between the nations, but also perceived itself to have a particular historical relationship with – and therefore duty to – Europe as "spiritual community". The Church possessed the influence accrued by its long history, its interconnections to state and their unique authority in individual and communal lives. Furthermore, considering our very period, Philippe Chenaux's seminal work underlines how Pope Pius XII was enthusiastic toward the European project and promised the Church's benevolence to it.[5] This has to be added to the very much-challenged-but-still-existing thesis of "Europe of the Vatican".[6] Finally, as Brian Girvin wrote it, in respect of religion and politics, this is of considerable importance, for many of the political parties which dominated political life after 1945 "had a religious basis, although they may not have been denominational parties as such".[7] On the other hand, the Catholic Church – the "one holy and apostolic Church" – is, despite the appellation, made up of multiple, national Churches, each with its own history, structure, leadership, and political interests. These Churches differ on doctrinal matters, and on pastoral emphases. Each national Catholic Church evolves with its own history, institutional structures, even ideologies, what Pierre Renouvin calls "les forces profondes" and has often been at odds with the Vatican over maintaining some degree of autonomy.[8] This article takes seriously the fact that the Church (in each country) is a religious organization with a long history, a particular structure, and varied leadership. Eventually, while the essence of democracy, and of the European integration process, is compromise, many of the Church's demands are not negotiable. All these factors have a real impact on the Catholic Church(es)'s political perspectives and on the way it/they represent Europe. It must be emphasized that this article is concerned with the Irish Catholic Church's representation of Europe, not the political debate

5. P. CHENNAUX, *L'Église catholique et le communisme en Europe*, Cerf, Paris, 2009, p.174.
6. We think of Vincent Auriol's words when he was President of France saying: "la triple alliance, Adenauer, Schuman, Gasperi, trois tonsures sous la même calotte" in: A. VINCENT, *Journal du septennat*, t.V, Armand Colin, Paris, 1951, p.463.
7. B. GIRVIN, *The Political Culture of Secularisation. European Trends and Comparative Perspectives*, in: D. BROUGHTON, D. and H.-M. ten NAPEL (eds), *Religions and Mass Electoral Behaviour in Europe*, Routledge, London-New-York, 2000, p.8.
8. P. RENOUVIN, *Introduction à l'histoire des relations internationales*, Armand Colin, Paris, 1964, pp. 5-272.

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within the Catholic Church on European membership process. This has two implications. First, it does not necessarily reflect the political importance of European membership process. Second, it understands there is a gap between the Hierarchy's position and popular perceptions.[9]

When considering Europe in the post-War period and the disruption of a traditional system it had to go through, it is quite natural to wonder about the Catholic Church's reaction. The post-war construction of Europe would challenge the whole of Catholic society and the whole idea of tradition as it requires deep society transformation. Europe raises new issues as it is a pluralistic and supranational organisation. It raises new issues and challenges to the Catholic Church which has to deal with many other systems of values. In that period, in Ireland, there was an increasing fear of how such a geopolitical revolution could challenge Catholic identity and an increasing questioning of how the Catholic Church should react towards a more than likely upheaval.[10] The analysis of the very singular representation of Europe by the Irish Catholic elite in the late 1950s and early 1960s teaches a lot about the way the Catholic Church looked at the other and at its own identity.

Focusing on the way the Irish Catholic Church looked at Europe in the late 1950s and early 1960s will help historians understand how profound and gradual a change of mentality can be and how the opening towards otherness can be considered as a deep threat for the Irish Catholic Church, which was more isolated than the Continental Catholic Church after World War II and took much more time to adjust to a more progressive society. The analytical objective of this article will be to find a framework for understanding and explaining the behaviour of the Catholic Church in Ireland towards Europe as the country took its first steps in the European adventure. It is to shed light on Europe and on the question of perception of the European reality by focusing on the images of Europe presented by the Irish Catholic Church in the late 1950s and early 1960s.The primary focus of this article will be on the singularity of Irish History when considering the relationship between Catholicism and Nationhood and Nationhood and Europe. The second focus will be the Church's very singular understanding of Europe. It will be divided into two main points: Europe as the cradle of Communism and an image of Europe of desolation.[11]

9. As Bishop Smith said in a private interview (23rd July 2006) such European considerations were far removed from popular concern.
10. P. BAUGÉ DE LA ROQUE, *Les représentations de l'Europe chez les élites catholiques de 1957 à 1985*, unpublished PhD, Université de La Sorbonne nouvelle, Paris and University College Cork, Cork, 2011, pp.37-50.
11. This paper is based on different kinds of sources, including religious journals such as *Studies*, the *Furrow* or *Christus Rex*. It also uses the *Hibernia weekly* paper and different diocesan and national Irish archives.

