BOOK REVIEWS

The closing pages offer the political speculation and exhortation too often found in social policy books. None the less, there is much of value here to an academic and general reader.

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Since 1969 some 1,000 serious publications have appeared on Northern Ireland. Frank Wright's is one of the more original attempts to explain the nature of its conflicts. His distinctive angle is to compare Northern Ireland with other 'ethnic frontier' societies situated within larger metropolitan empires. Thus the reader is treated to many suggestive comparisons and contrasts between the histories of Northern Ireland, Algeria, the southern states of the USA and a number of 'middle European' territories which were once ruled by the Hapsburgs (especially Poland and Czechoslovakia).

There are three novelties in his analysis. First, Wright develops a non-Marxist theory of the nature of imperialist development and its impact upon settler societies. The critical facetious events in ethnic frontiers are by-products of capitalist modernization and the assimilation (or non-assimilation) of colonizers. The complex gamut of possible relations between metropolitan settlers and natives (or ex-natives) are useful guides sometimes confusingly explored in several chapters of the book. Multiple tables on the sociology and pathology of paranoia, fascism, suppression and pluralist reformation emerge in the course of Wright's discussions. These hints are often novel—notably his discussion of 'defence actions' by dominant groups in the ethnic frontier and the analysis of 'representative violence' and 'communal retribution' in such societies. The same applies to his discussion of the nature of civil rights movements in ethnic frontiers. However, regrettably, many of his ideas are not very clearly articulated. Wright's prose is awkward and he often gets bogged down in argument histories in which fail to detect any obvious analytical or comparative results. Moreover, the comparativist must justify his choice of countries. Why these particular case-studies rather than others? Why is Algeria more illuminating for analyzing Northern Ireland than Palestine/Israel? Who the southern states of the USA rather than again/South Africa or Zimbabwe/Rhodesia? These defects detract from Wright's comparative endeavours. Author with good views frequently fail to express them well on their own writing. Consequently Wright should be accused of rewriting the theory of the 'ethnic frontier' in a metropolitan empire is a journal article. He has many things worth saying better and more sharply.

The second novelty is Wright's book, given that is expressly comparative, is a strange absence. He avoids the mindset of the theory of consociationalism - aside from some cursory discussion (p. 245f.) and several interesting other.

Thr sec politics and history of Northern Ireland are not systematically compared with these cases where consociational peace-fight appear to have stabilised divided societies (e.g. Austria, Belgium, Canada, Holland, Venezuela) or with those where they have failed to do so (e.g. Cyprus, Lebanon, Sri Lanka, Fiji). Since Wright displays considerable knowledge of the conceptual issues and the relevant countries' histories this neglect is regrettable. Not to be so perplexing. The ambitious comparative, like Wright, should not be pass the first known comparative theory of potential relevance to Northern Ireland, especially since we want to examine the feasible approach of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The latter is currently under considerable stress (summer 1988), but it cannot be understood without reference...
to communitarian theory since the British and Irish governments are engaged in an experiment in coercive communitarianism. The third novelty in the analysis is that it is constantly informed by the work of Rene Girard, which has led to Wright's thesis. It seems to involve a fusion of psychoanalysis, anthropology, and literary criticism. It is somewhat supposed to help us understand the judicial, sacrificial, and violent dimensions of Northern Ireland's societies. If so, it would help if Wright were to elucidate its explanatory powers in a comprehensive sense, as the 'Cathada' passages would figure; high anybody's adept of uninnocently. Girard and some are sufficiently suggested religious sentiments seem to be responsible for the mystical writing which shrouds the passages of the book and obscures the author's conclusions. Psychoanalytic and literary critics are well known for subtracting from the sum total of human knowledge the moment they hit the keys of their word processors; political scientists, historians, and historical sociologists have sought problems understanding Northern Ireland without ignoring these intellectual burdens.

Wright's book, despite its prescriptive flaws, deserves to be widely read, if not by undergraduates or the general public. Scholars interested in the politics of ethnically divided societies will find much to stimulate their analysis in informing their prescriptions. However, given the importance of his subject matter, the author should be encouraged to represent his arguments more lucidly and encourage understanding. After all, he knows better than most, misunderstanding fosters conflict.

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Nane's book represents a new approach towards the study of Italy's second economic miracle, which dates from the late 1970s and which has produced sustained industrialisation and widespread entrepreneurship. Her thesis is that economic decentralisation has not developed outside the political system, but relies on a close interaction with local, and increasingly regional, institutions. Together, they form Italy's unique experiment in 'social capitalism.' In the first part of the book, Nane examines socio-economic and political changes in Italy since 1968-69. Against the traditional view that these changes were tearing the country apart, she successfully argues that they lead to the search for new forms of democracy by an interesting pluralistic society. In the second part, the author provides evidence in support of her main thesis, largely in the form of numerous, if somewhat anecdotal, examples of local and regional governments' involvement in economic matters.

Though her thesis is both interesting and challenging, her evidence seems insufficient to sustain it. In particular, the book does not measure the economic performance of the various regions in terms of the impact of local government policies. We already know from previous studies that the areas of diversified industrialisation correspond to the Communist and Catholic regions, and that these have more efficient political institutions. The real problem, however, is to establish whether an innovative decentralisation administration can promote sustained economic growth in these regions, where a traditional political structure is largely absent. Here the book is inconclusive, although it offers some indications that this is being achieved in a few southern areas. Furthermore, I feel that Nane has underestimated the importance of the usual business sector in the Italian economy in the 1950s and 1960s. Nevertheless,