

# Irish Foreign Affairs

Volume Four, Number 4

December 2011

---

“Every nation, if it is to survive as a nation, must study its own history and have a foreign policy”  
—C.J. O’Donnell, *The Lordship of the World*, 1924, p.145

---

## Contents

Editorial p.2

Serbia, British Geopolitics and World War *Pat Walsh* p. 7

A 1937 Irish Internationalist Manifesto From Spain *Manus O’Riordan* p.19

Starving the Germans: the Evolution of Britain’s Strategy of Blockade During the First  
World War - Part Four *Eamon Dyas* p. 22

Travel Permit Card K13918—The Person Behind the Number *Eamon Dyas* p. 30

## Documents

War was ‘war’ p. 32

Institute of International and European Affairs p.21

The city of Koenigsberg p. 33

Ron Paul: US Bases round the World p 34

Ottoman POWs p. 35

DeValera interview with New York Times August First, 1947 p. 36

Ron Paul and Iran p.36

The decision of all the members of the European Union, minus Britain, to adopt a course of action which Britain opposed, raises the prospect of Britain becoming more substantially foreign to Ireland than it has been since the time of Charles Haughey. Martin Mansergh of Fianna Fail, who was adviser to many Taoiseachs before entering the Dail as a Fianna Fail TD, has denied that Ireland and Britain stand on a footing of foreign relations at all. His view seems to be that Irish is a variant of British, and that British is the default position of Irish. There is much to be said for that view of the matter as an objective description of Irish-British relations during the last forty years, leaving aside the years when Haughey was Taoiseach and acted as if Ireland was an independent state in the European family of states, rather than an Anglo-Saxon adjunct. But, of course, it is not just a matter of objective description. The relationship described by Mansergh coincided with the actual relationship to a considerable extent. But that description was not dispassionate reporting of what existed—it was the statement of an ideal.

Dr. Inge, a famous Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in London in the 1920s, said that the loss of Ireland was the most shameful event in British history.

Raymond Crotty, founder of the Anglophile 'Irish Sovereignty Movement', which campaigned vigorously against the European Union on the same line as the British Eurosceptics, appealed to Britain to take Ireland in hand once more because it was unable to look after itself. His appeal was made in the London *Times* on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1972.

Britain, seeing the possibility of making amends for the shameful, and in retrospect inexplicable, loss of Ireland in 1918-21, responded to Crotty's appeal. The Irish Universities were hegemonised by Oxford and Cambridge. The newspaper of British Ireland in County Dublin, maintained without visible means of support, was built up into the major newspaper published in Ireland. The British Council became active. And the British Ambassador began to act freely in Irish politics.

Ireland became a member of the EU along with Britain in 1972, and it usually seconded Britain's advocacy of measures designed to prevent the development of the EU on the lines set by its founders.

British membership had been vetoed by De Gaulle on the ground that the position that Britain had established for itself in the world was incompatible with the development of European union. Britain was insular and maritime. "*Maritime*" meant that Britannia ruled the waves and had arranged by its naval, commercial, industrial and financial power, that the world should feed it and supply it with raw materials. (There is a vivid picture of the world feeding England in Rudyard Kipling's poem, *The Big Steamers*.)

Europe, ravaged by two Great Wars brought about by English balance-of-power strategy in the first half of the 20th century, and other Great Wars during the preceding two centuries, made arrangements in the 1950s to ward off English mischief-making, and to make itself self-sufficient economically. If that European project succeeded, England would have been obliged to engage in a basic reorganisation of its relationship with the world, which would have had far-reaching consequences for its own domestic arrangements. A disunited Europe was essential to the mode of life it had established for itself.

Britain had stood aside from the European project when it was launched in the 1950s, when it was still an Empire, and regarded European politics with a fair degree of contemptuous dislike. It had not expected that project to amount to much, and was confident that, if it threatened to be a success, it would find ways of aborting it. And it had grounds in historical experience for this attitude.

