



Why won't Ireland accept its refugees?

Raymond Dooley

As a boy growing up in America in the 1950s, my images of the Irish and Ireland came directly from TV and the movies. There were the priests and nuns of *Going My Way* and *The Bells of St. Mary's*, the leprechauns of *Darby O'Gill* and the drunken, fighting Irish sergeants of countless John Ford Westerns. Ireland itself meant pubs, churches and lots of green countryside. The people were happy and friendly, except when they were fighting. All of the men were brave and strong and loyal, as long as they were sober, and the young women were either angelic or wild, but always beautiful. Most were named Maureen O'Hara.

Predictably enough, the most emotionally evocative images of Ireland for me came from a Ford movie, but not from one of those usually cited. *How Green Was My Valley* wasn't set in Ireland at all but in a Welsh mining village doing duty as an Irish surrogate. Told from the perspective of a grown man recalling his childhood memories, it was the story of a family torn asunder by the struggle to survive and a pastoral way of life swept away by modern times. The scene in which the unemployed young miners take leave of their mother before setting off to find work and make new lives for themselves in America and Australia left a vivid first impression of the reality of forced emigration.

As I grew older, my idea of what it meant to be Irish underwent certain adjustments to provide for such phenomena as Joyce, Yeats, Beckett, Bernadette Devlin (who made a big impression in the United States), the rise of the IRA and the arrival of a new wave of young Irish immigrants in the 1980s. Still, my view of the Irish as an open and friendly people remained largely intact.

Irish Internationalism

My first visit to Ireland came in 1989, which led to my living here for much of the following year. The early, superficial impressions I had of Ireland were in many ways reinforced (it was quite wet and the people were indeed very friendly). But I was surprised by the extraordinary interest in and orientation to the affairs of the rest of the world that seemed to