

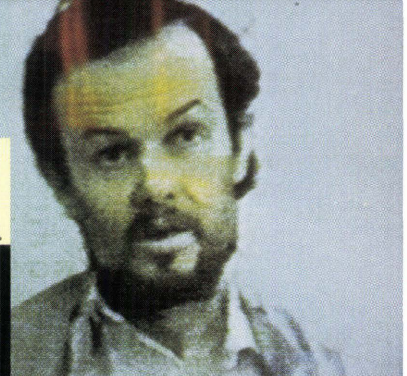
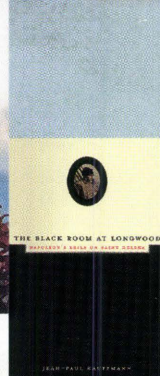
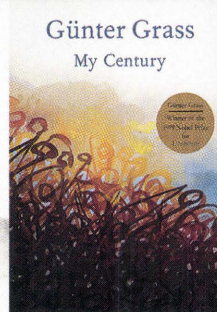
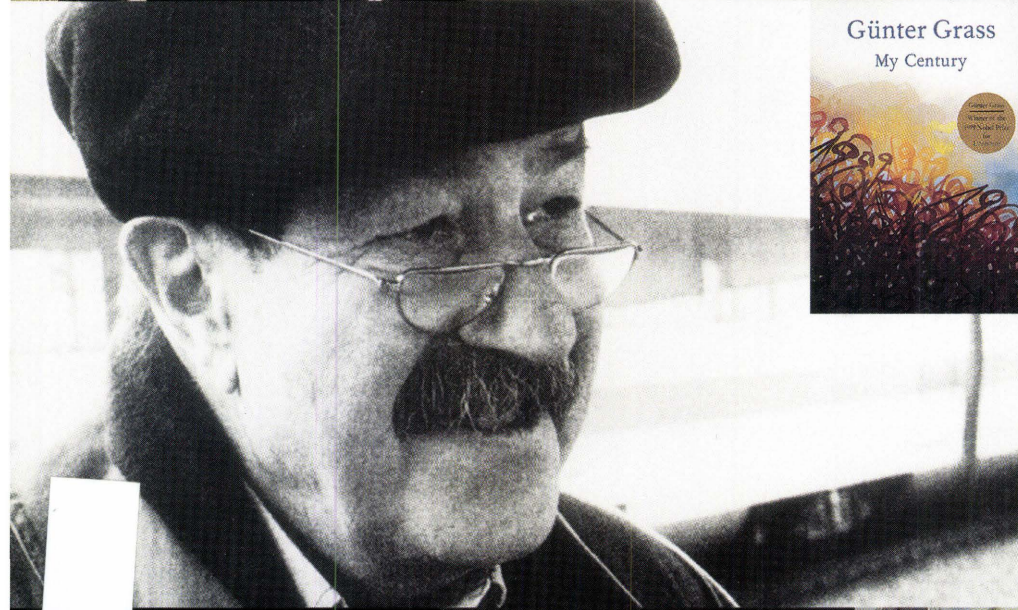
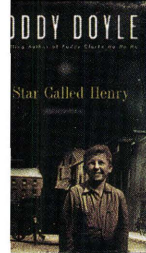
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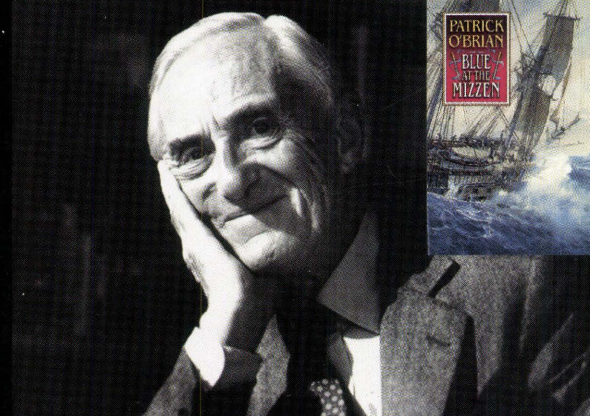
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## EUROPE'S AGENDA

- Reform
- Food Safety
- Web Hackers

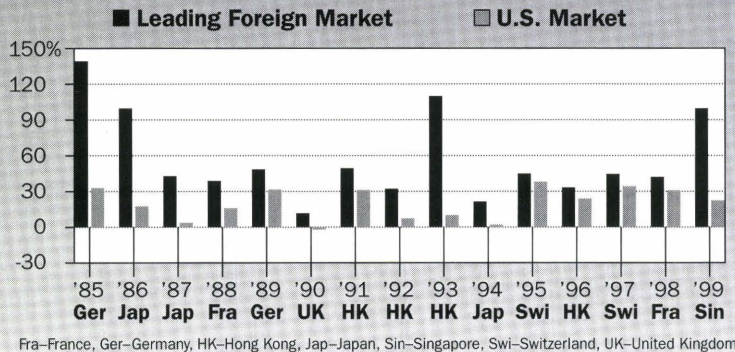
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# EUROPE

MAGAZINE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION



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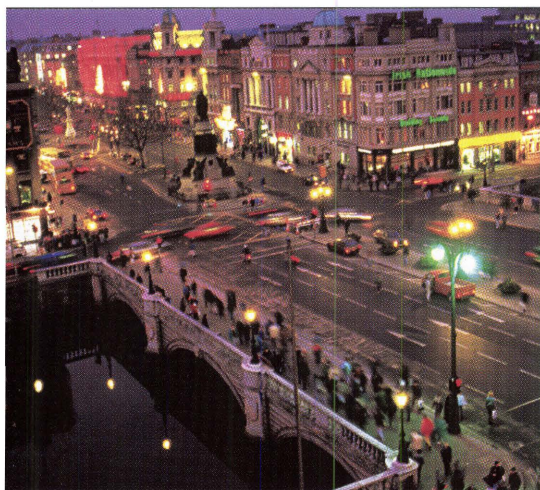
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# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

**T**his month, *EUROPE* explores the European Union's new agenda for the beginning of the twenty-first century and discusses what the Prodi Commission will be pursuing in Brussels over the months to come. According to our contributing editor Lionel Barber, enlargement, institutional reform, a common foreign and security policy (CFSP), and reform of the Commission lead the list of activities on which Prodi and his fellow commissioners will focus.

European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection David Byrne, in an exclusive interview, talks about the "strong feeling of collegiality" that now exists in Brussels. The commissioner speaks out on labeling for genetically modified food; a new independent food authority in Europe; computer hackers; and the Internet. A former attorney general of Ireland, Commissioner Byrne also comments on the peace—now on hold—in Northern Ireland.

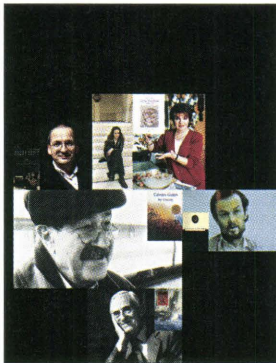
In our *EUROPE Update* section, contributing editor Martin Walker analyzes the upcoming Russian presidential election and its affect on Europe and the world, and Elizabeth Pond interviews Bodo Hambach, the special coordinator for the European Stability Pact, to find out the latest on what is happening in the tumultuous Balkans. In our monthly department "Eye on the EU," Susan Ladika updates our readers on the new government in Austria and its relations with the European Union.

With a fragile peace on hold in Northern Ireland, Dublin correspondent Mike Burns takes us through the steps that led to the historic peace accord and to the recent events that have sadly stopped this groundbreaking achievement.

Burns tells us why the "Celtic Tiger" is roaring ahead with one of the strongest economies in the European Union. He also presents a lively look at Dublin over the last 100 years.

This month, we embark on a tour of the publishing sector. Contributing editor Bruce Barnard examines the European publishing world after the AOL Time Warner announcement. We also review Europe's hottest authors—from last year's Nobel prize winner for literature, Germany's Günter Grass (*My Century*) and France's Jean-Paul Kauffmann (*The Black Room at Longwood*) to Ireland's Roddy Doyle (*A Star Called Henry*) and the UK's Anthony Loyd (*My War Gone By, I Miss It So*), as well as a startling new biography about Patrick O'Brian, author of the Aubrey-Maturin sea novels. The tour continues as our Capitals correspondents profile writers from their respective countries, including Portugal's Nobel Prize winner, Jose Saramago; Belgium novelist Amelie Nothomb, and the UK's kitchen sensation Delia Smith. In addition, Ester Laushway takes us aboard the *Literature Express Europe 2000*, a train that will carry 100 writers from forty European countries on a tour of cities from Lisbon to Berlin via St. Petersburg.

Finally, in our Arts and Leisure department, we review the movie *Angela's Ashes* and a new exhibit of works by the French artist Honoré Daumier.



Clockwise from top left: Roddy Doyle, Amélie Nothomb, Delia Smith, Jean-Paul Kauffmann, Patrick O'Brian, and Günter Grass.

*Robert J. Guttman*  
**Robert J. Guttman**  
 Editor-in-Chief

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<b>INTERN</b>	Terhi Kiviranta
<b>ADVERTISING INFORMATION</b>	Fran Grega tel. (410) 897-0297 fax (410) 897-0298

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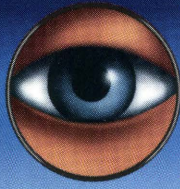
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# EYE ON THE EU



Profiling  
Personalities and  
Developments  
Within the  
European Union

## EU GIVES COLD SHOULDER TO NEW AUSTRIAN GOVERNMENT

**F**ar-right party leader Jörg Haider's heated words against foreigners and European Union expansion and several sympathetic statements on Nazism have earned Austria a cold shoulder from the other fourteen members of the EU since his Freedom Party joined the conservative Austrian People's Party in a coalition governing the country.

In an unprecedented move, the other EU countries have frozen bilateral relations with Austria and are threatening to deny Austrian ambassadors access to ministers in the fourteen member nations and to withhold support for Austrians applying for positions in international organizations.

The uproar has manifested in many different ways. At the first meeting of EU ministers since the Austria's new government was sworn in February 5, Social Minister Elisabeth Sickl, a member of the Freedom Party, was snubbed by her counterparts, and the French and Belgian ministers walked out of the room when she spoke. The traditional photograph also was canceled because of Sickl's presence.

Other countries from as far away as Canada and Costa Rica are joining the fray, reducing their ties with the Austrian government. Israel has withdrawn its ambassador and the United States

temporarily recalled Ambassador Kathryn Walt-Hall for consultations with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

In announcing the EU's moves, Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Guterres, whose country holds the rotating EU presidency, said, "A whole range of values which underpin our civilization are at stake. We will pay maximum attention to the actions of the Austrian government."

British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook also castigated Haider, saying, "The naked appeal to xenophobia on which Mr. Haider has based his platform on which he has sought votes and which he continues to peddle is something that strikes against the basis of the European Union."

During the October election campaign, he focused on foreigners. Campaign posters urged Austrians to "Stop Over-foreignerization," and at party rallies, Haider claimed "every foreigner, even if he's a criminal, received more support from the government than the average pensioner." He also opposed EU enlargement, saying residents of former communist countries would pour into Austria and steal jobs.

Nearly a decade ago, he provoked an uproar by saying the Nazis had a "proper employment policy."

Haider is not part of the new government—instead opting to remain governor of the province of Carinthia. Although he recently resigned as leader of the Freedom Party, many believe he pulls the strings of his party's politicians.

Few actually expected the Freedom Party to wind up in the government. It came in second in October elections, with 27 percent of the vote—much of it from those fed up with the Socialists, who have ruled the country alone or in coalition since the end of World War II.



Several thousand Austrians demonstrated against the swearing in of the new government.

Many are tired of Austria's strict patronage system, which has doled out civil service jobs to Socialist supporters of the country's massive bureaucracy.

Although the Socialists still garnered the most votes, they were unable to revive their thirteen-year coalition with the conservative People's Party. When negotiations failed, the People's Party and the Freedom Party quickly formed a government led by People's Party leader Wolfgang Schüssel.

Fearing the damage the duo would inflict on Austria's image, President Thomas Klestil required the new government to sign a document underscoring its commitment to democracy and human rights. One portion states, "The Federal Government works for an Austria in which

xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and racism have no place. It will take vigorous steps to counter every way of thinking that seeks to denigrate human beings, will actively combat the dissemination of such ideas, and is committed to full respect for the rights and fundamental freedoms of

people of any nationality—irrespective of the reason for their stay in Austria. It acknowledges its special responsibility as regards the respectful treatment of ethnic and religious minorities."

Peter Moser, Austria's ambassador to Washington, said in an interview with CNN that the country has been surprised by the scope of the international outcry. Since the Allies withdrew from the country in 1995, Austria has proved to be "a respected member of the international community. There is no objective reason why we would fall back into the dark ages of the 1930s."

He added that before the country is judged by the rest of the world, "you have to give us a fighting chance, the benefit of the doubt."

—Susan Ladika



## ECB RATE BOOST AIMS TO AID EURO

**F**or the first time since the launch of the euro, the European Central Bank has raised interest rates in a direct response to the weakness of the single currency. The decision to raise the benchmark rate by one quarter of a point to 3.25 percent was taken three days after a meeting of EU finance ministers in Brussels. Wim Duisenberg, ECB president, was present, and he contributed to the discussion about the euro's fall below parity with the dollar.

As any high school student knows, the exchange rate parity between the euro and dollar is meaningless in strictly economic terms. Wilhelm Buiter, the outspoken academic who sits on the Bank of England monetary policy committee, said that the issue was only of interest to "chartists."

On the other hand, the steady decline of the euro against the dollar matters in political and psychological terms. In the run-up to the launch of the single currency in January 1999, many politicians and economists predicted a rock-solid euro that would soon challenge the supremacy of the dollar as a reserve currency on the world stage. The near 20 percent decline of the single currency against the dollar in the interim period has been something of a shock.

The single most interesting development, however, is

the way in which the euro's genteel decline has exposed policy differences among the member states, notably France and Germany. Once upon a time, Germany was the guardian of the strong deutsche mark while France flirted with a weak(ish) franc to export itself out of trouble. Today the roles are reversed: Paris is the foremost champion of a strong euro, while Berlin is more comfortable with a weak(ish) currency.

The big change is that France is far more confident that a strong euro will not damage its economic prospects. In recent years, French growth has been consistently more impressive than Germany's. Now that France has a voice over euro zone-wide monetary policy, it no longer has to toe the line of the once all-powerful Bundesbank, which has effectively been subsumed into the ECB.

By contrast, the Social Democrat-led government in Germany has made it clear that it can live with the euro's low level. It believes that inflationary risks in Germany are minimal, that the weak euro has bolstered German exports outside the EU, and that strong growth still offers the best hope of tackling the chronically high levels of unemployment.

These diverging positions point to the difficulty of coordinating policies among the eleven members of the eurozone and an independent central bank. At the EU finance ministers' meeting in Brussels, France succeeded in encouraging Luxembourg to in-

sist on a strong statement on behalf of the euro that would go beyond the usual formulation that "the euro has strong potential to appreciate." In the end, however, a compromise was struck in which all fifteen governments reaffirmed their faith in structural reforms, such as more flexi-

hand, the evidence of inflation in the euro zone—with the exception of the hot periphery in Ireland and Spain—is fairly sparse.

Several commentators, such as Anatole Kaletsky of the *Times*, have complained that the ECB is in effect setting its sights too low in

**T**he big change is that France is far more confident that a strong euro will not damage its economic prospects.

ble labor markets, in a move to bolster confidence in the euro.

Nevertheless, the financial markets ignored the statement and focused on Duisenberg's own words after the meeting. Duisenberg said that the euro's weakness was a cause for concern because it could boost imported inflationary pressures—a statement that, incidentally, he had said word-for-word to ministers in the closed-door meeting.

Market reaction to the rate hike was mixed. Duisenberg appeared to have switched tack from his previous position of "benign neglect" toward the euro's value against the dollar (and yen), thus suggesting that he was seriously concerned about a wider and uncontrolled slump of the currency. On the other

terms of pursuing a growth-inclined monetary policy. Over the past ten years, the EU has either been in recession or been a partner in low growth. Kaletsky argues that the ECB should be looking for growth of closer to 4 percent, drawing inspiration from the US performance during the Roaring Nineties.

This expectation may be overly ambitious. But by specifically targeting the exchange rate as a source of concern, the ECB is effectively throwing down a challenge: either the member states take the necessary structural reforms that will stimulate investors' confidence and strengthen the currency or the bank will take the necessary steps in terms of tightening monetary policy.

—Lionel Barber



## AUTO INDUSTRY GOES 'E'

Not to be left in the e-dust, auto manufacturers are speeding to leverage Internet technology to improve their businesses and their products. Five of the world's biggest car makers have announced plans to create a joint procurement Internet-based exchange. DaimlerChrysler, Ford, General Motors, and the Renault-Nissan Motors team have invited automotive suppliers to join them in building the e-exchange.



How would it work? Details have yet to be confirmed, but think of something like an eBay for the car industry. For example, when DaimlerChrysler needs, say, 10,000 headlight bulbs, it would post a request for bids on the exchange. Suppliers would respond with their price for the bulbs, and the car maker would choose the best bid.

The companies' expect the exchange to streamline drastically their multibillion-dollar procurement processes. Together the five auto makers annually purchase more than \$250 billion in parts, supplies, and materials. Analysts estimate the project could save the industry tens of billions of dollars and reduce production costs by more than \$1,000 per vehicle. Furthermore, the exchange would itself make money, charging a small commission on each transaction.

Industry insiders say that auto parts and material suppliers lobbied the car makers to form a joint exchange. Previously, Ford and GM had been building rival Web exchanges with software firms Oracle and Commerce One, respectively.

As part of the agreement to build the yet unnamed exchange, the software companies agreed to work together. So far, BMW has not announced whether it would seek to join the group; however, Volkswagen, Europe's largest car builder, declined to participate, saying that it is building its own on-line sourcing network.

Meanwhile, in Scandinavia, mobile phone maker Ericsson has partnered with car maker Volvo and telecom operator Telia to marry mobile telephony with automotive technology. The three announced plans to form WirelessCar ([www.wirelesscar.com](http://www.wirelesscar.com)), which, according to a joint statement, will build "solutions that connect vehicles to a wide variety of mobile e-services, such as roadside and emergency assistance, access to Internet services, vehicle software management, and remote diagnostics."

"So far, advanced mobile e-services have been mere visions," declared Jan Hellaker, the company's new president, "WirelessCar will make them come true."

## SEARS AND CARREFOUR LAUNCH RETAIL E-EXCHANGE

While the auto industry buzzed about Web sourcing, the retail industry made news with its own e-exchange. Sears and Carrefour of France, two of the world's biggest retailers, have joined with software giant Oracle to build a global business-to-business e-exchange for the retail industry. GlobalNetXchange ([www.GlobalNetXchange.com](http://www.GlobalNetXchange.com)) will allow network members to buy, sell, trade, or auction goods and services over the Internet. In addition to cost-savings, the companies say the exchange will allow purchasing professionals to focus on product quality, supplier competitiveness and performance, and time to market.

"This is a revolution in retail," declared Sears chairman and CEO, Arthur C. Martinez. "It will forever redefine supply-chain processes."

Sears and Carrefour, which together

make some \$80 billion in purchases from 50,000 suppliers, say they will begin using the exchange within weeks. The companies say they plan to bring in other retailers as equity partners in the venture. Oracle will hold a minority interest.

## BBC TO SELL STAKE IN INTERNET BUSINESS

The government-controlled British Broadcasting Corporation has announced plans to sell a minority stake in its successful beeb.com ([www.beeb.com](http://www.beeb.com)) Internet service. The move comes as part of a plan to privatize its \$7 billion commercial arm, BBC Worldwide.

Launched in 1997, beeb.com evolved from an entertainment information provider to an e-commerce service. It is organized into eight departments selling everything from cars and

vacations to magazine subscriptions and power tools. It also offers tips and advice on a variety of subjects, such as buying a home and planting an organic lawn, and reviews CDs, books, and movies. In January, it counted 15 million page views, with the majority of visitors clicking to the pages relating to BBC programs and brands.

The site, which also sells advertising, is estimated to be worth some \$2 billion. Currently, the BBC is trying to raise cash to digitize its channels and boost its programming. However, officials say they don't plan to sell stakes in any of the BBC's core services, including the two television channels, BBC1 and 2, Radios 1 to 5, and its Internet news site, [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk).



## EU SUMMIT TO ADDRESS NET ACCESS

EU officials are focusing on boosting Internet access and e-commerce in the fifteen-member union. Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Guterres, whose



nation holds the rotating EU presidency, has said that EU leaders will be looking at ways to reduce local telephone charges at the March 23–24 summit in Lisbon. Analysts point to expensive local telephone charges in the EU as one of the region's main obstacles to building Europe's Internet economy. The United Kingdom has proposed a three-year plan for making Internet access in the EU cheaper and faster than anywhere else.

## VAT TO APPLY TO DOWNLOADED PRODUCTS

The European Commission said it intends to close a loophole allowing non-EU companies to avoid paying value-added tax on the sale of products EU customers can download from the Internet. EU-based merchants face a competitive disadvantage since they must pay the VAT on such products, which include software and music. The Commission insists its proposal, which is due before summer, is not a new tax. The European Parliament and the fifteen member countries must pass the proposal for it to become law.

## COMMISSION PLANS 'DOT EU' DOMAIN

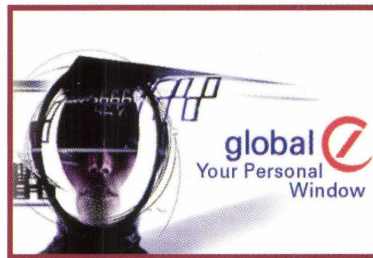
The European Commission plans to create a new Internet domain name, '.eu', which it hopes will raise the European profile on the Internet. Currently, Web addresses for sites from EU member countries end with domain names like .uk (for the United Kingdom) and .de (for Germany) or .com. EU officials hope that more companies and individuals will switch to the .eu bypassing .com as well as the country domain names.

The Commission released a statement saying, "The .eu domain would strengthen the image and the infrastructure of the Internet in Europe, and allow the identification of companies and institutions as European." EU institutions, including the Commission and the European Parliament, would also adopt the new domain.

## BUSINESS BYTES

The European Commission announced that it was launching an antitrust probe into software giant Micro-

soft ([www.microsoft.com](http://www.microsoft.com)), specifically surrounding its new Windows 2000 operating system. Microsoft officials responded that the Commission's concerns were caused by misconceptions about the new product... Meanwhile Microsoft and Software AG of Germany ([www.softwareag.com](http://www.softwareag.com)) announced a partnership to create a software "bridge" between different computer platforms. Computers running Microsoft's Windows operating system would use the bridge to run applications from mainframe computers... Finnish mobile phone maker Nokia ([www.nokia.com](http://www.nokia.com)) and Internet service provider America Online ([www.aol.com](http://www.aol.com)) announced plans to offer a version of AOL's Instant Messenger service on Nokia phones. The Instant Messenger software alerts AOL users when their friends are on-line as well as affords access to the Web. Nokia plans to deliver the first phones



using the software in the second half of this year... Meanwhile, Deutsche Bank, Germany's biggest bank ([www.deutschebank.com](http://www.deutschebank.com)), has enlisted AOL and German software firm SAP ([www.sap.com](http://www.sap.com)) to help it create on-line trading and financial services that will put it at the heart of Europe's emerging e-economy. The deal would allow Deutsche to tap into two customer-rich on-line environments. AOL is connected to nearly 4 million users in Europe, and SAP provides back-office software solutions for major companies... This month's public offering of Siemens' semiconductor subsidiary, Infineon Technologies ([www.infineon.com](http://www.infineon.com)), is expected to be the biggest in Germany since Deutsche Telecom went public in 1996. The company expects the sale to reap as much as \$6 billion. US chipmaker Intel owns a minority share of the business.

—Peter Gwin

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# Romano's Reformation

By Lionel Barber

**President Romano Prodi faces perhaps the biggest challenge of his career in reforming the European Commission.**

Six months after he took over as president of the European Commission, Romano Prodi is discovering how hard it is to live up to his high expectations. Prodi, a former Italian prime minister who established his reputation as the man who led his country into the single currency, has found it harder to adjust to life in Brussels. A man of grand visions and flowing rhetoric, he is less obviously comfortable with the role of the Commission in the subtle, but often slow-moving, decision-making process in the European Union.

Prodi has had a habit of launching high-profile initiatives without ensuring the full backing of the fifteen EU member states. First, he called for a firm date for the most advanced EU candidate countries to join the Union. Then he set up a three-strong group of "wise men" to produce a report for this year's constitutional conference (IGC) on the reform of the EU's institutions ahead of enlargement. In each instance, Prodi had to retreat, lessening his political authority in the eyes of member states.

None of these early setbacks is fatal. Jacques Delors, widely regarded as the most effective Commission president of the postwar era, also found it hard to find his feet in Brussels. His first initiative calling for closer cooperation on defense inside the EU was shot down

by the member states. But he quickly recovered and produced another new "Big Idea"—the plan to complete single European market by 1992.

Riccardo Perrisich, a former Delors adviser at the Commission who now works for Pirelli, the Italian tire manufacturer, says that Prodi could learn from his predecessor. The most important lesson is to build a power base in the European Council, the regular forum for EU heads of government. "Delors understood that the real power was in the Council and worked closely with (former German chancellor) Kohl and (former French president) Mitterrand," says Perrisich. "Prodi will be tempted to seek political legitimacy through the European Parliament, but that would be a mistake."

There are four areas where the Prodi Commission is likely to be tested during its five-year term. All will depend on the leadership qualities of the president, whose role is a combination of powerbroker, administrator, and umpire in disputes between the member states.

## Enlargement

At the December 1999 EU summit in Helsinki, government leaders agreed to add a further six countries to the six-strong list of accession candidates, plus Turkey. This agreement raises the medium-term prospect of a Union comprising twenty-eight countries, a daunting challenge in terms of organization.

In the past, the EU has tended to


promise more than it could deliver on membership for the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Prodi's challenge is to show how the EU can absorb the newcomers without undermining the Union's own capacity to act and take decisions; and to take further steps to reforming the EU's own internal policies—notably the Common Agricultural Policy—to make the Union ready for enlargement.

## Institutional Reform

The wise men's group led by Jean-Luc Dehaene, the former Belgian prime minister, produced a blueprint for the reform of EU institutions and decision-making that was far more ambitious than most EU governments wanted. But few doubt that a root-and-branch approach is needed to allow the Union to cope with the bigger and faster-than-expected enlargement eastward and southward, which now appears to be contemplated. Inevitably, this change will mean countries sacrificing their right to their own EU commissioner, more majority voting, and a weakening of national veto rights.

## The EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy

Prodi wants the EU to take a lead in restoring stability to the Balkans in the wake of the conflict in Kosovo. So far, however, NATO and the UN are the primary actors in Kosovo and neighboring Bosnia in terms of peacekeeping and the provision of aid. Prodi has yet to



Last fall, European Commission President Romano Prodi rode his bike to work in Brussels to promote the idea of car-free European cities.

sketch out an EU-style 'Partnership for Peace' for the Balkans.

Meanwhile, the UK and French governments have set the pace in terms of building on the old Delors defense initiative. The Helsinki summit set clear goals for assessing defense capability in the member states and held out the prospect of a 60,000-strong rapid reaction force that could act under the direction of the EU, albeit after consultation with the Americans in NATO. The Commission is not directly involved in this area, but Prodi could play a useful supportive role in his relationship with Javier Solana, the EU's CSFP representative. The Commission's role in the promised new multilateral trade round will also be a priority for the next five years.