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The Constraints and Opportunities of History

Postwar Irish Catholic Church and its dealings with Europe make little sense unless one knows about the nationalist struggle for independence, the policies of censorship and protectionism, the 1937 Constitution and World War Two neutrality … A deep analysis of the Irish Catholic Church's understanding of Europe in the late 1950s – early 1960s also requires the historian to be aware of two further elements in Irish history: the position of the Irish Catholic Church on the political stage and the late application for membership to the EEC in 1961. This section shows how Irish history has shaped the Irish Catholic understanding of Europe.

The special position of the Catholic Church in Irish History

Through their own prior actions and for political reasons the Irish Catholic Church had put itself, or been placed, in a particular trajectory. Its history had left a legacy that in this case had traceable effects on its way of working. Father Tom Burke, a Dominican preacher, said in 1872:

> "Take an average Irishman […] and you will find that the very principle in his mind is 'I am not an Englishman because I am a Catholic'. Take an Irishman wherever he is found all over the earth and any casual observer will at once come to the conclusion 'Oh he is an Irishman, he is a Catholic. The two go together'".[12]

Attitudes like this, though not universal, seemed to have become more and more common and up to the early 1960s, many publications revealed how a symbiosis between Catholicism and Irishness had taken shape. According to Wesley Hutchinson, soon after the Act of Union (1801), the only way of reviving nationalist political fervour rested on Catholic Emancipation.[13] From that very moment the Irish urge for national emancipation went pretty much hand in hand with the Catholic urge for full recognition. In this way Catholicism was used as a major theme in the Irish national cause. Catholicism became an instrument, a kind of unifying cement.[14] Irish post-independence statesmen, mainly embodied in Eamon de Valera, worked hard to pursue a policy of economic and cultural nationalism within which the vision of true Irishness coincided to a considerable degree with a traditionalist Catholic ideal.[15] This may give an avenue of understanding De Valera's vision of Ireland as it was revealed in his much-quoted 1943 St Patrick's Day broadcast:

12. Father Tom Burke quoted by K. HUGH, *The British Isles: a History of Four Nations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006, p.264.
13. W. HUTCHINSON, *La question irlandaise*, Ellipses, Paris, 1997, p.88.
14. B. ANDERSON, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London, 1991, pp.9-36.
15. That is what Dermot Keogh terms "the politics of informal consensus". This refers to a growing intimacy in the relationship between Church and state which was to last up to the early 1970s. D. KEOGH, *Catholicism and the Formation and the Modern Irish Society*, in: C.G. SANDULESCU (ed.), *Irishness in a Changing Society*, Colin Smythe Ltd., Buckinghamshire, 1988, p.161.

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> "That Ireland which we dreamed of would be the home of people who valued material wealth only as a basis of right living, of a people who were satisfied with frugal comfort and devoted their leisure to things of the spirit".[16]

De Valera's main aim was to defend a type of Ireland where the existence of a peasant country represented purity and integrity of life, uncontaminated by the venal and some progressive values apparently afflicting some more industrial societies.[17] This mentality was very much linked with the Catholic ethos of the first half of the 20th Century. There was a fear of industrialization, mechanization and urbanization as they were perceived as being dangerous for the dignity of the person.[18] However, as John Fulton observes in his book *The Tragedy of Belief* De Valera opposed any attempt to incorporate the church into the apparatus of the state.[19] An important aspect of such a position was that the political opposition did not object to them. Eamon De Valera was as zealous as William T. Cosgrave[20] had been in ensuring that Catholic morality would be upheld by legislation.[21] Such a history affected the way Catholics were politicized, and the instruments the Church could use. Thus, when Ireland decided to re-think its political and economic orientation to look toward the European project in 1957, it caused cultural shock waves across the country[22] and provoked great turmoil within the Church as it felt its special position threatened. Ireland had not been exposed to the broad-mindedness, progress, economic development and deep exchanges of ideas taking place in the post-World War II decade as had the rest of the continent. Furthermore, an overall trend can be discerned during the twentieth century in Europe which points in the direction of a decline in church membership as well as a decrease in those willing to accept the main theological claims of Christianity.[23] Eventually, it can also be noted that a religious dimension to politics can be found where the society is religiously homogenous. As Robert R. Alford concluded, where religious homogeneity exists, there is unlikely to be tension between religion and

