

- [CND - The Duracell Bunny](#)
- [America's Strong-Horse Weak-Horse Choices](#)
- [Strange Lisbon Bedfellows](#)
- [Páva, Budapest - Restaurant Review](#)
- [Issue 172's Letters to the Press](#)
- [Quotes for Issue 172](#)

CND - The Duracell Bunny



Last month, an [article](#) appeared in the (subscription-only) Irish Times to mark the Golden Jubilee anniversary of the founding of CND, the [Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament](#). It was written by Canon Patrick Comerford, a Church of Ireland priest, long a CND member and presently the president of Irish CND. He has conveniently reproduced it on his own excellent (non-subscription) [blog](#).

Its title, "*50 years later, CND is still on the march in a nuclear world*", aptly and with unintended irony, summarises CND's principal, if not only, achievement: that, like the [Duracell bunny](#), it just keeps on marching. For, whilst the article attempts to show what a force for good CND has been over the past half-century, it blithely and innocently recounts a litany of failure and irrelevance.

Principal among these is that, despite CND's relentless efforts, no country has actually abandoned its nuclear arms and ambitions, except for two. South Africa

did so as part of its disavowal of Apartheid, and Libya because its president [feared America](#) after Saddam was toppled. CND had nothing to do with it.

Indeed, the list of nuclear states has ratcheted *up* under CND's watch from just three (the US, Soviet Union and Britain) to [nine](#) (France, China, Israel, India, Pakistan and North Korea), with Iran and Syria desperately trying to join the expanding club, and perhaps also Venezuela through the Ahmadinejad/Chavez rapport.

Contrast this non-performance with a couple of other iconic do-good drives, whose resounding victories made them effectively redundant.

- The slavery abolitionist movement which began in Britain in the 18th century was so successful that, with the help of a robust Royal Navy which then ruled the waves, by the end of the 19th century its job was virtually complete. [Millennia](#) of endemic slavery – and social acceptance of it – were now history. The abolitionists had persuaded not only Britain to turn from pro to anti-slavery, but also America and the rest of the West.
 - Disgracefully, though, traditional slavery does still persist in pockets of the Islamic world.
- Similarly, the anti-Apartheid movement, which began around the same time as CND as a move to banish from South Africa its legal, institutionalised, colour-based favouritism and prejudice,

achieved stunning success more than a decade ago, epitomised by the release of Nelson Mandela.

- The ignominious apartheid still widely and openly practiced by brown and black people upon their fellow-citizens elsewhere - eg on Chinese minorities in the Far East, Jews in Arab countries, darker-skinned tribes in Africa – few care about, because the perpetrators aren't white.

I remember the young CND from my teenage years, because of its annual four-day Easter march of protest from London to Aldermaston, home of Britain's [Atomic Weapons Research Establishment](#), which happened to be very close to my boarding school. I didn't understand what they were fussing about about then, and frankly, I still don't.

But Canon Comerford reminds me that CND was backed by very many luminaries of the day, including JB Priestley, Kingsley Martin, Bertrand Russell, AJP Taylor and assorted church leaders.

And yet, decades of annual Aldermaston marches, of which [the last was in 2004](#), had no effect at all on the AWRE, which is still [operating happily](#).

Meanwhile, CND sponsored numerous protests, court cases, debates etc in Whitehall, Trafalgar Square and in other countries throughout the 1960s and 1970s, which likewise had precisely zero effect on Britain's nuclear policies (and those of America, France, China etc).

As if CND did have something to do with it, however, Canon Comerford points out that the Soviets removed their missiles and nuclear warheads from [Cuba in 1962](#). Yet this was not because of CND but because they were afraid America would nuke the Kremlin if they didn't.

Similarly, the [Partial Test Ban Treaty](#) of 1963 and the subsequent arms reduction treaties were signed by the Americans and Soviets not due to CND but because of the mutual fear of nuclear attack and annihilation. Paradoxically, the existence of nuclear weapons was itself a reason to reduce them.

CND were invigorated in the 1980s when, to counter the Soviets' deployment of nuclear-armed SS-20s in its Eastern Europe vassal states, aimed at Western Europe, the US deployed [Pershing and Cruise nuclear missiles](#) in Britain and West Germany. This gave rise to the never-ending, CND-endorsed [Greenham Common protests](#) where countless scruffy-looking women set up camp with their children and looked pathetic for



the TV cameras. That CND Duracell Bunny in Greenham Common marched on for nineteen long years.

