

nes O ands

Sat March 31st
2001

Germans reject McCourt's image

By DENIS
O'SHAUGHNESSY

WRITER Mathias Paulokat, in the millions-selling German magazine, *Der Spiegel*, claims that Frank McCourt, in the novel and film "Angela's Ashes", did Limerick and its 79,000 inhabitants no favours.

"Holidaymakers now try to detour the city from a suitable distance," said Mr Paulokat, in his article.

On a visit to the city, recaptured in the prominently-placed story in the magazine, Mathias waxes lyrical about Limerick and its many attractions.

Mathias' article, reproduced below, was sent to this newspaper by John O'Sullivan, a former Limerick Leader employee who has, since the 1960's, been domiciled in Germany.

Translation from the German is by Ruth O'Shaughnessy:

Mathias writes: "Mccourt judged Limerick harshly:

"In his novel, 'Angela's Ashes', and the film of the same name, he described the third-largest city in Ireland as a place where disease was rife in the lanes, which the stoic Irish rain changed into a mudbath.

"Limerick was a curse, being a blessing to finally escape, according to McCourt.

"Mccourt's dreary tales did Limerick and its 79,000 inhabitants no favours. Holiday-makers try to detour from a suitable distance. Unjustly. There is much to discover.

"The Hunt Museum in the city centre displays an excellent collection of historical Irish exhibits; the restored King John's Castle, built from 1200 to 1212, offers the opportunity for a flying visit into mediaeval Ireland.

"Yet part of Limerick's good fortune is that the next largest cities of Galway, to the north, and Cork, to the south, are each around 100 km away.

"Limerick, with its adjacent Shannon Airport, is therefore the ideal base camp from which to explore the



McCourt—rejected

impressive west coast of Ireland.

"The Cliffs of Moher, the bare, rocky landscape of the Burren, as well as the Aran Islands, to the north, are a mere hour's drive from Limerick.

"The Ring of Kerry, the Killarney National Park, the Dingle Peninsula, with its sheer coastline and the as yet not overcrowded Ring of Beara, are the excursion destinations to the south of Limerick.

"But even in the direct surrounds of the city are beautiful landmarks.

"To the north east, the 30-km-long Lough Derg invites the visitor to enjoy the long walk on its banks and the bordering mountain and hill chains.

"Here Ireland presents itself exactly as one knows it from illustrated books and postcards: lush meadows,

bordered by mossy stone walls and gorse bushes, clear mountain streams, which rush over the rocks through shady glens to the sea, song thrushes, which in knotty oak trees warble their verses, and herds of sheep being driven

by tweed-jacketed farmers into the next meadow.

"The small fishing villages of Ballina and Killaloe directly on the banks of the Shannon belong to the national cultural heritage.

"In the local pubs, such as Goosers in Ballina, many cosy evenings are spent in front of the turf fire-place drinking ale."

He continues: "The village of Castleconnell, just five kilometres from Limerick, is also worth exploring.

"For years, each Wednesday evening in the blue-and-yellow pub, 'The Guerinfisher', whoever has the time or inclination can unpack his fiddle, tin whistle, accordion, guitar or bodhrán, and join Paddy Guerin in playing a jig or reel, in a traditional musical session.

"In places like Castleconnell, the pub is a substitute living room for many of the locals. And though old cottages are notorious for their leaky roofs, it never rains inside an Irish pub—however, the atmosphere inside is feucht-fröhlich."

now compa-

monise the and work firms and describing out the like,"

who has tim chief they were attracted hethering-post.

nt that he mpetitive Shannon any in the

Richardson s in this ct advan- ger Irish "saturat- the Shan- ans that ss to the

Shannon Estuary.

"The N69 to Foynes is a breeze compared to the East wall Road in Dublin," he said.

But he warned that the fourth crossing of the River Shannon should be a tunnel.

"The implications of a bridge lifting during rush hour are just horrendous. A bridge could be up for a half hour if two ships are coming up the estuary," he said.

But for the moment Mr Hetherington is taking everything in and getting to know the region and his new post.

"In the short term it's a getting to know you time for me — getting to know the customers and users of the estuary. Only then can I see and shape my own thoughts. But I can only lead the project which will also require co-operation and support from customers, work-force and community alike."