16. Anonymous, *De Valera's Saint Patrick Broadcast*, in: *Irish Press*, 18.03.1943.
17. Though notable exceptions such as W.B. Yeats.
18. Modern Catholic teaching was formulated by Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, in 1891, to counter such secular and materialistic attitudes. It was the Catholic alternative to communism. One of the most important developments within continental Catholicism at the close of the nineteenth century and in the first half of the twentieth century was the growth of social movements. Catholics in many countries had developed co-operatives, farmers' organizations, trade unions, all of which consolidated the position of Catholics.
19. J. FULTON, *The Tragedy of Belief, Division, Politics, and Religion in Ireland*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1991, p.141.
20. William T. Cosgrave was the first President of the Executive Council (Prime Minister) of the Irish Free State from 1922 to 1932.
21. In 1929, the Censorship Act had made it illegal to advocate the use of contraceptives. In 1935, the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act prohibited the sale and importation of artificial contraceptives. In the same year, the government passed the Public Dance Halls Act, which likewise alleviated episcopal anxiety. L. FULLER, *Irish Catholicism since 1950, The Undoing of a Culture*, 2nd ed., Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 2004, pp.5-6.
22. It is important to bear in mind that the kind of loyalty towards and legitimization of, Catholicism by politicians in the post-independence era was totally in keeping with the thinking and lifestyle of the vast majority of the Catholic population of the Republic of Ireland in the 1950s.
23. B. GIRVIN, op.cit, p.12.

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politics.[24] John Henry Whyte demonstrated such a thesis when analysing the Irish case up to the 1970s.[25] For these very reasons, the Irish hierarchy saw little need for change, and was principally concerned with protecting and defending the status quo. One may wonder how the Catholic Church reacted and how it understood the prospective effects of EC membership and its potential to influence Irish Catholic identity.

The late application for EEC membership

Irish Catholic ethos had indeed experienced very little change in the first half of the Twentieth Century and had not been confronted by the ideas and forces of modernity which swept across Europe after World War II. Ireland was very little concerned by fundamental questions exhausted Europeans were faced by: How could Europe recover economically? How could Europe regain political strength and stability? How could old nationalistic hatreds be eliminated? The fact that Ireland was neutral during the Second World War meant that Irish society did not participate in a transformation which influenced post-war Europe. Concerning the social and economic developments Ireland had lagged far behind Britain and mainland Europe in the post-war period. For instance, the Catholic Church in Ireland was very critical of any direct state interventions as opposition to the Mother and Child Scheme had shown in 1951.[26] Moreover the rigid censorship policy which had been in place for since the 1920s ensured that Irish society was further isolated from such changes, in term of both new ideas and social and economic developments.[27] Favoured by the Catholic Church authorities and politicians alike censorship was, as Louise Fuller suggests, expressly designed to protect Irish Catholics from secularist or corrupting influences

24. R.R. ALFORD, *Party and Society*, Rand McNally, New-York, 1963, pp.49-59.
25. J.H. WHYTE, *Ireland: politics without social bases*, in: R. ROSE (ed.), *Electoral Behaviour: A Comparative Handbook*, Free Press, New-York, 1974. John Henry Whyte also shows that the real power of the Church cannot be evaluated through its direct interference in the making of laws but more through its influence of the electorate and politicians' souls. This is particularly true for the European case where there is no archive revealing official dialogue between the Church and the State. J.H. WHYTE, *Church and State in Modern Ireland, 1923-1979*, Gill and Macmillan Ltd., Dublin, 1984, p.364.
26. Bishop DIGNAN of CLONFERT, *Social Security: Outlines of a Scheme of National Health Insurance*, pamphlet, Sligo, 1945. The Mother and Child Scheme was a healthcare programme in Ireland that would later become remembered as a major political crisis involving primarily the Irish Government and Roman Catholic Church in the early 1950s. In 1950, the Minister for Health, Noel Browne, proposed introducing a scheme which would provide maternity care for all mothers and healthcare for children up to the age of sixteen, funded by the taxpayer. It met with ferocious opposition from conservative elements in the Catholic hierarchy, often at the behest of the medical profession. N. BROWNE, *Against The Tide*, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1986, pp.141-155.
27. In this way, the Irish state apparatus assisted public and family morality by the fairly heavy censorship of books, magazines, newspapers, and films. The Censorship of Film Act of 1923 for instance gave a film censor the power to cut or refuse a license to films which, in his opinion, were subversive of public morality. The Irish state apparatus also banned the making, importation, or distribution of contraceptives, and the distribution of any literature informing on such matters.

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emanating from abroad.[28] In the 1950s Western Europe was in a state of flux while Ireland was still evolving culturally very slowly.