The target of the ladies' ire was - incredibly - America and Britain, rather than the baleful Soviet enemy that had already swallowed half of Europe and now wanted the other half. The women were backed up by massive protests in London, some addressed by Canon Comerford himself.

But, once again, it was all for naught. The missiles stayed; and eventually the rotten and corrupt Evil Empire began simply to collapse in 1990 under the sheer economic weight and madness of trying to outgun and outnuclearise the US.

In everything that it has ever done, CND has found itself on the wrong side of the argument and been comprehensively defeated.

Canon Comerford claims a CND success in that the Pershing and Cruise missiles were eventually removed in 1991, which he thinks proves that "*the nuclear arms race can be reversed at any stage*".

It proves no such thing, as the Soviet threat had disappeared by then so the Pershings and Cruises were no longer needed. Rather, it demonstrates that wars, in this case the Cold War between the US and the USSR, can be won by the superior side, which fortunately was America. That is the only reason the nuclear arms race ceased. As usual, CND had nothing to do with it.

In fact you can argue that CND prolonged it, by encouraging the Soviets to think that

the West was irresolute and would never fight back.

CND would be better off thanking God for the USA and its nuclear arsenal. For without American arms, soldiery and backbone, not only would the Japanese empire not have been crushed and then democratised. Neither would Nazi Germany. And democracy would not have been restored across West (and – eventually – Eastern) Europe, and without American troops and (nuclear) missiles stationed in Europe the Soviet Empire would not have been kept at bay and eventually caused to implode. This created the space for the Europeans to rebuild, to work together, to construct the EU, and since America took care of their defence against the Soviets, left spare cash to ~~frater~~ invest in social programmes.

You would have thought CND would be delighted at such beneficent outcomes, even if they were achieved via means that CND disdains.

It's not, of course, and still the Duracell CND Bunny marches on.

Canon Comerford tells us that nowadays CND worries

- about Pakistan, India and Israel,
- about nuclear materials falling into the hands of "*corrupt regimes and terrorists*", and
- about the (wholly benign) environmental effects of nuclear energy.

The one thing he can't bring himself to mention is the existential nuclear threat of the moment: namely, Iran's efforts to acquire a bomb in order, in President Ahmadinejad's

words, to wipe Israel from the map, thereby completing the Holocaust that he (ie President Ahmadinejad, certainly not the Canon) denies ever happened. CND's website is typically mealy-mouthed: "*CND opposes both the use of force against Iran and any acquisition of nuclear weapons capabilities by Iran,*" even relegating Iran's nuclear threat to second place. Moreover, as far as I can tell its is planning no mass rallies to the Iranian Embassy in London or elsewhere.

But it's all irrelevant anyway. One thing is sure: CND will persist in having absolutely no effect whatsoever on any of these problems; yet it is "*still on the march*" (to nowhere).

No doubt it makes its members feel righteous and virtuous. Deluded more like.

Ronald Reagan once said that "*a [nuclear] freeze ... would be a very dangerous fraud, for that is merely the illusion of peace. The reality is that we must find peace through strength*". CND would do well to ponder this wisdom.

Happy 50th Birthday, CND. If I were you, I wouldn't bother with a 51st.

America's Strong-Horse Weak-Horse Choices

Not everything the late Osama bin Laden said was wicked; it was sometimes wise. For example, in December 2001 a translated transcript of him chatting to others included this gem: "*when people see a strong horse and a weak horse, by nature, they will like the strong horse*".

It's true: everyone wants to back a winner. The US presidential shenanigans have sometimes reminded me of this universal truth, as they transfix and fascinate not just Americans but the rest of the world as well. For the first time in two generations, neither the Democrats nor the Republicans have a pre-ordained candidate, and

this has provided an object lesson in open, competitive democracy. (Compare with Russia's presidential "*election*" last week). No other candidate for any governing position anywhere in the world is subject to such rigorous, merciless public examination and attack as the would-be nominees have been undergoing. Regardless of what you think of their politics or personalities, you have to be filled with admiration at the sheer doggedness and toughness under fire of each one of them.

