

President Higgin's remarks on Castro

I WISH to disassociate myself from President Michael D Higgins remarks on Castro.

The only good revolution is from a closed society to an open society.

Castro turned Cuba into a closed society with compulsory conformity.

Castro used murder and violence to inflict dogmatic Marxism on Cuban bringing poverty to Cuba and nearly nuclear devastation to the world.

Criticism was eliminated by blind obedience to the 'cult of the Leader.'

Karl Popper the father of the Open Society said that Marxism brings about equality by reducing all to an equality of destitution.

Men are not equal but they form a normal distribution of IQ and talent and earning power reflects that.

Prosperity comes from each one reaching their potential. Individuals push out the frontiers of knowledge and use that knowledge to innovate new

products and methods.

A creative society will transform itself from a potato chip economy to a computer chip economy. Prosperity is a by-product of human development in an open creative scientific society.

People are employed not for what they know but for when they discover and patent. Praise for Castro means the Irish people do not value human rights and honour a regime where humans have the same quality of life as ants working in an ant colony, produce more of the same in the same way, for millions of years. Cuba only existed badly while it was supported by the Soviet economy. The 'Enlightenment' had a motto: "When critical reasoning is asleep, in morons and monsters creep."

NOEL FLANNERY
SOUTH CIRCULAR ROAD, LIMERICK

Castro supported Irish Independence

IN my opinion Fidel Castro was a great world leader, and a man who cared

deeply about his country. Both he and Che Guevara, are very comparable to figures in our own Irish history, who fought for Independence from Britain, much like Cuba fought for economic independence from the USA.

The people of Cuba have lost the founder of their new society, their country's leader. He was a man who supported the cause of Irish Independence, and spoke very highly of the Hunger Strikers of 1981. Ireland and Cuba have many similarities in our histories, and these should be remembered at this time.

Since Castro's death there has been a lot of Left-Right debate on him and his legacy. I have my own opinions on the man, but I think that the reaction of the people of Cuba has shown how much he was loved by his own people, and that is very important. A world leader, an inspiration to Cuba, and to socialists worldwide has passed away, and it is a shame that we have not sent our condolences to a country in mourning."

CLLR SÉIGHÍN Ó CEALLAIGH
WINDY RIDGE, FRIARSTOWN, GRANGE



Castro pictured at Shannon Airport during a stop-over in 1982. On the occasion of the visit captured in this photograph, Castro spoke with airport staff, showed a strong appreciation for the Irish economy and, particularly, in our agricultural industry, asking a range of questions, not least about inoculation of bovines

The 'truth' about Angela's Ashes

WHEN Angela's Ashes was published in America in 1996 it was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for non-fiction - an award, by the way, for which only books by American authors are considered - and it went on to become a worldwide best seller.

In both the American and Irish media the hitherto unknown author, Frank McCourt, was acclaimed as a writer of outstanding talent. In Ireland, and especially in Limerick where the book is set, he was regularly and mistakenly described as an Irish writer and even as having been born in Limerick; in fact, he was born in New York in 1930, of Irish parents, and lived there until he was four years old when the family returned to Ireland. He actually boasted, in his many American interviews, of being a New Yorker.

His book was written in New York 50 years after he went back there from Limerick. Soon after its publication some dissident voices began to contradict the chorus of adulation with which the book was greeted by some reviewers, by the mass consumers of any well-publicised best-seller, and by those sycophants in the media and in public life who are ready to hitch a ride on any band wagon of success.

Among those who declared that McCourt's book was not only a totally false account of the years he spent in Limerick, from the age of four to nineteen, but a scurrilous defamation of Limerick city and its inhabitants, were the famous film star, the late Richard Harris, a proud native of Limerick who had known the McCourt family, Mary Kenny, a journalist highly esteemed both in Ireland and Britain, and Roy Foster, Professor of Irish History at Oxford University.

As a native of Limerick and an Irish writer, I added my own voice to the protests in the form of a letter to the Limerick Leader which inevitably drew on me the standard riposte of begrudged employment by McCourt himself and by those credulous media hacks and others who had swallowed his tale 'hook, line and sinker.' Brother Malachy employs a more vituperative vocabulary in his abuse of dissidents (see an example in Limerick Leader from 8.8.09).