### Reform of the Commission

Neil Kinnock, vice president of the Commission, has just produced an eighty-point package of reforms aimed at improving the efficiency of the Brussels bureaucracy, which has changed little since it was founded in the late 1950s on the French public service model. The package was triggered by the forced resignation of the previous Commission led by Jacques Santer, which was accused of cronyism and petty fraud. Although these accusations were widely considered to be exaggerated, Prodi faces a formidable task in restoring morale, breaking down fiefdoms, and ensuring that the top jobs inside the Commission are awarded according to merit rather than nationality.

Santer, who suffered more criticism than was often justified, faced three challenges during his own five-year term—to help prepare the technical and political ground for monetary union; to lay out the policy reforms for enlargement; and to deal with the unfinished business of the 1992 Maastricht Treaty in an IGC.

In the end, the Luxembourgger made a useful contribution to all three, chiefly because he understood when to fight and when to bow to the member states. Prodi will need to draw upon all of his own political skills to pull off a similar feat over the rest of his term. ☹

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*Lionel Barber, based in London, is a EUROPE contributing editor and the news editor of the Financial Times.*

# David Byrne

## European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection

**EUROPE  
INTERVIEW**

*David Byrne, European commissioner for health and consumer protection, spoke with EUROPE editor-in-chief Robert J. Guttman in Washington, DC last month about a wide range of issues including food safety, web hackers, and labeling. Byrne, an Irishman, also discusses the peace process in Northern Ireland.*

### **What is the Transatlantic Consumer Dialogue or TACD?**

TACD is an international organization that's made up of some sixty consumer organizations operating in Europe and the United States. They felt it desirable to pool their resources and develop policies on various issues of interest to the consumers—including consumer protection and the enhancement of consumer rights—with a view to putting their views before policymakers both in the United States and in the European Union.

They have been successful in doing that. This year, they are having their third meeting. It was established as a counterbalance to the Transatlantic



Business Dialogue, and they have good access, of course, to policymakers on both sides of the Atlantic. Yesterday, I addressed them and so did Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman. They get good access.

### **Do you see any differences between the American and European consumers and what they want to see when they are buying products or do you think consumers are alike everywhere?**

They are alike everywhere. They have the same concerns. In some areas, I suppose, there may be greater expertise than in other areas. Some consumer groups concentrate on some aspects and, therefore, acquire an expertise in their own specialized areas. But generally, you'll find that the concerns of consumers on both sides of the Atlantic are probably pretty well much the same.

### **What is the EU position on labeling? Should all products be labeled for better food safety for the consumer?**

The question of labeling is in relation to meat and meat products. It is something that's being dealt with in the Commission at the moment. The labeling of beef is an issue that's going through the Council of Ministers at the moment. There's a draft directive dealing with the issue, and it will go through the usual legislative process. The [European] Parliament's involved. And the hope is that we will bring that to fruition some time by September 2000.

### **Do you think Europeans have a different view on labeling than Americans?**

That's probably correct, particularly in areas such as GMO (genetically modified organism) foods. In the United States, the belief is that the law requires the labeling of goods and of food for two reasons. One, to inform the consumer of the ingredients, nutrients, and so on contained in the food. And secondly, to inform the consumer of any ingredients in the food that might be likely to cause an allergic response in a consumer who may be susceptible to that. Now, they do not have a requirement to label food for consumer information purposes to facilitate consumer choice.

We in the European Union have a different view on that. We believe, in



circumstances such as the GMO foods, that it is appropriate to have a labeling system. This is not for any reason other than to inform the consumer and enable the consumer to come to a conclusion whether he or she wants to consume that product or not.

There is no question of any warning

address the scientific issues involved in it. We also know that many consumers have ethical considerations in relation to the consumption of GMO foods. The manufacturers never considered all of these issues, and that has considerably heightened the consumer anxiety in the EU in relation to these foods.

**Does this have anything to do with the mad cow beef scare in the UK a couple years ago?**

I do believe it has. The consumers in Europe are very sensitized to the whole question of food safety, probably because of the existence of these food scares, BSE in beef, dioxin in poultry, and other scares that have taken place, but those two principally.

The issue of food safety is now firmly on the political agenda. It's firmly on the agenda of consumers, and they want rigorous analysis of this. They want to know what they are consuming, and they will not be fobbed off. Now, the same level of scrutiny doesn't appear to be required by the US consumer, but having said that, I am aware that there are manifestations of increasing concern in the United States also. There's no scientific evidence available that indicates that GMO foods are dangerous or unsafe. But of course, you are probably aware that there are those who have concerns about it. It's a new technology. They are deeply concerned about it. They feel that they haven't been told enough about it, and they want to know more. Until they do know more, they are not going to consume this new product.

Equally, there are those who have major concerns in relation to the ethics of genetically modified foods. Now they are not expressing concern in relation to the safety issue. It is a different issue they're addressing. But, these concerns have been expressed. They have to be addressed.

**There has been a proposal to set up an independent food authority in Europe. Would that be patterned after the FDA in the US?**

Not really. Some aspects of it are the same, but some aspects of it are quite different. What's the same is that we feel that the Food and Drug Administration here in the United States is a visible manifestation of the regulation for safe food. It is probably the best known

institution in the world engaged in the process of providing food safety. We want to have the same thing in the European Union in the sense that we would also like to have one voice in relation to statements relating to food safety.

But having said that, the structures that we have in mind will be somewhat different. For instance, the FDA is not an independent institution. It is part of the US administration, whereas the food authority that we establish will be a separate legal entity and will have a separate legal personality. It will be governed by a board, and the board will be mandated to consult with independent scientists in private practice in the European Union, or indeed elsewhere, when considering any particular issue that requires examination.

Having done that, they will then formulate their opinion and publish it on the Internet. In the event that the Food Authority advises some form of legislative response, then that will be passed on to those of us who are involved on that side. That is the risk management end of risk analysis. We then will have to deal with that situation in that way, and if there is a requirement for a legislative response, one would expect 99 times out of 100 that that's what we'll do. In the event that we decide to take a different route, that would have to be fully justified publicly and openly with full transparency.

And of course there will be full interaction between the scientists and the regulators in relation to all of this so that each knows exactly what it is that is required to be done. The scientists and the Food Authority will both be engaged in risk assessment and risk communication, and the regulators will be involved in risk management.

**Is this something that is going to happen fairly soon?**

We're in the consultation phase at the moment. We've published a paper and asked for comments to be made, hopefully by the end of April, from all interested parties. When that's done, we will then formulate our proposals for presentation to the Commission in September. Assuming that that gets over that hurdle, we then set about drafting the necessary legislation to establish the Food Authority.

As you know, legislation going

being included in any label which would be identified with GMO food, because there is no science that states that GMO foods are unsafe. So, you certainly couldn't label to that effect. That is not the purpose of labeling GMO foods. The purpose, as I say, is to inform consumers that a particular product is a GMO food or not.

**Why is genetically modified food a threat to anyone's health and why do Europeans seem to be more concerned than Americans?**

There's a bit of a history attached to this. I believe that the European consumers are probably more resistant to GMO foods than the American consumer. The resistance in the European Union is due to the fact that the manufacturers of these products, the processors who put these products on the marketplace failed to take into account the consumers' considerations in all of this. They failed to prepare consumers for the production of these products; failed to give adequate information and education in relation to it; and failed to

through the European Union's legal structures or political structures takes time, and I don't expect the legislation to be in place finally and passed until sometime toward the end of the year 2001. But I am encouraged by the fact that European Parliament President [Nicole] Fontaine has said that she believes the time scale that we set out in the white paper was too long. She would like to see a shorter time scale, and I welcome that. I infer from that that both she and the Parliament will do everything possible to speed up their processes so that they will hopefully be able to move as quickly as we can. In the event that they can, we may have a shorter time scale.

#### **Will the Food Authority supercede the individual nations' authority?**

I don't see it as superceding. I see it as that they would act in a complementary manner with the food safety agencies in member states. There are at the moment five food safety agencies in existence. I participated in the establishment of one of them in Ireland when I was attorney general. There are three member states in the process of establishing their own, and there probably will be more coming along. The moral authority and the scientific authority of the food agency at European level will be enhanced, not by the fact of its existence, because it won't rule by dictate... It will have to gain its own confidence from the consumers over a period of time. That's best done by full consultation process.

So that I expect there to be an interaction between the Food Authority and the food safety agencies in member states similar to the way the EMEA, the organization that deals with drugs, interacts with scientists and with member states. As a result, there is a real feeling that there is a full consultative process involved and you get the very best scientific advice in any particular subject.

#### **What is the status of the beef hormone dispute with the US?**

There're two aspects to this. First, I have to say that there is in place a ban on importation of beef containing hormones. That's not a discriminatory reaction on the part of the European Union. It is also prohibited to administer growth-promoting hormones to ani-

mals in the European Union as well. So, there's an even application of the law in relation to that.

However, we have entered into agreements with the United States for the importation of hormone-free and residue-free meat from the United States into the European Union so long as the EU is satisfied that there are sufficiently high-quality, scientific testing procedures in place to ensure that the meat exported to the EU is in fact hormone and residue-free. We have had a little bit of a problem about that in the last couple of years, and we have been working hard, particularly in the last couple of months, to make sure that the testing procedures that the US uses are up to the standards that we require.

We have had some difficulty about that. I discussed these issues with Secretary Glickman yesterday, and I'm satisfied that from the assurances that have been given by the US Department of Agriculture that these outstanding issues will be dealt with within the next couple of weeks.

#### **Web hackers have been shutting down major US Web sites this week. How is the EU working on protecting the consumer on the Internet? Are you working with the US on a global solution?**

Yes, we had a very good meeting yesterday with the Federal Trade Commission's Chairman Robert Pitofsky and Commissioner Mozelle Thompson. This is something that I have been working on in the European Commission—establishing procedures for on-line contracting so as to ensure that consumers are protected and they get what they contract for. If they don't, there must be an effective, cheap, and speedy dispute resolution mechanism put in place to ensure that they get redress.

The first priority is to put in place preventive measures to avoid the dispute happening in the first place. Secondly, in the event that a dispute does occur, our ambition is to try and establish—with the cooperation and association of the US and hopefully Canada, Australia, and other countries—a dispute resolution mechanism that would have a global response because, of course, contracting on the Internet is a global activity. So, there's no point in us just having mechanisms to resolve disputes that exist only in the European Union. We need to do that for the

Union obviously but also for EU-US contracts and contracts that are undertaken elsewhere in other parts of the world. It's a big ambition. It's a big undertaking, but it can be done, and it can be done online.

For instance, I understand that the Canadians already have what they describe as a cyber tribunal. I am very interested in this development and would like to see that perhaps we may all put in place systems that consumers and producers will be confident in and ensure that they will get redress in the event that a dispute arises.

#### **Will this be a new authority?**

There will need to be some structures put in place. I would like to see this done, once again, in the simplest possible way and the most effective way. I don't see the need for us to establish large institutions and structures to achieve this end.

## **"The issue of food**

#### **Will this be like a Web police? Will it have a name?**

In the European Union, we have coined the phrase, or the name, the EEJnet, which is the European Extra Judicial Network. I was interested in calling it that because it has a resonance with the EECJ in Luxembourg, which is of course quite a different institution, but I wanted to focus on having a name that would stick in people's minds.

This will be a network of clearing houses in each member state where a consumer can go and say, "Look, I bought a television in another member state, and it doesn't work, and I didn't get what I contracted for, and I want to resolve my dispute." And that clearing house then would get in contact with the clearing house in the member state where the TV was purchased and the procedures will then be put in place to arbitrate that issue.

#### **Do you think the people in Ireland like the rest of the people around Europe are happy with the euro?**

Yes. I don't think there is any difficulty about that in Ireland. Since we joined the European Union on January 1, 1973—or the Common Market as it was then called—there has been widespread support for Ireland's mem-

bership. I think that continues to be the case. I don't believe that there is any concern about the establishment of the euro. People in Ireland will welcome the euro when it comes into circulation.

**The Celtic tiger is still roaring. What are the reasons for this boom in Ireland and what role has the EU played in this economic boom?**

Membership of the European Union has been a hugely important feature in the economic development in Ireland in recent years for a number of reasons. First, it has benefited from the transfer of resources in the EU to Ireland, which is what the EU is designed to do in circumstances where you have a member state that doesn't yet have the level of economic development of the other member states. That has worked well for Ireland. I know that many people in the EU are pleased to point to Ireland as being the success story of the

and quite a large population of young well-educated people who appear to be particularly suited to the software industry. That appears to be a well recognized issue. I've spoken to a number of computer software manufacturers and they've indicated that to me. Also, the fact that Ireland would be a gateway into the EU for US investors is another advantage. Also, the tax regime in Ireland is attractive for investment, and successive Irish governments have been known to be business friendly.

I also believe that there may be investment into Ireland for reasons possibly associated with the Northern Ireland issue. Investment into Ireland and into Northern Ireland by many people could well have been motivated by a desire to see that issue resolved.

**What do you think about EU enlargement? Is Ireland against that because it might cut back on some aid from the EU or do**

that we reach a success and that what we've seen today is merely another bump in the road and that this issue will be resolved, hopefully in the very near future. Because the price is too high and too many people have worked too hard for this to allow it to fail. It is the right solution, and I sincerely hope that it will get back on track.

**How does the Prodi Commission differ from the Santer Commission? What are we going to see new?**

I wasn't in the Santer Commission so I am not in a position to comment, but what I can say about the Prodi Commission is that the strong feeling of collegiality that exists there is very valuable. I appreciate it enormously. I have excellent relations with my colleagues. I see that my colleagues have excellent relations with one another. We work together in a very cooperative manner. I have succeeded in bringing issues to

## safety is now firmly on the political agenda."

European Union and its policies.

But now, of course, the transfer of the funds issue is falling off, and by the year 2006, Ireland will probably be a net contributor to the European Union. The EU provides a market of 370 million people. That's of huge advantage to Ireland. Ireland is a huge exporter of beef. Ninety percent of the beef output from Ireland has to be exported. In general, Ireland is a very big exporter of food and a very big exporter of software. In fact, Ireland is the second-largest exporter of computer software in the world, second only to the United States.

The success though is not only because of membership of the European Union. There has been considerable investment from the United States into the EU. One in four dollars invested into the EU comes to Ireland. To put that in context, the Irish population is 1 percent of the total population of the European Union. That's there for many reasons. There're obviously historic ties. There are 40 million Irish-Americans living in the United States. They have become very successful. They're at the top of the tree in large businesses and are in a position to make these kinds of investment decisions. Ireland also has a very good education system

**most Irish people support it?**

As I said to you, the whole issue of transfer of funds from the European Union to Ireland is now becoming of much lesser importance than it was. As I indicated, I believe that Ireland will be a net contributor to the EU in the year 2006. So, I don't see that in Ireland there is any apprehension that Ireland would be competing with the candidate countries, or new countries coming into the EU, for resources of that type because Ireland will soon not be getting any of these resources. I believe that Ireland adopts a positive approach to this.

**What's your feeling about what's going to happen in Northern Ireland? Is peace going to prevail?**

I was involved in that during my time as attorney general in Ireland from June 1997 until July 1999. I was part of the Taoiseach's (Irish prime minister) negotiating team in Belfast for the negotiation of the Good Friday Agreement, which I believe is an excellent agreement. I've seen the news today that the Assembly may well be suspended, and of course, I am very disappointed about that. I sincerely hope that good sense prevails. All the parties have worked extremely hard in this issue over a long period of time. I would fervently hope

the Commission on tobacco, on phthalates, on a number of other issues, the Precautionary Principle, in conjunction with other colleagues, and they have done the same with me. And it has been remarked upon by those who have been in the Commission for a long time that this Commission, in the short term that it has been there, has shown the signs of a capacity to work closer together in a cooperative spirit; and indeed, some of the issues that I have brought to the table and succeeded in getting through the Commission had failed to get through in the last Commission. So, I think that's a mark of the good, sound, rational, constructive, friendly approach that exists in the Prodi Commission.

To a large extent, I think that's inspired by President Prodi himself. That is the kind of personality that the man has. He has a clear vision of what he wants to do and where he wants to lead this Commission. I believe him to be a good leader. He is a very warm personality. He is a very friendly man. He consulted his colleagues in the Commission. All of this leads to an inclusive feeling that we're all part of the team and all seeking to succeed and wishing to see others succeed as well. It's an excellent environment in which to work. ☺

# Irish Peace on Hold

By Mike Burns

**“Unfortunately, though there was real progress on the part of the IRA, there was not enough to justify withholding suspension.... I very much regret this course of action, but it would have been more damaging to do nothing.”**

—Peter Mandelson, secretary of state for Northern Ireland Friday, February 11, 2000

**“Had republicans discharged their obligations under the [Good Friday] Agreement, we would not have this problem now. Sooner or later, they are going to have to.”**

—David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionist Party and first minister in the nine-week Northern Ireland Executive

**“The only ones who will benefit from suspending the institutions are the rejectionists. David Trimble’s leadership is not going to be enhanced.”**

—Gerry Adams, president of Sinn Fein, political wing of the Irish Republican Army

It lasted seventy-two days, the first hopeful signs for a power-sharing government and a lasting peace in Northern Ireland. For the first time, Irish republicans—opposed to continuing British rule—had taken ministerial office alongside unionists—committed to maintaining traditional links with the United Kingdom—who had at last recognized the need for détente with nationalism and the neighboring Irish Republic.

Bitter political and personal divisions were set aside. An historic accom-

modation had been reached between both traditions, reflecting a disavowal of violence and a commitment to exclusively political and democratic methods. As the *Irish Times* editorialized on December 2: We are witnessing the birth of a new Ireland.

Then, shortly before 6 pm on Friday, February 11, Peter Mandelson, the UK’s Northern Ireland secretary, announced he was suspending the fledgling administration and its institutions and re-imposing direct rule from London.



Ulster Unionist Party leader David Trimble (left) and Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams (right).





Children play under a "no decommissioning" republican mural in west Belfast in January.

The brave new world of peace and understanding, born with the signing of the historic peace agreement of Good Friday 1998 and the first experiment in shared government since 1974, was in limbo.

Mandelson claimed the suspension was necessary because the Irish Republican Army [IRA] had failed to indicate when it would decommission its arms and explosives as provided for in the Good Friday Agreement, brokered by former US senator George Mitchell.

Independent observers said Mandelson's action was prompted more by efforts to shore up the position of David Trimble, first minister in the fledgling government and leader of the Ulster Unionists. Trimble had promised his party in November that he would resign unless the IRA started decommissioning by early February. Trimble was convinced he had an understanding along these lines following a review by Senator Mitchell.

British government officials said Trimble's departure could have led to the election of a more hard-line leader opposed to the Good Friday Agreement—and the possibility of putting back the peace process by several years.

Sinn Fein, the IRA's political wing, said the agreement had set a deadline of May 22 to "hand over or render useless its weapons" and the IRA was fulfilling its obligations. Its leader, Gerry Adams, pointed out that the IRA's appointed interlocutor had again been in discussions with the decommissioning body headed by the Canadian General John de Chastelain only hours before the suspension.

This was confirmed in a second report by the commission, which outlined the outcome of these talks, said "valuable progress" had been made, but

failed to mention any commitment by the IRA to start the decommissioning process.

The inevitable spate of bitter recrimination and condemnation followed. Even the usually mild-mannered Irish Republic's Taoiseach [prime minister] Bertie Ahern admitted to parliament in Dublin that he had expressed his frustration in telephone exchanges with British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

There were also unconfirmed claims of a serious rift developing between Blair and Mandelson over the way the suspension was handled, although British officials said there was no basis for these claims.

Three days after his announcement, Mandelson told a forum of British and Irish politicians in London that he hoped the suspension would be short. That evening in Belfast, he went into urgent talks with Brian Cowen, the Republic's new foreign minister.

Two days later in London, Ahern held crisis talks with Blair. Both leaders then met the three main Northern Ireland political parties involved [Ulster Unionists, Sinn Fein, and the Social Democratic and Labor Party—SDLP] with a view to reaffirming the principles of the Good Friday Agreement and finding a way of taking the political process forward.

In the interim, the IRA announced it was "withdrawing" from the decommissioning talks and withdrawing its proposals put to de Chastelain, almost certainly ensuring there will be no "quick fix" to the problem.

However, and perhaps significantly, there was no mention in the IRA statement that it would immediately resume its campaign of violence which, over the past three decades, claimed more than 3,600 lives, maimed and injured

thousands more, and led to massive destruction of property in Ireland and the United Kingdom. In economic terms, it had also stifled the economic potential of Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic.

Now the future remains unclear. Sporadic acts of violence by dissidents—"spectaculars" in paramilitary jargon—cannot be ruled out. However, apart from its angry withdrawal statement, the IRA has been insistent that it represents no threat to the peace process. A resumption of hostilities is on hold while its political leaders continue talking.

Furthermore, there is also a belief that Mandelson—unsung hero or careless villain of the peace process depending on your point of view—could offer them a new sweetener by withdrawing some of the 14,319 British soldiers stationed in Northern Ireland and continuing reforms of the police force, the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

So far, then, a threatened split in the IRA seems to have been avoided and the position of Gerry Adams as leader of Sinn Fein appears secure—for the moment at least. David Trimble's leadership is no longer under threat. The mainly Roman Catholic, moderate SDLP, led by Nobel peace laureate John Hume, says it urgently favors getting the whole process back on the rails and the resumption of shared government.

President Bill Clinton—who played a vital role in shaping the first peace blueprint and in helping the Irish politicians weather their earlier difficulties—will again be called on to use his good offices in restoring the equilibrium.

The danger is that niggling arguments may delay that momentum. New levels of commitment and negotiating skills are urgently required. If they are not forthcoming, the prospects are bleak and, although the majority of Irish people would regard such a development with horror, there could be a return to the violence of the still-recent past.

However, as with most things in Ireland, matters may be desperate but not without hope.

In another context and another age, the Irish lyric poet William Butler Yeats wrote in his *Lake Isle of Inisfree* of the place "where peace comes dripping slow."

Ireland 2000, as in its violent past, is like that. ☹

# Beyond 2000: A Celtic Vision

By Mike Burns

For centuries, the island looked to the past and rarely to the future. Take one of the main points from this outline of its physical features. Ireland was separated from the European mainland in the period following the last Ice Age. That physical separation, apart from a golden period when Irish monks traveled as educators throughout Europe and further afield, led to an isolationism pockmarked by Viking and Norman invasions and, subsequently, eight centuries of troubled rule by the neighboring British.

That rule came to an end in December 1921, with the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and the creation of the Irish Free State of twenty-six counties (since 1948 the Irish Republic) and the

six Ulster counties being granted their own parliament in Belfast while remaining part of the United Kingdom.

Revolution, war, strife, famine, a bitter civil war, unemployment, and massive forced emigration were unfortunate byproducts of that checkered history. Now it's all changed.

From an economy traditionally based on agriculture, with the island population living largely in rural areas, Ireland is now a thriving example of a modern, forward-looking economy within the European Union, and its capital, Dublin, is one of the most cosmopolitan and rapidly growing cities in Europe.

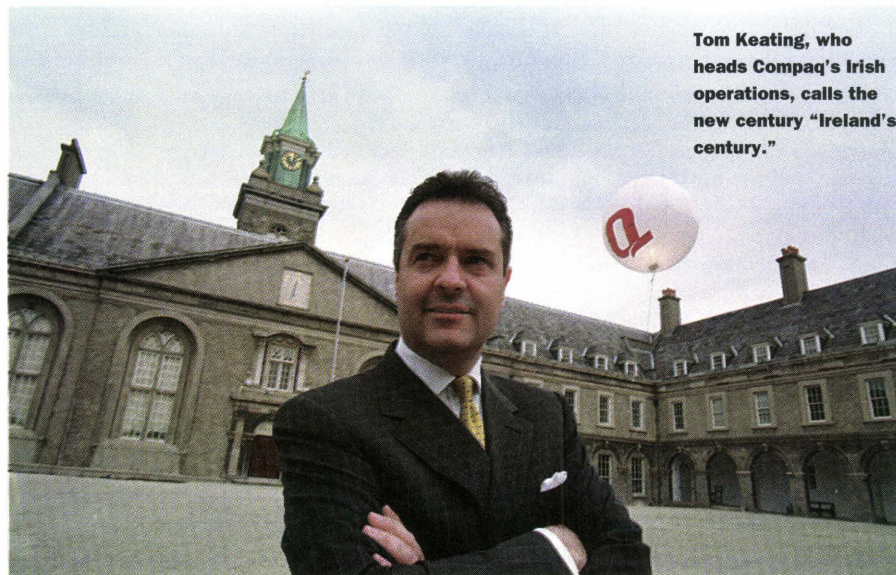
"Celtic Tiger" is a rather overworked description, but it does reflect the tremendous strides that have been made in taking the country from an almost Third World rating to an Ireland

with one of the fastest growing export-led economies in the world. How did it happen? What does the new millennium hold?

The answers probably lie in a number of areas: a clear and determined emphasis on education, particularly higher education; a large, vibrant young work force; a series of planned 'social partnership' developments involving government, employers, and the trade unions; getting public finances and the government's policy framework right after a series of hit-and-miss earlier attempts; and, last but certainly not least, membership in the European Union since 1973.

Take education first. For generations, the need to educate has been uppermost in the minds of Irish parents, themselves frequently economically deprived but prepared to put up with personal hardship to attain 'better things' for their offspring. That education hunger was satisfied, firstly through the church-developed but state-supported first and second levels, then through a government-sponsored free-education-for-all scheme leading on to university. That came to fruition in the late 1980s and early 1990s with convergence in the quality of bright, articulate youngsters emerging from the educational system—more than half the population is younger than twenty-five—at a time when the type of skills they possessed were in huge demand.

John Travers, chief executive of Forfás, the state policy and advisory board for promoting industry, science, and technology, says Ireland was lucky in identifying some twenty years ago that



**Tom Keating, who heads Compaq's Irish operations, calls the new century "Ireland's century."**

Construction cranes dotting the Dublin skyline symbolize the dynamic growth of the new Celtic economy.



information technology and pharmaceuticals would be major growth areas.

"First of all, we developed a kind of intelligence system about the way the IT sector was developing," he says. "We targeted many of the companies which have since located in Ireland, among them Intel, Microsoft, Hewlett Packard, Compaq, and Nortel."

His board chairman, Tom Toner, himself a successful businessman and guiding light behind the country's main ferry company, says this networking was vital—plus an Irish aptitude for charm and late-night socializing with businesspeople well-versed in presentation ploys at their company but not always susceptible to personal follow-up contact and hospitality.

Ireland now has one of the biggest pharmaceutical industries in Europe and a thriving agri-food industry. All of this coincided with a well-run national economy, a low corporate tax rate (converging on 12.5 percent), a rapid-response pact—Partnership 2000—which saw trade unions, employers, and the government agreeing on modest wage increases in return for almost \$2.5 billion in income tax cuts. This pact allowed the employers and trade unions to sort out their gripes before they could bring about any lasting damage.

However, it was European Union membership that gave Ireland its greatest impetus, not just in terms of the huge financial aid it received, but also in a psychological sense, in giving its young people new horizons and a brimming new confidence.

The Western European "island beyond the island," which for so long had lived in the shadow of Britain, its nearest neighbor, was given a new day in the sun.

President Mary McAleese says Ireland "should exploit every synergy" in order to win business.