Besides, the basis of the European integration could look a little disturbing for a newly independent country as it required the transfer of a real power – albeit over a limited field of activity – to a common, supranational organization. Indeed, following considerable bloodshed during the years 1916 to 1921, the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1922 established the Irish Free State as a British dominion. But Irish aspirations for complete independence were not easily appeased. Adopting a new constitution in 1937, the twenty-six counties of Southern Ireland elected a president (Douglas Hyde) and officially changed the name of the country to Ireland. Ireland voted itself out of the British Commonwealth in 1948 and declared itself a republic in 1949. Ireland's decision (1961) to consider a European membership reveals a real turning point in its traditional way of looking at politics and a readiness to accept the risks as well as the opportunities of full-scale European competition. Ireland, then, came late to membership of the European Communities. Yet, as the Irish economic problems grew and the European movement developed it proved impossible for the Irish politicians to remain convinced by the 1930s isolationist policy.[29] Thus Thomas Kenneth Whitaker launched his Programme for Economic Expansion in 1958 and the Irish government started to look towards the European Economic Community in 1961. It was only in the early 1960s, as a result of this programme, that the Irish economy showed an upturn which, in due course, gave rise to a more affluent society. Besides, it was inevitable that the post-war social reforms which were taking place in Britain would be observed closely in Ireland.[30]

Europe as a Red Threat

With the spread of democracy and the subsequent appearance of the European political project, the Catholic Church, and more particularly the Irish Catholic Church, struggled to define its place. Change was accelerating in Europe by the early 1960s and this was having a growing impact on traditional values, political identification and social behaviour. When looking at Europe, what occurred in the 1960s was that the social change weakened further those groups which had traditionally been supportive of religion and who were most likely to vote for Christian Democratic or conservative parties. When strictly considering the Irish Catholic Church's opinion,

28. The fact that much of the east-coast could pick BBC broadcast placed politicians under particular pressure. The government established a Television Commission on 1958 in order to examine all aspects of television broadcasting. L. FULLER, op.cit., p.37.
29. Despite its tenacious political zeal, the Republic of Ireland had relatively weak material resources with which to assert itself as a nation. Furthermore emigration, a dramatic feature of Irish 1950s life, drained the country of young men and women.
30. The fact that emigrants were travelling to and fro from Britain would have made people at home more aware of the inadequacy of the Irish system.

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the problem with Europe was that it emphasized individualism and modernity, and promoted an individual's right to choose a socio-political and economic ideology which might have a direct bearing on moral and religious questions. According to the Irish Hierarchy, that would lead to the displacement of God's moral order from its position as the transcendent datum of all actions and may even reject the Christian concept of the individual human life as sacred. Moreover, it is important to bear in mind that, in the 1950s, the external signs of a vibrant Catholic culture were everywhere to be seen in Ireland. That sharply contrasted with what was happening in mainland Europe.

Contaminated and contaminating Europe

Like any European Catholic Church, the Irish Church feared secular – particularly Communist – control of government. Such a government might ban religious instruction and lay religious organizations such as trade unions or social action groups and might permit and adopt social policies contrary to the teachings of the Church such as divorce. With the Soviet Union and its image of a Communist-led state, the Church concluded that an atheistic government might banish the Church altogether. Indeed, as Philiph Coupland observes in his work Britannia, Europa and Christendom, the Christian critique of the Soviet system took a number of directions: the abrogation of religious freedom, the persecution of individual Christians and churches in state policy and day-to-day practice in the USSR and its satellites.[31] As a matter of fact the Catholic Church as a whole was violently anti-Communist and after the defeat of the Germans at Stalingrad, no need to say that the fears of the Vatican increased. The only answer to Communism was an unequivocal and uncompromising opposition. To the Institution it was more than needed to rally politicians and citizens to its cause and so had to be quite dynamic: the European project could be the answer.

However, the first point that strikes the historian looking at the relationship between Catholicism and Europe is the substantial difference between the Irish Catholic Church's and the Vatican's position towards Europe. Pius XII and then John XXIII showed a real fascination and enthusiasm towards the European political project and strongly favoured the ideal of peace inherent to it as they perceived the European project as an effective means to stand in the way of the Communist scourge while the Irish Catholic Church's stand-firm stance revealed its fears and opposition.[32] The first most obvious explanation for such a difference might be the very different ways the Vatican and Ireland experienced the Second World War. They could not share the same need for a peace project. Ireland had remained neutral during the Second World War and, moreover, chose to remain outside NATO soon thereafter. However, this did not mean that Ireland was ideologically neutral. From the early 1950's the Irish Catholic elite, as the rest of the Catholic Church, revealed a pronounced fear towards

31. P. COUPLAND, *Britannia, Europa and Christendom*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2006, p. 145.
32. P. CHENNAUX, *De la chrétienté à l'Europe – Les catholiques et l'idée européenne au XX*e *siècle*, CLD Éds, Tours, 2007.