It was necessary for it at first to give some encouragement to the European project. The outcome of the World War, which it had worked up from the German/Polish border dispute, left Soviet Communism in control of half of Europe, with strong phalanxes of support in most of the other half. Traditional balance-of-power strategy did not apply in that situation. Western Europe had to be encouraged to unite against Moscow in the Cold War, which could not be resolved by becoming a shooting war because of the speed with which the Soviet Union broke the Western monopoly of nuclear weapons.

But Europe flourished during the post-War generation much more than was good for Britain. Two conditions were conducive to its flourishing. One was the Cold War itself, which gave it a closed eastern border in the form of the Iron Curtain, and a sense of impending danger which was a stimulus to unity. The other was a kind of international politics in the form of Christian Democracy, which was beyond the comprehension of British political understanding.

Britain, as an Occupation force in Germany, tried to bring Social Democracy to the fore after 1945, as it had been after 1918. It had leverage on Social Democracy. Its ambition was frustrated by the rapid emergence of Christian Democracy as the dominant force in post-War German politics.

It became habitual with British foreign policy propaganda to characterise Fascism as a development from the Catholic social policy set out in Papal Encyclicals around 1900. An equation was made between Fascism and Catholicism, such that the London *Times* on August 14, 1995, could publish a large photo of De Valera on a visit to the Vatican in 1939 and meeting Mussolini on the way, as was customary, along with the comment "Irish premier Eamon de Valera with Fascists in Rome in 1939: under his 1937 constitution, he styled himself Taoiseach in imitation of Duce".

And there was no protest from the Irish intelligentsia against this travesty of historical fact. De Valera held the line for parliamentary democracy in Ireland during the 1930s against Fascist pressure from the Treatyite, and therefore pro-British, party, Fine Gael.

The silent acceptance by academia in Ireland of this Catholic-Fascist equation might be seen as bearing out Dr. Crotty's contention that Ireland was no longer able to do its own thinking. But Dr. Crotty, driven by his hostility to Europe, was amongst the silent.

The Christian Democracy which took Germany in hand after 1945, and gained freedom of action for itself by securing American influence as a counter to British influence, had been suppressed by the Nazi regime in 1933. Its leader, Konrad

Adenauer, had experienced British occupation in Cologne after 1918. As Mayor of Cologne in the 1920s he put into effect the “*social market*” policies that were the hallmark of Christian Democratic Germany in the 1950s. He was nominally a member of the Centre Party—a Catholic party developed in opposition to Bismark’s *Kulturkampf* (Culture Struggle) against Catholicism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century—but refused a call to become Chancellor in the Weimar Republic because the liberal (*laissez faire*) outlook would not allow him to implement in the Republic as a whole the policies that he applied in the local government in Cologne. He was removed as Mayor of Cologne in 1933, bided his time in seclusion, and re-emerged in 1945 with the political abilities and the economic policy which revived Germany so quickly after its catastrophic defeat, and gave substance and coherence to post-War Europe.

In Italy Christian Democracy also emerged as the dominant party, the only other major party being the Communist Party. Its leader was Alcide de Gasperi, who began his political career in the Austrian region of Northern Italy before 1914, took part in Austrian politics as a Papal Encyclicalist, did not support the irredentist claims on the Trentino by the Italian State, and stood apart from the irredentist warmongering of Mussolini urged on by Britain in 1914-15.

French political life was far less organised than German and Italian after 1945. It was Gaullist in a general sort of way. And Gaullism, though not nominally Christian Democratic, was so in sentiment in every way that mattered.

The Cold War ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989-90. The external threat to the capitalist system as a whole ended, freeing the situation for the development of antagonisms within that system. Limited war became possible once more in Europe, after two generations when it was unthinkable. The first expression of this return to normality was the destruction of Yugoslavia by extreme nationalist developments encouraged and supported by the former Free World of the Cold War.