It is estimated that more than 40 percent of all Irish graduates spend at least one year abroad—but unlike past emigrants, almost all return to take up jobs at home. More than 10,000 have set up their own companies doing research and development and building a range of software businesses in the IT and other sectors.

In arts, culture, tourism, music, sport, filmmaking, the Irish are having a field day—from Riverdance to U2, the Cranberries, the Corrs, and Boyzone, to writers like Maeve Binchy and Roddy Doyle, to athletes Sonia O'Sullivan and Catherine McKiernan. Even the traditional Irish bar has become an export, with almost 1,500 Irish-style pubs opening worldwide in the last ten years.

So, what does the new millennium hold? Compaq, the world's second-largest global supplier of personal computers, employs more than 2,200 people at its three plants in Ireland. The company's Irish boss, Tom Keating, is in no doubt about what the future holds. "The twenty-first century will be Ireland's century. One of Ireland's biggest problems has always been where it is situated, on the outermost region of Western Europe and an island to boot. It has never lacked talent...its biggest export

has been people. It has no excuse today when it comes to competing on the world stage, and one of the main reasons for this is new technology.” Keating says Ireland, with its IT knowledge, can compete across the world. Being an island is no longer an excuse.

Ireland’s second female president, Mary McAleese, agrees. She says the potential for the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland is “limited only by the flair and imagination of those involved.” Furthermore, she urges, “We should exploit every synergy that can build our capacity to win business competitively in overseas markets.”

Tom Toner says unemployment should shortly be “in or around 5 percent” with sufficient numbers of young people entering the work force until 2003. After that, there could be problems unless immigration can satisfy the demand. (At present, an estimated 1,200 people per month from other EU countries are finding work in Ireland.)

John Travers believes complacency could become another factor, alongside a skills shortage not just in the high-tech sectors but also in clerical, skilled, semi-skilled, and even unskilled areas.

In addition, new wealth plus historically low mortgage rates and ever-increasing demands for homes have led to a tremendous increase in property prices. However, both Travers and Toner believe fears of the economy becoming overheated or being affected by artificially low interest rates are exaggerated. Moreover, says Travers, the foundations that are now in place are far stronger than at any time in the past.

The country’s main think tank, the Economic and Social Research Institute, believes the emphasis from 2000 to 2006 should no longer be on securing large amounts of structural funding from the EU and chasing every job. Now the challenges are more about how to manage success and to ensure that the momentum of economic growth can be maintained.

However, while it looks like fair sailing ahead in to the twenty-first century, the niggling thought built into the Irish psyche always remains that says, “No one forecast the boom before it came, so who’s going to forecast the downturn.” ☐

*Mike Burns is EUROPE’s Dublin correspondent.*

# Dublin

By Mike Burns

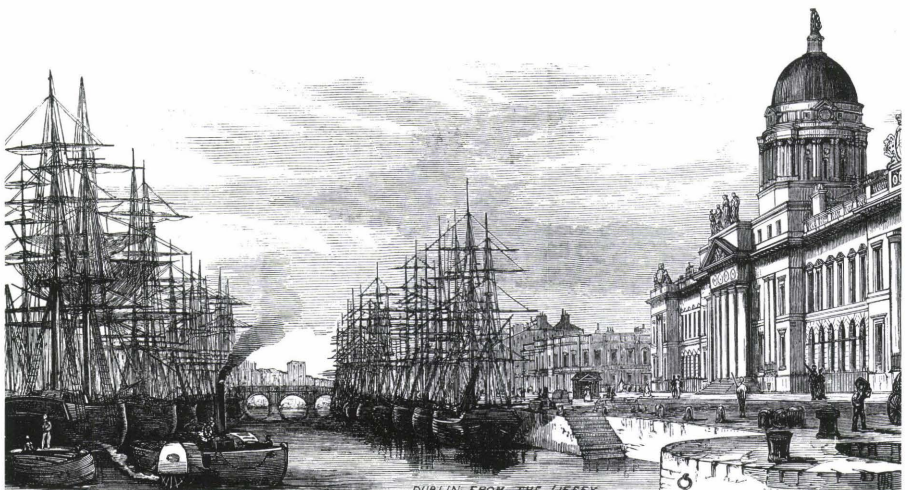
More than a thousand years old—it celebrated its millennium in 1988—the Irish capital of Dublin has gone through numerous periods of turbulent history and tranquility, wealth, literary innovation, culture (George Frederick Handel’s *Messiah* was first performed on Fishamble Street), and extreme underclass deprivation and poverty.

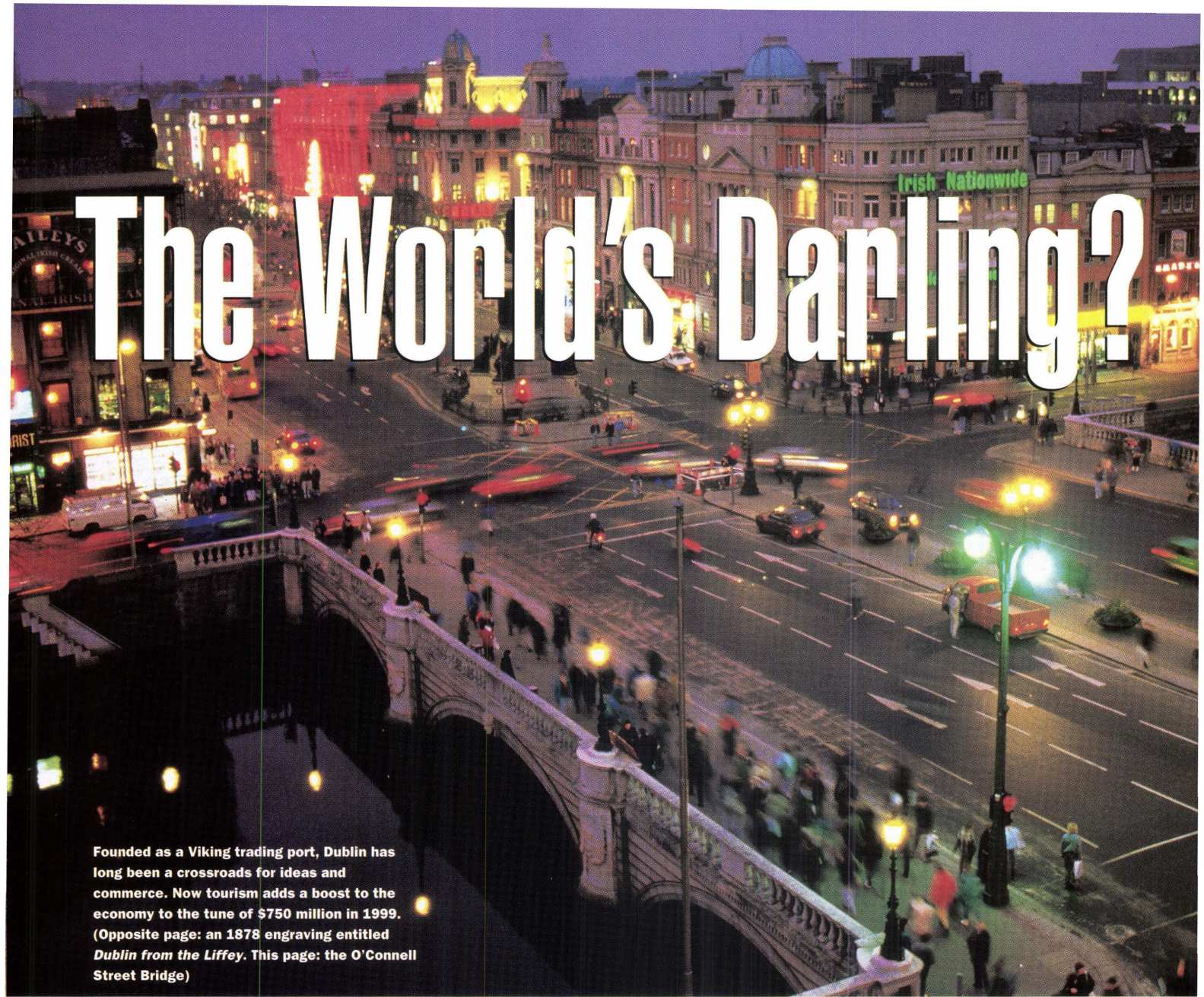
The guidebooks tell it like this: Dublin began as a Viking trading port, became a walled medieval city, and, in a glorious century of expansion, became what was once proudly termed “the second city of the [former British] Empire,” an elegant Georgian metropolis with wide thoroughfares, gracious squares, and great houses, neatly bordered by the Royal and Grand canals.

Through the ages, the rich and rare traditions of “Old Dublin” have inspired scores of eminent artists, writers, and musicians. It’s still doing that. However, the once small population has soared to roughly 1.5 million people, and the shape of the city itself has changed as housing and commercial development sweep out to the suburbs and adjoining counties of Wicklow, Kildare, and Meath.

Not everyone welcomes this growth. The balladeer Pete St. John, remembering “Dublin in the rare ould times,” bemoans the changing skyline, the “new glass cages” along the city quays and “the great unyielding concrete [which] makes a city of my town.”

Certainly, the roar of the “Celtic Tiger” has brought new prosperity to the Irish Republic, with Dublin the main beneficiary. Its changing urban landscape and new-found wealth have created an assured and cosmopolitan





# The World's Darling?

Founded as a Viking trading port, Dublin has long been a crossroads for ideas and commerce. Now tourism adds a boost to the economy to the tune of \$750 million in 1999. (Opposite page: an 1878 engraving entitled *Dublin from the Liffey*. This page: the O'Connell Street Bridge)

city, ranked in a recent global survey of 218 locations as one of the best cities in which to reside—behind Seattle and Los Angeles but higher than New York, Rome, Madrid, and Rio de Janeiro.

Not surprisingly, tourism is booming, with a daily high season count last year of 60,000 visitors—mainly from other European countries and North America but also from Australia and Asia. One of every two tourists who come to Ireland visits the capital, according to Dublin Tourism, the agency charged with promoting the city. It estimates that the total number of visitors who stayed in the capital in 1999 was 3.4 million, 200,000 more than previous years. Their contribution to the local economy: \$750 million.

Quite a contrast between the Dublin—and Ireland—at the start of the twentieth century and the birth of

the twenty-first century.

Tourism numbers were of little concern, although Dublin's streets were gaily bedecked in bunting for the arrival of Queen Victoria in April 1900. Her three-week stay in Ireland was ostensibly to celebrate the Act of Union of 1800 but, in reality, to counter anti-Boer War feelings, smoldering Irish nationalism, and the debate about Home Rule for Ireland and breaking of the constitutional link with Britain.

An estimated half-a-million people turned out to witness the aged queen's ceremonial visit—the first in almost four decades. But in the narrow streets flanking the main thoroughfares, poverty, and violence were endemic, the socially-deprived living in tenement buildings and conditions sharply in contrast with the glitter and pomp surrounding the royal festivities.

Daniel Mulhall, the Irish consul-general to Scotland, in his splendid portrait of Ireland in 1900, entitled *A New Day Dawning*, notes that around 1900 almost one in every four children born in Dublin died before their first birthday. Efforts to establish trade unionism in Ireland led to a lockout of Dublin workers in 1913, leading to deaths from cold and hunger among the unemployed workers and their families.

In 1914, the majority of constitutional nationalist leaders urged their followers to support Britain in the Great War. Thousands did and paid with their lives in the trenches of France and Belgium. Other nationalists decided that Britain's difficulty provided an Irish opportunity to seek independence by military action. In Easter Week of 1916, open violence erupted in Dublin's streets. The General Post Office was oc-

cupied and became the center of some of the bloodiest encounters. The fighting lasted for only five days before the uprising was put down and fifteen of the leaders were executed.

Those executions are seen as the kernel of events that turned the public mood and led, after a brief but bitter civil war, to Irish self-government. The six northeastern counties, with a majority of British loyalists, were partitioned and remained part of the United Kingdom.

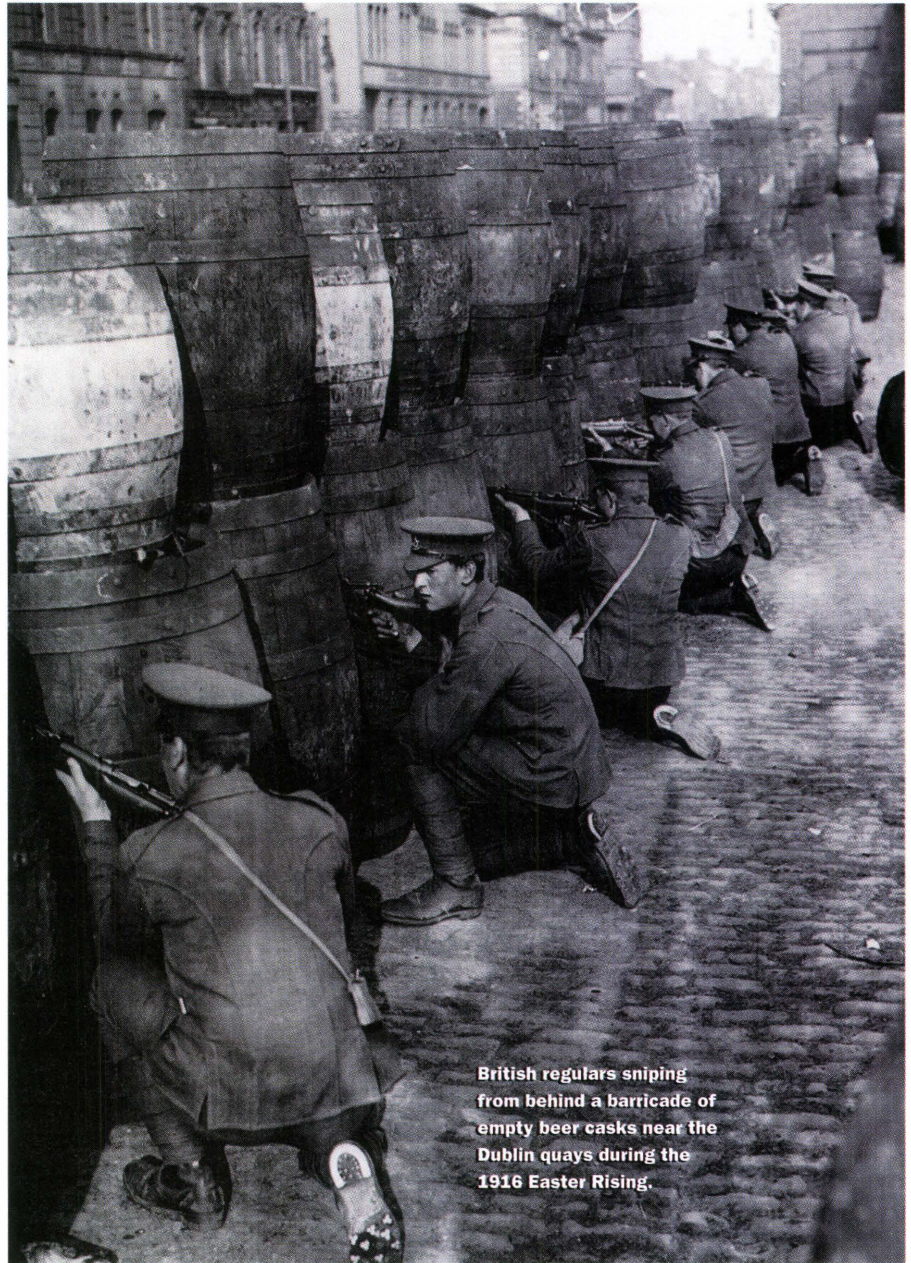
From that fledgling Irish Free State emerged what is the buoyant and confident Irish Republic—and Dublin—of today. But not without its scars. Money, in short supply, was used to reorganize government and reconstruct war-damaged buildings. But the teetering economy didn't allow for other than essential maintenance and, by the early 1960s, Dublin was looking rather scruffy.

A boom in the 1960s saw a rash of new building with little thought being given to the preservation of the finer Georgian squares and houses. The boom didn't last, but thankfully, it did manage to halt new building and brought about restoration of many of the old buildings.

In the 1970s, membership in the European Union brought more dynamic national and local government; concentration on education at third-level; partnership agreements on wages and conditions involving government, employers, and trades unions; and an enlightened approach to attracting new, high-tech industry from abroad—the birth of today's economic miracle.

Throughout the centuries, Dublin has served as the country's economic, political, social, and cultural nerve center. The works of Edmund Burke, Oliver Goldsmith, Jonathan Swift, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw, William Butler Yeats, John Millington Synge, Samuel Beckett, Bram Stoker (his paperback *Dracula* was published in 1900, at the time of Queen Victoria's Dublin visit) speak volumes about the quality and importance of the Irish contribution to international literature. Three of them—Shaw, Yeats, and Beckett—became Nobel laureates (Shaw was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1925 but refused to accept it).

They were writers in the Anglo-Irish



British regulars sniping from behind a barricade of empty beer casks near the Dublin quays during the 1916 Easter Rising.

tradition. The older Celtic tradition of Irish language and poetry, which was largely ignored until the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, did play a major part in shaping what we now call "The New Ireland."

The Celtic Revival at the turn of the century saw Yeats, Synge, and Lady Gregory establishing Dublin's Abbey Theatre (in 1904) and the production of plays by Synge, Sean O'Casey, and of course, Yeats himself. Professor Terence Brown, in *The Life of W.B. Yeats*, says the writer's hatred of late Victorian materialism informed not just his poetry and drama but also "his ardent involvement in the Irish nationalist cause."

James Joyce, Dublin's most famous literary figure, was born in 1882 and spent an impoverished childhood before going to University College Dublin, the city's largest university. It was here he started his collection of short stories, eventually published as *Dubliners*.

He spent most of his adult life abroad, but his epic narrative *Ulysses* remains the ultimate celebration of the city of his birth. Leopold Bloom's legendary travels around the city on June 16, 1904, are commemorated in Dublin every year on Bloomsday—the date Joyce fell in love with Nora Barnacle, whom he married twenty-seven years later.

Unlike Shaw, Yeats, Beckett, and Dubliner-by-adoption Seamus Heaney, Joyce did not win a Nobel laureate. Nevertheless, the Writers' Museum in Dublin's Parnell Square commemorates Joyce, Brendan Behan, Patrick Kavanagh, Flann O'Brien, the Nobel winners, and other literary figures.

Dublin's National Gallery houses an excellent collection of Irish and European art, including Turner watercolors that can only be exhibited in January (to protect them from the harsher light of other months) and Caravaggio's stunning *The Taking of Christ*.

Across the road, at the corner of Merrion Square, is the birthplace of Oscar Wilde. The Chester Beatty Library, bequeathed to the Irish nation in 1956 and set later this year to move to a custom-designed home in Dublin Castle, contains some 22,000 manuscripts, rare books, miniature paintings, and objects from Western, Middle East, and Far Eastern cultures.

The city also offers a fine selection of other galleries and museums, ranging from modern art to photography, and scores of other "places of interest" to delight the discerning visitor. Trinity College, in the heart of Dublin, is Ireland's oldest university. Queen Elizabeth I founded it in 1591. Today, it houses almost a quarter million books and is the guardian of the ninth century illuminated manuscript, *The Book of Kells*.

The Phoenix Park, one of the largest inner-city demesnes in Europe, is home to the Irish White House of President Mary McAleese, the US ambassador's residence, and the Dublin Zoo.



Revelers celebrate Bloomsday in honor of James Joyce's masterpiece *Ulysses*.

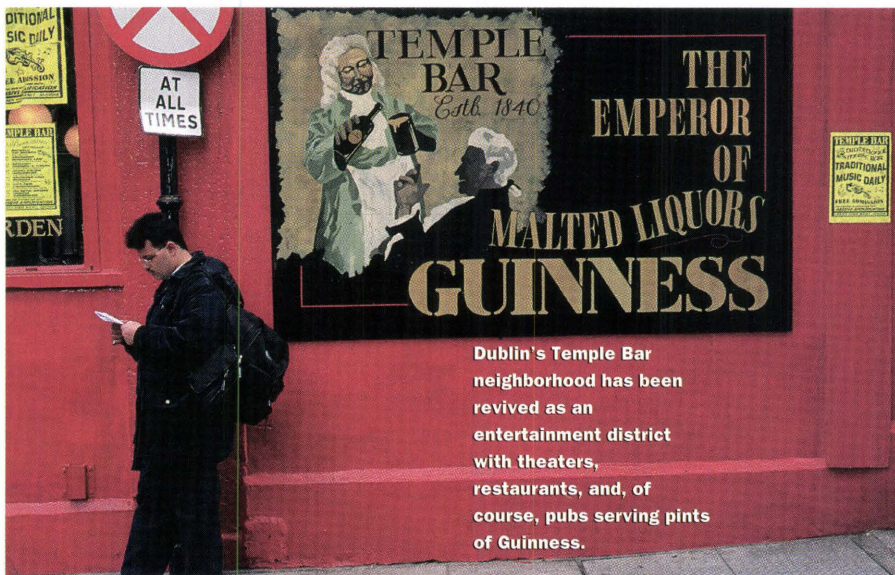
Set between the Irish Sea and the Dublin and Wicklow mountains, the city combines an exciting mixture of history, art, culture, and grand, aristocratic Georgian architecture with a modern and exciting contemporary scene.

There is, however, a downside. The economic success has fostered a building boom. The once-stately skyline is dominated by huge construction cranes. Traffic gridlock, taxi shortages, drugs, gang wars, and soaring property prices all tend to lessen the joys of living.

Furthermore, one of the other sadder elements of "new Dublin" life is the erosion of the city's traditional pubs, rightly famed for their charm and witty ripostes—a tragedy in itself but more so in the home of the world famous Guinness Brewery. As fake Irish pubs spring up in cities around the world, many of the older versions on which they are based are, unfortunately, in decline. More and more of the older pubs, where conversation and banter once dominated, are being "developed" into large upmarket emporia with loud music and, horror of horrors, television sets. Some of the old-style pubs, including those with traditional Irish music, still exist, but in fewer numbers.

But don't let me put you off visiting—and enjoying—booming Dublin. Given those tourism figures, it's not surprising that the city of Anna Livia enjoys a "world's darling" status even among the film fraternity, who use its old streets and buildings to create myriad turn-of-the-century locations.

The city of U2 (now owners of a hotel overlooking the river Liffey) and Boyzone is an exciting place, particularly in the restored "Left Bank-esque" quarter of Temple Bar, a vibrant area of galleries, restaurants, outdoor and indoor entertainment, and—yes—pubs. ☺



Dublin's Temple Bar neighborhood has been revived as an entertainment district with theaters, restaurants, and, of course, pubs serving pints of Guinness.

# Deal Mania Grips Cyber Companies

## AOL—Time Warner merger worries European Internet firms

By Bruce Barnard

**T**he trailblazing merger of AOL and Time Warner was a wake-up call to Europe's media and Internet companies. Fears that America will drown Europe in the Internet-based "new" economy were fanned within days of the AOL deal when Warner Music took boardroom control of a \$20 billion fifty-fifty joint venture with the United Kingdom's EMI that will create the world's biggest music company.

Europe made sure, however, that it will challenge the US in delivering content to consumers after the record-

breaking \$190 billion takeover by the UK's Vodafone Airtouch of Germany's Mannesmann to form the world's biggest mobile telephone operator, and its fourth-largest company.

Europe has a few large media companies capable of keeping in touch with the likes of Time Warner and Walt Disney but nothing to compare with Internet-based firms like AOL, Yahoo, and Microsoft.

Nevertheless, that's about to change as the European industry faces the stark choice of merging or risking marginalization. Hollywood hurt Europe's domestic film business and

grabbed a large slice of its television market. Moreover, if Europe doesn't shore up its defenses, it could be trampled underfoot in the new Internet race.

Europe is better placed to fight back than it was five years ago. Privatization and deregulation have freed European firms to compete with US rivals across the world. Tellingly, telecoms and media firms figured prominently in the record \$1.3 trillion of merger and acquisitions last year.

However, the AOL—Time Warner deal has ratcheted up the challenge to Europe. The Internet may operate across cyberspace, but like most other

## Vodafone Buys Mannesmann

**V**odafone AirTouch's \$190 billion acquisition of Mannesmann was much more than the world's biggest takeover. In a single stroke, the British mobile phone operator transformed the corporate landscape of Europe's biggest economy by pulling off the first successful hostile takeover bid in German history.

That, in time, will be a greater achievement than its creation of the world's fourth-largest company and the biggest mobile phone operator with more than 42 million subscribers. Before Vodafone launched its bid in early November, Germany was regarded as a no man's land for Anglo-Saxon-style

contested takeovers. Pirelli, the Italian tire giant, tried and failed to take over Continental, its German rival, in 1991. Even a planned merger between two German steel firms, Thyssen and Krupp, proved too controversial and had to be recast.

However, the manner of Vodafone's victory showed that Germany's business community, political establishment, and labor unions no longer conform to their stereotypes. There was very little political interference by Chancellor Gerhard Schröder or protests by union leaders. Mannesmann's powerful workers representatives simply fought for the best deal for

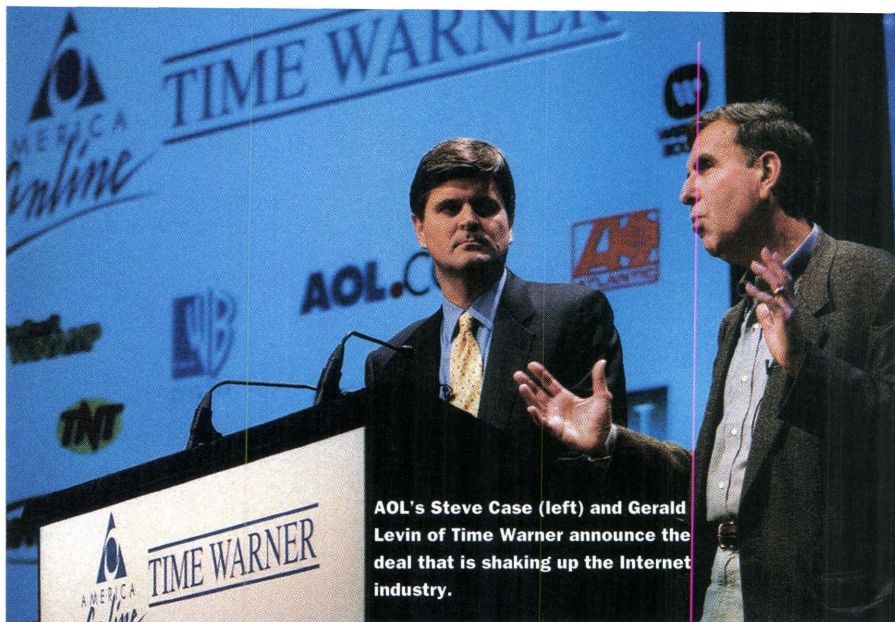
their colleagues. Most importantly, the outcome was decided by Mannesmann's shareholders.

The idea that Mannesmann, one of Germany's most successful companies, would fall under foreign control would have been almost unthinkable a year ago. The first Social Democrat government in sixteen years was still finding its way, and the business community was calling for the head of its (since departed) left-wing finance minister "Red" Oskar Lafontaine. Chancellor Schröder later blotted his copybook by approving subsidies for Holzmann, a struggling construction company.

