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Further Europeanisation? The Irish General Election of June 1989

By Brendan O'Leary and John Peterson

Charles Haughey, the Irish Taoiseach (Prime Minister), ended weeks of speculation when he called a general election in the Republic of Ireland on 25 May 1989. He requested the President to dissolve the 25th Dáil Éireann and he chose 15 June as polling day – to coincide with the European elections due on that date. The minority Fianna Fáil government had been in office since February 1987,¹ just over two years, and had suffered seven defeats in Dáil Éireann during that period, on relatively minor and procedural matters. The government had been riding consistently high in the public opinion polls since the spring of 1988, and when it was defeated by the opposition parties on the question of special funding for haemophiliacs who had contracted AIDS Haughey decided the prospects were good for winning an overall majority.

The campaign marked Haughey's fifth attempt to lead Fianna Fáil to an overall majority. Moreover, he made the alleged need for a majority government the central issue in Fianna Fáil's campaign. The electorate were informed that the key choice was between sound government and multi-party chaos. They none the less chose the latter option as Haughey's fifth sally proved to be as unsuccessful as his previous close encounters with the voters. Having fought a disastrous campaign, in which the party lost some 6–7 per cent of the public support it enjoyed² when the election was launched, Fianna Fáil won almost exactly the same first-preference vote it had obtained in February 1987, 44.1 per cent, but lost four seats (see Tables 1 and 2, and Figure 1). Fianna Fáil failed to win anything like a sufficient tally of the key marginal seats it had targeted and ended up unexpectedly losing seats to all the other major parties and independents.

FIGURE 1
FIRST-PREFERENCE VOTES 1987 AND 1989 COMPARED
Parties' First-Preference Share (%) February 1987
Parties' First-Preference Share (%) June 1989

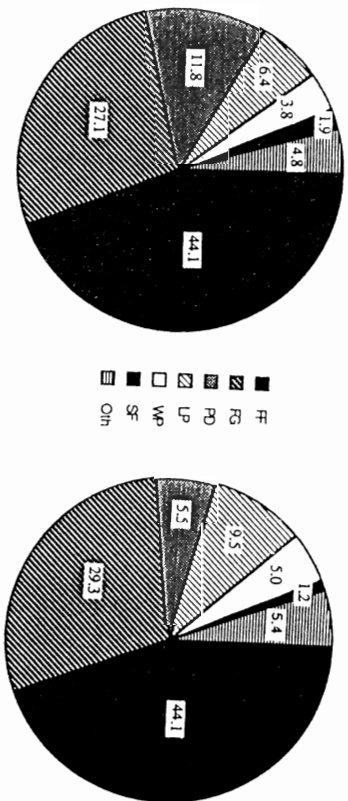


TABLE 2
FIRST-PREFERENCE SHARES OF MAJOR PARTIES AND PROPORTIONALITY INDEX

	Feb 1987	PI	June 1989	PI	Net Gain in % Share
Fianna Fáil	44.1	110.6	44.1	105.2	(0)
Fine Gael	27.1	113.2	29.3	113	(+2.2)
Prog Democrats	11.8	71.18	5.5	65.5	(-6.3)
Labour Party	6.4	112.5	9.5	94.7	(+3.1)
Workers' Party	3.8	63.5	5.0	84	(+1.2)
Sinn Féin	1.9		1.2		(-0.7)
Others	4.8		5.4		(+1.2)
	100		100		

Index of volatility (calculated as in M. N. Peterson, 'The Dynamics of European Party Systems', *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (1979), pp. 1–26) = 7.4 in 1989 compared with 16.1 in 1987. Index of proportionality calculated as in Cornelius O'Leary, *Irish Elections, 1978–1977* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1979), Chapter 9.

As can be seen from Table 1, Fianna Fáil's total number of seats left them seven short of an overall majority. After the election the combined left block of 24 deputies (Labour (15), the Workers' Party (7), the Democratic Socialist Party (1) and one independent socialist) stuck by their electoral commitment not to support any of the centre-right parties' nominations for Taoiseach. The newly elected Green Party deputy announced that he would also not support the leader of any of the other parties, as did Neil Blaney, the Independent Fianna Fáil candidate. The left/Green stance left open four feasible scenarios: another Fianna Fáil minority government, a Fianna Fáil-Progressive Democrats coalition, a Fianna Fáil-Fine Gael coalition or another general election.