John McCain's campaign is developing particularly well for him. He has secured the Republicans' nomination with a string of decisive victories in primaries and caucuses, which means that the many anti-McCain Republicans who hate him for some of his slightly Leftish ideas (soft on illegal immigrants, pro-Kyoto, critical of big business) now have no choice but to endorse him because they have no-one else. At least they all love his conservative positions on defence and finance. Moreover, how that he is the indisputable "*strong horse*", it's much easier for all his fellow-Republicans to stifle their moans and support him.

By late February, Barack Obama looked like the Democrats' "*strong horse*". So much so that there were nearly daily defections of delegates, legislators, and politicians from Hillary to Obama, stampeding to be well clear of Hillary Clinton's perceived "*weak horse*".

But that turned out to be premature. For Mr Obama failed to deliver the expected knockout blow at the Texas and Ohio primaries, which means the Democrats' nomination battle may well carry on until June, and the party will therefore remain divided. Even then, victory is expected to come by a close margin so the differential equine strength will probably not arouse much passion.

This means that, while Mr McCain can now quietly plan and raise money for the actual presidential campaign, Mr Obama and Mrs Clinton are forced to spend everything they can raise in order to sling mud at each other for another three months. Only then can one of them begin doing what Mr McCain is doing now. Moreover, all that extra mud-slinging will provide him with further ammunition for the final campaign.

Not that he needs that much. For Barack and Hillary each have the same massive Achilles heel. Iraq. Each wants to extricate America from Iraq as quickly as possible, while trying to make it look like they are not cutting and running. A year ago when they started campaigning, this was a rather popular position, and arguably it had some practical merit in that the only progress that seemed underway in Iraq was of the negative variety, with suicide-homicide atrocities, American casualties and fervid insurgency at every turn, every day. It might not have been honourable to withdraw, but you can understand that people at a certain moment might say enough is enough, I want out of here.

But that's all changed thanks to the brilliance of General David Petraeus (or "Betray-Us" as a moveon.org ad treasonously once proposed). Against all expectations, his surge has resulted in a dramatic turnaround in the fortunes of the American military, and more importantly, of ordinary Iraqis.

Thousands of once-disgruntled Sunnis have turned against al Qaeda, ceased most

resistance, and begun flocking to government security forces and begging the Americans to stop both al Qaeda and Shiite militias. They are volunteering information about terrorists and mines, and clamouring to sign up with the joint security force. Tribal Sheikhs are driving the so-called "Anbar Awakening". In short, Al Qaeda is being comprehensively defeated, and at the same time exposed not as religious zealots but more like criminal thugs, bent on extortion, gasoline and food racketeering, petty theft, murder, pornography. All this is providing space for Americans to rebuild government facilities, arbitrate tribal feuds, repair utilities, train Iraqi army and police personnel, and generally improve life on the ground.

This may not be victory (yet) but it is certainly not defeat. And there is now no doubt about who is the "strong horse" (the Iraqi and American security forces) and who the "weak" (Al Qaeda). That in itself must be helping to influencing Iraqis of all clans and religious persuasions to support the emergent new Iraq over the criminal thugs.

Meanwhile, back in America, the very absence of Iraq from the front pages bears witness to its successes there. And the longer this progress continues, the more inescapable will it become, and the more inexcusable will become the retreatism of the two Democratic candidates. If America is seen as the "strong horse" in Iraq, the American people will want to back anyone who supports it. So unless Hillary or Barack



make a humiliating U-turn on Iraq, they will undoubtedly

become, in the eyes of US voters, the "weak horse" to be crushed by "strong horse" McCain.

No wonder he is beaming.

If only Osama bin Laden had stuck to philosophising, he could have made himself a fortune on the lecture and after-dinner circuit.

Strange Lisbon Bedfellows

I have been watching with interest the debate developing over the Lisbon Treaty, in respect of which only Ireland's paltry four million citizens, out of the EU's 390 million, will be permitted a referendum and thus - in theory - a veto.

The pros and cons arguments really fall into two broad baskets:

- The pros tell us that Lisbon is good for Ireland and the EU in all kinds of ways. Democracy, climate change, defence, terrorism, competition, protection, workers, bosses, neo-liberals, economics you name it.
- Some of the cons claim certain details are bad for Ireland/EU (similar list to the above). But their most powerful argument is simply that the document is deliberately incomprehensible, for the sole reason that the drafters do not want the approvers to know what they are approving because otherwise they wouldn't. And therefore there is no better reason to disapprove it.