Yugoslavia, though a Socialist state of Communist origin, had been a *de facto* ally of the capitalist West against the Soviet Union for 40 years, though formally Non-Aligned. Its

usefulness to the West ended with the Cold War, and it was found that it had remained Communist to such an extent that its presence ceased to be tolerable. It was destroyed by extreme nationalist movements, encouraged by the former Free World and actively supported by a range of measures—from financial to military.

NATO, the Western half of the military alliance that defeated Nazi Germany established as a defensive measure against the other half, was not disbanded when the Soviet bloc collapsed. When it lost its defensive purpose, it was instantly, and without a moment’s reflection, transformed into an aggressive force. It accorded itself a mandate to interfere anywhere in the world. Its first action was in the new Balkan War. And, through this action, which to many eyes appeared as a substitute for the war on the Soviet Union by the Free World which the Soviet acquisition of nuclear weapons had prevented, the distinction between the EU and NATO dissolved.

There were states in NATO that were not members of the EU: the USA, Turkey, and the Fascist states of Spain and Portugal. Spain and Portugal were Fascist states when they joined the military alliance to defend the Free World, though they became parliamentary democracies later. The admission of Fascist States to NATO so soon after the defeat of Germany in what was generally called the ‘Anti-Fascist War’ may seem to contradict the declared purpose of NATO, but that is because of the continuing influence of the demonic British propaganda of its 1939-45 War. Fascism arose in the first instance as a movement to defend capitalism against the spread of Communism in a Europe disrupted by Britain’s first World War of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and it was supported as such by the Western hero of the second World War, Churchill. The second war on Germany came about through the bungling, rudderless foreign policy of the World Super Power of the 1920s and 1930s, the British Empire—and that is effectively how it was described by Churchill in his account of the inter-War years, *The Gathering Storm*. And, when Britain suddenly decided to make war on Germany in 1939, after collaborating with it actively (not ‘*appeasing*’ it) for five years, it did so from a position of strength. German military success was gained against the odds, and was possible only because Britain launched the War without having a will to fight that was evident in military preparations.

The moment Germany was defeated, Europe fell into 45 years of antagonism determined by the fundamental incompatibility between the Eastern and Western sections of the alliance that had defeated it. The EU was founded in the Western component of the global antagonism in a situation that was overawed by that antagonism. But, although the global antagonism was one of the conditions that made it possible, it was not in any other sense the cause of it. Such constructive developments are not the product of external causes.

When the USA and Britain launched their destructive invasion of Iraq in 2003 there was frequent reference on the British media to the rapid reconstruction of Europe following the destructive invasion of 1944-5 as a precedent for the post-Invasion development of Iraq. The assumption was that the reconstruction of Europe was the work of the Occupation forces. It was a profoundly false assumption, although a necessary assumption if the ideology of the victors in World War 2 was to be sustained.

The historical fact is that European reconstruction after 1945 was the work of European political leaders acting in defiance of the British Occupation Power. Those leaders had personally experienced the consequence to Europe of the two World Wars brought about by Britain and had reflected on it and were

*Irish Foreign Affairs* is a publication of  
the *Irish Political Review* Group.

55 St Peter’s Tce., Howth, Dublin 13

Editor: Philip O’Connor

ISSN 2009-132X

Printers: Athol Books, Belfast

[www.atholbooks.org](http://www.atholbooks.org)

Price per issue: €4 (Sterling £3)

Annual postal subscription €16 (£14)

Annual electronic subscription €4 (£3)

All correspondence:

[Philip@atholbooks.org](mailto:Philip@atholbooks.org)

Orders to:

[atholbooks-sales.org](http://atholbooks-sales.org)

determined that Britain should not again be allowed to play balance-of-power politics within Europe.

Balance-of-power has a nice reassuring ring to it. It was Britain's aim to maintain a balance in Europe, and surely balance is good! How could Europe reasonably object to being kept in balance?

But Britain itself was not part of the balance. It stood outside the balance, keeping the European states balanced against each other, so that it might determine the course of European events by adding its weight to one or the other side.