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the rise of Communism and was highly apprehensive about seeing it spread throughout the European Continent.[33] Secondly, as the Council of Vatican II revealed a few years later, the Irish Hierarchy was totally isolated and absolutely unaware of what was happening on the Continent when considering the intellectual and theological currents.[34] Moreover, the diocesan archives and different religious journals' articles underline how the Irish Catholic Church had a very romantic vision of Europe but very little knowledge of the European project and nearly no knowledge of its political aspect.[35] Finally, as Dermot Keogh puts to the fore in his work untitled *Ireland and the Vatican*, the more Joseph Walshe – who had become the first Irish Ambassador to the Holy See in 1946 – remained in Rome, the more disillusioned he became with Pius XII's policy on domestic Italian politics and the more he detected some signs of the Vatican departing from its policy of "extreme prudence" towards Communism.[36] Lack of genuine knowledge of the European project definitely remains one of the keys of explanation of such a difference.

To the Catholic Church, Communism represented the modern world in its worst form. Communism symbolised materialism, absence of individual rights, and instant gratification, all being in total opposition to the Catholic values conveyed by the Catholic identity. In an article untitled *Bolchevism and Babbitry*, Liam Brophy (1952) warned readers

> "the Curtain moves West […]. The Russian Empire has been expanding since the collapse of Germany, and the Iron Curtain is moving West and in its wake that train of evils men associate with the Dark Ages".[37]

The Irish Catholic Church saw its advance as a tidal wave as Cardinal John D'Alton (1956) cautioned the faithful in his Lent pastoral letter in 1956.

> "It is important to remember that Russia has never abandoned her design of World Revolution, which she hopes to achieve, if possible by peaceful means, but, if need is, by violence and bloodshed".

According to the prelate, Communism rotted society from the inside in a particularly pernicious manner. Such a pernicious evolution would not lead anyone to become

33. An aspect of French culture and indeed Western European culture in general in the post-war was the growth of communism, socialism and the social democratic movement and various strains thereof. See also C.M. WARNER, *Confessions of an Interest Group, The Catholic Church and Political Parties in Europe*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2000, pp.83-84. As Carolyne M. Warner epitomizes, Pius XII was a staunch anti-Communist who believed they threatened Christendom.
34. P. BEAUGÉ de LA ROQUE, *Le Concile Vatican II: Étape essentielle dans le processus d'ouverture de l'Église catholique d'Irlande*, in: *Revue d'études irlandaises*, 1(2013), pp.27-40.
35. The Irish Catholic Hierarchy became much more aware of the European project once Ireland started its process of membership in 1961. The diocesan archives show that up to 1965 the Irish Church understood Europe in a very colorful way but based such a representation on very little concrete information. P. BEAUGÉ de LA ROQUE, *Les représentations de l'Europe* …, op.cit., pp.85-120.
36. D. KEOGH, *Ireland and the Vatican – The Politics and Diplomacy of Church-State Relations, 1922-1960*, Cork University Press, Cork, 1995, p.331.
37. L. BROPHY, *Bolchevism or Babbitry*, in: *Hibernia*, January 1952, pp.4-5.

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alarmed and to arm oneself against such a scourge. As he saw it, members of the Communist Party were perfectly aware that

> "the anti-religious propaganda must be cautious and adapted to local conditions. Hence in Italy we sometimes have the spectacle of Communists joining in religious processions, while in Hungary after the late war members of the Party went to the countryside to offer help in rebuilding ruined churches".[38]

Through this quotation, we can understand how Europe was both threatened and already contaminated, and how threatening this situation was to Irish Catholicism. These exclusively European examples reveal how Europe could be represented as an ill and corrupted body from which it was necessary to protect oneself. Europe was perceived as the place where such an evil could develop and proliferate. However, members of the Irish clergy often reminded their flocks and congregations that Ireland was not as threatened as the rest of Europe. They made a clear distinction between Catholic Ireland and the godless Continent. Cardinal D'Alton actually wrote "Thank God, owing to the vigorous faith of our people they [the Communists] have so far made little headway".[39] They saw Europe as a set of working suburbs, which was a godsend for the Marxist ideology. As a motley collection of urban-industrial societies, Europe was considered as spiritually weak and absolutely unable to resist pernicious and creeping Communism.[40] The roaring workshops were the diametric opposite of the quiet rural world. Europe was at complete odds with green and pious Erin, the latter certainly far superior and better able to withstand the lure of Communism. That European integration should lead to a much more industrialized world as the mere mention of communities such as the European Coal and Steel Community or Euratom suggested really made Catholic bishops stop and think. They feared that industrialized Europe was susceptible to witness a dangerous increase in communism. Bishops worried that communism, associated with materialism and secularism would lead to a loss of faith. There was concern that industrial developments which were not under the Church's control would lead to a rupture between the past and the present, a rupture in the chain of memories, and that the process of passing the lived heritage of God's self-revelation, the basis of Catholic tradition, would come to an end.