But what is also interesting is the motley crew from across society's spectrum, particularly within Ireland, who are finding themselves on the same "no" side though in normal polite company and discourse they can't stand each other. The amount of nose-holding is extraordinary.

- On the Far Left:

- Sinn Fein tells us the "Lisbon Treaty is a bad deal for Ireland".
- The Socialist Workers Party gives us "Reasons to vote NO to the Lisbon Treaty".
- For the anti-warriors of the Peace and Neutrality Alliance it's all about "Centralization and Neoliberalism".

• On the Far Right:

- The British National Party considers the Lisbon Treaty to be "treasonous" and a "Soviet Constitution", while
- for Jean-Marie Le Pen it represents a "criminal conspiracy" and also a "traison" (but he won't come to Ireland for fear of providing a propaganda victory to the Yes camp)

• On the Capitalist front,

- there are millionaire businessmen such as Declan Ganley, who has created an anti-Lisbon organization called Libertas, which reckons that the "Irish constitution [will become] completely subject to [the] EU".
- And of course Britain's business-favouring Conservative Party are (so far unsuccessfully) demanding (as a prelude to rejection) a referendum on Lisbon - which the ruling Labour Party effectively promised on p84 of its 2005 manifesto ("We will put it to the British people in a referendum").

- With some exceptions, Irish trade unionists don't seem to be particularly bothered one way or another, and seem to view Lisbon

more as an opportunity to use a NO vote as a negotiating threat.

- Irish Left-wing journalists generally seem to favour the No side, such as Vincent Brown, who finds that Lisbon is both unobtainable from EU offices and “gobbledegook”
- Then there are ordinary Joe Soaps like me, for whom it is “execrable”.

Frankly, I couldn't care less who is on the same No side as I am, just so long as they vote No and persuade others to. It's the result that is important, and if some vote No for what I would regard as wrong or silly reasons, who am I to complain?

It may, however, all be academic in the end. For all its talk about democracy, the majesty of the people, citizens rights etc, all this will probably be trumped by the desperate desire of EU politicians and bureaucrats for Lisbon to be ratified. It's understandable for Brusselarians as their careers depend on the EU's influence to be ever-expanding, but to me it is inexplicable as far as national politicians are concerned.

Meanwhile, the EU Parliament has shown a staggering contempt for Irish and EU democracy when, confronted on 20 February with the following amendment 32-2a:

“The European Parliament undertakes to respect the outcome of the referendum in Ireland”

MEPs voted it down, by an astonishing 449 votes to 129. The “*downers*” even

included Proinsias De Rossa, one of Ireland's own MEPs.

The parliament is evidently shame-faced about it, because in its summary of the relevant debate, they dare report neither the amendment nor the voting result.

Páva, Budapest - Restaurant Review

The Four Seasons Gresham Hotel is not the most famous and venerable of Budapest's five-star hotels, distinctions better applied to

- the gracious Danubius Hotel Gellert with its historic spas, art nouveau style, high glass domed ceiling and ornate ironwork, or
- the majestic New York Palace which, judging by the extensive gold leaf and especially the exquisitely painted ceilings, looks as if it has been abducted from the Sistine Chapel.



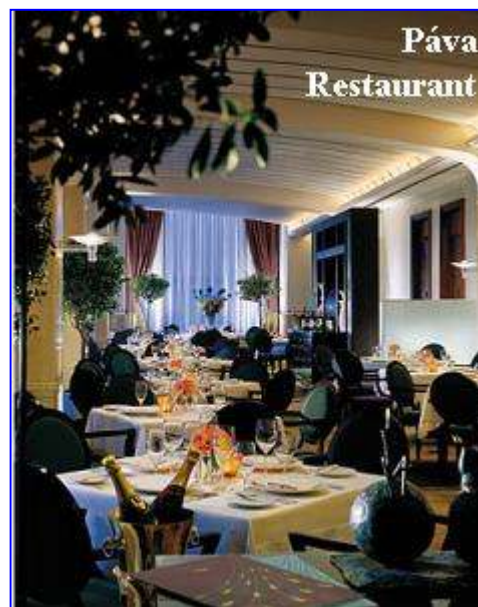
But the Four Seasons Gresham, by contrast, is housed in what can only be described as a palace on the Pest bank of the Danube, with exquisite views over the river toward the hills of Buda.