This strategy was not a secret, conspiratorial one. It seems to have been conceived when William of Orange became King of England during his war with France. One of its earliest theoretical exponents was John Toland from Gaelic-speaking Donegal, who underwent a conversion to fanatical Protestantism in Derry in the 1680s and went on to become one of the first Whig ideologues. It became such a commonplace of the English outlook that one finds it in a biography of Marlborough by the poet, Edward Thomas, published just before the 1914 War. And, though it was known that the manipulation of European balance and disunity was the British way, it always worked in the heat of a crisis.

But there were European leaders in 1945 who were committed to ensuring that it would work no more. That is how the rancours of the War were set aside so quickly by France, Germany, Italy and Benelux and the constructive statesmanship of integral European development was set in motion west of the Iron Curtain and under cover of the global antagonism between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, during a period when the Cold War made British strategy inoperative.

The ending of the Cold War gave the EU a problematical frontier to the East, and restored the possibility of British balance-of-power politics, at a time when the founders of the EU had passed away, and the history of the development had been reduced to little more than sentimental fancy.

Britain had been admitted to membership on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1973 when it seemed to be reshaping itself into a European state under Edward Heath's Government. Heath was displaced by Margaret Thatcher a few years later and his outlook on this and other matters was rejected and held up to scorn. When the Cold War ended, Britain was well-placed to influence EU development from within along lines which served its own globalist interests. It encouraged random expansion eastwards in a way that diluted the original developmental impulse of the EU. It encouraged the aggressive attitude towards a Russia that seemed to be drifting helplessly, compensating for the War that dared not be fought between 1945 and 1990. It helped the EU to lose itself in NATO to such an extent that the neutrality of some EU countries was reduced to a pedantic pretence. And it allowed superficial measures of European integration on the wrong lines, while disabling the institution which might have made them functional by direction, the Commission, and gained exemption for itself from everything it didn't want.

Ireland joined the EU as a kind of British satellite. Its Government, urged on by the Opposition parties, changed its Northern policy under British pressure in 1970 and that submission left it disoriented, caught in a Constitutional obligation which it could neither implement nor repeal. It entered Europe in the spirit of leaving a history which had become alien to it. But Europe was not a haven for lost souls. It was a combination of definite states and nationalities committed to the construction of a supra-national framework. Ireland was a national state constructed two generations earlier through a Constitutional war of defence against British military

government, but the national impulse of its existence had gone awry, due to its 1970s submission, and it did not quite know what to do with itself.

As a state which had all but lost the national reason for its existence, it might have sought a new purpose in Europe as a supporter of supra-national development through the Commission. But that was what it was least of all capable of doing because it was what Britain was most opposed to.

Ireland, though profiting greatly from the European self-sufficiency arrangements tended to by the Commission, became a second voice for Britain in the business of aborting EU Constitutional development—not knowing what it was doing, being unable to think about it since Europe came to it as a relief from thought.

There was a brief revival of independent spirit in the Irish state when Charles Haughey became Taoiseach. This was noticed by European leaders and Ireland was handsomely rewarded for ceasing to be Britain's *alter ego*. But Haughey, with whose active personal direction of government the Celtic Tiger development began, was reviled by the media in general, and was obstructed by a civil service shaped to the listless mode of Irish existence, and when he was got rid of he was presented by the media as having been disgraced.

The disoriented condition of Irish public life was worsened by the denial during the boom years of the political source of the boom. The unpopular political resourcefulness that brought it about had been blackguarded and all its traces removed from the system as a matter of principle when the time came for handling the end of the boom.

During that era when Ireland seemed bereft of national will, and was seconding Britain in Europe, its currency got separated from sterling—by accident. Ireland was being towed along in Britain's wake as usual when Britain, in response to a currency crisis brought about by George Soros, suddenly left the ERM mechanism, leaving the Irish Punt in it to become part of the Euro.