Haughey attempted to pursue the first scenario, contending that Fianna Fáil remained the largest single party, that coalitions had never worked in Irish politics, and that at most he was prepared to offer Fine Gael and

TABLE 1
PARTY POSITIONS IN DÁIL ÉIREANN: BEFORE AND AFTER

	Feb 1987	June 1989	Gains/Losses
Fianna Fáil	81	77	(-4)
Fine Gael	51	55	(+4)
Progressive Democrats	14	6	(-8)
Labour Party	12	15	(+3)
Workers' Party	4	7	(+3)
Democratic Socialist Party	1	1	(0)
Green Party	0	1	(+1)
Independents/Others	3	4	(+1)
	166	166	

the Progressive Democrats (PDs) 'Legislative participation' in discussions on policy. Fine Gael skilfully offered Fianna Fáil an Israeli-style coalition deal, an offer which they knew Fianna Fáil could only refuse. The gesture was primarily intended to portray Fine Gael as prepared to act in the national interest. The PDs, who had fought the campaign in an electoral coalition with Fine Gael, declared that they would honour their promise to vote for Dukes as Taoiseach. The impasse was obvious, and Haughey was defeated in the nomination for Taoiseach by 86 votes to 78, when the Dáil reassembled on 29 June. Only one independent deputy outside the ranks of Fianna Fáil had voted for Haughey. Subsequently Dukes, nominated by Fine Gael and the Progressive Democrats, was defeated by 103 votes to 61 votes, and Dick Spring, the Labour leader, nominated by his party and the Workers' Party, was defeated by 138 votes to 24.

After displaying considerable reluctance, if not petulance, Haughey was obliged to tender his resignation as Taoiseach to the President in Irish politics, caretaker administration. This outcome was unprecedented in Irish politics, and created immense speculation because of uncertainty surrounding the relevant constitutional provisions. Article 13 (1) of *Bunreacht Na hÉireann* (Constitution of Ireland) makes it clear that only Dáil Éireann can nominate the Taoiseach, and suggests that the President can play no formal role in finding a Taoiseach when no party or coalition enjoys a majority in Dáil Éireann. Article 13 (2) 2 declares that 'The President may in his absolute discretion refuse to dissolve Dáil Éireann and on the advice of a Taoiseach who has ceased to retain the support of a majority in Dáil Éireann'. Article 28 (10) and 11. 1^o) states that 'The Taoiseach shall resign from office upon his advice to retain the support of a majority in Dáil Éireann unless on his advice the President dissolves Dáil Éireann and on the reassembly of Dáil Éireann after the dissolution the Taoiseach secures the support of a majority in Dáil Éireann. If the Taoiseach at any time resigns from office the other members of the Government shall be deemed also to have resigned from office, but the Taoiseach and the other members of the Government shall continue to carry on their duties until their successors shall have been appointed'.

Three controversies were buried in the potential constitutional interpretations of these articles. First, would the President, for the first time in the history of the state, exercise his absolute discretion and reject a request for a dissolution if Haughey were to make such a request? Second, would the President have the right to play the role, executed by presidents and monarchs in other parliamentary systems, of finding another prime minister who could win the confidence of the legislature? Third, and most intriguing of all was a truly explosive question: would the caretaker Taoiseach, who had never enjoyed the support of the 26th Dáil, actually have the constitutional right, as part of his duties, to request a dissolution?

Sadly for lovers of constitutional imbrolios these questions were not definitively answered because the crisis of governmental formation was solved, albeit at an Italian pace. Since negotiating a grand coalition government with Fine Gael was unthinkable for Fianna Fáil, the feasible scenarios were reduced to two: a request by Haughey to the President to dissolve the Dáil and have another election, or a deal between Fianna Fáil and the