As negative criticism from such reputable sources increased - the British satirical magazine, Private Eye, ridiculed the book in several skits - the author of Angela's Ashes initially asserted that the book was a true account of his years in Limerick, "all true, everything in the book actually happened" (Irish Independent, 8.4.97).

Later, he admitted that he had "hammed it up for the market." (RTÉ Guide, 19.12.97). Finally, he fell back on the illogical pronouncement that "the book need not be factually true, because it is not a history but a memoir"; (quoted by Professor Foster in his book, The Irish Story: Telling Tales and Making it up in



The announcement that a new professional production of Angela's Ashes - The Musical will host its premiere in Limerick next summer has re-opened a debate about the accuracy of Frank McCourt's famous, Pulitzer Prize winning novel

Ireland).

In fact, Angela's Ashes is not an original work of creative literature at all; it is an adaptation in book form of a stand-up comic show which Frank McCourt and his brother, Malachy, had been presenting in bars and hotels in the U.S. from as far back as 1977. Entitled A Couple of Blaguards (no comment), it consisted of the material later to be reshaped to make the book.

In July 1985, the McCourts brought their show to the Belltable Theatre in Limerick for a week. Among the citizens who were appalled and disgusted by it was Charlie St. George, a popular republican and veteran of the Young Munster team that famously defeated the favourites, the Dublin club, Lansdowne, to win the Bateman Cup in 1928 (a more prestigious achievement in those amateur days than the Heineken cup victories of the professional Munster team). His vehement denunciation of the McCourts and their concocted travesty of their boyhood years in Limerick appeared in the Leader on July 6, 1985.

In my compendium, Beautiful Limerick (2004), I included four serious essays, one of which was a critical analysis of Angela's Ashes. In 2014 I decided to publish these essays in a separate book, Remember Limerick. It was initially accepted for publication by the Limerick Writers Centre, but when it was made a condition of publication that I omit the essay on Angela's Ashes, because McCourt had been a benefactor of the Centre, I withdrew the book and published it myself.

Finally, having read in the Leader this

year that the American publishers of Angela's Ashes were about to publish a new edition of that book to celebrate twenty years of its existence, I decided to publish my essay, rewritten and enlarged, in an edition of its own, under the title, 'Angela's Ashes Analysed: An Essay in Aid of Truth'.

It is due for publication shortly and I intend to send a copy to those individuals and institutions, including UL, responsible for the acclamation of what I succinctly described, in a letter to the Irish Times in 1998, as a "meretricious concoction with which a Yankee-Doodle-Dandy smart boyo has gulled some naive critics and many of the general public".

I shall also send a copy to all public and college libraries where it will be available for future researchers into social life in Limerick and in Ireland generally in the period covered by Angela's Ashes.

In his criticism of McCourt's book, Professor Roy Foster commented on the puzzling fact that certain elements in

Limerick city were promoting Frank McCourt as a distinguished citizen of Limerick, and that some people were even making commercial capital out of a book that mocked their own city and its people. In spite of all evidence to the contrary, this inexplicable conduct continues, ensuring that the totally negative and untrue image of Limerick conjured up by an American charlatan for commercial purposes is perpetuated year after year. The latest manifestation of this lamentable activity is in the shape of a musical version of Angela's Ashes which, we are told, will be presented in Limerick next year.

Like the book itself, and the mediocre film of same, this musical will not, of course, include scenes portraying the real Frank McCourt who was a member of the Catholic Boy Scouts in Limerick from the age of twelve until, aged nineteen, he returned to America. He was, in fact, such an exemplary and devout Catholic scout that he rose to be Senior Patrol Leader, and was presented with an award at a meeting of the troop where he was wished good luck in his future life in America. The Limerick Leader's account, (6.10.1949), records that the meeting concluded with a singing of the hymn, Faith of Our Fathers.

While this musical version may further titillate those people in Limerick and elsewhere who continue to acclaim him, my book will be available in Limerick City Library for anyone who wishes to know the truth about Frank McCourt and Angela's Ashes.

CRÍSTÓIR Ó FLOINN
GLENAGEARY, CO DUBLIN

HAVE YOUR SAY

If you've got a view on a local topic we'd love to hear from you.

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