However, the German

economy was becoming more open as it embraced privatization of state-owned companies and deregulation of monopolies. While it trailed the United Kingdom by more than a decade in market-opening measures, it swiftly made up for the late start. Deutsche Telekom, for example, lost more market share to private rivals in 1998, the first full year of telecommunication deregulation, than British Telecom lost in fifteen years. In addition, the rates it charges customers fell much more rapidly. Similarly, while Deutsche Post, the postal monopoly, is being primed for an initial public offering in the fall (following a \$4 bil-





**AOL's Steve Case (left) and Gerald Levin of Time Warner announce the deal that is shaking up the Internet industry.**

Warner takeover probably will be the unraveling of one of the most prominent transatlantic media alliances—between AOL and Bertelsmann of Germany.

Bertelsmann, the world's third-largest media group with annual revenues likely to top \$18 billion this year, is AOL's main partner in Europe with joint ventures in the UK, France, and Germany as well as in Australia. It is also, however, a fierce rival of Time Warner in many areas, which is sure to cause tensions in AOL Europe, its joint venture with AOL.

The German group is well poised to become the leading player in Europe's Internet-based multimedia industry. It has been active in the US for several years, but it only sprang to public prominence last year with a \$1.1 billion acquisition of New York-based Random House, the world's biggest English language publisher. It also owns one of the world's top record companies, BMG, better known for US labels such as Arista and RCA, and was tipped to join forces with Sony of Japan following the Warner-EMI merger.

Bertelsmann is already heavily involved in the Internet. It is the largest shareholder in barnesandnoble.com,

industries in Europe, it is fragmented into national markets. The biggest Internet providers in most European countries are their former telephone monopolies, but they have yet to offer service across frontiers.

Indeed the most pan-European Internet companies are from the United States. In November, Yahoo, Microsoft, and AOL ranked in the top thirty web sites in the UK, France, and Germany, according to the latest data compiled by Media Metrix, an Internet usage tracker.

The US industry is targeting foreign markets, especially Europe, to compen-

sate for slowing growth in Internet usage at home. The US Internet population grew by "only" 13 percent in 1999, compared to 58 percent in 1998, according to Cyber Dialogue, an Internet research company.

The US firms are facing stiff opposition from European operators. Domestic companies, according to Media Metrix, provided the most popular services in the UK, France, and Germany. AOL was third in Germany and fifth in the UK and France. Moreover, Yahoo is the only large US Internet provider that is turning a profit in Europe.

The immediate impact of the Time

lion investment in transport companies in Europe and the US), the UK's post office is only now getting limited commercial freedom from the government.

Furthermore, German boardrooms have embraced American business practices like stock options, and young professionals are investing in the stock market.

Mannesmann was a symbol of this "new" Germany. A 113-year-old company best known for making steel pipelines, it entered telecoms in the early 1990s—seven years after Vodafone—and became Europe's biggest mobile phone operator with the \$33 billion acquisition of Orange of the UK in October, which made it a prey of Vodafone within weeks.

Mannesmann, however,

isn't a typical German company either, not least because 60 percent of its shares were held abroad, 13 percent in the United States. Moreover, the bulk of the German economy is accounted for by small and medium-sized family-owned firms, the so-called *Mittelstand*, which have not been caught up in changes sweeping through large, publicly quoted corporations.

Even as Vodafone was closing in on Mannesmann, the German government foreshadowed the biggest corporate restructuring in fifty years by unveiling plans to abandon taxes on profits from the sale of assets. This surprise measure is expected to unleash a massive outflow of capital—more than \$100 billion according to some estimates—as banks

and insurance companies sell strategic shares in top companies they have held for half a century. These sales will loosen the influence of banks on German companies, making them more open to takeovers and allow the sellers to focus on their core activities and pursue shareholder value.

The planned end of capital gains taxes and the lowering of corporate taxes will cut the tax burden of a typical manufacturing company by between 6–7 percent to below levels in France, the Netherlands, and the US



**Chris Ghent of Vodafone and Mannesmann's Klaus Esser announce their \$180 billion deal.**

and just above the United Kingdom's. These measures are making Germany more business-friendly and attractive to foreign investors, a vital ingredient for success in the global market. Deutschland AG didn't become Germany Inc. in the wake of the Vodafone affair, but it's on its way.

—Bruce Barnard

the US-based online bookseller, and has a 25 percent stake in Lycos Europe, a joint venture with Lycos, the US search engine. It plans to triple annual Internet revenues to around \$2.6 billion within three years and has set a strategic target of overtaking Amazon.com as the leading e-commerce group.

The AOL-Time Warner deal came at a time when Europe's media, telecom, and Internet businesses were in the throes of takeovers, alliances, and joint ventures. Europe can't match the AOL deal or even come near the recent \$80 billion merger of Viacom and CBS. However, it is creating firms with global reach that will be able to take on their US rivals in growing markets, especially in the Southern Hemisphere.

France, until recently hostile to US business trends, has enthusiastically embraced media-Internet convergence as leading companies in industries as diverse as defense and utilities move into these sectors.

France's two largest media groups, Canal Plus and Lagardere, struck a \$1.1 billion deal to develop publishing and entertainment brands for distribution via cable television, digital pay television, and the Internet only days after the AOL-Time Warner merger.

"When we see what's happening in the US, we're right on target," said Jean-Luc Lagardere, chairman of the missiles-to-magazines group. Lagardere oozes content. It owns Hachette Filipacchi Media, the biggest magazine publisher in the world and the US with more than 200 titles, including *Elle*, *Paris Match*, *Car and Driver*, and *Premiere*, which can be transformed into web sites or television theme channels. Lagardere's partner Canal Plus is Europe's biggest pay television operator, with channels in eleven European countries, 13.4 million subscribers, numerous Web sites, and several theme channels. The two partners have global ambitions for their new venture. "We're not going to stop with Europe. We're targeting Latin America, North America, and Japan as well," said Michel Thoulouze, head of Multithematiques, a theme channel producer that's majority owned by Canal Plus and Lagardere.

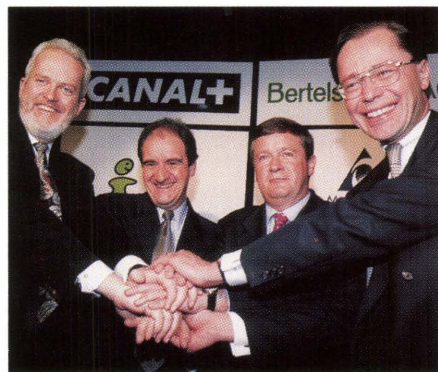
The two firms are already global players: only 44 percent of their joint revenues come from France while 26 percent originates in the United States.

AOL-Time Warner may tower over them, but it is less international.

Other French firms likely to figure in media-Internet deals in the coming months are Vivendi, the rapidly diversifying utilities giant that owns a large slice of Rupert Murdoch's British Sky Broadcasting (BSkyB), and Canal Plus and France Telecom, the former telecoms monopoly that has a stake in NASDAQ-quoted NTL, the UK's largest cable operator.

The AOL-Time Warner deal flushed out Internet investments by Europe's media groups. BSKyB plans to spend \$400 million; Pearson, publisher of London's *Financial Times*, \$400 million; and Reuters, the media and information group, \$800 million over four years.

Even as they make deals, Europe's media and Internet players are keeping an eye on the fallout from the AOL-Time Warner deal. If Bertelsmann walks away from AOL, the US



**The AOL-Time Warner deal throws into question AOL's 1998 agreement with Bertelsmann, Canal Plus, and Cegetel.**

firm will be forced to find new content partners in Europe. Time Warner will provide it with top quality content, but most of it is in English and generated in the United States. To attract subscribers in Europe it must offer local content. AOL Europe continues to set the pace, linking up with two of the world's largest mobile phone manufacturers, Nokia of Finland and Sweden's Ericsson to allow subscribers access to its on-line services via their handsets.

AOL and other US firms will be competing for content against fast-growing European Internet service providers. These include Terra Networks, which is majority owned by Telefonica, the former Spanish telecoms monopoly; the Dutch group World Online; Chello, the broadband portal developed by Am-

sterdam-based cable operator United Pan European Communications (UPC).

The AOL bombshell has intensified pressure on these firms to accelerate their expansion and some are on the way to becoming global players—potential partners for US companies.

In January, Terra Networks of Spain became Europe's biggest Internet company by market value after a seven-fold surge in its stock price since Telefonica floated a 15 percent stake on the Madrid stock exchange last November. Terra, the first pure Internet company spun off by one of Europe's former telephone monopolies is now three times as large as Europe's number two Internet company, the UK's Freeserve.

Terra and Telefonica are well placed to grab market leadership in Latin and Central America ahead of US rivals. Terra has more than 860,000 subscribers in Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru, and in Spain as well in Spanish-speaking North America. Meanwhile, in January, Telefonica launched a \$21 billion bid to buy out its units in Brazil, Argentina, and Peru to become the leading player in mobile telephony and data transmission in the region. In April, it plans an IPO for Telefonica Media, its television, cable, and media unit.

Another company to watch is fast expanding UPC, which is snapping up cable firms across Europe and upgrading them to offer television, telephone, and Internet services via a set-top box. UPC, in which Microsoft has an 8 percent holding, offers cable television to 6 million households in twelve European countries and Israel. It's moving at a dizzy pace, bidding around \$940 million for the cable business of a Dutch power utility and preparing to sell a minority stake in Chello, its high-speed Internet access service.

American money is flooding into Europe and it's not only corporate cash. Three of America's most famous sports stars, golfer Tiger Woods, the Los Angeles Lakers' Shaquille O'Neal, and Chicago Bulls legend Michael Jordan pumped \$3.5 million into Sports.com, a European Internet company.

Europe, like America, is hooked on the Net. ☺

*Bruce Barnard is a EUROPE contributing editor and a European correspondent for the Journal of Commerce.*

# EUROPE

## Update

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## WHAT THEY SAID: SPECIAL COORDINATOR OF THE SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE STABILITY PACT BODO HAMBACH

Bodo Hombach loves to be criticized for doing nothing. Only when such complaints get loud enough, he avers in an interview, will they goad donor governments actually to pony up on their pledges of aid for the troubled Balkans. Only then, can the West's efforts to frog-march the Serbs, Albanians, and others out of medieval hatreds and into the twenty-first century move beyond rhetoric to action.

The problem for Hombach is that, as the European Union-nominated special coordinator of the world community for the Southeastern Europe Stability Pact, he has no powers of his own.

He holds no purse strings and runs no civil service in Kosovo. The most he can do is to use his post as a bully pulpit to cajole and prod the multiple governments, international organizations, and private agencies that are striving to end the killing and begin economic cooperation in the region.

It's very different from his last job and the expertise he was famous for at home. In the highly structured and mediated politics in his native Germany, he was a top political operative, the guy who sat down in the corner pub over a beer and brought the Ruhr miners and their pit bosses together to wrestle out their differences and then lobby together for more subsidies

from the federal government. As the first chief of staff for Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, he was credited with (or blamed for) the battle against Finance Minister Oskar Lafontaine that brought the fiery left-winger to resign nine months ago and make way for Schröder's more centrist economic reforms.

Hombach's new international assignment is much tougher. The near anarchy of a gang-ridden state like Albania or of a Kosovo that only recently escaped mass ethnic murder makes for a much rawer environment. In the Balkans, there are no rules of the game like the elaborate restraints built into established democracies. Nor is there the domestic electoral compulsion that has induced western Germans, for example, to donate \$1 trillion to boost living standards in poor eastern Germany in the past decade.

Nonetheless, Hombach thinks a credible start has been made in the half year since the war ended in Kosovo and the EU, US, Russia, Canada, and Japan launched the Southeastern Europe Stability Pact to develop the region. Donor countries have at least made those pledges of hundreds of millions of dollars. And under the precept of assistance for self-help, the three international working tables under

Hombach's supervision have begun generating local initiatives in the areas of democratization and human rights; economic reconstruction, development, and cooperation; and security. He likens the work to building a foundation, "stone by stone." The international community can succeed in its mission only if it manages to build on this foundation the kind of economic growth that will bring in Western investment and other tangible benefits and thus prove that cooperating with neighbors is much more useful than killing them.

No, these efforts will not lead to a new Marshall Plan, Hombach states. Today's funds for the Balkans will not begin to match the American largesse in Western Europe after World War II; the Balkans simply do not have the social infrastructure and trained manpower that could absorb so much wealth. In one crucial aspect only will the stability pact resemble the Marshall Plan—in requiring all aid recipients to cooperate with each other in designing and implementing joint region-wide projects.

And exactly whom does the special coordinator coordinate? The "greatest stars" on the Balkan stage, Hombach replies, including the European Council of sovereign EU member states, the EU Commission, the Organization of Security and Cooper-

ation in Europe (OSCE), NATO, "and to a certain extent the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)." Both large and small countries have their own programs in the region, as do international banks, a multitude of non-governmental organizations, industry-wide associations, churches, foundations, parliamentary committees, and other groups. "They all make a big interwoven tapestry, and they are surprisingly willing to coordinate their activities," he notes approvingly.

In another image, Hombach compares himself to an orchestra conductor who concentrates on basic principles and must rely on the consent of his various performers. "I have only limited freedom. I must operate in a consensus. But I can help shape the consensus."

He continues, "I must do what conductors do when applause comes—step to the side and wave to the musicians, say to the EU, for example, you have the leading role here," or "harmonize" NATO and the OSCE "and all the little piccolos."

So, how does the special coordinator respond to all the criticism that his office and the West are slow off the mark and have so far done little to open EU markets for Balkan exporters or underwrite a free-trade zone in the Balkans?

## WHAT THEY SAID (CONTINUED)

Disarmingly, Hombach embraces his critics. "I hear such talk gladly. Mostly it comes from businessmen and Americans, from people who are structurally impatient. I need this to open the second phase" of action. "Now is the moment of truth."

The criticism Hombach does not brook is the pronouncement that the notion of 'help for self-help' and the policy of 'waiting for initiatives to come from the locals' constitute an alibi for inaction. Outsiders can move faster without waiting for

community consensus, Hombach acknowledges, but results will endure only if aid recipients help design their own road and energy networks and other development programs and therefore gain a stake in them.

The whole object, he says,

is to empower people who have felt disenfranchised, to "unleash people's own economic energies." Raising living standards, he concludes, is the only way to overcome ethnic hatred.

## REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK: PUTIN'S RUSSIA

The rise of former KGB officer Vladimir Putin from obscurity to Russian prime minister and now acting president has been so dizzyingly fast that neither Russians nor sympathetic Westerners feel confident about predicting the country's new course. Only the wretched Chechens, who saw Putin rise to power on what seemed to be a successful second war against their rebellious little mountain province, can feel certain about one keystone of his policy—that Russian shells and bombs will continue to rain down upon them.

Perhaps not. Acting-Presi-

dent Putin and his spin doctors have been working hard to improve his image. Russians are sick of aged invalids in the Kremlin; he released photos of himself, young and fit, in judo kit. Foreigners were worried that an old KGB man might bring back authoritarian ways; he made a well-publicized pilgrimage to the grave of the great dissident of Soviet days, Andrei Sakharov. Western bankers were worried at the fate of reform; he swiftly appointed the able, young finance minister Mikhail Kasyanov, forty-two, to be his top deputy prime minister. Running the public and private debt renegotia-

tions, the tough but affable Kasyanov convinced IMF officials and private bankers alike that he was a convinced economic reformer who spoke their language.

Above all, Putin moved fast to correct the widespread Russian assumption that he was not just Boris Yeltsin's heir but a younger, fitter leader who would perpetuate the discredited Yeltsin system of Kremlin cronyism. Certainly, his appointment rested on one crucial deal, the promise of immunity to Yeltsin for presiding over the institutionalized looting of state assets that hallmarked the Yeltsin era of economic

'reform'. But then Putin sidelined Yeltsin's controversial daughter, Tatyana, who had been the power behind the Yeltsin throne, and demoted Pavel Borodin and Nikolai Aksyonenko, the senior Kremlin officials who ran the *Semya*, or the 'Family', as the Yeltsin clique was known. Borodin had run the state within the state that was formally known as the Kremlin's 'property management office'. Aksyonenko had been the Kremlin voice of controversial media and finance magnate Boris Berezovsky.

There are thus two important facts about the Putin government on which Western governments and bankers and Russian voters will have to base their assessments of the new regime. First, he is signaling an end to business as usual. Doubtless the new *Boyars* of Russia, the big magnates of the oil and gas and banking and media industries, will continue to exert massive influence. But the pecking order among them has changed. Second, and more important, Putin can claim some kind of democratic mandate after the success in December's parliamentary elections to the new Duma of the parties he backed. The old Communist party with 111 seats remained the biggest single group on the new Duma, but the brand-new Unity Party, endorsed by Putin, won seventy-six seats and eclipsed the sixty-one seats of Fatherland, the coalition party of former premier Yevgeny Primakov and powerful Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov.

Putin's meteoric rise in

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## REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK (CONTINUED)

the opinion polls rests not only on the wave of favorable media that the Yeltsin 'family' media orchestrated for him, but also on his decision to renew the war against the Chechens, only this time with guns and rockets rather than with the blood of ill-trained Russian conscripts. More than skeptical Westerners, Russian public opinion seems to have accepted that Chechens, rather than their own dirty tricks intelligence services, were behind last summer's spate of terrorist bombings of Russian civilians. The war was overwhelmingly popular until the Russian casualty lists began to rise ominously again in January. If the war goes badly, Putin's polls could fall as fast as they rose.

Putin is in a box. His war strategy was to fight a low-casualty war with artillery, to lay siege to the city of Grozny, and to hold the cru-

cial oil pipelines and switching stations that bring the Caspian Sea oil north to Russia, while letting the Chechen guerillas fester in their mountain fastnesses.

Although it was able to drive the Chechen fighters from Grozny, the Russian army suffered numerous casualties and remains a demoralized and unreliable tool however desperate the government, generals, and Russian people may be for a sign that after the humiliations of the 1990s their state and army can succeed at something and win. This situation raises an acute problem for Russia's friends and neighbors in the West. However vicious and unsavory and unjustified the Chechen war, the psychological demoralization of Russia and its loss of faith in Western-style reforms may be a bigger headache for the West.

"If Putin could declare a

victory, bring the troops home, and use that assertion of state authority to get on with giving Russia an effective government and tackling corruption, we'd all give a discreet cheer, and the tap on Western investment would start to open up again," says Walter Russell Mead, senior fellow at Council on Foreign Relations and an influential adviser to the US administration. "A weak, corrupt, and maniacally depressive Russia is in nobody's interest."

Putin has said all the right things about restoring law and order and issued edicts demanding that the police and intelligence services tackle corruption, but so did Yeltsin. Putin's election victory this month may depend on media support from some of the same magnates who are most associated in the public mind with the Kremlin cronyism of the past.

There are two reasons for

guarded optimism about the future. The first is that after the financial collapse of 1998, the Russian economy is growing again, and Western imports are now so expensive that homegrown Russian producers of consumer goods are starting to thrive. The second is the wave of relief that greeted Yeltsin's departure and the rush of provincial governors and politicians to support Putin and the new regime. Russians want a government that works and a leadership it can be proud of. The Duma elections demonstrated that the electorate is in no mood to bring back the old Communists and support has collapsed for the extreme nationalism of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. Everybody wants the Putin government to succeed, except the Chechens, whose extraordinary courage and fighting abilities may yet discredit him before the March 26 presidential elections.

## EU NEWS

### EU Opens Membership Talks

The EU formally opened talks with six additional countries in February, boosting the number of countries negotiating entry to twelve. The six new countries—Slovakia, Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Romania, and Malta—will have to introduce tough economic reforms before they can join. Entry talks began two years ago with Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, Estonia, and Cyprus, and these candidates hope to join within the next three years. Turkey is also a candidate but has not yet been admitted to formal talks. The proposed expansion could lead to a doubling of the fifteen-nation European Union in the next decade.

### Mesic New Croatian President

Sixty-five-year-old Stipe Mesic won a runoff election to become Croatia's new president last

month, succeeding the late Franjo Tudjman, who died in December. Mesic has held several political offices and was a member of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) until 1994 when he split with the party after disagreeing with Tudjman's Bosnia policies. He joined the small Croatian People's Party (HNS) in 1997. As president, Mesic has pledged to reform his country into "a fully developed European country with high levels of democracy."

### Finland Inaugurates Female President

Tarja Halonen became Finland's first woman president on March 1 after edging opposition leader Esko Aho in a cliffhanger election in February. The fifty-six-year-old Halonen, a Social Democrat, became Finland's first female foreign minister in 1995. She will serve a six-year term and has promised to work for increased equality between the

sexes. Halonen comes to the position at a time when the country is adopting a new constitution that curtails the president's powers, especially in the area of domestic affairs. Although Halonen will remain in charge of foreign policy, the constitution now requires her to conduct foreign affairs in close cooperation with the cabinet, headed by Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen.

### EU to Investigate Microsoft's Windows 2000

The European Commission has begun an antitrust investigation into Microsoft's Windows 2000, the company's latest computer operating system launched worldwide in February. The investigation follows complaints from rivals and users that Microsoft has designed its product in such a way that it allows the company to expand its market dominance in PC operating systems into other markets

for server software and e-commerce.

### Upcoming Events

**Lisbon Summit:** The EU's fifteen leaders will meet for a special summit in Lisbon March 23–24. The theme will be employment, economic reform, and social cohesion.

**EU-African Summit:** The summit will take place in Cairo on April 3–4.

**G8 Summit:** The heads of the G8 nations will meet in Japan in July.



#### Correspondents

Bruce Barnard from London  
Susan Ladika from Vienna  
Martin Walker from Moscow

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## BUSINESS BRIEFS

**Stora Enso**, the giant Helsinki-based forestry group, edged out **International Paper** of the US as the world's biggest paper and pulp producer after acquiring Wisconsin-based **Consolidated Paper** for \$4.9 billion. The deal came just days after another Finnish group, **UPM-Kymmene**, paid \$6.5 billion for **Champion International** of the US, creating the world's third-largest paper and pulp company with annual revenues exceeding \$13 billion. These first major transatlantic mergers in the rapidly consolidating industry are likely to trigger a quick response from rival companies with International Paper tipped to take over a top European firm.

Philips, the Dutch electronics giant, has put its troubled past firmly behind it, more than tripling profits in 1999 to \$1.8 billion and mulling a stock market listing for **Origin**, its valuable computer software division. Philips' shares also nearly tripled in value during the year, reflecting the market's favorable verdict on the completion of the successful "fix, sell, or close" restructuring program launched by Cor Boonstra, who became president of the then loss-making group in 1996.

Following Boonstra's decision to focus on electronic hardware, Philips made three large deals largely financed by the \$4.75 billion profit booked from the sale of its **Polygram** movie and music division to Canada's **Seagram**. It took a 50 percent stake in **LG LCD**, a South Korean manufacturer of liquid crystal display screens, and acquired two US high-tech firms, **VLSI**, a semiconductor chip manufacturer, and **ATL Ultrasound**, which makes medical imaging equipment.

Boonstra said Philips likely will seek a primary listing for Origin in the second half of the year. The company, which has 17,000 employees in thirty countries,

out of a total Philips payroll of 230,000, boosted operating profits by 64 percent last year to \$97 million.

Boonstra also stressed Philips will stick with making light bulbs, one of its original activities. Philips is the world leader, and it is "not likely that other owners could add more value."

**Canal Plus** of France, Europe's top pay television group, moved closer to its goal of creating a pan-European competitor to Hollywood by raising its stake in **Tobis**, a Berlin-based film distributor, from 20 percent to 60 percent.

The deal will give Canal Plus better access to German television screens for movies made by its French units, **Le Studio Canal Plus** and **Pathe**, as well as those produced by **Bel Air**, its joint venture with **Warner Bros.**, and **Working Title**, its London-based venture with **Universal Studios**.

Canal Plus is concentrating on building up its distribution activities to counter the power of US studios, which control distribution in Europe often pulling popular domestic movies after a short run to make way for Hollywood products. Canal Plus still has two big gaps in its European distribution Network—in Belgium and the UK—which it is expected to plug shortly.

**Linde**, the world's leading manufacturer of industrial trucks, joined forces with **Komatsu** of Japan in a global marketing joint venture that will boost the German company's position in the US and Asian markets. Linde has 17 percent of the world market for forklift trucks, but sales are concentrated in Europe. It recently re-branded its American business in a bid to boost its 2 percent share of a market that is dominated by local manufacturer **Nacco**. It also opened a plant in China, but its Asian sales lag way behind **Komatsu**, **Nissan**, and **Toyota**.

Under the deal, Komatsu

will market Linde's products in Japan, and Linde's Italian unit, **Fiat OM**, will manufacture some of Komatsu's products in Europe. Komatsu also will provide Linde's American unit with products designed for the US market.

Europe's oil industry was bracing for another round of consolidation after Italy's **ENI** and Spain's **Repsol-YPF** were reported to be in merger talks. Both companies face pressure to keep pace with the recent wave of restructuring in the wake of **Exxon's** acquisition of **Mobil** and the merger of French rivals **TotalFina** and **Elf-Aquitaine**.

Although Repsol bought YPF, Argentina's biggest oil producer, last year, it remains a middle-ranking player in a game dominated by giants. ENI tried to join forces with Elf Aquitaine before TotalFina launched its successful \$48 billion and mulled taking stakes in two Spanish energy firms, **Gas Natural** and **Iberdrola**, the country's second-largest electricity producer.

A merger of ENI and Repsol would create the world's fifth-largest oil company by market capitalization, behind TotalFina and ahead of **Chevron** of the US.

Europe's car industry was also gripped by feverish takeover speculation with illustrious families such as **Agnelli**, **Quandt**, and **Peugeot** holding the key to the future of Italy's **Fiat**, luxury German car maker **BMW**, and **PSA**, the French Peugeot group. All three companies appear to be in play despite their flat denials that takeovers or mergers are imminent.

Fiat tops the speculation table with analysts saying it is only a matter of time before it announces a merger or is sold to another manufacturer. **DaimlerChrysler** is tipped most often as a likely predator/partner, but Ford, sitting on a \$28 billion cash pile and seeking to turnaround its barely profitable European operation, is seen as a possi-

ble suitor for the Italian company. The final word belongs to the Agnelli family, which owns more than 30 percent of its shares.

**BMW**, damaged by years of mounting losses at **Rover**, its British unit, has attracted the interest of **Volkswagen**, Germany's biggest car company, which is said to have proposed an alliance. But the Quandts, who control 40 percent of BMW, are not keen to surrender control.

Peugeot shares have risen sharply on reports that it is being courted by DaimlerChrysler. The support of the Peugeot family, which owns 37 percent of the company's voting shares, is seen as essential for any bid to succeed.

The consolidation of Europe's insurance industry gathered pace with the \$42.3 billion friendly merger of **Norwich Union** and **CGU** creating the UK's largest insurer and a company able to compete with continental giants like **Axa** of France, Germany's **Allianz**, and **Generali** of Italy.

The new company, to be called **CGNU**, will rank fifth in Europe and sixth in the world with annual premium revenues exceeding \$40 billion and 70,000 employees.

By joining forces, the two companies have shielded themselves from an unwanted bid by larger European rivals. They also have improved their chances of participating in the merger and acquisition frenzy in Europe triggered by the launch of the euro, falling premiums, and the surge in sales of long-term savings to Europe's aging population.

Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo will sign a free trade deal with the EU at its Lisbon summit March 23 that will give European investors and exporters almost as much freedom in Central America's largest market as US and Canadian firms obtained from the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1994.