The priest-workers as fear "crystallizators"

For this reason, according to the Catholic Church in Ireland, it was absolutely vital to understand and monitor any domestic and European movements which potentially held a Communist germ. The historian can observe how the Irish Catholic elites fo-

38. J.F. D'ALTON, *Communism and Religion*, in: *Christus Rex,* 10(1956), pp.195-211.
39. Ibid.
40. P. BEAUGÉ de LA ROQUE, op.cit., pp.95-100.

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cused on the French priest workers. After evoking initial sympathy,[41] it became obvious that Irish Catholics increasingly viewed them with suspicion. Kevin Devlin was then very sharp and clear on the subject:

> "Most priest-workers carry out their apostolate both in the factory and in the district where they live. But the two milieux are distinct, each with its own problems. The factory-world is perhaps more impervious to the Gospel; it is knit by a hard fraternity of its own; and the thorny question of political action is insistent".[42]

Through his words, he underlined how, according to his Catholic point of view, the priest-workers closeness with the working world, which was apparently deeply infiltrated by the Communist Party, constituted a serious threat to Catholic identity and could not be neglected. Because of their work, the priest-workers were necessarily in frequent contact with members of the Party and so they became suspect.[43] Furthermore, in Father Cathal Brendan Daly's opinion, their way of evangelizing betrayed a weakness. Indeed, as stated by the priest-workers "the conversion of the masses must be in two stages: stage one brings them to Christ; stage two, which is more difficult, brings them to the Church and to the parish". Yet, as the author maintained,

> "these are invalid and dangerous dichotomies […] we will not solve a 'crisis of authority' by abdicating from authority; we will not cure disobedience by ceasing to give commands".[44]

Their work was inadequate as it did not conform to the Catholic principle of universality. Indeed, such behaviour could even been deemed as being in opposition with the principle of an undivided worldwide ecclesial community that gathered people of different origins, distinct cultures, into one People of God. Moreover, by proposing a doctrine, a new conception of the world and a new conception of life, Communism was a "pseudoreligion", a spiritual problem.[45]

41. Indeed, it may be noticed that from 1949 to 1953, the period the priests workers reached their height, most of the published articles showed a real admiration for the movement. For instance, Kevin Devlin (1953) did not hesitate to start his article by comparing the priests to "St. Paul himself [who] was not the first priest-worker. That honour belongs to his Master", and "During the war, a number of French priests, many of them volunteers, shared the sufferings of the déportés […] to feed the war-factories of the Reich". For a comprehensive history of the workers priests, see E. POULAT, *Les prêtres-ouvriers, naissance et fin*, Éds du Cerf, Paris, 1999.
42. K. DEVLIN, *Priest Workers in France*, in: *Christus Rex*, 7(1953), pp.603-610.
43. M. KENNY, *Goodbye to Catholic Ireland, A Social, Personal and Cultural History from the Fall of Parnell to the Realm of Mary Robinson*, Sinclair-Stevenson, London, 1997, p.167. In her work, Mary Kenny explains why the Marxist ideology could be perceived in such dangerous way particularly by Catholics. She wrote "The dangers of Marxism were that it mirrored Catholicity in its claim upon an international brotherhood; like Christianity, it appealed at various levels, and it had idealism, altruism and an internal moral order".
44. C.B. DALY, *The New French Revolution*, in: *The Furrow*, 3(May 1952), pp.177-189.
45. P. PIERRARD, *Histoire des curés de campagne de 1789 à nos jours*, Plon, Paris, 1986, p.155.

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However, there was no parallel development in Ireland. Jean Blanchard observed:

> "The family life of Irish Catholic Workers and employees, with few exceptions, is steeped in Catholicism… The majority of them support the national parties, rather than the Labour Party […]. International Marxism has very little influence on the workers".[46]

The idea of a country that had preserved a purity of faith in the face of the Continental evils was cherished. A country loyal to the teaching of the Church and the Catholic tradition was celebrated. In opposition, Europe was represented as having succumbed to the worst evils of materialism, secularism and selfishness. If Communism was firstly considered as a moral problem, the Irish Church's understanding of Europe made it a real political issue. However, it is worth observing that the impact of such ideas never went beyond the Irish borders. Besides, Irish archives have not yet revealed any correspondence on the specific European subject between the Irish Hierarchy and the Vatican. Finally, there seems to be absolutely no dialogue between the Irish Catholic Church and the Irish political parties on such a topic. The greater readiness of bishops to speak out loud on internal political issues such as social welfare, education or public health contrasted sharply with the silence the bishops adopted when Europe was concerned.