The establishment of the Euro as the currency of most EU states, but with Britain allowed to retain sterling while remaining a full member of the EU, and with the supra-national authority of the Commission being marginalised, and replaced by the InterGovernmental Conference, was an arrangement made for disaster. It built currency conflict into the economic life of the EU, and deprived the EU of the only institution with a degree of political authority which might have controlled the fortunes of the Euro.

Ireland played an active part in the undermining of the Euro. Pat Cox had his moment of glory as the leader of the European Parliament in the reckless, absurd, demagogic campaign against the "*corruption*" of the Commission.

The pre-EU anarchy of Europe was restored within the façade of the EU. The natural result was a crisis. The crisis had the effect of bringing to mind what the EU is supposed to be about. It has, as we go to print, precipitated an unprecedented degree of Franco-German purposefulness which forced a vote in which 26 of the 27 states voted against Britain.

Ireland, as a Eurozone state, could hardly have voted with Britain. If this development is followed through in a substantial European political development, Ireland will once again be taking a major step towards independence from Britain—without wanting to.

Official Ireland is now at ease only in connection with England. It was once at ease with itself and open to the world. It recoiled from itself in 1970 when it could neither stand by its own Northern policy in the face of British pressure, nor accept

that the North was part of the British state, *de jure*, to the extent that this was so in accordance with the wishes of a majority, and indict Britain of systematic sectarian misgovernment of the Six Counties in exclusion from the democratic system of the state. It could not assert its own policy against British disapproval, but neither could it discard its own policy and hold Britain accountable for the mischief-making mode of government that it established in the North as the means of enacting and maintaining Partition. It maintained a flimsy critical posture with relation to British policy on the North, but fundamentally it excused Britain of responsibility for the mess it made in the North by adopting the British pretence that the Six County region of the British state was an Irish state, even though not a shred of sovereign authority attached to it, and virtually all its legislation was enacted at Westminster. And, by recognising this misgoverned region of the British state as an Irish state, it was led to plead guilty for the unstable condition of the North because of its failure to recognise it as a state—and an Irish one at that.

It was in that mood of denial of realities at home that Ireland joined Europe as a British satellite. It sought to lose itself in Europe, and to lose its Northern Ireland problem in Europe, therefore there was much fantasy about what Europe was.

Europe, an arena of contentious nationalities, was no place for a state with an existential problem. Ireland was the odd man out. Instead of availing of the opportunity to remove itself from the British sphere and to flourish in Europe on the ground of its nationality, it provincialised itself. By denying itself it could only revert to the status of a British province which had accidentally become a state and did not know how to conduct itself as a state.

It sought to 'modernise' itself by escaping from its 'history', as if it was something apart from its history. And it took its place like a wraith at the heart of Europe—Brussels—where Flemings and Walloons apologised to nobody for being Flemings and Walloons and refusing to become Belgians in any other way than by using the Belgian State as the site of their antagonism.

The Irish Sovereignty Movement of Raymond Crotty and Anthony Coughlan campaigned actively against Europe as a deadly danger to Irish independence. But, if it was a danger, it was only because Ireland, entering Europe at a moment when it was becoming unsure of what it was itself, could not avail of the opportunities of national development provided by Europe, and was therefore overcome by a feeling of nonentity.

Economically it benefited greatly by moving from the British world market to the protected European market. Individuals prospered, but the national sense of the collective wilted.

Ireland might have contributed greatly to European culture by insisting on its own history. It asserted its right to statehood by a military act of rebellion against Britain during the Great War. Britain justified its intervention in the European War of 1914, expanding it into a World War, by declaring that its only purpose was to establish democracy and the rights of small nations as basic principles of a new world order. Ireland put that declaration to the test by voting for independence in the post-War election and establishing a national Government, only for Britain to impose military government in defiance of the democratic election. And, when Britain launched another World War, Ireland declared neutrality, and armed as best it could to deter British occupation.

By taking its stand unapologetically on its own history, and reviewing European affairs in the light of it, Ireland might have made a major contribution to the political culture. No other state was so well placed to do so. By failing to do so Ireland left

Europe at the mercy of the British propaganda/history in which Britain is presented as an agent of Providence. And that was a very immoral thing to do.