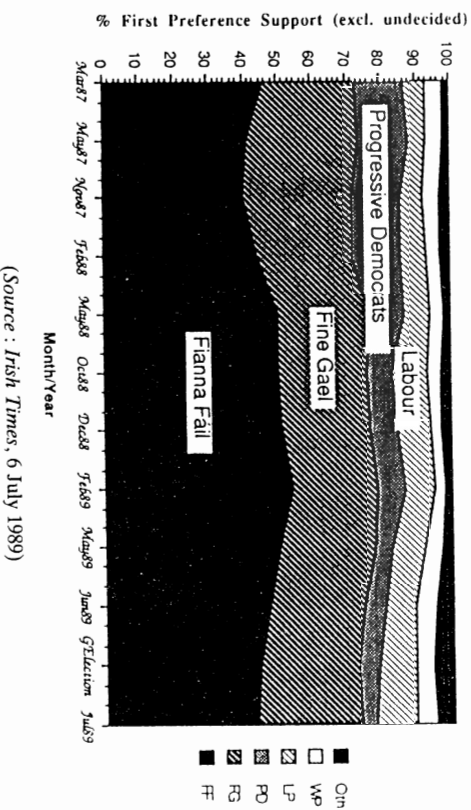
Progressive Democrats, the political party formed in 1986 by a faction of Fianna Fáil deputies who had been hostile to Haughey's leadership. Since all parties, but especially Fianna Fáil, had good reason to fear being held responsible for precipitating another election, the question rapidly became the terms on which a deal would be made. The merits of one of political science's best-tested hypotheses – the rationality of a 'minimum winning coalition' – was soon vindicated. On 12 July after prolonged post-election bargaining between Fianna Fáil and the PDs Haughey was re-elected Taoiseach by 84 to 79. The PDs had struck a hard bargain: a coalition government, a four-year programme of government (to be reviewed after two years) and two seats in the Cabinet for their party's six deputies.³ The leader of the Progressive Democrats, Desmond O'Malley, became Minister of Industry and Commerce, the position he held when last in a FF cabinet, while Bobby Molloy became Minister of Energy. The main concession to the PDs in the agreed policy programme was for the government to move in stages towards a standard 25 per cent rate of income tax by 1993. Furthermore, an extra £115 million punts would be injected into the health service in 1989 and up to £11 million punts made available for haemophiliacs with Aids. Fianna Fáil had called an election to win a majority but had ended up negotiating their first coalition government in the history of the state, and with a party whom its grassroots organisation unanimously regarded as traitors and knaves.

PARTY PERFORMANCES

Fianna Fáil

When rounded up Fianna Fáil's share of the first preference vote was exactly the same as in 1987 (see Table 2 and Figure 1). This result was especially disappointing in view of the party's commanding position in the *Irish Times*/MRBI polls between May 1988 and May 1989 (see Figure 2), and the generally favourable popular perception of Haughey's third term as Taoiseach. In office Haughey had fulfilled the government press secretary's declaration that he would set such a hot political pace that the Opposition parties would be struggling to keep up with him. He and his ministers had turned on their electoral promises, rapidly outflanking both Fine Gael and the PDs in their commitments to fiscal rectitude, budgetary and borrowing discipline, and public expenditure cutbacks. Haughey successfully negotiated a corporatist-style Programme for National Recovery with the social partners (employers, trade unions and farmers) which was to continue under the new coalition government. The Programme established a three-year economic policy which strictly limited wage increases in the public and private sectors in return for government action on tax reduction and job creation, with the tacit understanding that public expenditure would have to be rationalised. This policy, combined with EMS membership, helped to keep inflation down to the remarkably low figure of 3.5 per cent in 1989.

FIGURE 2
PARTY SUPPORT IN IRISH TIMES/MRBI POLLS 1987-1989



(Source: Irish Times, 6 July 1989)

Haughey therefore seemed to be triumphant in late 1988. The parties of the Left remained small and divided. Fine Gael's new leader, Alan Dukes, had embarked upon what became known as the 'Tallaght strategy', which amounted to support in the Dáil in the national interest for the government's economic programme. Fianna Fáil was the primary beneficiary of Fine Gael's generosity; at least, so the polls suggested. Furthermore Fianna Fáil's actions in government had removed the distinctive policy stance and electoral market niche of the Progressive Democrats, and this breakaway party appeared destined to go the way of all 'flash parties'.⁴ With the Exchequer borrowing requirement reduced, and the national debt/GNP ratio stabilised and falling, Haughey, the newly established statesman, and his party seemed racing certainties for a comfortable victory in the next general election. The claim that the hard times were over and that good times lay around the corner was not unbelievable.

Fianna Fáil had conventionally and understandably been described as the predominant party in the Irish party system,⁵ and it appeared in the spring of 1989 that it was about to re-establish its hegemony. Fianna Fáil is the sole party to have formed a majority government in the 23 general elections since 1923, and it achieved this feat under its first three leaders, Éamon de Valera, Seán Lemass and Jack Lynch, on seven occasions,⁶ and the government has formed a minority government on seven occasions,⁷ and the government in either majority or minority form after 14 of the 19 general elections held between 1932 and 1987, with an average share of the first-preference vote of just over 46 per cent. However, since 1973 there have been six alternations in government, three Fine Gael/Labour coalition governments, and seven

elections, suggesting considerable change and volatility in the 'changing Irish party system'.⁸