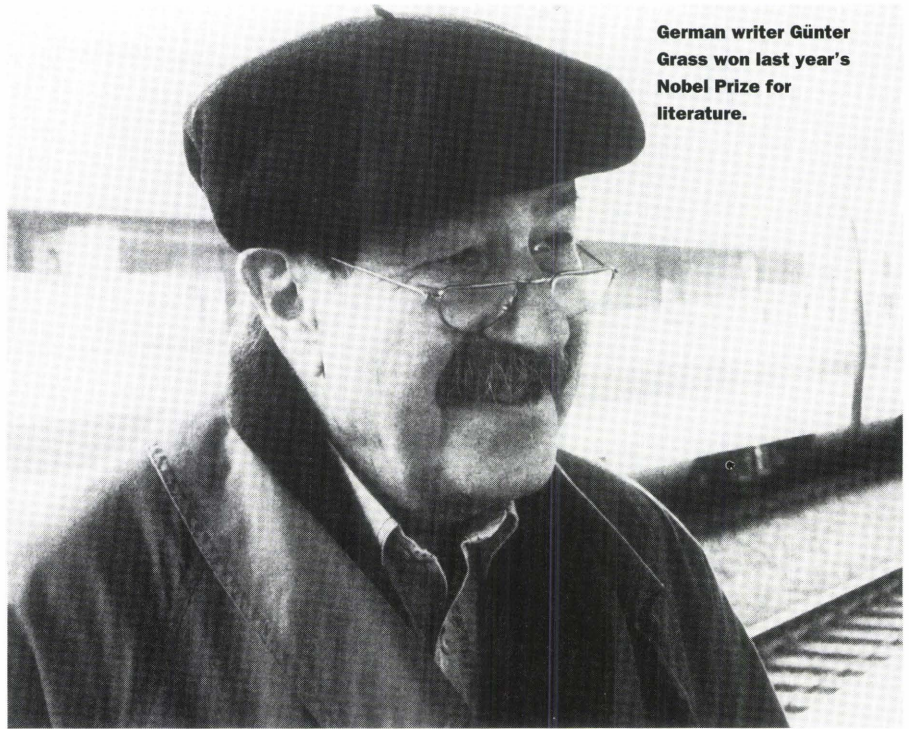
# The Grass Century

By Claire Bose

**G**ünter Grass, “whose frolicsome black fables portray the forgotten face of history,” is at last the winner of the 1999 Nobel Prize for literature. Awarded annually in the fields of physics, chemistry, medicine, economics, peace, and literature, the prizes honor living individuals who have made significant and lasting contributions in their fields. Apt then that Germany’s most eminent, and sometimes *enfant terrible*, writer should join the club. The choice was not surprising since Grass has long been tipped to win the prize. He heard the news on the radio as he was leaving his home in Lübeck to visit the dentist and describes his reaction as one of both happiness and pride.

Over the years, Grass has published more than twenty volumes of poetry, prose, and plays. It was, however, one of his earliest novels, *The Tin Drum*, that the Nobel judges singled out for exceptional praise, saying the book “will become one of the enduring literary works of the twentieth century.”

*The Tin Drum* is the novel that brought Grass international fame when it was published in 1959. Set in Danzig before World War II (which became Gdansk, Poland after the war), the novel is an allegory of Hitler’s rise to power. The central character is Oskar, a child intellectual who, at the age of three, decides to stop growing in protest at the forthcoming fascist invasion of his city. He communicates only through a toy drum to which he has become attached. It is only when Oskar returns to Danzig, once the fascist



German writer Günter Grass won last year's Nobel Prize for literature.

threat is gone, that he starts to grow again. Through this dark epic tale, filled with realism and magic realism, Grass tackles his country’s contemporary history—no easy feat at the time of publication. The novel, which has sold some 4 million copies, won him immediate critical acclaim and was followed by the highly praised *Cat and Mouse* and later *Dog Years*. These three novels form what is known as the *Danzig Trilogy* and are the works for which Grass is perhaps best known.

Grass himself has a wealth of information to draw upon for this trilogy, since Danzig was his childhood home. As a young man, he was a member of the Hitler Youth and fought during the last years of the Second World War, until American troops took him prisoner. His capture awakened him to the full horrors of war and resulted in his new commitment to peace and a persistent questioning of history and policy.

For this very reason, Grass has never been afraid of entering the political fray. His 1953 novel *The Plebs Try*

*Rebellion*, written after he had witnessed the 1953 East Berlin workers’ uprising, deeply offended the East German regime. During the 1960s, Grass worked closely with Willy Brandt, during the former chancellor’s electoral campaigns and acted as a speechwriter for Brandt during his term as Berlin’s mayor.

Age has not lessened Grass’s criticism of government policy. He was almost singular in voicing his fears over the German reunification process, seeing it almost as a failed act of colonization. His dissatisfaction with capitalism was described as “beastlike...after the victory over the communist system.” His subsequent novel on the subject, *Wide Field*, another epic, this time set in the final years of the German Democratic Republic, was not well received at all.

Grass even turned his back on the Social Democrats following the tightening of asylum and immigration laws, and he has long been a campaigner for human rights, making use of his standing to gain good publicity for his causes at

events such as the Frankfurt book fair.

It seems fitting then that the last Nobel Prize of the twentieth century should be awarded to Günter Grass, whose latest publication is entitled, *My Century*. Described as “a collection of interlinked stories celebrating the century,” and published simultaneously throughout the world, these 100 stories (one for each year of the century) are not, Grass has said, a history of the century, although together they undeniably form a remembrance of things past.

What at first seems a little daunting to non-Germans—after all, *My Century* refers to a German view of the century—soon becomes clear, as the tales come together to form a comprehensive picture of the last hundred years.

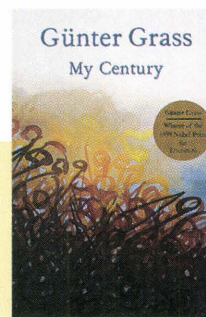
So much of the first half of the twentieth century was taken up with war, and the stories reflect that. For the war years 1914–1918, instead of front-line accounts of the horrors in the trenches,

we are projected forward to 1966 and a meeting between Erich Maria Remarque (author of *All Quiet on the Western Front*) and Ernst Jünger (author of *On the Marble Cliffs*) as they reflect upon their differing experiences of the Great War. The Second World War is also recounted in a similar fashion. The tale for 1938 links Kristallnacht with the fall of the Berlin wall some fifty years later (both events took place on November 9). For 1991, the focus this time is the Gulf War and the coverage by the media.

The twentieth century was also an era of great innovation. For 1902, Grass tells the tale of a young student who buys his very first straw hat and the ensuing technological advances they witness together. “There was much new at the time. The Imperial Post Office, for instance, had just issued uniform stamps for the entire Reich... And since progress was the keynote of the day,

many straw hatters were curious about times to come. My hat had many adventures...” Together the young man and his hat witness the first Zeppelin balloon cruising across the sky, the publication of Thomas Mann’s controversial *Buddenbrooks*, the launch of the world’s largest ship, the *Imperator*, and travel together to the newly opened zoo and see a movie. Technology ticks on, and in 1997, Dolly the cloned sheep makes her way onto the page. Even the euro gets a mention, “if they ever get around to it.”

The history of the twentieth century is vast but, without a doubt, the grand seignior of German literature has grasped its very essence and takes us on a compelling journey through the century in all its grandeur and all its horror. ☹



Claire Bose is a writer based in Frankfurt.

### **Günter Grass delivered his Nobel Lecture entitled “To Be Continued” on December 7, 1999. Following are excerpts from the lecture.**

...But how did I become a writer, poet, and artist—all at once and all on frightening white paper? What home-made hubris put a child up to such craziness? After all, I was only twelve when I realized I wanted to be an artist. It coincided with the outbreak of the Second World War, when I was living on the outskirts of Danzig. But my first opportunity for professional development had to wait until the following year, when I found a tempting offer in the Hitler Youth magazine *Hilf mit!* (Lend a Hand). It was a story contest. With prizes. I immediately set to writing my first novel. Influenced by my mother’s background, it bore the title *The Kashubians*, but the action did not take place in the painful present of that small and dwindling people; it took place in the thirteenth cen-

tury during a period of interregnum, a grim period when brigands and robber barons ruled the highways and the only recourse a peasant had to justice was a kind of kangaroo court.

All I can remember of it is that after a brief outline of the economic conditions in the Kashubian hinterland I started in on pillages and massacres with a vengeance. There was so much throttling, stabbing, and skewering, so many kangaroo-court hangings and executions that by the end of the first chapter all the protagonists and a goodly number of the minor characters were dead and either buried or left to the crows... Not for good, of course, but the neophyte had learned his lesson: next time he would have to be a bit more gentle with his characters....

•••

The publication of my first two novels, *The Tin Drum* and *Dog Years*, and the novella I stuck between them, *Cat and Mouse*, taught me early on, as a relatively young writer, that books can cause offence, stir up fury, even hatred, that what is undertaken out of love for one’s country can be taken as soiling one’s nest. From then on I have been controversial....

•••

In 1973...Willy Brandt spoke before the United Nations General Assembly, the first German chancellor to do so. He brought up the issue of worldwide poverty. The applause following his exclamation ‘Hunger too is war!’ was stunning.

I was present when he gave the speech. I was working on my novel *The Flounder* at the time. It deals with the very foundations of human existence including food, the lack and superabundance thereof, great gluttons and untold

starvelings, the joys of the palate and crusts from the rich man’s table.

The issue is still with us. The poor counter growing riches with growing birth rates. The affluent north and west can try to screen themselves off in security-mad fortresses, but the flocks of refugees will catch up with them: no gate can withstand the crush of the hungry.

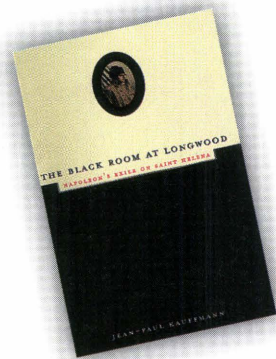
The future will have something to say about all this. Our common novel must be continued. And even if one day people stop or are forced to stop writing and publishing, if books are no longer available, there will still be storytellers giving us mouth-to-ear artificial respiration, spinning old stories in new ways: loud and soft, heckling and halting, now close to laughter, now on the brink of tears.

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Translated from German:  
Michael Henry Heim



# Kauffmann's **BlackRoom**

By Karen Taylor



**A**t age forty-five, Napoleon Bonaparte, fresh from his defeat at Waterloo, was shipped off to Saint Helena, a speck of land in the South Atlantic. It was a prison without walls, but a prison nonetheless, and the emperor experienced the same relentless disintegration that captives have known the world over. At age fifty-one, he succumbed. "The real cause of his death was melancholy," writes Jean-Paul Kauffmann, author of *The Black Room at Longwood*, a nonfiction work examining the emperor's six years on the British island.

Though he never makes overt mention of the fact, Kauffmann was himself held prisoner for three years in Beirut, hostage to Shiite Muslims. It is unlikely that such a book could have come from someone who had not endured such an experience. "The prisoner wears himself out trying to understand why he has been abandoned," writes Kauffmann. "Oblivion, indifference, and solitude sap his energy. In



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**Jean-Paul KAUFFMANN**

the end, these subversive activities destroy his will to live.”

But the book is about much more than captivity, and Kauffmann brings much more to the work than his Beirut insights. Readers will also find the keen sensory awareness of the wine aficionado (Kauffmann founded and edited a leading wine journal), the investigative talents of the journalist (he has worked for leading French newspapers and magazines), and the passion of the history buff and bibliophile. Like his other writings, this latest work bears the mark of Kauffmann’s subtle intelligence and gently wry wit.

*The Black Room* garnered five literary awards in France, including the prestigious Prix Femina, and the *Observer* named Kauffmann one of the 100 most promising writers of the twenty-first century. The English translation, published by Four Walls Eight Windows, has won widespread acclaim from US critics.

The following is an excerpt from a recent conversation with the author.

***The Black Room at Longwood has been a bestseller for its US publisher and has been nominated for “Best Nonfiction” by the National Book Critics Circle. Why do you think your book has been so popular with American readers?***

To tell you the truth, this success greatly surprises me. Perhaps I’m too modest! In any case, I feel very lucky to have had such an excellent translator. What interests American readers most, I think, is Napoleon, but that was secondary for me. You could even say that the book’s success is the result of a misunderstanding. I wanted to write a book about the traces left by history: what remains today in Saint Helena of such an event? Did it leave a mark on the island? To find out, I investigated the house at Longwood, where Napoleon spent his last days, and interviewed the people who live there today. I structured my book like a detective novel.

***You are preparing for a second book tour in the United States—this time in the Pacific Northwest. How did the public react to your first tour?***

In my conferences, I focused on the smell of captivity. Every prisoner in the world will tell you the same thing: the



**Jean-Paul Kauffmann (right), author and editor of the French magazine *L'Amateur de Cigare*, samples cigars in the Partagas factory in Havana.**

most striking sensation when you visit a prison is the smell of confined bodies, of bad food. This smell immediately gives you the feeling of an enclosed space. I think that this olfactory aspect surprised my audiences. Napoleon was in fact very modern in that he had a very keen sense of smell, and he talked about it. At the time, doing so was taboo.

***The Black Room works on a number of levels—it is a book about history, time, captivity, French–British relations, mortality, solitude. What was your original objective? And how did the book take shape?***

Originally, I had no intention of writing a book on Saint Helena. I traveled to the island to write an article for the French magazine *Geo*. But after having written that piece, I was very frustrated. I had come back with so many impressions that I couldn’t express! Nevertheless, I was very hesitant to write a book because of my own captivity. My experience had nothing to do with that of Napoleon, yet all imprisonments are similar. I had to resolve that contradiction.

***Having been a prisoner yourself, you have an intimate knowledge and understanding of that experience. Were you at all surprised at how one of the most powerful men in history dealt with his own captivity?***

I think he dealt with it very well. In fact, I

think it was his greatest victory of all. He kept his sadness and depression to himself; he did not confide in anyone. For him, that would have been a personal failure. At the end, he was overwhelmed by disillusionment. He spent most of his days soaking in the bathtub. It is that man who interested me, the man who was naked, disarmed, vanquished.

***Are you currently working on another book?***

Yes, it concerns *The Struggle Between Jacob and the Angel*, a painting by Delacroix that hangs in the Saint-Sulpice Cathedral in Paris. It is the artist’s last work, and it is an enigma. I have no idea whether or not I will be able to resolve it, but that is of little importance. It is the attempt that counts. That is why I have always been so enthralled by detective stories: The hero tries to solve a mystery, and even though the results are sometimes disappointing, it is always fascinating to go along on the adventure. The author takes the reader by the hand and says, “Hold on tight, we’re leaving, follow me!” ☺

*Karen Taylor is the editor-in-chief of FRANCE Magazine.*



# Type **A guide to the new and noteworthy books from Europe**

## **Patrick O'Brian: A Life Revealed** By Dean King; Henry Holt & Co.; 448 pages; \$28

On January 2, 2000, one of the twentieth century's most accomplished and enigmatic authors slipped away like a square-rigger disappearing into the night mist. Patrick O'Brian, celebrated author of the wildly popular twenty-volume series detailing the adventures of Royal Navy captain Jack Aubrey and his ship's surgeon-cum-spy Stephen Maturin, died in Dublin at the age of eighty-five.

O'Brian's passing came just as biographer Dean King was putting the finishing touches on *Patrick O'Brian: A Life Revealed*, a well-researched, if limited, portrait of the celebrated creator of the seafaring series set during the Napoleonic era. King's interest in O'Brian began, as it did for many Americans, when in 1991 he read the *New*

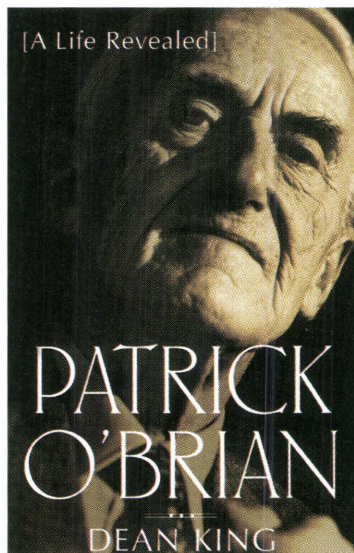
*York Times Book Review's* cover story reintroducing the author to US readers. Since then, he has staked a claim as O'Brian's biggest, if not most enterprising, fan. He has published two highly successful companion books, *A Sea of Words* (a guide to the cultural and nautical terminology of the period) and *Harbors and High Seas* (an atlas to the places visited in the books). In 1998, he wrote a profile of the author for *New York* magazine that attempted to delve into O'Brian's personal history, a subject the author tenaciously guarded.

For Aubrey-Maturin fans, King's book is the Rosetta stone to Patrick O'Brian. Here the biog-

rapher uncovers what the curmudgeonly writer had long sought to keep hidden, most notably his failed marriage and two children. The proverbial key to unlocking his secret past proved

to be a document filed in London officially changing his surname from Russ to O'Brian. From there, King tracked down the author's son, Richard Russ, and members of the Russ family and found them willing to talk about the man behind the novels who had cut his ties with them.

For almost fifty years, O'Brian claimed to be from Ireland, but in fact, he had been born in



Buckinghamshire, England in 1914, the grandson of a German immigrant who had built a successful fur business in London. The second-youngest of nine children, Patrick endured an unsettled childhood. His mother died when he was very young, and his father teetered on the verge of bankruptcy. He was a sickly child and immersed himself in books and writing. As a teenager, he had published his first novel and a collection of stories.

At twenty, after dropping out of RAF training, he made his way to London and joined the literary pub scene. There, he met Elizabeth Jones. They married in 1936, even though, King comments, "Patrick's life centered on literature, writing, and love of language, [whereas] Elizabeth... was nearly illiterate."

The couple produced Richard and Jane, a daughter born with spina bifida. In 1940, "in a moment of weakness," writes King, "he left his helpless family, causing permanent bitterness, not only between him and Elizabeth and Richard, but among his disapproving siblings." Jane died two years later.

When the Germans began raining bombs on London in the fall of 1940, Patrick volunteered as an ambulance driver. During this duty, he fell in love with a fellow driver, Mary Tolstoy. Both fluent in French, they soon were recruited by British intelligence and served until the war's end, at which time Russ became O'Brian.

With his new wife and new name, O'Brian embarked on the arduous task of honing his writing and eking out an existence, first in Wales and then in the southern French town of Collioure. His son Richard spent significant stretches of time with the couple until a rift in 1964 ended communication between father and son. O'Brian would later claim he had no children of his own.

Over the years, the author continued to write and publish. He made extra money by translating books from French to English, including the works of Simone de Beauvoir. He and Mary acquired a small vineyard, and their life revolved around thrift and a cycle of

reading, writing, and making wine.

O'Brian's career took an important turn in 1967. C.S. Forester, author of the Horatio Hornblower sea adventures, had passed away the year before, and the Philadelphia-based publisher J.B. Lippincott was looking for a new author to fill that market niche. O'Brian, who had already published two seafaring novels, signed a \$7,500 contract to produce a maritime adventure, and Jack Aubrey and Stephen Maturin were born.

King notes that O'Brian modeled Aubrey's historical details on the career of the Scottish commander Thomas Cochrane. However, "O'Brian wanted his captain to be a thorough Englishman.... At least in part, he visualized his brother Mike, a tall, powerful, and spirited man of action, and a sociable one."

Critics greeted the first Aubrey-Maturin novel, *Master and Commander*, with generally favorable reviews, and the book generated enough sales to interest the publisher in a sequel. Ultimately, word-

of-mouth popularized the series, and Aubrey-Maturin steadily built a readership over the next three decades. With each new installment picking up where the previous had ended, O'Brian continued to attract new admirers of the novels' high level of historical accuracy and the complexity and depth of the two main characters.

Although an American publisher had commissioned the first books, the series fell out of print in the United States by 1979 after only five novels. It would be more than a decade and nine more novels in the series before Aubrey and Maturin returned to American bookstores. In 1991, W. W. Norton reintroduced the series, and with the *New York Times* calling the collection "the best historical novels ever written," American readers took notice. O'Brian's popularity skyrocketed in the US during the 1990s, continuing through last fall's release of *Blue at the Mizzen*, the twentieth and final book in the series.

King paints O'Brian as a man who hungers for recognition of his work. He

is also petty, stubborn, extremely sensitive to criticism, and an intellectual snob. However, he is also capable of tremendous warmth and generosity, and his wife seems to have been an especially soothing influence. Particularly of interest to Aubrey-Maturin fans will be King's description of O'Brian's voracious acquisition of research materials, including an entire set of the 1810 *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

Undoubtedly, some O'Brian devotees will deride King's book as an opportunistic airing of the author's dirty laundry. It would have been preferable if King had discussed in greater detail his attempts to contact O'Brian before his death, his work on the companion books, and an anthology of sea stories he edited and dedicated to the author (O'Brian returned the copy King sent him).

Nevertheless, one senses that King is trying to present an accurate and fair picture of the author. He rightly argues his "attempt to plumb the depths of O'Brian's real life" is a means to show the reader how the author was able to create "extraordinary fiction, fiction that for so many of us, embodies the sheer joy of reading."

Indeed, O'Brian himself wrote a meticulously detailed, if sympathetic, biography of Picasso with whom he'd had a brief acquaintance in the 1950s.

Unfortunately, without O'Brian's participation, the book, although it contains many revelations and details, keeps the reader on the periphery of the author's life—essentially where O'Brian kept most everyone. We read his son's remembrances and his editor's comments, and King frequently matches scenes in the novels with events in O'Brian's life. (Most notably, King points to the penultimate Aubrey-Maturin novel, *The Hundred Days*, published in 1998, and O'Brian's decision to write the death of Maturin's beloved wife Diana only months after his own wife's passing.) Otherwise, O'Brian and his wife remain silent and their life in Collioure opaque.

With their deaths and those of his ex-wife and all but one of his siblings, readers hungering for a fuller account of O'Brian's life can only hope that new information emerges from other knowledgeable sources. Otherwise, his admirers will be forced to search for clues about the man through careful reading

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of his works—which is precisely what Patrick O’Brian would have wanted.

—Peter Gwin

## Blue at the Mizzen

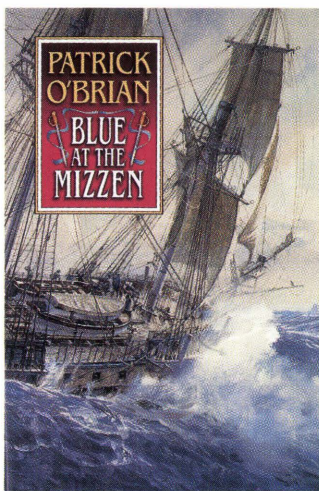
By Patrick O’Brian; W. W. Norton; 262 pages; \$24

“The sea, if it teaches nothing else, does at least compel a submission to the inevitable which resembles patience,” writes Patrick O’Brian in the final installment of his seafaring series set around the time of the Napoleonic wars in Europe. *Blue at the Mizzen*, the author’s twentieth novel, represents the final saga in the adventures of ship captain Jack Aubrey and his loyal surgeon Stephen Maturin, much to the displeasure of legions of fans all over the world.

Without intimate knowledge of nineteenth century sailing technology and Royal Navy culture, reading O’Brian requires patience, which is well rewarded. Not having read any of the other books in his series, I didn’t really know what to expect.

The book’s most striking feature is its elegant language. It is one of the best-written books I have ever read. The author’s description of ships and sailors and his sense of the times feel extremely authentic. O’Brian seems effortlessly to transport the reader aboard the ship, *Surprise*, and off on her hazardous journey to Chile. Mixed with the rich detail is an air of mystery as the ship and her crew, which are said to have embarked on a “hydrographical” voyage to chart the coastline, are really seeking to provide military assistance to independence fighters.

While adventure and drama are ever present, the language is so antiquated and sometimes the nautical terms so foreign to my landlubber’s ears that I was often put off and became disengaged as the story developed. It is almost as if the author is too much of a gentleman with his ‘proper’ use of language. As strange as that may sound, it kept me at a certain distance.



Nevertheless, the interaction between the captain, Jack Aubrey, a man of adventure and daring, and the more sedate and scholarly doctor, Stephen Maturin, makes for a wonderful balance aboard the ship.

From getting the ship repaired in England and Madeira to the doctor’s brief love interest in Sierra Leone to storms and disasters and battles at sea, the book moves at a steady clip as the captain receives a promotion and a new assignment as a reward for his bravery and victory in battle.

O’Brian is said to have written three chapters of the next Aubrey-Maturin novel before his death, but it remains to be seen if anyone can (or will try to) pick up where he left off. However, my curiosity has been aroused, and I look forward to reading the first book in the series, *Master and Commander*, to see how this beautifully written seafaring saga began.

—Robert J. Guttman

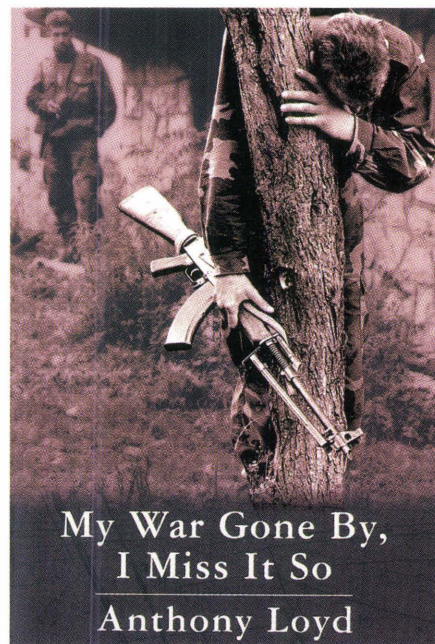
## My War Gone By, I Miss It So

By Anthony Loyd; Atlantic Monthly Press; 321 pages; \$25

If you’ve ever caught yourself slipping under the romantic spell of war—the adrenaline rush of life-or-death moments, the deep bonds of brothers in arms, the Shakespearean beauty of star-crossed lovers caught on opposite sides—then Anthony Loyd’s *My War Gone By, I Miss It So* offers both a voyeuristic thrill and a sobering cure.

Loyd went in search of experiencing a war firsthand. When a brief career in the British army didn’t yield it, even after stints in Northern Ireland and the Gulf War, he became a journalist and headed for Bosnia in 1993. First in Sarajevo and then in a series of shattered towns and hamlets throughout Croatia and Bosnia, Loyd finds the armed conflict he has always wanted.

He lures us into his nightmare, numbing our reason with the narcotic of his adventure. He takes us to a nightclub in Sarajevo where “the fashion accessories included



Scorpion machine-pistols strapped to the ankle for the men, thigh-high black suede boots for the vampsque women,” and where “on a good night there was even shellfire to pick up where the bass left off.”

But it’s a set-up. The stylized swaggering belies the war’s grim reality. The adrenaline high of being in a battle zone comes at the price of having scenes of carnage and sorrow forever seared into your consciousness. We feel the rush as we bolt with him from a car under a hail of gunfire, diving for cover in a ditch, but the high quickly gives way to the hangover when we come face to face with a maggot-eaten corpse. Nevertheless, the terror abates, and we follow him into the fire again.

Loyd says his actions aren’t completely guided by cravings for action. “With a few notable exceptions,” he writes, “print journalists in Yugoslavia hamstrung themselves” by not going to the front, choosing to interview “figures of authority a little way behind the line, who will afford a broader understanding of what is going on”—and a lot more personal safety. In chasing the “suits,” as he calls the politicians and aid bureaucrats, many journalists missed the stories that held the essence of the war.

His taste for living near the frontlines takes its toll in the form of increasingly frayed nerves and nightmares. On visits back to London, he turns to heroin for relief. “Smack—my most in-

timate and possessive lover," he confides. "I would be hard pressed to explain the cravings to any outsider, those moments when my mind turns its back on rationality and wills my return to her arms again; and once in that embrace I do not want to leave." War and heroin become his twin addictions, and before it's too late, we are sucked into the vortex with him, hoping against hope for his escape from both.