But Ireland rendered itself incapable of doing what its own history required of it. It left Europe in the lurch. And before long it was actually denying its own history. Its official position now is that the British war of destruction on Germany (and on Turkey a few months later), which was described as such at the time by James Connolly and Roger Casement, was actually "*Our War*", which we should celebrate annually with poppies.

It used to be the general view that the Irish state was founded in war with Britain, when Britain refused to take heed of democratic voting. That view has now been discarded. The Insurrection of 1916 and the Election two years later are no longer seen as constituting acts of the state. The Taoiseach in a recent address told us that the democratic state was founded by a British Act of Parliament which in 1922 imposed colonial Dominion status on Ireland, under threat of intensified military action if Dominion status under the Crown was not accepted and the Republic destroyed.

And, naturally enough, this reversion towards provincialism is accompanied by a revival of anti-Germanism, in harmony with Britain.

British anti-Germanism is increasing. It is a respectable part of the national culture. As some philosopher said, "*To define is to negate*", and Britain has defined itself over five centuries by three great hates—of Catholicism, of France, and of Germany. They arose in that order, but the new hate never displaces the old. They are all kept in working order in popular culture. Germany, for centuries the ally of England against the two others, began to be a hate figure when it defeated the French aggression of 1870, becoming the strongest military power west of Russia, and embarked on a course of economic development and began to be a power in the world market which Britain saw as its market because it established it.

Britain nurtures the major hates of its historical development all the time, with only changes of emphasis. Since it was through them that it became what it is, and the objects of them have not gone away, it assumes that they remain relevant to its well-being. Britain is a well-conducted democratic state which takes care not to lose itself in the altruistic political illusions that it persuades others to adopt.

A few days before the famous 26 to 1 vote in the EU, Channel 4 carried an anti-German report that was a bit unusual in that it was conducted by a slightly Anglicised German who makes a living in British broadcasting, Matt Frei:

"Who would have thought that more than two decades after the Brandenburg Gate was opened, Germany has effectively become Europe's economic policeman? Chancellor Merkel has the power to tell the Greeks and the Italians how to get their economic houses in order. Berlin even has ways of making you quit if your name is Silvio Berlusconi."

He interviewed Olaf Henkel, "*a former business leader*", who once supported the Euro, but now sees it as divisive and putting Germany in the position of laying down the law. And he commented: "*If that's true, perhaps it's just as well that most people don't know that the German Finance Ministry used to be the headquarters of Hitler's Luftwaffe*". And he concludes that Germany does not seem to be willing "*to save the world by writing cheques and overcoming its hang-up*".

He went to Wittenburg, where Luther launched his theology, to explain the German "*hang-up*", which is causing it to refuse

to save the world. It arises from the fact that the Germans have the same word for debt and guilt: *Schuld*. In the grip of a primitive superstition:

“No wonder this is predominantly a cash culture, wary of credit cards, intolerant of the very concept of living beyond one’s means.”

Irish anti-Germanism was, of course, more vulgar. A photo of Angela Merkel caught mid-way through a wave so that she seemed to be giving a Nazi salute appeared in the *Irish Times*.

That was before the 26 to 1 vote in Europe. A different note was struck after the vote.

If Europe actually does unite against Britain, and makes economic arrangements which consolidate the Euro and diminish the influence of the City of London in Europe, that will be a very serious matter for Britain. Historical precedent suggests that Europe cannot do this, but less likely things have happened. The much stronger historical precedent, which told Major Street in Dublin Castle in 1920 that the Irish would not stand by their vote for Independence once the will of the master was brought to bear on them, proved to be mistaken. It was this that brought Dr. Inge, the famous Dean of St. Paul’s, to make the statement referred to above—and looking at those who now conduct the Irish state, one can only wonder how it happened.

So precedent is not omnipotent. The 26 to 1 vote in Europe is unprecedented, as was the 1918 Election in Ireland. And it is not certain that it is just a flash in the pan. And, if it isn’t, then something substantially new in the world is about to happen.