The burning psephological question in Irish politics has been: why has Fianna Fáil been much less dominant in the last 16 years, especially under Haughey who has led the party since 1979? The first and most obvious answer is that Haughey himself is the problem, an electoral liability to his party because of questions surrounding his past and his judgement.⁹ However, in the five election campaigns led by Haughey the mean Fianna Fáil vote has been 45.2 per cent, which is barely below 46.4 per cent, the mean Fianna Fáil vote for the years 1932-77. A second and more convincing structural explanation of Fianna Fáil's historically poor performance under Haughey is available. The enlargement of Dáil Éireann to 166 seats and the constituency boundary changes which went with this expansion came into effect in 1981. These changes arguably have made it much more difficult for any party or coalition to win an overall majority.¹⁰ A more political hypothesis is that Fianna Fáil's historically poor performance under Haughey can be explained by the electoral strategies of the other parties and the voting practices of their supporters. Since 1973 the electorate have been offered an alternative government on the occasion of every election, except that of February 1987. This fact has mattered considerably in structuring voters' behaviour and their pattern of transfers. In an STV system nomination strategies and voting transfers are vital in determining the overall outcome and in the 1980s the other parties have so managed their nomination strategies and their voters' transfers that Fianna Fáil's predominance has been successfully challenged. Finally, the nature of Irish politics may be changing with the 'catch-all' populist strategy of Fianna Fáil vulnerable to the gradual development of a more conventional Western European pattern of ideological and class politics.

Such statistical, structural, strategic and historical transformation hypotheses stand at odds with the popular salience given to the 'Haughey factor', but they do not persuade Haughey's detractors or those convinced of the irreducible salience of personality in politics. Haughey's critics argue that if Fianna Fáil had been led by anybody else then there would have been no defeat of his party in 1981, no faction-fights of the sort which split the party in the early and mid-1980s, and they assert that but for his divisive leadership the PDs would never have come into existence in 1986. Moreover, they contend that in his absence the electoral pacts and coalitions of the other parties would not have been so effective.

Whatever one's verdict on the overall significance of the 'Haughey factor', no detached observer disputes that the fought poor election campaigns both in 1987 and 1989. In the most recent election Haughey's first difficulty was in establishing the need for an election, and his satisfaction rating plummeted from the day the election was called. Despite the credibility of his performance in government the bulk of the electorate were very content to see a minority Fianna Fáil government being closely supervised and supported by Fine Gael, and saw no justification for an election. Second, Fianna Fáil were over-confident about their record in government, and this helps to explain

their failure to dictate the electoral issues in the campaign. Spontaneous discontent with the impact of cutback management on the health services and ministerial gaffes rapidly put the government on the defensive.¹¹ When questioned about the health service Haughey made the mistake of saying that 'We were not aware. . . . I personally was not aware. . . . of the full extent of the difficulties and hardships'. And Dr John O'Connell, a Fianna Fáil candidate in Dublin, riposted to the complaint that some patients had been left to sleep overnight on trolleys in corridors with the remarkably insensitive contention that 'A trolley is a bed on wheels so it doesn't mean that people are being neglected'. With assurances of this kind it was perhaps not surprising that one Independent candidate was elected to the Dáil on the sole ticket of saving the local hospital in his area. With even more stunning skill Haughey responded to a Wexford widow who asked him to raise the widows' pension with the remark that she should 'Get married again. . . . you're young enough and good-looking enough to get married again'! The fact that the polls throughout the campaign showed a rising left vote, especially in Dublin, which threatened to ruin Fianna Fáil's chances of an overall majority, pushed Haughey into implausible 'red scare' tactics which brought his party no discernible benefits, and merely served to increase the credibility of the left surge. The only feature of Fianna Fáil's expensive election campaign that was well managed was its decision to avoid a head-to-head television debate between Haughey and Dukes. Their campaign managers, led by Seamus Brennan, judged that Dukes' technocratic and statistic-studded style of argument would come across much less effectively in an interview format. They proved to be correct. Haughey came off best in an RTE programme focused on the two main contenders for Taoiseach held two days before the election – although it was also widely felt that the interviewer had been harder on Dukes than Haughey. Haughey's performance on that occasion may well have halted the slide in his party's support.

The regional breakdown of support for Fianna Fáil (see Table 3) was more or less unchanged in aggregate. In Dublin City Fianna Fáil lost working-class support to the parties of the left but this loss was compensated by increased middle-class votes prepared to reward the government's economic record, and anxious to ensure governmental stability. In Munster, despite the losses sustained by the PDs, Fianna Fáil failed to recover support on anything like the scale one might have expected, and in Connaught/Ulster the party suffered net losses over what became known as the (fishing) 'rod licence' issue – a complex story worth an article in itself – and as a result of the impact of cuts in health services.