Loyd's book is not a "big picture" reconstruction of the war's events, like Laura Silber's *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation* or Misha Glenny's *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, rather it's a highly personal experience. He repeatedly questions his motives as a foreigner coming to watch someone else's war.

"Why was I here?" he asks. "There had to be a reason. I was not a Bosnian stuck in Sarajevo.... So why did I stay? Was I a sluttish dilettante day-tripping into someone else's nightmare? Maybe."

He reasons, perhaps a bit facetiously, that the same morbid fascination attends all the foreigners' decisions to come to Bosnia. "Men and women who venture to someone else's war through choice do so in a variety of guises," he writes. "UN general, BBC correspondent, aid worker, mercenary: in the final analysis they all want the same thing, a hit off the action, a walk on the dark side. It's just a question of how slick a cover you give yourself, and how far you want to go."

As a war correspondent, Loyd goes all the way, making friendships and acquaintances that transcend nearly all the battle lines—Muslims, Croats, Serbs, soldiers, mercenaries, gangsters, peasants, aid workers, journalists, and UN troops. Eventually, he comes, however, to sympathize with the Bosnian-Muslims, and his anger finds a target. "The dreary, cynical, flaccid suits in whose pudgy fingers lolled the reins of Europe's power. I was one of the 'do something brigade', the words...used to describe and dismiss the growing numbers of people wanting interdictory action in Bosnia. When you are faced with a prophetic abscess in Europe...is not 'doing something' the whole point?"

What Loyd has done, in fact, is construct a visceral account of his war and its lasting effect on his life. His taut prose and original turns of phrase testify to his talent as a writer. Further-

more, his ability to interweave his battlefield experiences with his battle with heroin reveals a gifted storyteller. As a special correspondent for the *Times* of London, the thirty-four-year-old Loyd has continued to cover armed conflicts, most recently in Chechnya. With his obvious talent, he has the potential to add to his oeuvre. One only hopes that he lives to do it.

—Peter Gwin

### John Major: The Autobiography

By John Roy Major; Harper Collins; 560 pages; \$35

John Major has become the United Kingdom's forgotten prime minister. Yet, he dominated British politics for most of the last decade, occupying Number 10 Downing Street for almost seven years until Tony Blair's landslide election triumph in May 1997. Since then, Major has become a non-person in his own Conservative Party, which is airbrushing him out of existence like a discredited member of the Soviet Politburo.

The Conservative Party leadership, most of its MPs, activists, and rank-and-file members skirt over and play down the successes of the Major years, focusing on—and exaggerating—the failures.

This book attempts to give Major's side of the story and lay down a mark for future historians. "I will not concede possession of the recent past to the mythographers of the Left or Right who have every self-interest in retouching the history we made," he writes.

The book records some of the most dramatic events in the country's problematic relationship with Europe, including the fraught negotiations over the landmark Maastricht Treaty in 1991. It also tells a "rags to riches" story of a meteoric rise to the pinnacle of power with a plot line that Hollywood would dismiss as too fanciful. By comparison, both Margaret Thatcher (who looms large in the book) and Tony Blair, who are much better known in

the US, pursued utterly conventional paths to the top.

Major's spectacular rise is one of the great mysteries of British politics. Unfortunately, after reading this book, we are none the wiser about how this very ordinary man achieved such extraordinary success.

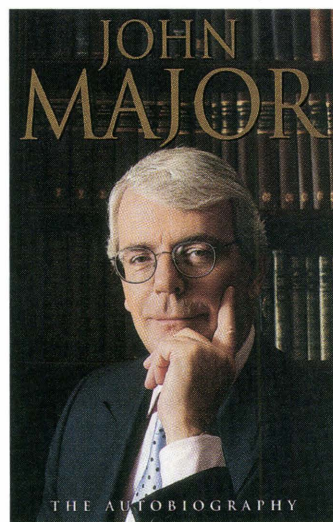
Major was born in 1943 in a colorless southern suburb of London into a family that was always short of money. His father was a circus artiste and later the owner of a company that made garden gnomes. Major dropped out of high school at sixteen and spent six months on the dole while looking for a job as a clerk and helping his father with the gnomes. His contemporaries, by contrast, were heading for Oxford or Cambridge, fired by ambitions of political careers and high office.

Then the teenage Major "found" politics, and there was no looking back. Within a decade he was a local ward politician in south London, had qualified as a banker, working briefly in Nigeria, and entered Parliament in 1979, Margaret Thatcher's first election victory, having taken one of the safest Conservative seats in the country.

The rest is history. Major seemed destined for parliamentary obscurity, but he was quickly spotted by Margaret Thatcher, and his meteoric rise began. He hit the big time in 1987 when he was promoted from chief secretary of the Treasury to foreign secretary despite telling Thatcher it was "the job

for which I was least prepared." Three months later he was chancellor of the exchequer—the peak of his ambition. But when Thatcher dramatically resigned in 1990 after a cabinet rebellion, largely over her stance on Europe, he stood, and won, the ballot to succeed her—with her active support.

Why? How? Major says he was driven by fame and pursued it by hard work. "I worked twice as hard as anyone else. I attended meetings and functions, canvassed and supported people...determined never to fall again through lack of effort...I was just there."



Major had one more surprise up his sleeve: Against all the odds, and the calculations of his own party, he won the 1992 general election.

Almost immediately, however, his administration began to fall apart when the pound was humiliatingly ejected from the European Exchange Rate Mechanism in the fall. The Conservative Party has not yet recovered from the trauma, and Major himself still agonizes over whether he should have resigned. "I was never certain then that it was right to stay, nor am I now."

The 1992 victory was Major's greatest achievement. It "killed socialism in Britain" and "made the world safe for Tony Blair." But his detractors, mostly in his own party, now seem only to remember that in 1997 he led it to its worst election defeat since 1832.

He had other successes too, not least bequeathing a booming economy to Blair and putting in place some of the building blocks for peace in Northern Ireland. But he was overwhelmed by the bitter divisions in his own party over Europe, and he questions his handling of this explosive issue that continues to dog his successor as Conservative leader, William Hague. Major is refreshingly self-critical. "I shall always regret that I rarely found my own authentic voice in politics. I was too safe too often. Too defensive. Too reactive."

This is a well-written, fast-paced book with the added bonus that it is largely free of the pomposity and self-importance so common in most political memoirs.

—Bruce Barnard

### Five Days in London, May 1940

By John Lukacs; Yale University Press; 288 pages; \$20

On May 10, 1940, following the collapse of Norway to German invaders, Neville Chamberlain was driven from office as Britain's prime minister and replaced by Winston Churchill. On the way home from the investiture at Buckingham Palace, Churchill said to his traveling companion, "I hope it is not too late. I very much fear it is."

The story of the days that followed, of the fall of Belgium and France, the evacuation of Dunkirk and, three months later, the Battle of Britain have

been often told, by Churchill in his own war memoirs and by countless British, European, and American historians.

Now a prolific American historian and Hungarian émigré, John Lukacs, has brought his interpretation of the events of five days, May 24–28, 1940. These he considers the real hinge of fate in the war that ultimately would last almost six years. His thesis is that as Britain was confronted with Hitler's impending conquest of France, its principal leaders were seriously, albeit briefly, divided over what course to take. The alternatives were to resist to the end the presumably inevitable invasion of the British Isles or to nibble at peace feelers emanating from the Axis powers and in effect acquiesce in Nazi domination of the Continent.

Lukacs himself and other historians have written in recent years of this tightly fought political struggle but not in such a compact and concise presentation. Churchill did not even hint of it in his memoirs. Indeed, Lukacs, whose broad sweep and interests are reflected in his dozens of books, has come under fire from some academics for pushing his thesis too boldly, particularly because he is not a specialist in British politics.

The author asserts that the real debate was conducted and kept close to the vest in the War Cabinet, a five-member group that functioned as an inner government. The group comprised Churchill, Chamberlain, Lord Halifax, and two Labor Party leaders in the coalition government, Clement Attlee and Arthur Greenwood. It was a dispute of policy and principle between two protagonists, Churchill and Halifax, the foreign secretary. While describing Halifax as the "quintessential" appeaser, Lukacs writes the foreign secretary was motivated by patriotism and not a personal ambition to follow

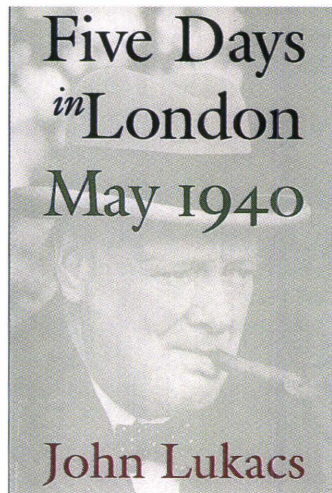
Churchill into Number 10 Downing Street.

Most clearly, this account shows how the tightest circle of people held vital information when an entire nation's destiny was at stake. The most apt comparison in recent American history would be the days in October 1962 before President Kennedy announced the Cuban missile crisis. But in an era of twenty-four-hour cable television news cycles, it is hard to imagine such secrecy prevailing anywhere now in Western governments.

As recounted by Lukacs, many of the debates were carried on almost in code. Perhaps because the words require almost a translation, Lukacs takes them as a baseline to explain not only surrounding events, especially in Belgium and France, but the British frames of reference.

Two particular themes are the conservatism of Halifax and the Tory establishment, as well as King George VI. They remained highly suspicious of Churchill, his eloquence, sense of drama, and steadfast opposition to appeasement, which many Tories had promoted from 1933 until the war began in 1939. Even into the first year of the war, much conservative sympathy lay against engaging Germany in a war on the European continent. The author also bluntly describes Britain of 1940 as a tired, old country whose condition was far deeper than the weariness produced by the First World War and the inter-war period.

The book, in effect, goes on two tracks. The inner debate and explanations of just how disconnected the British public was from the drama unfolding. This disconnect was true not only of the political debates, but of the war on the Continent itself. Lukacs's description of the newspaper coverage



**We are reminded just how narrowly Churchill had survived the most serious political threat to his wartime leadership.**

is so sad as to be almost amusing—from the advertisements in the *Guardian* in late May for weekend excursions to Paris to the absence of coverage of the inner workings of government. Trying to track public opinion is a tricky business, but the relatively unsophisticated readings of the time show a public with only some awareness of the perils at hand. What the author does not detail is how much of this can be ascribed to discreet news manipulation and management at the highest levels of government and Fleet Street and how much to misinformed reporting. Even the extent of the pending catastrophe at Dunkirk barely seemed to sink in with the press or public.

By luck, a total disaster—the loss of 400,000 British troops at Dunkirk—was avoided. Hitler's decision to halt the German army's advance and to allow the air force to try to finish off the British Expeditionary Force made possible the escape of so many troops by nearly every seagoing craft available on the English south coast.

Moreover, the glimmer of hope that British soldiers could be successfully evacuated helped create the context in the War Cabinet for Churchill to wear down Halifax and bring to an end the debate on pursuing diplomatic options with the Italians and Germans.

By this interesting account, gracefully told, we are reminded just how narrowly Churchill had survived the most serious political threat to his wartime leadership. Having done so, he could turn a united British nation to confront the most serious external threat ever posed in its history.

—Michael D. Mosettig

### A Star Called Henry

By Roddy Doyle; Viking Press; 343 pages; \$25

Roddy Doyle is quite probably Ireland's most famous living writer. He has published six books to date, including a Booker prizewinner. All three novels that form the *Barrytown Trilogy* have been made into films—*The Commitments* being the

most famous. All six novels are set in Dublin and all are written in Doyle's inimitable style—humor, honesty, and a good deal of profanity.

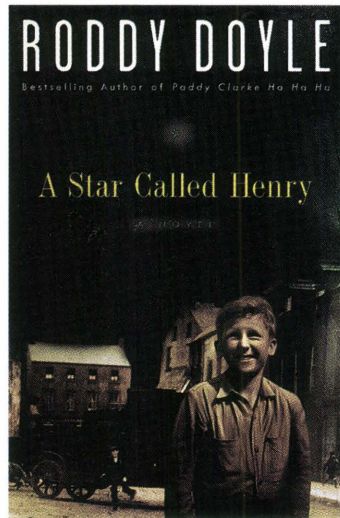
*A Star Called Henry* differs from Doyle's first five novels in one way. Whereas his previous novels have always focused on small-time tales of a closely-knit society, Doyle has chosen a much grander theme altogether and has selected one of the most important events of Irish history to serve as the backdrop for his novel.

Henry Smart, whose life Doyle will be chronicling for his second trilogy (*The Last Roundup*), comes into the world in 1901. He will be a child of the century, and he is born into a country

that is still part of the British Empire, into a city with unimaginable poverty and slums. Frank McCourt, in his bestselling memoir, *Angela's Ashes*, wrote that there was nothing worse than an Irish childhood, and it certainly seems that Henry Smart has his own share of hardship to

overcome. His father is a one-legged bouncer come hit man, and from the age of three, he is already living on the streets, taking care of his younger brother, with staying alive the only goal in mind.

But this is fiction, and from birth, Henry has been blessed with the ability not only to survive, but also to be a part of some of the most significant events of Irish history. At fourteen, he finds himself fighting in the Easter Uprising of 1916, alongside the likes of Pádraig Pearse, James Connolly, and Michael Collins. He narrowly escapes death using water divining powers he has inherited from his father and goes on to become one of Collins' most trusted men. He trains new recruits to wage war against the British and acts as Collins' assassin, all with the help of little more than a stolen bicycle and his long-gone father's wooden leg.



Much has been said regarding the facts and significance surrounding the events of the 1916 uprising, when the Irish Volunteers, and the Irish Citizens' Army joined together to occupy Dublin's post office on Easter Monday. The eventual surrender of the republicans to the British resulted in the swift execution of the ringleaders. This act, in itself, gave fuel to rising republican sentiment that, in turn, led

to the civil war of 1919–1922, thus resulting in the creation of the Irish Free State. Such a sensitive and contentious period of history is undoubtedly very difficult to tackle, but Doyle acquits himself well. Although he deals with historical figures in his book (Connolly teaches Henry to read; Collins is central to the novel), Doyle is adamant that he has not written a history of his country and makes no bones about the fact that he has altered dates and events to suit his narrative.

Fact and fiction aside, historians and non-historians alike will find little not to like about Henry Smart—his confidence, his humor, his pride. He is a myth and not a legend, more Butch and Sundance than Bonnie and Clyde, but a very well created myth at that.

—Claire Bose

### As It Is In Heaven

By Niall Williams; Warner Books; 310 pages; \$23

“If music be the food of love, play on.” Shakespeare sprinkled such sweet sayings throughout his comedies and this one, from *Twelfth Night*, could quite easily have been written for Niall Williams' beautiful second novel, *As It Is In Heaven*. A comedy in Shakespeare's day simply signified a happy ending, and such is the way with Williams' novel. However, at face value, the story line may seem as if it should be doomed to the tomes of tragedy, but Williams' lyricism and soft charm pull the novel firmly back to the realms of romance and magic realism.

Stephen Griffin is himself no



stranger to tragedy. His mother and sister died in a car accident when he was still young, and he grows up with his father, devouring history books until he eventually makes the subject his trade and arrives in a small town in the west of Ireland and stays as a teacher. He is timid and lives a solitary life; sincerely believing that this is as good as it gets.

And so it is. Until, that is, one day when he is cajoled into going to a local fundraising concert. He dices with death on the way (he too is nearly killed in a road accident), but once the music begins, Stephen is mesmerized and falls in love with the Italian violinist, Gabriella Castoldi.

Meanwhile, Stephen's father, Philip

is waiting to die, as he has been for the past twenty years. He cannot wait to be with his wife and daughter in heaven. He sees his son but once a month when they sit together listening to classical music and playing chess. When they sit down to play after Stephen's meeting with Gabriella, Philip immediately notices a change in his son. As Stephen

# EUROPE'S LITERARY ROAD SHOW

## ONE HUNDRED WRITERS ON A TRANSCONTINENTAL MISSION

"Are we building a new Tower of Babel or a house in which all of Europe's cultures can live together in harmony?" That question will be one of the topics discussed and debated June 1–July 17, when a special train will travel from Lisbon to Berlin via St. Petersburg. One hundred writers from forty European countries will be onboard. In their luggage, each will bring a text they have written, which will have been translated into every European language. The train and its cultural cargo will stop at twenty cities along a route that crosses Spain, France, Belgium, Germany, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Russia, Belarus, and Poland. Throughout the trip, the writers will meet the public, give readings of their works, exchange ideas, and participate in events organized by the stopover cities.

The itinerary taken by the *Literature Express Europe 2000* retraces the historic route of the *North-South Express*, the train that first linked northern and southern Europe together more than a hundred years ago but was brought to a halt by the political divisions and conflicts of the twentieth century. Its story is worth repeating since it mirrors the history of the European continent.

Conceived by Georges

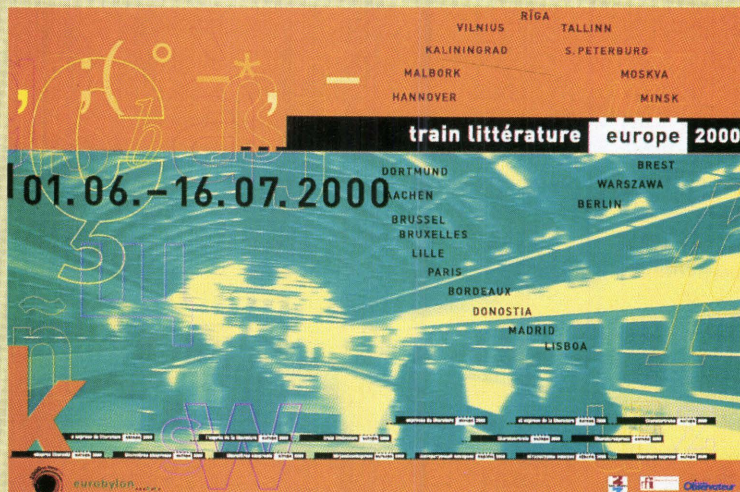
Nagelmackers, a Belgian banker who dreamed of a train that would cross Europe's frontiers without stopping, the *North-South Express* made its inaugural run in 1896. It traveled from Lisbon to St. Petersburg via Paris and Berlin in just eighty-four hours, making it the world's fastest train at the time. Not only was it second to none in speed, it was also the height of luxury, with sumptuous compartments and impeccable service. Its passengers represented a refined mix of Russian nobility, international diplomats, German businessmen, and wealthy tourists.

With the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo, the golden age of trans-European rail travel was brought to an abrupt halt. The *North-South Express* limped through various revival attempts but fell hostage to the turbulent history of twentieth century Europe. After the October Revolution, Russian aristocrats fled their country on this train. Later, countless artists, Jewish refugees, and communists used it to escape the terrors of Nazi Germany. Soldiers on their way to the front took the same line, both in 1914 when Belgium was invaded and again from

1936–1939 during the Spanish Civil War. There even came a time when part of the route was put to the heinous use of transporting victims to Nazi concentration camps. Finally, the Berlin blockade of 1948 severed the North-South rail link altogether.

The idea of celebrating the year 2000, when a united,

people come from Eastern Europe, are journalists, editors, or publishers, politically engaged and relatively young. The oldest, from Latvia, was born in 1936; the youngest, from Slovenia, in 1973, but the majority are in their thirties and forties. During their literary passage through Europe, they will be



border-free Europe is no longer just a dream, by following the same route as the historic train that first bridged the distances between different European cultures, came from Berlin. Thomas Wohlfahrt, director of the LiteraturWERKstatt, a literary workshop there, soon found willing partners for his project all over the European continent, with particularly enthusiastic support from eastern countries.

Many of the one hundred writers who will be bringing Europe's literature to the

jotting down notes for a fifteen-page essay "On Europe," which each of them will write at the end of the trip. The texts will be published in a book called *Eurobylon* that will be translated into every European language and published in 2001. A unique travel diary, it will provide a hundred different visions of the Europe taking shape today—a continent striving for political and economic unity while trying to preserve its cultural diversity.

—Ester Laushway

sleeps by the chessboard, Philip realizes two things: that his son is in love and that he, Philip, is indeed dying. This last assumption is confirmed by a visit to the hospital, and Philip vows to stay alive long enough to help his son through the grief of love, for Philip believes that love can only lead to heartbreak.

From there, the novel unfolds into a tale of love lost and found. Williams' prose is more akin to delicate poetry, and his story is as spellbinding as a sumptuous symphony. The music unleashes powerful emotions during Stephen's first concert: "It swept into the air like a bird with four wings, as the four musicians bowed their strings...The music flew through the room and filled it with a kind of sweet breathing that rose and fell in the breasts of the audience."

Williams has given his supporting characters larger than life personalities, each blessed with a special skill that verges on those of a magician, and these fit well into the magical quality of the novel. For example, there is Nelly Grant, who runs the local fruit shop in the tiny town of Kenmore. When it comes to fruit, she instinctively knows her customers' needs. For Stephen, she prescribes plums. "The man has no balance, and plums are the fruit of balance... Peaches work in the same way for people of southern climates, but it is plums, thought Nelly Grant, that balance the Irish."

In addition to *Four Letters of Love*, Williams has also written a number of non-fiction books, all set in Ireland. In *As It Is in Heaven*, he successfully paints Ireland's west coast as a wild and desolate landscape of almost indescribable beauty.

The author also employs bits of humor to shape the novel's tone. Vittorio Mazza, the musician that Gabriella Castoldi replaces, has for years endured recurring nightmares of his vision of purgatory: "The day after he arrived in Dublin with the other members of the ensemble, he woke in his hotel and felt with alarm the peculiar grayness of the light. He

imagined the cause was the net curtains and drew them aside only discover with grim astonishment that the gray was the color of the sky.... Vittorio gasped with the awfulness of it, blinked his eyes and opened them only to understand that he had arrived in the haunting landscape of his worst dream and that Dublin seemed to be the place that for sixteen years he had been calling Purgatory." Of course, Vittorio Mazza lasts little more than twenty-four hours in the rain-soaked city of Dublin before fleeing to his native Venice.

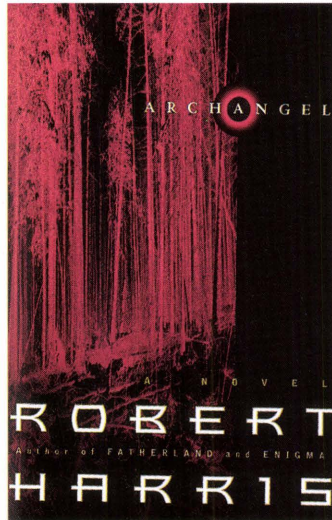
All told, *As It Is in Heaven* is a wonderfully moving novel that confirms Williams as one of Ireland's best contemporary writers. So settle down with your choice of fruit, for if strawberries be the fruit of love, read on! (Actually, I think Nelly Grant has strawberries as the fruit of optimism, but you get my drift...)

—Claire Bose

### Archangel

By Robert Harris; Random House; 373 pages; \$25

"You say Moscow is a scary town. It is. Why? I'll tell you. Because there's no tradition of private property in Russia. First of all, there were workers and peasants who had nothing, and the nobility owned the country. Then there were workers and peasants with nothing, and the Party owned the country. Now, there are still workers and peasants with nothing, and the country's owned, as it's always been owned, by whoever has the biggest fists. Unless you understand that, you can't begin to understand Russia. You can't make sense of the present unless a part of you lives in the past."



Fluke Kelso makes these insightful comments in Robert Harris's intelligent thriller *Archangel*. A down on his luck Oxford historian who has written extensively on Russia and is now in the frigid northern Russian port of Archangel with an arrogant and ambitious television reporter, tracking down the story of the century.

Harris, previously a television correspondent for the BBC and a

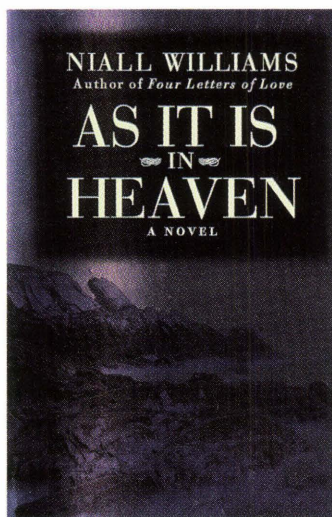
newspaper columnist for the London *Sunday Times*, made his worldwide reputation as a novelist with his first acclaimed bestseller, *Fatherland*. His new novel, in addition to being a fast-paced, fun to read novel, provides the reader a look at the chaotic state of present day Russia and a look back at the evils that happened under the Stalin dictatorship.

What is the new Russia like? "The new Russia. Whatever you want, you buy, and someone's always selling.... It's the Weimar Republic. All we need is Marlene Dietrich in a tuxedo and we might as well be in Berlin. You have a big country, proud country, lost its empire, really lost a war, but can't figure out how—figures it must've been stabbed in the back, so there's a lot of resentment, right?" So writes Harris, describing Russian life today.

The plot involves a scenario where Professor Kelso is approached in Moscow by a man who says he knows about the existence of a secret notebook of Stalin's. Sensing that this would be a boost to his failing academic career, Kelso gets involved in a journey to northern Russia in search of the notebooks, which turn out to have been written by a mistress of the former Russian dictator. The former KGB ("They used to be called...the KGB. Now they called themselves the SVR. The name had changed, but the job had not") were also interested in finding these notebooks. A chase ensues from Moscow to snowy Archangel.

Throw in a surprise ending involving Stalin that still has relevance today and the reader is treated to a novel where the old and the new Russia come alive.

—Robert J. Guttman



## Encore Provence New Adventures in the South of France

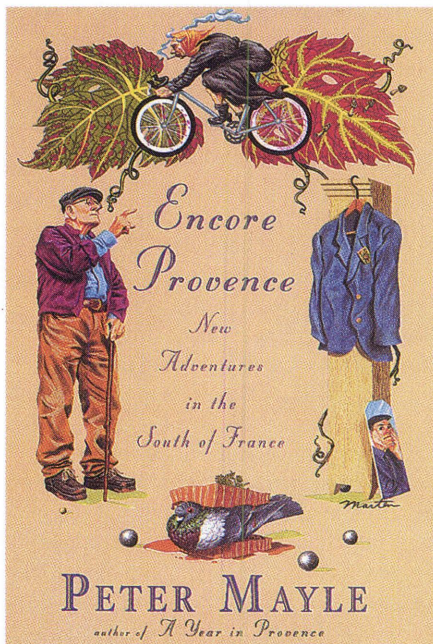
By Peter Mayle; Alfred A. Knopf; 226  
pages; \$23

“P”rovence has managed to retain its individual flavor and personality. This can be delightful or exasperating, like a difficult, cantankerous old friend. But that’s the way it is, with no excuses. Take it or leave it,” writes Peter Mayle in *Encore Provence*, his third humorous and revealing portrait of the Provence region in the south of France.

Mayle, who is British but considers himself “a permanent tourist,” briefly tried to live in the United States but says he missed the adopted home that he had made famous (or infamous depending on whom you talk to) in two previous bestsellers.

It seems as if Mayle mainly missed the Provençal cuisine since hardly a page goes by without mention of a wonderful lunch in a rustic café overlooking a scenic landscape. But what the author really finds interesting, besides his usual assortment of eccentric, strange or sometimes plainly weird acquaintances, is the cheerfulness of this beautiful region.