It is a fine example of the Secession form of architecture, which stemmed from Art

Nouveau. Secessionists tried to move towards the eradication of ornament, and focused on architectural form as the main focal point of a design. The Gresham Palace exemplifies this style with its smooth façade that draws attention mainly to the curved roofline, the bay windows and the pilasters along the front of the building. The palace also features beautiful ironwork, including two magnificent peacocks at the gate of the courtyard, which shows the link between Secessionism and its counterpart, Art Nouveau.

The extravagant palace was constructed between 1904 and 1906 by Gresham Life Assurance Company and used as both the company's headquarters and a residence for wealthy foreign aristocracy. The palace was eagerly occupied by Soviet troops during World War II and served as an apartment building during the drab decades of communism, when it was allowed to decay.

The Four Seasons group bought it in 2001 and spent \$85m and two years restoring it to all its original turn-of-the-century glory, complete with sculptures and facade stones, metal decoration,



stained glass windows and roof, ornaments, ceramic tiles, mosaics, stucco decoration and wrought iron.

It is a stunning sensation just to walk in through the main doors.

And if you do, turn left and you will find yourself entering Páva, the hotel's keynote, Italian restaurant.

I visited three months ago as part of a private celebration of two big birthdays (not mine). Páva's speciality is a marvellous six-course dégustation menu accompanied by a different wine to complement each course, with the whole menu changing every fortnight. This was the chosen target of the celebration. And it did not disappoint.

Following some wonderful chilled and colourful cocktails of unknown content, each served in an individual silver shaker on its own silver salver, we proceeded to the dining room. Each course was exquisitely presented as an individual work of art, but more to the point was totally scrumptious.

It uses grand language such as this, but here is a summary of what I and my friends enjoyed.

We began with a millefeuille filled with asparagus and other delights. After this came a wonderful piece of fresh seabream with a custardy sauce, followed by the best risotto with porcini mushrooms you will ever savour. Then came, as a kind of breather, what was called a granita, which was a kind of sorbet using mulled wine as the principal ingredient. Yum. Then a luscious fillet steak of veal, with a captivating bouquet of unusual vegetables, cooked al-dente they way I like them. Each course was accompanied by a different wine - Hungarian, Italian, French. But I cannot remember what they were, other than each was perfect.

Finally, there was the desert. Some delectable creamy stuff of peach and passion fruit in a sandwich of chocolate and biscuit. A few nuts, a scoop of delicately fruited ice-cream and a wheel of sugar, and the picture - or perhaps I should say photograph - was complete.

Throughout the service was efficient, attentive, smartly turned out and invisible. As it should be.

We ended the evening with strong coffees and glasses of Hungary's famed Tokaji Azu sweet dessert wine.

Though not cheap (€135 pp including drinks before during and after, plus a generous tip), it was a truly memorable evening, to be experienced only on the most special of occasions.

My rating: 90% (*I daren't give it the perfect 100% score in case the manager reads this review and thinks he can put the price up*).

You'll find the Páva at

- Roosevelt Tér 5-6, 1051 Budapest, Hungary;
- GPS co-ordinates 47° 29' 59.15" N 19° 2' 52.56" E;
- telephone +36-1-268-6000.

By the way, the Four Seasons Gresham Hotel is nothing to do with the eponymous Gresham Hotels group based in Dublin.



Issue 172's Letters to the Press

This letter was not published; neither will any more for a while. This is because, now that I write an occasional column for the Irish Times, I am considered to be one of those with a privileged platform, for whom the Letters page is not intended. So I may be reduced to harassing other publications when my frustrations bubble over.

- Violence in Gaza
- to the Irish Times

Madam, - The Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign is absolutely right to condemn the violence in Gaza, saying "enough is enough". So is its chairwoman, Marie Crawley, when she calls on the Irish Government "to condemn what is happening in Gaza in the strongest possible terms and to break with the criminal negligence of EU foreign policy" (200 Palestinians protest against violence in Gaza, March 3rd).