Fine Gael

The other major party in the Irish party system, Fine Gael, was reasonably content with its showing in the polls and with the outcome of the election. It gained five seats. Its election pact with the PDs persuaded some of the electorate that there was an alternative government to Fianna Fáil. The party campaigned for a rationalisation of the country's fiscal system, for staged tax-cuts and greater commercialisation of the public sector, but

TABLE 3
THE REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF FIRST PREFERENCES 1989

	Dublin Region	Rest of Leinster	Munster	Connaught/Ulster
FF	40.7 (+0.2)	46.1 (+0.4)	43.6 (+0.9)	47.5 (+2.2)
FG	23.0 (-0.7)	30.9 (+4.6)	30.4 (+3.5)	34.6 (+3.2)
PD	5.4 (-8.2)	4.2 (-6.8)	8.0 (-7.0)	3.2 (-2.4)
LP	9.5 (+2.4)	13.5 (+4.0)	10.9 (+4.1)	2.4 (+1.2)
WP	11.4 (+3.9)	1.7 (-0.5)	4.0 (+0.8)	1.4 (0)
SF	1.9 (-0.3)	0.8 (-0.8)	0.2 (-0.7)	2.3 (-0.9)
OTH	8.1 (+2.6)	2.8 (+0.1)	3.0 (-1.5)	8.6 (+1.6)
	100	100	100	100

Figures in brackets are the net gains and losses from the 1987 election.

Sources: *Irish Times*, 19 June 1989 and M. Laver, P. Mair and R. Sinnott (eds.), *How Ireland Voted* (Swords: Poolbeg, 1987), p. 67.

balanced its programme by arguing for increased funding and administrative streamlining of the health service. The party's campaign management, ably led by Seán O'Leary, targeted Fianna Fáil's weaknesses sharply and effectively, and achieved their central objective: preventing a Fianna Fáil majority. Indeed the Fine Gael headquarters were so confident of the impact of their campaign on public perceptions of Haughey that they decided to devote the last week of their campaign to attacking the competence of his ministerial appointments, especially in Environment, Agriculture and Marine – just in case Haughey might benefit from a wave of public sympathy.

Nevertheless Fine Gael's net gain in first preferences of 2.2 per cent left it with its second worst performance in the share of the first preference vote since 1957 (see Table 4). Although its advertising and critique of Fianna Fáil were effective, the impact probably benefited the parties of the left as much as it did Fine Gael. However, as Fine Gael's high proportionality score of 113 suggests (see Table 2), its party managers once again outperformed Fianna Fáil in nomination strategy and vote-management.¹² Indeed their vote management was so finely tuned that they nearly lost the seat of their former Taoiseach, Dr Garret FitzGerald, by electing his running mate ahead of him in the Dublin South East constituency. In the regional distribution of the vote Fine Gael recovered ground everywhere, albeit at levels of around 3 per cent, except in the Dublin region where they lost support (see Table 3).

However, the outcome of the election and the process of government-formation was perceived to be of undoubted benefit by some members of Fine Gael. Fianna Fáil had been pushed into a coalition government for the first time, and with the party which took most of its votes from Fine Gael in 1987. The formation of a Fianna Fáil–Progressive Democrat coalition frees Fine Gael in Opposition, enabling them to behave more opportunistically if they wish, and to shift back towards the more social democratic image they had acquired under FitzGerald. The rise of the PDs undoubtedly pushed both Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael to the right in economic policy, but now Fine Gael has both the need and the ability to develop a distinct image if it is

TABLE 4
THE TRADITIONAL PARTIES' SHARE OF FIRST PREFERENCES: 1943-87

	Fianna Fáil	Fine Gael	Labour	Total [FF+FG+LAB]
1943	41.9	23.1	15.7	80.7
1944	48.8	20.5	8.8	78.2
1948	41.9	19.8	8.7	70.4
1951	46.3	25.8	11.4	83.5
1954	43.4	32.0	12.1	87.5
1957	48.3	26.6	9.1	84.0
1961	43.8	32.0	11.6	87.4
1965	47.7	34.1	15.4	97.2
1969	45.7	34.1	17.0	96.8
1973	46.2	35.1	13.7	95.0
1977	50.6	30.5	11.6	92.7
1981	45.3	36.5	9.9	91.7
1982	47.3	37.3	9.1	93.7
1982	45.2	39.2	9.4	93.8
1987	44.1	27.1	6.4	77.6
1989	44.1	29.3	9.5	82.9

Sources: *Irish Times* 1987/1989, and M. Gallagher, *Political Parties in the Republic of Ireland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985).

to benefit from any dissatisfaction with the new coalition government. Their opportunity is also a danger: having seen off the PD threat on their right Fine Gael now has to prevent the parties of the left from assuming the mantle of opposition by tarring all the parties of the right and centre as identical.