“Perhaps the slower pace of life is partly responsible for another aspect of the local character, and that is cheerfulness. The French are not famous for being jolly, rather the reverse.... But go south, and the difference is striking.



There is an atmosphere of good humor, despite considerable social difficulties,” he writes. As in his first two Provence books, Mayle again proves he is a master observer of people and their strange ways, whether it is a quirky neighbor, the behavior of a fellow customer at a food market, or a stranger he has just befriended.

It is not often one finds a book chapter entitled “How To Be A Nose,” however, Mayle uses that title for an amusing discussion of the perfume industry in the town of Grasse. (This reviewer never realized how important a good nose is to the perfume industry.) Other chapters follow with titles such as “In Search of the Perfect Corkscrew” and “The Genetic Effects of Two Thousand Years of Foie Gras,” all capturing the unique flavor of Provence in a humorous and, at times, outrageous light.

Mayle travels to Marseille and presents a positive view of the ancient port city, debunking its international reputation as a rough place. The author writes, “Marseille was failing to live down to its reputation. It was more charming than threatening, the only risk of physical injury coming from the occasional flying soccer ball.”

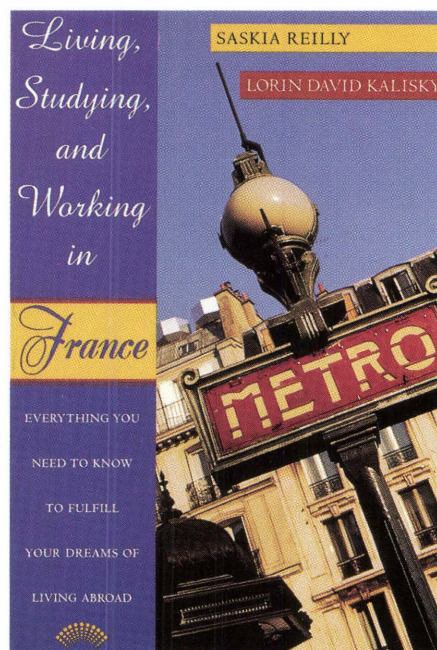
Although his non-fiction books on the region are a pleasure to read, his novels, which are set in the south of France, are even better, and it is hoped he is at work on one right now—if it isn’t lunchtime, that is. *Bon appetit and bonne lecture!*

—Robert J. Guttman

## Living, Studying, and Working in France

By Saskia Reilly and Lorin David  
Kalisky; Owl Books; 356 pages; \$16

So you’ve decided to follow your dream and move to the City of Lights, but then the nagging details of real life begin rearing their niggling heads. How does one get a work permit, rent an apartment, open a bank account, find a physician, and, for crying out loud, get *Internet access*? The questions for the budding expatriate seemly never end. However, Saskia Reilly and Lorin David Kalisky have produced an invaluable guide that answers the questions and solves the vexing quandaries that can make beginning a new life abroad unbearable.



As the title suggests, the book is organized into three main sections. “Living” begins with some of the less palatable aspects of your new life, such as the required paperwork, banking, health care, and taxes but gives way to lighter pursuits, including shopping and the sports and culture scene. “Studying” predictably provides a useful survey of domestic and foreign schools, language institutions, as well as bookstores and research facilities.

“Working,” which experienced job seekers in the land of Gaul well know, is where the proverbial *roue* meets the *route*. Reilly and Kalisky, who both worked as journalists in Paris (Reilly as a contributor for this magazine), present a useful primer on job hunting as a foreigner and a helpful overview of French business etiquette. They also offer suggestions for small businesses to open (although they caution Paris does not need another ‘authentic’ Irish pub).

Veteran expats and international business types might find *Living, Studying, and Working* a bit basic, but nearly everyone else will appreciate the authors’ straight-forward approach and lucid explanations. The book’s greatest strength, however, lies in its wealth of up-to-date telephone numbers, street addresses, e-mail and Web addresses, and a comprehensive index. All in all, Reilly and Kalisky deliver a timely and insightful book designed to educate new expats into the ways of the French. ☺

—Peter Gwin

# A LITERARY TOUR

Since relatively few non-English-writing authors are widely published in the US, we asked our Capitals correspondents to profile local writers in their respective countries. Their dispatches reveal a group that spans the publishing spectrum, from famous heavyweights, such as Portuguese Nobel Prize winner Jose Saramago, to up-and-comers, like Belgium's young novelist Amélie Nothomb, to specialized authors, including the UK's queen of cooking Delia Smith. The result amounts to a literary tour of Europe.

## BRUSSELS

### NOTHOMB BUILDS AN AUDIENCE

The French tend to be sniffy about Belgian authors, so it is a major achievement for thirty-two-year-old Amélie Nothomb to be a runaway bestseller in France, with a burgeoning cult following, especially among French youth. Last year she won the prestigious Grand Prix du Roman of the French Academy for her eighth novel, *Stupeur et tremblements*.

Nothomb started writing at seventeen and has published one novel each year since 1992. Her actual production is much more. "I estimate that I write about 3.7 novels a year," she says, "but only one of them is worth publishing." Her first published novel, which appeared in 1992, *Hygiène de l'assassin*, was an instant success. It sold 100,000 copies and was later adapted for the stage as both an opera and a play and translated into seven languages.

It was a total surprise to her. "I was convinced I would sell seven copies maximum, ten if my aunts bought it," she said. Her French publishers, Albin Michel, however, were convinced that they were onto a good thing, and their judgement has been confirmed by the continued

success of each of her later works.

Although unknown in France, Nothomb was already a famous name in Belgium. One of her ancestors—Jean-Baptiste—was a leading figure in the Belgian revolution of 1830 and was the principal author of the country's constitution. Her great grandfather, Pierre Nothomb,



was a distinguished poet, while her uncle—Charles-Ferdinand—was a recent foreign minister of Belgium and leader of the Social Christian Party.

Her father, Patrick, is a leading diplomat, who has served in five Asian countries as well as the US, where he was ambassador. Amélie was born in Kobe, Japan, and grew up speaking fluent Japanese. After graduating from Brussels University, she returned to Tokyo to work as an interpreter. She became engaged to a Japanese colleague, but—seven days before the wedding—decided that she didn't love him, dropped everything, and returned to Belgium. She then sent one of the many manuscripts on which she had been working to a Paris publisher and has never since looked back.

Nothomb's novels are short and easy to read—usually less than 200 pages. She is lively, witty, and especially gifted at dialogue, but her work is not to everyone's tastes. Many of her characters are deeply unpleasant, and she has a special fascination for obesity and for eating disorders, of which she has had personal experience.

A slight, attractive figure who lives alone in a Brussels apartment, she occasionally removes herself to Paris, which she describes as the perfect antidote to the relative "dullness" of Brussels. She says, however, "it wouldn't suit me to live all the time in Paris, especially as an author, because literary life in Paris is appalling, based on malicious gossip."

Despite the success of her work in French and other languages, publishers have been slow to bring out English translations of her books. Only one has appeared so far, *The Stranger Next Door*, translated by Carol Volk, and published by Henry Holt in 1998. It is to be hoped that its reception will encourage them to follow up with versions of her other works, particularly *Le Sabotage Amoureux*, her second and probably best novel so far. Only then will North American readers be able to appreciate the qualities, as well as the defects, of her work.

—Dick Leonard

## DUBLIN

## THE REMARKABLE MR. TÓIBÍN

A part from a radio critic's column in the (now-defunct) *Hibernia* magazine, Colm Tóibín had no previous journalistic experience when he began writing regularly for the current affairs magazines *In Dublin* and *Magill*. He confesses that journalism was a mystery. "Until then, I knew nothing about painting and art, politics or social ideology."

Today he is recognized as one of the brightest talents on the Irish writing scene with three non-fiction works—*Bad Blood: A Walk Along the [Irish] Border*, *Homage to Barcelona*, and *The Sign of the Cross: Travels in Catholic Europe*—and a number of highly acclaimed novels. His collection of selected journalism *The Night of the Generals* covered the ten-year period from 1980. Then came his first novel, *The South*, which won the Irish Times/Aer Lingus Literature Prize in 1991 and was runner-up in the British Whitbread Awards. *The Heather Blazing* won the Encore Prize for the best second novel in 1992. In 1995, he won the E.M. Forster Prize from the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Fellow Irish writer Roddy Doyle described Tóibín's *The Story of the Night* [1996], set in Argentina in the time of the generals and the Falklands War, as "a beautiful, fascinating novel...a thriller, a love story, and much more."

Last year, Carmen Callil, founder of the Virago Press asked Tóibín to co-author Picador's *The Modern Library: The 200 Best Novels in English Since 1950*, and his fourth novel, *The Blackwater Lightship*, was short-listed for the prestigious Booker Prize.

Tóibín, born in the County Wexford market town of Enniscorthy in 1955, got his first taste of city life when he became a student at University College Dublin (UCD), James Joyce's alma mater. College days over, Tóibín—with *The South* "already in my head"—saw a movie in Catalan. He immediately packed his bags, a few notebooks and pens, and set off for a three-year stay in Spain, where he wrote most of the novel in longhand. The book was widely praised.

But it was *The Heather Blazing* that first won him international critical acclaim, described by the *New Yorker* "as a quiet but stunning Irish novel." It drew on the landscape and people of his birth-

place on the Irish southeast coast, where he still spends most of his summers.

Tóibín's success was followed by *The Blackwater Lightship*—a novel exploiting the clashes of personality, insights, and emotions as three generations of Irish women arrive at an uneasy peace after years of rows and family in-fighting.

Again, the praise was universal and drew this commendation from the London *Independent on Sunday's* critic: "I know of no novelist under fifty who is Colm Tóibín's equal."

Tóibín himself retains an air of bewilderment, seemingly embarrassed by his international success. Instead, he prefers to talk of two books by the American author James Baldwin—*Go Tell It on the Mountain* and *Giovanni's Room*—which influenced his work.

What's next on the publishing horizon? Tóibín, who remains a very private person despite his public profile, isn't saying. But it's safe to say he'll be back shortly...with yet another bestseller.

—Mike Burns

## THE HAGUE

## THE DUTCH BIOGRAPHER

You might call him the biographer of the Dutch in the twentieth century. With his latest book, *The Century of My Father*, Geert Mak described not just the history of his family, but the emotions, the political changes, and particularly the immense social and cultural upheavals that took place in the Netherlands between 1900 and 1999.

*The Century of My Father* has sold more than a 100,000 copies since it arrived in bookstores last year, an astonishing number of books for the Dutch market. Furthermore, it has made Geert Mak one of the best-selling authors in the Netherlands in the nineties.

Geert Mak, born in 1946, is the son of a Dutch reformed minister. He studied law at the Protestant University of Amsterdam. In the seventies, he started to work as a journalist for a small leftist weekly and a progressive radio program. He also freelanced for a newspaper and launched a magazine for literary non-fiction. He traveled and began writing books about Amsterdam, the city he has lived in most of his life. First, he published in 1992 *The Angel of Amsterdam*, a social anatomy of the city, and in 1995 followed with *A Small History of Amsterdam*, dubbed a journalistic journey

through the Netherlands' largest city. It was translated into German, Czech, and English.

His national success came in 1996 with *How God Disappeared From Jorwerd*, a literary and sociological portrait of Jorwerd, a small village in the northern province of Friesland. With all his journalistic skills, Geert Mak described the changes that have taken place in the Dutch countryside since the end of the Second World War. It was a shift from the rural community with its slow pace of life that Mak and his generation, the children of the postwar baby boom, could still remember. The traditional village with its small shops, the predominance of religion and the authority of the local parish priest, the social control of close-knit family ties, the absence of television, the small farms and the hand-milked cows—all ceased to exist. From the early sixties onward, the modernization of agriculture, demographic and cultural changes, and the decline of religiousness exerted their profound impact on the countryside.

The book gave Jorwerd national fame. The village became the destination of visitors who had read the book and wanted to see the people, the houses, the bar, and the church of Jorwerd for themselves. A German translation appeared last year, and an English one is planned.

Last year, Geert Mak published *The Century of My Father*. The scope is even broader. Using the life of his father (who was born in 1899 and died in 1983) and of his family as a guideline, he describes the Netherlands in the twentieth century. Based on interviews with family members, letters, diaries, and his vivid memory, the result is an astonishing family portrait. At the same time, it presents a nation's history, written with keen observations of social circumstances.

Geert Mak possesses all the requisite attributes of a chronicler of Dutch society. He comes from a reformed-Protestant background and came of age during the anarchistic sixties and radical seventies; he disdains authority and strongly empathizes with the plights of ordinary people.

Furthermore, he hails from an adventurous family. In the thirties, his father, a prominent minister in the Orthodox Dutch Reformed Church, went to the then Dutch East Indies. There he became a civilian victim of the war in the Pacific and the Japanese occupation of

the former Dutch colony. He was forced to work on the infamous Burma railroad while his wife with two of their children (two others were left behind in the Netherlands) toiled in a Japanese internment camp.

After the war, with the family reunited in the Netherlands, Geert was born in 1946. Mak writes about the effects on the family of living through the Dutch reconstruction and the tremendous changes of the sixties and seventies. He describes it all in a sometimes nostalgic, sometimes indignant, but always respectful manner. His book offers a broad view of Dutch society and, at the same time, an intimate view of the life of an ordinary family that lived through extraordinary times.

—Roel Janssen

## LISBON

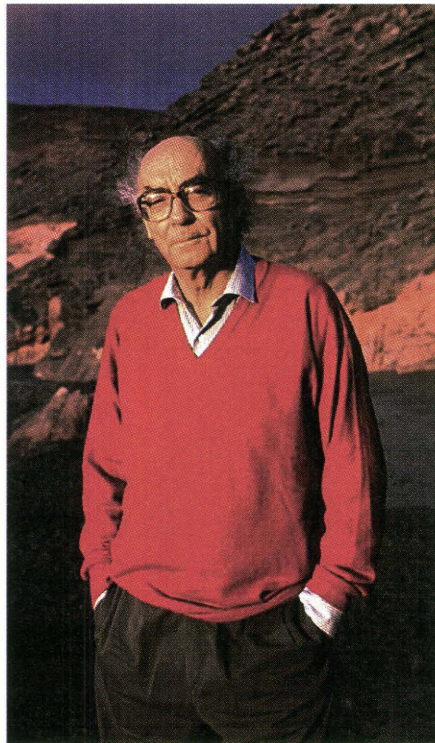
## PORTUGAL'S PRIZEWINNER

**W**hen José Saramago won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1998, the news caused enormous excitement in Portugal. Not only was he the first of the country's writers to win the award, but the first Portuguese-language writer to do so, in spite of the richness and variety of both Portuguese and Brazilian literature. Overnight, Saramago became a topic of conversation in virtually every corner cafe in Portugal, even among people who had never read a line by a writer with a reputation—arguably undeserved—for being difficult.

The Swedish Academy's decision to give the prize to the then seventy-five-year-old Saramago was somewhat controversial, however. The Vatican decried the fact that such a prestigious award had gone to what it described as "an inveterate communist of anti-religious views."

Saramago's 1991 novel *The Gospel According to Jesus Christ*, with its focus on a very human Jesus who has a sexual relationship with Mary Magdalene, caused an outcry in solidly Catholic Portugal and offended the Church hierarchy. The rumour over the book is thought to have played a part in its author's decision to move to the Canary Islands, where he now lives with his Spanish wife.

Born in 1922 to a family of landless peasants, Saramago came to Lisbon with his family when he was two years old. A communist from early adulthood, he published his first novel at the age of twenty-



Portuguese author José Saramago won the 1998 Nobel Prize.

five but produced no literary works during the right-wing dictatorship that ended only with the 1974 revolution. Instead, he earned his living as a journalist.

It was not until the publication of *Raised From the Ground* in 1980 that he gained recognition in Portugal for his fiction. *The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis*, which came out in 1984, marked his recognition abroad.

However, even in democratic Portugal, his committed Communist Party membership continued to raise the hackles of conservatives. His 1982 work, *O Memorial do Convento* (the English translation is called *Baltasar and Blimunda*) was set during the eighteenth-century construction of the monstrous convent at Mafra, north of Lisbon. Saramago's bluntness about the convent's builders and about Mafra itself offended the town's council, run by the right-of-center Social Democrat Party that dominated national politics in Portugal for more than a decade until 1985.

Since the Nobel award, Saramago has been fêted not only by the current Socialist government, but also by the literary establishment. Such recognition has its downside, however. The writer soon was complaining that he no longer had the time to write, so frequent were the engagements that he was expected to attend.

—Alison Roberts

## DELIA'S RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

**T**ony Blair offered to make her a baroness, and she turned him down. She is the United Kingdom's fastest selling hardback author, with more than 10 million book sales. Her television shows attract huge audiences, and her endorsement of any ingredient or cooking utensil sends sales soaring—it's called the "Delia effect."

Who is this best selling author? She is plain Delia Smith and one of the most instantly recognizable names in the UK. "Delia Smith is more than simply a cook. During a career spanning three decades she has become a national icon," claims the blurb on the book jacket of a recently published biography.

However, she also has her critics. When she included a color picture of water boiling in a pan in her hugely successful *Delia's How to Cook* last year, she unleashed a storm. Her snobbish critics were apoplectic at the idea of telling people how to boil water!

Delia Smith's influence is enormous. Biographer Alison Bowyer tells how Lune Metal Products had been planning to halt production of an omelet pan because of poor sales. When Delia praised the pan on her television show, also titled *How to Cook*, calling it "a little gem which will serve you for a lifetime of happy omelet making," sales leapt from 200 a year to 90,000 (yes, ninety thousand) in four months.

Having just read one of her cookbooks for the first time, I can attest that Delia Smith writes in straightforward, simple to understand language. Each step is clearly explained, and you don't need a special dictionary of culinary terms to understand and follow the directions of her recipes.

Delia began her career of teaching the ordinary British public how to cook in newspaper columns. Her first book came out in 1971. Titled *How to Cheat at Cooking*, it was somewhat pretentious; some found it unconvincing; but it gave her the appetite for writing books.

It wasn't long before she was invited to do an afternoon food program for BBC television. Quiet, unassuming Delia contrasted with the flamboyant celebrity cooks who had preceded her on television. She dispensed easy to follow recipes "like a friendly, unaffected housewife," as the *Daily Telegraph* com-

## CAPTURING NORDIC MOODS

The Nordic Council, an intergovernmental institution representing Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, and Iceland, has had lackluster success in building consensus in political and economic matters. However, on the cultural front, although the Finnish language actually is completely unrelated to the others, the Nordic Council has successfully promoted the idea of a common cultural heritage. Part of the council's cultural agenda includes the awarding of the annual Nordic Council Literary Prize to authors whose work captures the mood and themes of the region.

Henrik Nordbrandt, fifty-four years old, won this year's prize, for his work, which, critics have said, contains melancholic strands similar to themes evoked in the music of renowned Finnish composer Jean Sibelius (1865–1957). The prize includes a cash sum of almost \$50,000. More important than the money, however, is the introduction to the Nordic market at large, which is, of course, much larger than the very limited Danish market.

Henrik Nordbrandt lived for a long time in Turkey, and now spends most of the year in his small, Spartan house in Spain. He plans to use part of the prize money to install the elementary plumbing he has done without for many years. Though he has received a small annual government grant since 1980, money has always been in short supply.

The prize has been awarded for the anthology of poems *Dream Bridges*, which was first published in 1998 and explores the theme of life as a short span between birth and death. Nordbrandt uses the image of passing streetcars to imply that if you miss one, you may catch the next one with no problem. He applies this metaphor to relationships but is not so sure if "catching the next one" is always without a problem. His poems are erotic, but they describe the difficulties of new loves in recapturing, much less surpassing, the intensity of old loves.

Henrik Nordbrandt has been a very prolific and wide-ranging writer. In his thirty-five-year career, he has published twenty poetry books, two essay collections, a crime novel, a Turkish cookbook, and a memoir. Periodically, he has



British author Delia Smith wields tremendous influence among UK cooks.

mented. It wasn't long before her programs moved to prime time.

She can sometimes appear to be bossy and school-marmish, but it is her insistence on explaining every step of cooking the recipe that has made her fame. As someone once described her style—it is the culinary equivalent of painting by numbers. It may not be creative art, but it works. Or, as Delia herself says, "What I can cook, anyone can cook."

The prolific author followed the *Cheat* book with more serious works, and gradually people who bought her books began to realize that they could trust her recipes to work. Her calm, organized demeanor on television reinforced this trust. Her lack of glamour, however, did lead to a period in the wilderness of late night television. During that time Delia developed what was to become her famous *Cookery Course* series, which began in 1978, and her *Complete Cookery*

*Course* has never been out of print.

By the early 1980s this devout Catholic, since converting in the 1960s, was tired of her fame and began thinking more about religion than cooking. Discovering that people were interested to hear her views on religion, she appeared on religious television programs and wrote three spiritual books, culminating in *A Journey into God*.

In late 1990, her *Delia Smith's Christmas*, which contained all the ingredients for perfect meals for the festive season, was an instant success, selling 300,000 copies in a month. The parallel television series meant that Delia was back in the big time. She hadn't lost her knack of communicating recipes and making people want to cook.

Her latest book, *Delia's How to Cook: Book 2*, is billed as a guide for cooking in the twenty-first century. Seems she will be around for a while yet.

—David Lennon

also worked as a literary critic for a national newspaper. Some of his work has been translated into other languages, and several of his poetry books have been reprinted as paperbacks, a rare fate for such work and proof that he has an unusually large and devoted audience in Denmark. The publicity associated with the prize should help grow his audience, and while royalties are unlikely to reach levels that would impress any US writer, they may make a major difference to the life of Henrik Nordbrandt.

—Leif Beck Fallesen

## LUXEMBOURG

### REWENIG WRITES FOR CHILDREN

**A**versatile lot, these Luxembourg writers. Take Guy Rewenig, one of the country's best-known authors. He writes novels, plays, poetry, children's books, and streams of shorter prose works and articles for newspapers and magazines. Rewenig's latest publication, the children's book *Komba la Bomba*, illustrated by Roger Manderscheid, came out last December.

Guy Rewenig is not unique but certainly unusual in being one of the very few Luxembourgers to earn a living from writing fiction. With a population of only 400,000, the country is not exactly brimming with readers; a best-selling book here is one whose sales top 1,000. It certainly helps explain Rewenig's fascination with different outlets.

You might ask why Luxembourgers don't write in French or German or even English (most of them are fluent in all these languages) and tap the huge readerships of neighboring countries. However, to do that would be to betray the national tongue of Letzebuergesch, the revival of which in the literary world has been perhaps Luxembourg culture's outstanding feature in recent years.

"Only texts written in Letzebuergesch can truly and authentically articulate the innermost feelings of the individual and so express the popular heart and soul of the native Luxembourger," writes Jul Christophory, linguist and author of a number of books on Luxembourg literature. Yet until some sixteen years ago the language was, in Christophory's words, "for a long time consigned to the hands of pedantic schoolmasters or narrow-minded patriots and fanatics." He says this may have been because writers felt that the tongue—a distant cousin of

German—lacked the refinement to express philosophical or scientific argument, though, more likely, it was because writers simply wanted to reach a larger public.

In 1984, however, Guy Rewenig, then thirty-seven, gave up his job as a schoolteacher to devote himself to full-time writing and over the next few years produced a remarkable cycle of five novels in Letzebuergesch. The sequence, beginning with the book *Behind the Atlantic* about the miserable working life of a garbage man, was acclaimed for its bold use of language as much as for its fiery social content. Rewenig's powerful political commitment to justice for oppressed people wrestling with the excesses of capitalism, hypocrisy, and authoritarianism was made real through vivid descriptions of city, rural, and family life in contemporary Luxembourg.

"The real depths of the Luxembourg soul have been fully revealed in the novels of Mandersheid and Rewenig," says Christophory.

Rewenig was at work on a new children's book when I telephoned him. "Yes, it was a revolution sixteen years ago," he said. "Before then novels were written in German or French. My novels deal with modern themes, the reality of Luxembourg in Europe. They are about the underprivileged—immigrants and poor people struggling against the challenges of life in Luxembourg today."

So far just one of Rewenig's novels has been translated—into French—though some of his books for children have been rendered in Portuguese—there is a huge colony of some 80,000 Portuguese speakers in Luxembourg. Writing—and reading—fiction for young readers is something that gives him particular pleasure. "I read from my books to school classes quite regularly," he said. "I find it necessary to have this permanent contact."

His children's books are written in a comic style that makes them fun to read, but they treat much the same contemporary social themes as his novels. *Komba la Bomba*, for instance, is about a girl from the Cape Verde Islands trying to become a soccer star in Luxembourg and is rooted in the trials and tribulations of everyday life for people of sharply differing backgrounds.

"Our literature is quite as good as literature in other countries, but we are very small and unknown in the world, and we have great difficulties in 'getting

out'—in getting translated and published in other countries," Rewenig said.

"It's just opening up now, and it's getting better and better," he said. But he would be much happier if someone could arrange translations of his books into English.

—Alan Osborn

## MADRID

### CELA SOWS STORIES OF SPAIN

**A**t an age when most writers are resting on their laurels and basking in the praise of readers and reviewers, Spain's Nobel laureate Camilo José Cela, eighty-four, is back on the bestseller lists with the novel *Madera de Boj* (in English, Boxwood).

Like many of his previous works, it is set in Cela's native Galicia, the rugged and beautiful northwestern region of craggy coastlines, primeval forests, Celtic traditions, and isolated *aldeas* (hamlets), where superstition and belief in magic still reign.

Cela says the book is about the notorious Costa de la Muerte, or Coast of Death, where so many seagoing sons of Galicia have met their doom. The many characters come and go throughout the story, back and forth, rather like the tides of the ocean.

"There is no real plot," the author told a reporter when it was published last fall. "It is supposed to be a reflection of life, and life does not have a plot."

"It's also a novel of youth and hope," he said. "I've written it only for myself and the thousands of men who think like I do. I called it *Madera de Boj* because for me that type of wood is a symbol of utopia. It is a wood that grows very slowly, cannot float in the water, and takes a long time to burn. It's impossible to build a house out of the stuff, yet that is the unattainable dream of one of the characters."

Cela spent years gathering material for the novel and was working on it when he was named the winner of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1989. He has also won a slew of other literary awards for his decades of turning out such highly praised and innovative works as *The Hive*, *The Family of Pascual Duarte*, *Mrs. Caldwell Speaks With Her Son*, *Mazurca for Two Deaths*, and others.

One of his best-loved works is *Journey to La Alcarria*, a recounting of a trip he took in the 1940s to the towns and villages of the central Spanish province of



Guadalajara and the characters he encounters there.

—Benjamin Jones

## VIENNA

AUSTRIAN AUTHOR'S  
PSY-THRILLERS

**A**lthough she's a Viennese psychoanalyst by profession—complete with a couch—Edith Kneifl says she doesn't let her real-life cases creep into her crime writing.

Kneifl says she's "always very interested in aggression, fear, all the psychological themes," in her novels, but she never uses her patients as sources for her stories.

Her next novel, however, under the working title *The Divan*, will feature a psychoanalyst who is dissatisfied with her job as a television psychology talk show host. The young woman winds up playing detective in a criminal case. "It will be a criticism of the television, the media, those who worship people on TV," Kneifl said.

The forty-six-year-old already has five novels published, and the first one was an instant success. *Zwischen Zwei Naechten* (Between Two Nights) won the 1992 Glauser Prize for the best German-language thriller of the year. "I was very lucky. With this prize, doors were opened in Germany," the author said.

Being a crime writer was never something Kneifl intended to do. On a trip to visit friends in San Francisco in the early 1980s, she started reading many crime stories. "I thought they were the only books I could understand in English."