For too long, the Government and the EU - not to mention the media - have ignored the daily, unilateral rocketing of Israel by Hamas militants in Gaza, at rates of dozens per day. The negligence of politicians to take any action to stem this unwarranted violence has meant that it has been left to Israel itself to try to curtail it. - Yours etc,

Quotes for Issue 172

----- J I H A D -----

Quote: "The negotiations are suspended, as are all contacts on all levels, because in light of the Israeli aggression such communication has no meaning."

Nabil Abu Rudeineh, a spokesman for Fatah president Mahmoud Abbas, on Israel's recent military incursion into Hamas-controlled Gaza in response to sustained rocket attacks.

Apparently when Hamas lob Qassam and other rockets into Israel, at a rate of up to fifty per day, this is neither disreputable nor even worth reporting on.

But when Israel takes action to prevent this, they are (as usual) aggressors who, according to the new UN chief Ban Ki-moon, engage in "disproportionate and excessive use of force", a practice only Palestinians are permitted to employ with their unilateral rocketing aimed at civilian Jews.

Quote: "To those who reject democracy. To those who preach hate. To those who encourage violence. You are not part of the mainstream. You will not get public funding. You are not welcome as part of our society."

David Cameron, in a rare display of backbone.

Quote: "It's very nice to be a sort of a normal person for once. This is about as normal as I'm ever going to get."

Britain's Prince Harry reflects ruefully on his few weeks serving with the British Army in Afghanistan before America's Drudge Report disgracefully and treasonously blew his cover

----- LISBON TREATY -----

Quote (Sunday Times, 2nd March 2008, print-only edition): "The process would be postponed until the second referendum."

Antonio Misiroli, director of studies at the European Policy Centre, chuckles at what EUrocrats will do should the Irish electorate have the temerity to vote down the execrable Lisbon Treaty.

Last month the European Parliament voted 3½:1 to disrespect the outcome of the Irish referendum.

But Dick Roche, Ireland's Minister for European Affairs, says that "if Ireland votes no, then that is the result".

The people's vote is sacrosanct, therefore. Yeah, right.

----- U S E L E C T I O N -----

Quote: “*She [Hillary Clinton] is a monster, too - that is off the record - she is stooping to anything ... You just look at her and think, ‘Ergh’.*”

Harvard professor Samantha Power, Pulitzer Prize winning author in 2003 of “*A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*”, is forced to resign as key foreign policy aide from Barack Obama’s campaign

With a couple of intemperate remarks, she destroys her nascent but glittering political career.

Ireland only woke up to this brilliant young woman a month ago when it realised she was Irish, born in Dublin.

Quote: “*Stand up with me, my friends, stand up and fight for America - for her strength, her ideals, and her future.*”

John McCain acknowledges that he will be the US Republican’s presidential candidate for 2009

Quote: “*If he wants my pretty face standing by his side at one of these rallies, I’ll be glad to show up.*”

President George Bush endorses Senator McCain

----- I R E L A N D -----

Quote: “*This partial-parliament in this little semi-statelet.*”

Spitting vitriol, Sinn Féin parliamentarian Arthur Morgan uses parliamentary privilege to treasonously besmirch his parliament and his country.

So-called Irish Republicans such as Mr Morgan, a convicted IRA terrorist who served seven years, have a long history of not recognizing the sovereignty of the Irish Republic and its people. They maintain that the IRA is the country’s sole legitimate ruling body and standing army.

Three years ago I wrote about the way the same Mr Morgan cosied up to convicted IRA thieves and killers of an Irish policeman, Jerry McCabe, who had been guarding a cash delivery.

----- F R A N C E -----

Quote: “*All persons not having a plot in the cemetery and wishing to be buried in Sarpourenx are forbidden from dying in the parish. Offenders will be severely punished. It may be a laughing matter for some, but not for me.*”

Mayor Gerard Lalanne of Sarpourenx (pop 260) in south-west France worries about the village’s overcrowded cemetery.

He’s 70, so his own turn will not be far away.

Quote (spotted in a French newspaper): “*À l’eau, c’est l’air*”

From an advertisement to join the French Navy, and nothing to do with “*Hello Sailor*” in a stage-French accent ...

Hattip: Gerry in Dublin