Progressive Democrats

The election was disastrous for the PDs, even though they ended up in a coalition government and with two cabinet ministers. They were in disarray before the election began, not least because their deputy leader had indicated he would resign from politics to pursue a different career. To fight an election with one party and then form a government with another does not exactly help to consolidate a distinct and principled party image, and many Irish insiders predict the PDs' rapid re-absorption within Fianna Fáil, a task which would be made easier if Haughey were to retire in the course of the government's term. If they are not absorbed within Fianna Fáil, they may pay the usual price of being the smaller party in a coalition government in Ireland: loss of identity and bearing more than their share of the blame for government unpopularity.

The PDs lost eight of their 14 deputies, and several of their elected

deputies barely scraped into the Dáil. The party lost heavily in Dublin (see Table 3), where middle-class voters turned to Fianna Fáil, and lost on a similar scale in the rest of Leinster and Munster. Its smaller losses in Connaught/Ulster were of no benefit as the party had failed to establish a base there. The one consolation for the party was its very good performance in the European elections (see Table 5), but that owed most to the personal qualities of its candidate in Munster. However, it seems that Irish political culture is now inhospitable territory for a declared party of the economic right, especially when its haircut has been stolen, and the PDs' future seems to consist mostly of political obituaries.

TABLE 5
EUROPEAN RESULTS

	% First Preferences		Seats		Net Gain
	1989	1984	1989	1984	
FF	31.5	39.2	6	8	-2
FG	21.6	32.2	4	6	-2
FD	11.9	(-)	1	(-)	+1
LP	9.5	8.4	1	0	+1
WP	7.5	4.3	1	0	+1
SF	2.3	5.2	0	0	0
GP	3.7	(-)	0	0	0
Others	11.9	10.7	2	1	+1

Index of volatility for 1989: 16.38 (see Table 2 for index calculation)

The Left: Labour and the Workers' Party

The combined left vote – when one adds the first preference vote for the Labour Party, the Workers' Party, for independent socialist deputy Gregory and deputy Kemy of the Democratic Socialist Party – was 15.5 per cent, the highest left vote since the Labour Party's performance in 1969 (see Table 4). The left vote in the Dublin region, where the Workers' Party outpolled Labour, was a spectacular 21 per cent. The two parties of the left, although in competition with each other none the less managed some degree of voting co-operation. The Workers' Party called on its voters to transfer to Labour, whereas the Labour Party called on its voters to transfer to Labour, socialist candidate. Labour benefited more than the Workers' Party from other parties' transfers, although it also lost first-preference votes to Green candidates in the Dublin region.

The Labour Party's gain of three seats and rise of 3.1 per cent (Tables 1 and 2) in its national vote provided a much needed boost to the party – which had seen its vote slide almost consistently since 1969 (see Table 3). Not only did its vote rise nationally and in all four regions, but its share of the combined vote of Labour and the Workers' Party rose for the first time since the Workers' Party emerged as a competitor on the left in 1981. Moreover, the competition on the left ceased to have the zero-sum character it had shown since 1981 as both parties gained ground and seats. Both parties sought a fairer distribution of taxation, increased borrowing (where the net returns on investment) exceeded the costs of financing the new debt) to promote growth

and jobs, and increased public expenditure to be financed from increased growth and revenue. However, the primary focus of their campaign was on the social consequences of the government's retrenchment policies.

The Workers' Party also increased their number of deputies by three, and their share of the first preference vote. They won 5 per cent of the first preference vote and with seven deputies became eligible for special Dáil funding and privileges for the first time. They also did very well in the European elections (Table 5), sending their leader, Proinsias de Rossa, to represent Dublin in Strasbourg. Their success owed a great deal to the presence of youthful, dynamic and high-quality candidates – youthfulness being an especially important electoral asset for all parties' candidates in a disproportionately young electorate – as well as to their now well-established tradition of working hard for their constituents.

Both parties of the left remain content to be Tribune parties for the time being: the Workers' Party building an urban working-class vote, the Labour Party aiming for a wider social base. And as both ruled out entering a coalition with any of the parties of the centre or right they stand to gain from any misfortunes suffered by the parties of government. However, whether the left can break through the historic 20 per cent ceiling on its vote remains to be seen.

