

THE SINGLE EUROPEAN ACT

Sir, — Whence the sacred cow of *neutrality* to which the nation presently chuses to pay unswerving homage? In particular why such pride in Ireland's neutrality in the last war?

I for one wish to dissociate myself from the prevailing sense of nationalistic complacency which accepts, seemingly without question, the wisdom of de Valera's policy of looking the other way while neighbouring nations in Europe chose to stand against the tide of Nazism. It is indeed ironic that the people of Ireland whom, under O'Connell's leadership, had once annexed the Jewish cause to the struggle for Catholic Emancipation, should have stood by while the chambers of Auschwitz and Buchenwald perpetrated the greatest abomination ever conceived against humanity. Many Irishmen, whose principles dictated otherwise, stood apart from the nation and in doing so suffered and died in the cause of freedom. Ireland's neutral stand may be excused by some on its being then too close to events to appreciate the horrific magnitude of the atrocities taking place, and for others the Irishman's seemingly natural antipathy to the British is explanation enough. Such equivocation can no longer be tolerated. History has revealed the facts for all to see and the consequences of a Hitlerian victory, to which this country would stand accused of having acquiesced, hardly bears contemplation.

Neutrality is the right of all nations; it is a most precious right to be exercised only after careful consideration and deep soul searching. It is not a panacea to be applied as national policy for all eventualities. It is, as our history clearly shows, all too easy to be neutral in the course of what appears to be someone else's war, but an entirely different matter when the nation itself is directly threatened. Discussion on neutrality should concentrate therefore on the right to act neutrally if the nation so decides, not on the adoption of the inflexible designation of a *neutral nation*. In the light of recent experience it may be too much to expect an informed debate on the subject, but let us individually as Irish men and women at least look into our consciences and apply some reasoned thinking to the topic. In doing so let us not delude ourselves into believing that our neutral role in the last war was a noble act. — Yours, etc.,

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