The Representation of a Europe of Desolation

Despite this absolute refusal and fear of the continental world, changes were coming. As argued earlier, Communism was linked with the idea of industrialization, mechanization, and loss of human dignity to an extent. If Communism was the instrument to fear, desolation was the result to be apprehended. In the Church's opinion, Europe was the symbol of modernity – cradle of modernity. For these reasons, Europe was represented in a very negative and dark way. Indeed, since the French Revolution the relationship between the Catholic Church and the idea of modernity has always been very troublesome.[47] Secularisation is generally seen as a product of the Enlightenment and its impact on the 19th century. The Enlightenment challenged and criticized the world of Christianity and condemned it as irrational, anti-intellectual and anti-scientific. Besides, while the Enlightenment was essentially an intellectual movement, it created for the first time a body of ideas resting on foundations independent of church or biblical authority. On the other side, the Church condemned modernity for its godlessness, and was very determined in its condemnation of the social structures that were set up in the 19th and 20th centuries. Such hostility can be explained for various reasons: the fear of a licentious disorder and the fact that the Church entered in competition with a hostile order. Among the issues which affect

46. J. BLANCHARD, *The Church in Contemporary Ireland*, Clonmore and Reynolds, Dublin, 1963, p.30.
47. B. MACSWEENEY, *Roman Catholicism: The Search for Relevance*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1980, pp.236-239.

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the relationship between politics and religion, those concerned with the role of women in society and church and state relationship have a global importance. In the opinion of the Church, the supporters of modernity and its new order harboured evil intentions towards the Church.[48]

Signs were numerous that Irish Catholics were not prepared for change. It is interesting to note that at this very stage the Irish Catholic Church was still very homogenous in its views, remaining resolutely united on such issues. From the perspective of the Irish bishops, the isolation which was enjoyed by Ireland was something for which to be grateful. They still did not perceive that Ireland was cut off from the long-established intellectual and cultural traditions of Catholic Europe and that this had impoverished Irish Catholicism. The impressive spectacles and demonstrations held everywhere in Ireland during the Patrician year of 1961 helped to create such a strong and untouchable image of Irish Catholicism.[49] Concentrating on the presumed or perceived negative aspects of European culture the Irish clergy held an exalted, somewhat superior, idea of the uniqueness and genius of Irish Catholicism.

Europe represented a veritable sea of change and evoked deep fear and incomprehension both within Irish society and Irish Catholicism in the early 1960s. Criticism towards Europe was constructed through a system of oppositions. Ireland understood Europe as the Other. In this "mirror" as Bo Stråth calls it, the Catholic Church could look at itself and find contrasts which reinforced still more its feelings of superiority and self-confidence.[50] In this way, Europe seemed to reinforce a kind of national identity, while it is seen as standing in opposition to it. In order to depict a fundamentally vice-riden Europe, the Church endeavoured to exaggerate Irish innocence and virtuosity. It did not see any limits on the Church's role or tutelage of society, culture and politics.[51] In this way, through titles such as *What to Do on a Date* and *What Not to do on a Date* or *Temptations: Having Them and Being Them*, the Jesuit Daniel Lord displayed an idealized pure and innocent time, a time when sexuality was seen with much modesty, great caution and suspicion.[52] Moreover, such articles offer the historian an insight into the kind of piety which characterized Irish Catholicism in the 1950s and early 1960s. The Irish Catholic elite's naivety stood out all the more so since Europe was represented as totally immoral. Indeed modern Europe was represented as laden with vices. Mary Kenny remembers that in the late

48. S. HELLEMANS, *From 'Catholicism against Modernity' to the Problematic 'Modernity of Catholicism'*, in: *Ethical Perspectives*, 2(2001), p.117.
49. The tone of the Irish Catholic Directory's report is very enthusiastic: "Ballinascreen had a very impressive Patrician Year […] Ireland's Patrician Year will reach its climax with a week's solemn ceremonies which open in Dublin today (17th of June) in the presence of the Papal Legate", Anonymous, *Irish Catholic Directory,* James Duffy and Co. Ltd. Dublin, 1962, p.701.
50. B. Stråth, *Europe and the Other and Europe as the Other*, op.cit, p.15.
51. Pius XII asserted "The power of the Church does not limit itself to strictly religious questions, as some say, but has authority over the entire object, institution, interpretation, and application of natural laws, as regards their moral aspect". See F. MALGERI, *La Chiesa di Pio XII fra guerra e dopoguerra"*, in: A. RICCARDI (ed.), *Pio XII*, Laterza, Bari, 1985, p.113.
52. L. FULLER, op.cit, p.30.