The Two Green Fringes

The Two Green Fringes the party which supports the IRA's terrorist campaign in Northern Ireland, fared extremely badly in its electoral campaign to win seats in Dáil Éireann. Its first preference vote dropped from 1.9 per cent in 1987 to 1.2 per cent, and it also lost ground in the European elections (see Table 5) where its vote fell from 5.2 per cent of the first preference vote in 1984 to 2.3 per cent in 1989. But in the latter campaign its fall in support is partly explained by the fact that its candidates stood down in Munster in favour of Father Patrick Ryan, the priest suspected of involvement in running arms for the IRA and the cause of a diplomatic row between Britain, Ireland and Belgium in 1988. Standing on an anti-extradition platform he polled 6.3 per cent of the first preference vote. However, despite this one-off protest vote for the turbulent priest, the fact is that Sinn Féin have failed to build any electoral momentum in the South, even in the propitious circumstances created by severe deprivation in inner-city Dublin and working-class housing estates in the Dublin region. This failure in the Republic, on top of electoral setbacks in the local government and European elections in Northern Ireland, suggests that Sinn Féin's prospects for growth are over.

It is a rather different green fringe, the ecological rather than the Irish nationalist variety, which looks set for organic growth in electoral support. The Greens returned their first deputy, Roger Garland, to the Dáil, and surprised themselves and the opinion pollsters by their relatively good showing in both the national and European elections. Since Ireland has developed its own concerned and allegedly post-materialist middle class, and has multiple environmental issues which can achieve political salience, there seems no good reason to believe that the Greens' success will be

transitory, especially as Ireland's electoral system is potentially kind to small parties.

CONCLUSION: FURTHER EUROPEANISATION?

Analysing the last election many commentators, including one of the present authors, contended that it presaged greater Europeanisation and re-alignment.¹³ The most recent election does not require too much revision of this contention. The combined share of the first preference vote won by the established parties (Fianna Fáil + Fine Gael + Labour) was the second lowest figure since 1948 (see Table 4), the previous lowest score being recorded in 1987. Moreover, in the European elections the combined first-preference vote of the traditional established parties was a stunningly low 62.2 per cent (see Table 5).

The social underpinnings of the traditional political system – a Catholic morally conservative, clientelist, egalitarian and agrarian social order hospitable to populist parties, and an urban centre dominated by the rural periphery – continue to be eroded under the impact of economic modernisation, liberalisation, industrialisation, urbanisation, European Community integration and the general internationalisation of Western European cultures. Class voting, at least on the basis of our preliminary polling analysis, increased further in this election. Indeed one way of explaining the election outcome is by saying that there was a swing to Fianna Fáil from the Progressive Democrats among the middle class, and a swing to the left from Fianna Fáil among the working class. Furthermore, there is now an identifiable left bloc facing a centre-right bloc, the logical outcome of the alignments suggested by the 1987 election results. Coalition or minority government has been the norm throughout the 1980s. Electoral volatility is high. There are emergent and deepening cleavages between secular anti-clerical and religious traditionalists. The new parties that have emerged – the Progressive Democrats, the Workers' Party and the Greens – all appeal to broad ideological principles which are not necessarily nor uniquely rooted in Irish history and culture, but rather are part of the common culture of modern Europe. Unlike the previous flash parties, the most recent of parties have also been primarily urban rather than rural.

The established parties have adapted to these developments and challenges, and may well survive them and accommodate them without further loss of support, but they are being considerably reshaped in the process. The most traditionalist Irish party – Catholic, nationalist and populist Fianna Fáil – is now more concerned to manage a successful capitalist economy than to preserve its nationalist republican purity, and pragmatically operates the Anglo-Irish Agreement with the British Conservatives. Fine Gael, once alleged to be the party of Anglophiles, is now the unashamed party of Europhiles, and considering whether it should move slightly leftwards to take full advantage of opposition. The Labour Party, once a party of no-joys of office, now aspires to be a European socialist party – which may of course require a different species of vagueness. Ireland of course remains

very distinctive in its political culture, in its voting system, its parish-pump politics, its social egalitarianism, and in the historic foundations of its two main political parties in a civil war – but it continues to become perceptibly more like many of its West European neighbours.