Fed up with the role women play in many crime novels written by male authors, Kneifl started writing parodies of their books. "The women were strong and clever. The men were beautiful and very stupid."

Although these works were never published, they started her on a writing kick. "Writing was just to relax and enjoy," she said, and her original focus was on short stories, with themes ranging from eroticism to science fiction. "I was searching for what kind of stories were best for me."

She eventually settled on crime writing, particularly after the success of *Zwischen Zwei Naechten*. Her third novel, *Triestiner Morgen* (Trieste Morning), set in Trieste, Italy, is now being turned into a

movie by an Austrian film production company, and her fourth novel, *Ende des Vorstellung* (End of the Introduction), also is scheduled to be made into a film.

Her publisher, Munich-based Diana Verlag, now is working to get her most recent novel, *Allein in der Nacht*, (Alone in the Night), released in the English-speaking market.

Like most Austrian authors, Kneifl has turned to the German market to make a living. Even the best-known Austrian authors often only sell 2,000–3,000 copies in their home market. Instead, US authors like John Grisham and Michael Crichton are in demand.

Kneifl said her books usually sell about 10,000 copies, although the second edition of *Triestiner Morgen* is about to be released.

"I could live now just from writing," Kneifl said, "but I couldn't live as well as I do now." She isn't about to give up her writing work. For Kneifl, writing "is like playing. It's still very relaxing" after a long day with patients. "I sit down at the computer and go into another world."

—Susan Ladika

## STOCKHOLM

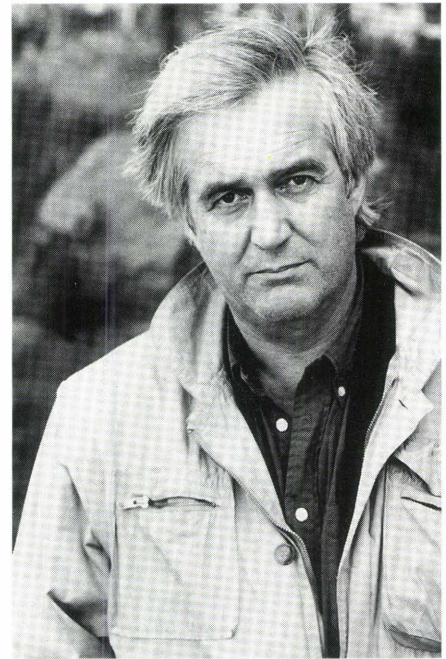
## SWEDEN'S MYSTERY DUO

**O**ne is so tough they call him the Nordic James Bond. The other is accident-prone. One is apt to land in the midst of gunfire, explosions, and car chases. The other is more likely to spend the evening listening to classical music.

The one is Carl Gustaf Gilbert Hamilton, the popular agent in author Jan Guillou's thriller series. The other is Kurt Wallander, an overweight, red-wine drinking detective in the throes of a mid-life crisis, the hero of a series by writer Henning Mankell.

Although the two authors are as different as their characters, they are often coupled in reviews of popular Swedish literature. Both authors' works have been translated into a number of languages, including English. Outside of Sweden, however, Guillou seems to be most popular in Norway, while Mankell is especially well known in Germany.

A former journalist, Guillou, fifty-six, won fame in 1973 when he and his colleague Peter Bratt exposed a top-secret quasi-military agency, the Information Bureau. The bureau, which officially did not exist, was collecting information about Swedish citizens involved in politi-



Henning Mankell is the creator of a bestselling Swedish detective series.

cal activities. Because of their expose, the two served ten-month prison terms for espionage, but IB was ultimately dismantled.

The experience gave Guillou the idea for the Hamilton series. His first book, *Coq Rouge*, was published in 1986. Book reviewers have often speculated that Hamilton is Guillou's alter ego. He cultivates a macho image—much like Hamilton's—and is often berated by women's-rights advocates for what they consider his male chauvinistic rantings.

Mankell, fifty-two, is a little different. He lives in Maputo, Mozambique, where he is artistic adviser to the Avenida Theater, although he has a summer home in southern Sweden. While he hobnobs with celebrities—most recently Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson—Mankell generally keeps a low profile.

If his hero doesn't have the hard-charging glamour of Gulliou's, Mankell nonetheless gives his books an international flavor. In *The White Lioness*, for instance, a plot to assassinate Nelson Mandela features a killer trained in southern Sweden.

While Guillou's Hamilton thrives on violence, Mankell's Wallander is often appalled by the violence of the criminals he hunts and the increasing violence in society generally.

As two of Sweden's top thriller-mystery authors, it's been suggested that Mankell and Guillou are rivals. But they

say it's not so. In fact, they've collaborated on the script for a thriller, which will probably become a television movie. Guillou already has movie experience, since several of his books have been filmed for the screen.

Most recently, two novels were combined to create the movie *Hamilton*, which revolves around nuclear weapons smuggling from the former Soviet Union. While the main character is played by Swedish actor Peter Stormare, US actor Mark Hamill of *Star Wars* fame has a supporting role. The movie was shot in Stockholm, the northern-Swedish Kiruna region, Murmansk, the Russian tundra, Morocco, Moscow, and Washington.

But if they get along with each other, there is a difference when it comes to income. Guillou is Sweden's number-two earning author, second only to the venerable Astrid Lindgren. His books have sold more than 4 million copies.

—Ariane Sains

## PARIS

### FRANCE AND THE LITERATURE EXPRESS EUROPE 2000

Two French writers, both born in 1947 and stylishly left-wing, will be onboard the *Literature Express Europe 2000*.

Olivier Rolin, the more widely known of the two, holds a degree in philosophy and strong pro-proletarian political views. He was a reporter for the news weekly *Le Nouvel Observateur* and the trendy daily paper *Libération* for which he also worked as a literary critic for several years. He has written six novels, one of which—*Port Sudan*, published by Seuil in 1994—earned him France's prestigious *Femina* literary prize, and he has contributed to a number of collective works. One of them, *S: A Novel*, the story of a woman's extraordinary life as told by seven authors, was translated into English and published as a paperback in the United States by Brookline Books.

For Rolin, travel not only stimulates a writer, but is also a good metaphor for the continual dissatisfaction and restlessness that are part of the creative process. He believes that cosmopolitanism, "which was an ideal—and a reality—of European art," has now also become "a philosophical and political necessity."

His fellow Frenchman on the literature train, Jacques Jouet, is a brilliant, quirky and prolific juggler of words, who

has been dashing off a poem every day for the last seven years and also writes plays, essays, radio scripts, short stories, and novels. Since 1983, he has been a member of Oulipo, a group of writers who push word games to intellectual and sometimes deliberately absurd extremes. One prominent member of Oulipo, Georges Pérec, for example, wrote an entire novel, *La Disparition* (The Disappearance) without once using the letter 'e'—a mind boggling achievement, especially when one considers how often that letter appears in the French language!

Among Jouet's works are two novels, *Le directeur du Musée des Cadeaux des Chefs d'Etat de l'Etranger* (roughly translated, The Director of the Museum of Gifts from Foreign Heads of State) and *La montagne R* (The R Mountain). The titles alone are a clue to their unconventional form and content, only accessible to readers possessing good mental agility.

Jouet says that he is looking forward to his forty-seven-day, whistle-stop tour of Europe because he loves trains and loves traveling, "but I don't like to prepare for a trip, anymore than I expect something definite to come out of it. For me, travel is idleness, and it is only by being actively idle—if such a contradiction is possible—that something can really happen on a journey."

The *Literature Express Europe 2000* will make three stops in France: in Bordeaux (June 10–12), Paris (June 13–15), and Lille (June 15–16). Each of the three cities has chosen a different theme with which to welcome the writers.

Bordeaux, true to its name, has planned a program around "the love of wine and the passion for books." This stop could well be one of the most popular layovers of the whole trip because, in addition to the usual readings and meetings with the public, the visiting writers are being invited to stay in some of the famous wine-producing châteaux and test the truth of the saying that "*in vino, veritas*."

In cosmopolitan Paris, the main theme will be "Cosmopolitanism and contemporary creativity." The Georges Pompidou modern art center is arranging encounters between French and foreign artists in a variety of disciplines, a poetry "market" is planned, and the National Library of France is organizing a series of debates around its exhibition on utopias.

The dynamic northern city of Lille,

slated to become Europe's cultural capital in 2004, is focusing its program on the marriage of northern and southern European cultures, in particular its own blend of Spanish roots and a Flemish identity.

Wherever the *Literature Express* passes, the will and the hope of the host cities is that the many different cultures of Europe are now, in the year 2000, more than ever before, on the right track to a diverse but united Europe.

—Ester Laushway

## BERLIN

### GABRIELA OR LUISE?

Ten years after the Berlin Wall came down, German economic, political, social, and psychological unity remains elusive. In spite of channeling public funds from the West to the East, the gap between *Wessis* and *Ossis* persists as wide as ever. Perhaps one of the most poignant portraits of the situation can be found in *Neuland* by Luise Endlich. It chronicles the daily difficulties of a western German woman adapting to the formerly communist East and reveals the power of *Ostalgie*, the eastern German nostalgia for the 'good old days' of communism.

Published last summer by Transit, against the backdrop of the ten-year celebrations of the wall coming down, Endlich's *Neuland* (New Land) had the effect of gasoline poured on a fire. It shot up the bestseller list and sold out four printings. While readers in western Germany have sung its praises, eastern Germans resent it, and some have gone so far as to start a campaign against the author (Luise Endlich is a pseudonym for Gabriela Mendling) and her husband.

The controversy isn't new to Endlich. Her *Very Simple Stories* caused a stir among readers and the media because, as the publishers say, "the book is the first authentic report containing absurd and funny details of everyday difficulties in a united Germany."

In 1995, Mendling, then thirty-nine years-old, a physiotherapist, decided to move from the Ruhr town of Wuppertal in the West after her husband, a gynecologist, was offered a leading position in the hospital of Frankfurt an der Oder on the German-Polish border. She soon finds out that in a town with few other *Wessis* she is hardly welcome. "From the start I was a foreigner, and intolerance of foreigners in the East is unbelievable,"

she writes. She finds intolerance at school when her seven-year-old son is badly beaten up and hounded outside the gates by neo-Nazis. Then the family's cars are vandalized, and while they are away on vacation, her son's pet rabbits are clubbed to death.

Still, Mendling tries to get involved in community life. When preparing for a party, she goes to buy wine and finds only sweet Bulgarian or Hungarian varieties and her request for dry French wine arouses amazement. "You are the first customer to ask for it," says the storekeeper. A pre-Christmas party for doctors' spouses turns into a fiasco. When conversation does strike up at last, it gets unpleasant when one woman says she could never bring herself to harass privately insured patients to pay their bills as "they do in the West without batting an eyelid." Mendling cannot restrain herself. "Do you really think everyone in the West is an unscrupulous exploiter?" she retorts.

Some of the characters she describes assure her that things used to be better before unification. Education, industrial training, law and order, gender equality, and social and job security were all superior, they are convinced. Many are stuck with the old habits, she concludes.

According to a recent survey, however, 75 percent of eastern Germans are "satisfied" with the results of unification. The easterners insist that they want to be allowed to be different like the Bavarians. It is not the perceived arrogance of the Wessis that most Ossis resent; rather it is their ignorance. Whereas all but 15 percent of easterners have now visited western Germany, 40 percent of westerners have yet to set foot in former East Germany. The easterners want more respect for their past and blame the westerners for not trying to understand the very different world they had to live in.

"I have always felt I was the focus of every disappointment with the West, right down to the better wheelbarrows [the easterners] say they had before unification," writes Mendling.

Tensions surfaced over one particular passage in the book, describing an instance when Mendling offered lasagna to her neighbor, a former Stasi collaborator. He had not had the dish before and, refusing a knife and fork, grabbed a chunk stuffed it into his mouth. "Now that I've tasted Italian, I know I can live without it," he says. After the book was published, anonymous leaflets were spread around the town, including her

husband's clinic, inviting eastern Germans to evening classes at which Frau Mendling would demonstrate how to eat lasagna without utensils.

The author says she intends to stay to see if this town will change and whether the new buildings now sprouting are accompanied "by the more critical changes in people's heads."

Wolfgang Thierse, president of the German parliament and himself an Ossi, regrets that the author's views have stirred up such strong emotions. "The book," he says, "is fair. It describes, but does not evaluate."

—Wanda Menke-Glückert

## HELSINKI

### TERVO DISPLAYS LIGHT TOUCH

Jari Tervo is not yet a name well known outside Finland, but there is every prospect that he will be. This laddish forty-one year old has become so popular at home that Finns often describe situations or real-life characters as 'Tervoesque'—with the confident expectation

that the meaning will be fully understood.

He is unusual in a literary firmament that does not produce many stars, and he is versatile. After studying Finnish literature at Helsinki University, he became a journalist, and indeed, he still writes a weekly column in one of the capital's two evening papers, the *Ilta Sanomat*. His career as a man of letters began in the 1980s during which he produced four acclaimed collections of poetry.

However, his true forte was revealed with the publication in 1992 of his first novel entitled *The Court of the North*. Tervo was born in Rovaniemi, the so-called capital of Lapland, which sits on the Arctic Circle. To put it mildly, this is a tough, eccentric place that endures almost constant darkness during the winter months, and at the height of summer, daylight extends to twenty-three hours.

It is no secret that, in either of these extreme seasons, drinking is one of the inhabitants' favorite recreations; Tervo made this the social-cultural context for a raucously funny tale about four drifters who went on a bender for several days.

This could certainly have been a

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'dark' story in the more familiar Nordic mode—that is what foreigners would probably expect—but what distinguishes Tervo from the clichéd lineaments of Finnish writing is his light touch.

Several more novels followed quickly: *The Policeman's Son* about a bum who tries and botches a bank robbery; *Numbered Among Your Saints* where the murder of a petty criminal broadens into a portrayal of a small provincial town; and *Windswept Expanse* (how Finnish!) in which one twin brother disastrously poses as his sibling.

Tervo's latest novel *My Family Chronicle* was published last year and boosted the author's popularity still more. He has also written two short story collections and has become a cheekily rude television commentator on current affairs, a fact that has certainly not harmed his book sales.

However, this fresh, funny, and idiosyncratic Finnish voice has still to be translated. Lowlife in low temperatures—with a lot of Runyonesque laughs—Tervo's international debut cannot or should not be long delayed.

—David Haworth

## ROME

### BARICCO'S SENSUOUS SEDUCTIONS

He is a music critic turned novelist whom not many of Italy's snooty critics seem to like. However, Alessandro Baricco doesn't care much what the critics say since Italians and readers around the world are having a very special love affair with his books and making him rich in the process. Born in Turin in 1958, Baricco is the author of such best-sellers as *Silk*, *Ocean Sea*, *City*, and the stage monologue *Novecento*, which director Giuseppe Tornatore (of *Cinema Paradiso* fame) made into his first English-speaking movie, *The Legend of 1900*, starring Tim Roth.

The tones of Baricco's unusual but beautiful little books (so far translated into sixteen languages) are always lyrical. His language is rich yet simple and his favorite themes revolve around love. So far, his tour de force about love and sensuality is *Silk*, a short but sumptuous book, more poetry than prose. The story of a young French merchant who, in 1861, travels to Japan looking for uncontaminated silk eggs for breeding and

falls in love with the concubine of the local baron, never touching her nor even speaking to her, moved readers to tears.

Baricco's other passion is the open sea. In *Novecento*, Danny is a naturally gifted pianist who has spent his entire life living aboard a great ocean liner traveling back and forth between Europe and the United States. The enormity of life outside the ship seems too much for him. He prefers the surety and containment of a piano keyboard. With no official record of his birth, his only proof of his existence is his music.

"Is Baricco really a great writer, or is he a bluffer?" asked the daily newspaper *Il Giorno*, reflecting the same attitude as many in the Italian media toward the famous writer. Foreign critics, however, have been more generous in their praise, especially the French. "*Silk* [is] one hour of enchantment," enthused *Le Monde*. "Baricco is desperate like Celine, lucid like Conrad, inventive and rich like Calvino," acclaimed *L'Express*. Baricco's "exotic language hypnotizes us," declared the *New York Times*.

Always sporting a boyish and ruffled look in jeans and an unbuttoned shirt, Alessandro Baricco doesn't seem to care much about critics. Always going his own way, he has founded a school of writing in his native Turin, naming it "Holden" after J.D. Salinger's character in *Catcher in the Rye*.

—Niccolò d'Aquino

## ATHENS

### CICELLIS FINDS HER GREEK VOICE

Kay Cicellis decided at the age of twelve that she wanted to be a writer. But for much of her career, she wrote in English—the result of a childhood spent in Marseille among English and French-speakers.

It was only after publishing several novels and collections of short stories in English, as well as translating the work of a number of Greek authors that she started to experiment with writing in Greek. Last year, she won Greece's national short story prize for a collection of stories, *The Dance of Time*.

Writing in English came easily, she says, because it was the language she used most. Greek, in fact, was a foreign language until the family fortunes collapsed during the Depression and they moved to Athens. As a teenager, she lived on the island of Cephalonia—the

family's original home—during the Italian and German occupations.

"I remember very clearly," she says, "reading Victor Hugo at the age of twelve and bursting into tears because I knew I could never be as good. I learned my limitations very early." The short stories of Katharine Mansfield provided another early influence. "I copied her slavishly in my teens," Cicellis admits.

Her first book, *The Easy Way*, was a collection of short stories. Then came a novel, followed by another collection of stories inspired by a disastrous earthquake on Cephalonia that destroyed most of the island's buildings and triggered a mass emigration. In *The Way to Colonos*, a collection of three novellas, she turned to themes that etched ancient Greek tragedy.

"I don't like having to live with a subject for two or three years," she says. "What I really like is the long short story or a novella. It gives you space, but it's got shape. Novels very often don't have a shape."

After living in Pakistan, Nigeria, and England, Cicellis returned to settle in Athens with her family amid the political turmoil of the mid-1960s. Her first published piece in Greek appeared during the colonel's junta in *18 Texts*, a collection of articles by opponents of the regime that caused a political furor when it was published.

Making the transition from English to Greek proved a painful process, she says. "I started writing in Greek, but I couldn't let go of English. It was a love affair with the language. I was completely involved. But I could see it was dying on me—I'd lived so long outside England—and finally I parted with it."

One of her Cicellis's achievements in Greek was the libretto for *The Return*, an acclaimed opera by Argyris Kouniadis, the German-based Greek composer. It is a modern version of the myth of Orestes avenging the death of his father Agamemnon, set in a middle-class Athenian home.

Greece's literary scene has been transformed over the past decade with many more novels being published. The widening readership has helped Greek writers become less introspective and more confident, Cicellis says. "It's a different, much livelier environment. The feeling of isolation has gone. There are talented new writers who aren't afraid to explore bold themes, and there are more short story writers, too."

—Kerin Hope

# ARTS & LEISURE

ART

## HONORÉ DAUMIER

*The Phillips Collection; Washington DC; through May 14*

It is hard to understate the complexity of the French artist Honoré Daumier. Imagine an artist who combines the wicked poignancy of a *New Yorker* cartoonist, the gentle humanity of Rockwell, and the insatiable curiosity of Picasso. It seems fitting then that Daumier's life (1808–1879) and career spanned a period of both political tumult and artistic discovery, from the demise of the Bourbons to the ascendance of the Impressionists.

As a caricaturist, Daumier detailed the vagaries of the various regimes and the foibles and folly of French society. His massive output and knack for exposing hypocrisy and pretension with tightly drawn precision made his name a household word in France. The exhibit currently on view at the Phillips Collection in Washington, DC—which is the first full-fledged Daumier retrospective in the United States—combines a broad selection of his cartoons with a detailed view of his other works. The 245 pieces on display (a mere fraction of the artist's entire 6,000-work oeuvre) include drawings, lithographs, watercolors, sculptures, and paintings.

Born in Marseille to an aspiring writer and his illiterate wife, Daumier moved to Paris around the age of twelve. His father arranged for him to

study drawing with Alexandre Lenoir, a noted archaeologist and artist. He later enrolled at the Academie Suisse and spent hours sketching at the Louvre. At fourteen, he began his four-decade experiment with lithography.

In 1830, Daumier joined the crowds (and was said to have been slightly wounded) during the three-day July Revolution, which saw Louis-Philippe replace Charles X of the house of Bourbon. What effect the violence of that summer had on him is not directly known, but it is clear that Daumier determined that certainly for him the cliché held true: his mightiest weapon was indeed his pen.

He got his start contributing caricatures to *La Silhouette*, which published his first political cartoons in 1829. The following year, Charles Philippon, publisher and arch Republican critic of Louis-Philippe, hired him to draw for his satirical weekly, *La Caricature*, and later for the daily *Le Charivari*.

It was for *La Caricature* in 1831 that the artist drew his most famous cartoon, *Gargantua*, which depicted the oppressed citizenry forced to dump their money down the throat of a gluttonous Louis-Philippe. The government banned the cartoon from publication (although it was briefly displayed in *La Caricature's* office window) and sentenced Daumier to six months in prison. However, word of the scandal spread, and the punishment only served to build the artist's fame.

Politicians proved easy prey for Daumier. He deftly



**In A Famous Case (ca. 1862-65, pen and ink, chalk, watercolor), Daumier captures the melodrama of a barrister's pleading.**

exaggerated their long noses, pursed lips, rolling chins, even the bumps on their heads to full comic effect. (One can only imagine the devilish delight with which he might have cast his pen upon the current US presidential field.) Lawyers too came under his critical gaze. A series of tinted drawings captures the rich swirl and billow of the barristers' robes, their melodramatic pleadings, their whispered conferences, as well as their self-satisfied smiles.

In 1835, the government clamped down on political caricature, and Daumier turned his unblinking eye on French society. In panel after panel, the artist explores the plight of the emerging Parisian middle class. Often he—or she—is caught in a moment of human frailty of one form or another. There is the man who tries to awaken his wife only to have her call him by the wrong name; the mother hunched over a writing desk, overcome with creative inspiration while her child nearly drowns in the bath. There are also mo-

ments of romance: the old couple lamenting the demolition of the hotel where they spent their wedding night; a rumpled family gazing dreamily at a full moon over the Seine. Daumier invariably finds just the right tone. The sentiments are sweet yet not saccharine. The humor is pointed but not biting.

However, Daumier was entirely capable of showing his teeth. Such an occasion presented itself during the 1848 presidential election when Bonapartist ringleaders sought to bully their way into power. In response, the artist created Ratapoil (the name means “hairy rat”), a spindly, pointed character representing the henchman of Napoleon III, and used him in a series of lithographs to depict the demagoguery of the emperor's supporters.

In addition to his beloved pen and ink and lithography, Daumier experimented with a variety of media, including painting and sculpture. In fact, Ratapoil and the politicians had been modeled first as sculptures, allow-

ing him to fully explore the figures in three dimensions before drawing them.

The sculptures and works on paper notwithstanding, the artist's paintings represent his most enigmatic work. It is not known exactly when Daumier began painting because he rarely dated his canvases, but it is clear that he sought a new direction. The seventy-five oils on view at the Phillips appear in stark contrast to his satire pieces, as quirk and whimsy are replaced by somber earnestness. Where the cartoons revealed the artist's wit and intelligence, the paintings evoke a desire to communicate on a much deeper level. Émile Bernard, a contemporary artist and critic, once remarked that as a painter Daumier "entered the soul, the others only painted the clothing."

Although he flirts with religious and mythical subjects, Daumier continues his study of people, from laundresses and train passengers to theater performers and art collectors. Perhaps most surprising is his variation in styles. From canvas to canvas, one sees clear evidence that Daumier was venturing into territory that would later be fully explored by the Impressionists and post-Impressionists. Works such as *A Box at the Theater* and the *Don Quixote* and *Sancho Panza* series could easily be mistaken for canvases painted decades after his death. His thick, choppy brushstrokes in *Women Pursued by Satyrs* and later in *The Chess Players* foreshadow a technique van Gogh would make his trademark.

Daumier died a pauper in 1879, barely months after friends and supporters, including Victor Hugo, had organized an exhibition of his paintings in a vain attempt to raise money for the artist. It went little noticed, and by the

end of the century, writes historian Henri Loyrette in the exhibit catalogue, Daumier is vaguely remembered as a caricaturist of Louis-Philippe's time whose work was regarded as "ephemeral and of secondary importance."

It is fitting then that the first full Daumier retrospective come to the Phillips Collection, which was founded in 1921 as the first US museum dedicated to modern art. Founder Duncan Phillips began collecting the artist in the 1920s and soon stated that his gallery's "principal ambition" was making its Daumier unit the best in the world. A fitting tribute to a deserving artist.

—Peter Gwin

#### FILMS

### ANGELA'S ASHES

*Directed by Alan Parker; starring Emily Watson and Robert Carlyle; 120 minutes*

**S**urely, it doesn't rain that much in Limerick, and surely, teachers in World War II era Limerick were kinder than this movie makes them out to have been. Certainly, priests in the Catholic Church were more sympathetic to their poorer constituents than this movie depicts. And what family in their right mind would leave the United States during this time to go back to Ireland for what turned out to be a pretty miserable existence?

All this said, *Angela's Ashes* is well worth seeing. Limerick's surrounding countryside and even its squalid slums are beautifully filmed. The performances by Emily Watson, as the depressed, despairing, and baffled wife and mother, and Robert Carlyle, as the alcoholic, unemployed father, are superb.

Although the actor who played the youngest reincarnation of Frank McCourt was



Joe Breen (center left) portrays Frank McCourt (right) as a young boy in the film version of the author's memoir, *Angela's Ashes*.

the cutest, all of the boys who played him in his stages of life until he left for America as a teenager were all very believable in their roles.

While the story revolves around the McCourt family's terrible poverty and sad misfortunes, the movie contains a deep well of humor and wit. In one of the movie's funniest scenes, young McCourt writes an essay on "Jesus and the Weather."

Whenever he was able to scrape together the few coins for admission, McCourt finds escape from his hunger and grim surroundings watching James Cagney movies at the local cinema with his friends.

Although his father was a down-on-his-luck alcoholic, he was, when sober, able to take walks and talk with his children in the rainy mountainous countryside around Limerick.

It would have been hard to watch the squalor in which the family lived if the movie hadn't been broken up by periods of humor. It helped that the film was really a series of short vignettes depicting various stages in the author's young life.

Alan Parker, the Irish director, best known for his successful comedy about an Irish rock band *The Commitments*, has another winner on his hands with this film. He transfers McCourt's tale of his childhood to the screen

maintaining the alternating sense of sadness and humor that leaves one with the message that children can survive terrible conditions if they have a bit of luck and pluck about them.

Does the author think the film does his memoir justice? Says Frank McCourt, "*Angela's Ashes* is the perfect realization of my book on film. It is everything I could have hoped for and imagined. I sing its praises."

—Robert J. Guttman

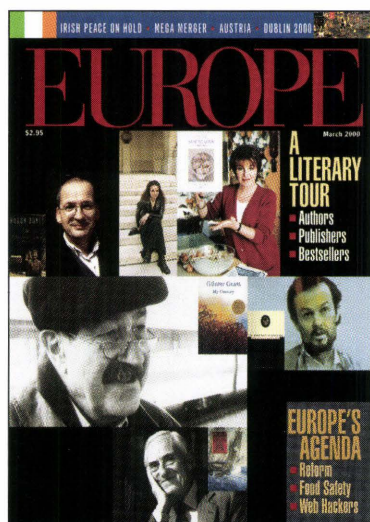
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