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fifties the Catholic Church evoked the image of Europe as a permissive society.[53] For instance this Europe was illustrated by the many extra-marital relationships in Great-Britain–liaisons which strongly contrasted with virtuous Ireland. It is particularly obvious when one focuses on the clergy's attempts to check emigration – particularly of young women – to Britain. While emigration was definitely necessary from an economic perspective, returning migrants represented a real challenge to traditional values. The clergy regularly warned the faithful of the dangers of a materialistic society or mixed marriages.

Modern Europe was not only irreligious or permissive. It was also perverted because it was prosperous. In this way, Fr Daniel Hegarthy wrote in an issue of Christus Rex in 1961 "An easy prosperity is as harmful to a young country as it is to a young man unless both have the wisdom to see it for what it is worth".[54] Europe was seen as a realm of easy prosperity. Prosperity and modernity as they were tested out in Europe were a real scourge from which Ireland had to energetically protect itself. In an article of the same issue entitled *Refugees from Society*, through the example of Sweden, Desmond Fennell argued against a quick economic evolution which would undoubtedly lead to a dramatic social transformation. In his article, he wondered about a "so called emancipation of women". According to Fennell,

> "when such an emancipated woman […] breaks up a home, the husband can be regarded as a real victim. He loses a home and his children and becomes a refugee".[55]

The representation of Europe as being an anti-family model was certainly one of the strongest arguments adduced as a threat to Catholic identity. Indeed, Catholic teachings recognize that the family remains the main unit of the society and is certainly the best tool to transmit the value of tradition.

This representation of Europe as an anti-family model provoked a new kind of anxiety amongst Irish Catholic elites. Indeed some perceived Irish membership of the EEC as a threat to the national Constitution. The 1937 Constitution specified that the "State recognises the family as the natural primary and fundamental unit group of society".[56] Divorce was prohibited and woman's primary responsibility was to home and family.[57] The fear of what they would call harmful influences from abroad was real. EEC membership would make mentalities evolve just as Europe would be a new source of direct intellectual influences. Not only was there the anxiety that Irish Catholic identity was being threatened, there was also the anxiety that the identity of the whole country was threatened, as Catholicism and national identity had become interchangeable.[58] The Constitution proclaimed the special position of the Catholic

53. M. KENNY, op.cit., p.213.
54. D.A. HEGARTY, *Ireland in a Changing World*, in: *Christus Rex*, 15(1961), pp.117-125.
55. D. FENNELL, *Refugees from Society*, in: *Christus Rex*, 15(1961), pp.103-116.
56. Bunreacht na hÉireann, Art. 41.1.1, Dublin.
57. M. ARNAL-CORISH, *La sécularisation en République d'Irlande, 1958-1995*, unpublished PhD, Université de Caen, 1995.
58. D. KEOGH, *Catholicism and the Formation …*, op.cit., pp.151-162.

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Church as "the guardian of the Faith professed by the great majority of the citizens".[59]

Unlike the Catholic Church in continental Europe, the Irish Church in the post-war and pre-conciliar period had been loath to believe that profound changes could occur. When Ireland decided to allow its political orientation to evolve and to put an end to protectionism it caused a considerable culture shock in the country. It provoked a real fear and apprehension within some Catholic circles as it was bound to have some repercussions on the essence of their identity, their Catholic identity. Furthermore it is to be noticed that if post-war discussions of Europe's future were primarily between the supporters of national sovereignty (often called, in the context of the present European Community, the "Confederalist") and the supporters of regional supranationalism (referred to as the "Federalists") it was very different in the case of the Irish Catholic Church. There was no trace of such a debate of ideas in the Irish Catholic Church's stand on Europe.

59. Bunreacht na hÉireann, Art. 44.1.2, Dublin.

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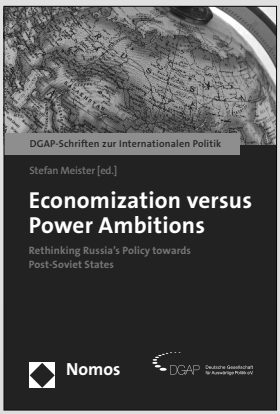

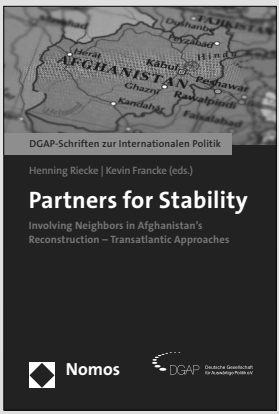

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