NOTES

1. For accounts of the February 1987 election see M. Laver, P. Mair and R. Sinnott (eds.), *How Ireland Voted: The Irish General Election 1987* (Swords: Poolbeg Press, 1987) and B. O'Leary, 'Towards Europeanisation and Realignment? The Irish General Election, February 1987', *West European Politics*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (July 1987), pp. 455–65.
2. The two main Irish polls, the *Irish Times*/MRBI and the *Independent*/IMS, employ slightly different questions and methodologies in seeking to estimate party support, which is why estimating the loss of support by Fianna Fail in the course of the campaign is problematic.
3. The size of the Irish Cabinet is constitutionally limited to 15 Ministers.
4. Flash parties are parties whose impact on party-competition is disruptive but whose impact is fleeting. The concept was developed by P. Converse and G. Depux. 'Politicisation of the Electorate in France and the United States', in A. Campbell, P. Converse, W. Miller, and D. Stokes (eds.), *Elections and the Political Order* (New York: John Wiley, 1966), and has been applied to previous Irish parties with such traits by R. K. Carty, *Electoral Politics in Ireland: Party and Parish Pump* (Dingle: Brandon Books, 1983), Ch. 3.
5. See, *inter alia*, B. Chubb, *The Government and Politics of Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 73 and Carty, *Electoral Politics in Ireland*, pp. 38–40, 100–108.
6. The seven periods of majority government were in 1933–37, 1938–43, 1944–48, 1957–61, 1965–69, 1969–73, and 1977–81.
7. The seven periods of minority government were in 1932–33, 1937–38, 1943–44, 1951–54, 1961–64, 1982 and 1987–89.
8. The *tour de force* on transformations in Irish party politics is P. Mair's *The Changing Irish Party System: Organisation, Ideology and Electoral Competition* (London: Frances Pinter, 1987).
9. Haughey, previously Minister for Finance, was charged with but found not guilty of illegally organising the dispatch of arms to Northern Ireland in the Dublin Arms Trial of 1970. Questions surrounding his character and judgement resurfaced again in the nine month caretaker government he led in 1982. Those with an interest in conspiracies and cock-ups will enjoy J. Kelly, *Orders for the Captain: Ireland's Watergate* (Dublin: Kelly, 1986) and J. Joyce and P. Murtagh, *The Boss: Charles J. Haughey in Government* (Swords: Poolbeg Press, 1983).
10. See P. Mair, 'Muffling the Swing: STV and the Irish General Election of 1981', *West European Politics*, Vol. 5, No. 1, (January 1981), pp. 75–90.
11. In a focused choice of four key issues in an IMS/*Sunday Independent* poll conducted on 8 June health (39 per cent) was seen as the most important issue with unemployment second (30 per cent), taxation (18 per cent) and then emigration (9 per cent) – *Sunday Independent*, 11 June 1989.
12. A score of 100 indicates perfect proportionality. A score of > (or <) 100 indicates that a party's share of seats has exceeded (or is less than) its share of first-preference votes. The proportionality index (see Table 2) can also be used a measure of party skill in nomination strategy and vote transfer management.
13. See B. O'Leary, *op. cit.*, especially pp. 461–4.

Luxembourg: The European Parliament and National Elections of June 1989

Michael Smart

In common with Greece and Ireland, Luxembourg held both its national and European Parliament elections on the same day (18 June), continuing its practice since direct elections to the Parliament were first instituted in 1979. Voting is compulsory, and the turnout for the European Parliament elections (87 per cent) was the highest in the European Community after Belgium (93 per cent).

The European Parliament elections were dominated by anxieties over the future location of the Parliamentary Secretariat and pressures to move it to Brussels. There was no division between the main parties in their professed determination to fight Luxembourg's corner within the Community and the results showed no change in the party distribution of the Duchy's six seats. As in 1984, three went to the Christian-Social Party, two to the Socialists and one to the Democratic Party (Liberals). The members were elected for a single national constituency by proportional representation.

TABLE 1
ELECTIONS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, JUNE 1989 (PERCENTAGE BY VOTE)

	1989	1984	1979
Christian-Socials	34.9	35.3	36.1
Socialists	25.5	30.3	21.7
Democrats	20.0	21.2	28.1
Greens	10.4	6.1	1.0
Others	9.2	7.1	13.1

The vote showed a continuing decline in support for the Democratic Party from its peak in 1979, when it won two seats to the Socialists' one. The main movement was a rise in the votes of the Greens and smaller parties at the expense of the Socialists and Democrats.

This movement was also evident in the national elections, which produced the remarkable result of significant losses by all three major parties.

TABLE 2
ELECTIONS TO THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES, JUNE 1989

	1989 seats	1989 % votes	1984 % votes	1979 % votes
Christian-Socials	22	31.7	34.9	34.5
Socialists	18	27.2	33.6	24.3
Democrats (Liberals)	11	16.2	18.7	21.3
Greens	4	8.4	5.2	1.0
Five-Sixths Party	4	7.3	-	-
Communists	1	5.1	5.0	5.8
Others	-	4.2	3.1	13.1