

excuses for the amateurishness of the operation can be delineated only in four-letter words.

The British Government would impound the book and the author if *Veil* had been written by a British reporter about covert operations undertaken by British agencies. The mere reporting of what the head of Intelligence liked to drink for breakfast would be punishable; and the person who may have given the writer this information—even the head of Intelligence—would be equally guilty. Of course, Whitehall would have to show that the divulging of such information could be useful to an enemy. This might be hard to do, although the writer could be accused of violating the Official Secrets Act. In the United States, however, anything goes.

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, I was invited to a two-day meeting of old CENSORED who had been active in secret intelligence work since World War II. The then head of the Central Intelligence Agency, William J. Casey, and two former directors, William E. Colby and Richard Helms, as well as a former Deputy Director, Ray Cline, were among the 80 or so guests who vied with one another in telling the most appropriate and sometimes outlandish tales of adventure 30 and 40 years ago. The participants, so we were advised in our invitation, were all members of the old-boy network of Intelligence operatives. Much to my surprise and dismay, I recognised a journalist who had built a lucrative career exposing wrongdoing in Washington, and who had never been a member of this old-boy network; the man was Bob Woodward. His presence mystified me. I decided to try to find out what he was doing. Woodward was talking to Colby. I walked over to them and listened. They were talking about the new office building at the CIA's headquarters in Langley, Virginia; then they talked about Nathan Hale's statue outside the Director's office. (Nathan Hale said, the moment before he was hanged, "Give me liberty or give me death".) When their conversation lulled, I said, "Woodward, what are you doing here?" He said, without looking directly at me, "I'm writing a biography of Bill Casey".

It was odd that Casey allowed Woodward to write about him. I couldn't fathom Casey's reasoning and I didn't try. It was mysterious; but then many things the CIA do are mysterious. After the publication of *Veil*, I surmised that Casey had many ulterior motives, chief among them the desire to perplex the Russians. There is so much unclassified information about clandestine operations and technical innovations that the Russians must feel they have to analyse all of it. There must be 10,000 Russians reading information about American covert operations and trying to make useful interpretations. It's an impossible task in the United States; it's got to be impossible for the Russians. With more and more books, we might overload their system. Several former directors of the CIA have written books. Are there any secrets? Is everyone in the CIA? If the United States had an Official Secrets Act, then the entire CIA would be impounded.

My assumption is that the CIA is an infertile cover for Intelligence operations and that the actual directors of American Intelligence are located in the kitchens of a tandoori in Ealing and a Chinese restaurant in San Francisco.

Burke's Ireland

By Max Beloff



IT CAN NEVER be useless to read Edmund Burke. In a range of sympathies and in the capacity to place political questions of the moment within the perspective of centuries and of continents, he remains the master. And in an age when political debate has cheapened into the patter of the admen, it is good to be

reminded of the sonorities of which the English language was capable a mere 200 years ago. Ireland's problems are, alas, always with us. Yet I am a little puzzled by the present republication of Burke's comments upon them.¹

As one is reminded by Conor Cruise O'Brien, in an introduction done with his usual verve, this collection has not been made with a view to the present-day reader. It is a reprint of a collection of Burke's public writings, with a few private letters on the same topics, made by Matthew Arnold in connection with the renewed attention paid to Irish questions at the time of the Home Rule controversy in 1881. It may be that readers at that time, 100 years closer to the events, were more familiar with them—could place every allusion of Burke's to some particular occasion, and identify the statesmen and others to whom he rarely gives an actual name. It is certain that they would have found it easier to take aboard the classical quotations which were then part and parcel of House of Commons debates. If this material needed to be called to our attention in popular form—Burke scholars are otherwise provided for—it would surely have been desirable to provide enough annotation to help understand the text. It would not have been a vast effort, and it would have made the volume more acceptable.

Furthermore, as Conor Cruise O'Brien makes clear, the Irish affairs which were the objects of Burke's concern are not those of today, though they continue to have their repercussions on what has now become both sides of the border in a (then unthinkable) partitioned country. In dealing with Ireland, as with other political issues, Conor Cruise O'Brien makes much of the dividing line brought about in Burke's thinking by the French Revolution. Indeed, his one suggestion in dealing with Matthew Arnold's editing is to suggest that a letter written in this later phase should be read in its chronological place and not where Arnold put it. Before 1782, Burke was chiefly concerned to plead for the abolition of the worst aspects of the penal laws and to try to bring about, if not an equality for the majority Roman Catholic community, then

¹ *Irish Affairs*. By EDMUND BURKE. Edited by MATTHEW ARNOLD, with a new introduction by CONOR CRUISE O'BRIEN. The Cresset Library (Hutchinson), £6.95.

at least a situation which would not prevent them from enjoying tolerable conditions for earning their livelihood and for education in the tenets of their faith.

When he returned to the affairs of Ireland in 1792, after this absorption in Indian affairs through the Warren Hastings trial, the situation had changed. Ireland had achieved economic equality with Britain, advocacy of which had cost Burke the support of his electors at Bristol; and the Irish Parliament—Grattan's Parliament—had been freed from Westminster's control. Some derogations from the worst of the discrimination against Catholics had been made. But the Irish Parliament was itself a vehicle for the preservation of "the Protestant ascendancy" (a phrase which came into use at that time and which meant not just Protestants, but members of the established Anglican Church).

It was among Protestant dissenters—ancestors of Dr Ian Paisley's "loyalists"—that anti-English sentiment was most powerful and treasonable activities most prevalent. Burke feared the influence of "Jacobinism" upon this combustible matter. His main purpose in his last years of life was to argue that, if the Catholics were enfranchised, they would be deaf to

the appeals of the "United Irishmen" and could be made into the most loyal of the King's subjects. Jacobinism, as propagated in Europe by the armies of the Revolution and Napoleon Bonaparte, was the enemy of all religion: all four main elements in the religion of the British Isles—Anglicanism, Scottish Presbyterianism, Roman Catholicism, and Protestant dissent—had an equal interest in resisting it. But that demanded decent equality of treatment. As we know—if Latin is still permitted—*dis aliter visum* (the powers that be saw things differently).

Subsequent history changed the issues at stake beyond recall. Nor can it be said that Ulster, even in the Stormont period, renewed the old situation. The differences are greater than the similarities.

All this does not matter, says Conor Cruise O'Brien. Burke is purveying not just comments on the passing scene, but truths about politics or suggestions about politics that set one thinking; and thinking is always good for one. I am inclined to agree. On looking round our world, one can see many countries whose governments might learn from Burke. None seems very willing to do so.

I Am Old

I am old
And it's a new world now, they say
Of computer games
And journeys to Betelgeuse
And Canopus Major
If such places exist

The world economy is getting better
While daily everything
That made life tolerable
Is getting worse

The world's computers have proved
That friendship, love, community,
Creation are all illusions
And nothing but. . . .

But . . .
It would be nice
To sit by an open hearth
And have a drink
With a friend
And smoke a pipe
It would be nice to be in love
Without the obligation of writing letters
Or otherwise expressing it

It would be nice
To have the old world back

Patrick Gillen