Britain is concerned because it is isolated from Europe. Ireland is concerned because it saw no alternative but to be one of the 26 and thus isolate itself from Britain. It is now faced with the dire prospect of having to act the part of a European state in European affairs, instead of dragging along in Britain’s wake.

And the *Irish Times*, the newspaper which Britain left behind in Ireland when it found it had to leave, is greatly concerned. Life will become impossible for it if Europe coheres, with Ireland as part of it, and Britain strikes out on a separate course of action. Its concern was expressed in its editorial of 13<sup>th</sup> December:

“The use by David Cameron of the veto in Brussels on Friday has unleashed a new and malign dynamic not only in the EU’s European and bilateral relationships, but in its domestic politics. For the British prime minister this was a crossroads moment of real significance that has called into question the long-term engagement to the EU... And it has sharply re-emphasised... how much the country’s European policy is driven by a specifically English agenda.

“Sold by the Tories back home as a magnificent victory in defence of the City, another Agincourt no less, the truth is that Cameron emerged from the summit with less than he had when he went into the meeting, with the UK’s ‘vital’ interests less protected...

“From an Irish perspective, fears of loss of business to the City have been overplayed... But if the UK is marginalising itself in the EU, a renewed emphasis on the bilateral relationship will be important. In the end, however, Ireland’s place, though once defined on the world stage by our relationship with our neighbour, is now in Europe.

Britain’s casting off of the lines to the mainland and drift into the mid-Atlantic does not change that reality.”

This is a statement of disillusionment. The *Irish Times* takes the worst-case scenario as the one that will probably happen. Ninety years ago it was dismissive of the Election, the Dail and the Declaration of Independence, being sure that England would know how to brush that nonsense aside. But England didn’t. And the *Irish Times* is really the only newspaper in Ireland to-day that has memory. It is the purposeful paper of the English remnant, conducted by an Editor subject to the continuous supervision of a Directory with all concerned being bound by an annual Oath of Secrecy (see John *Martin’s Past And Present, a record of the journal since 1859*, published in 2008). It has achieved marvels in recent decades in the way of fostering forgetfulness in others, and that ensured that it did not itself fall into forgetfulness of its reason for existing.

England let it down badly in 1919-21—and of course it was always *England*. It was England that made the State and brought it to the verge of complete world dominance—the classic work on it is rightly called *The English Constitution*.

The trauma of 1919-21 causes it to expect the worst now. If the worst happens, and England returns to grand isolation with Ireland playing a part in a secure Europe, the *Irish Times* will have to contemplate the fate worse than death—becoming Irish.

---

Look up

Athol Books

on the Internet

[www.atholbooks.org](http://www.atholbooks.org)

# 'The Guardians of the Gate' — Serbia, British Geopolitics and World War

By Pat Walsh

The Reverend R.G.D. Laffan was with the Entente invasion force which violated Greek neutrality by occupying Salonika in October 1915. According to Churchill, the occupation of Salonika by the 'Army of the Orient' was fundamentally an attempt to intimidate the Greeks into joining the war against the Germans, Austro-Hungarians and Ottomans. However, at the time it was widely represented as an attempt to save the Serbs (from the mess they had created for themselves in the belief that they had powerful backers and could, therefore, behave irresponsibly toward Vienna after the Sarajevo assassinations).

Prior to the repulsing of the Entente invasion of Turkey at the Dardanelles in 1915 Greece had been relatively unimportant to Britain. But the failure to break the Turks (and the Germans in the West) led to a drastic expansion of the war on England's behalf. Irredentist ambitions were employed to lure the Greeks, Italians and the Balkan nations into the war. These irredentist ambitions that Britain promoted were often in conflict with one another and stored up trouble for after the war. But no matter! Such things could be sorted after the war was won – and the important thing was to win the war at all cost.

The Serbs had proved a useful detonator for the launching of the Great War on Germany. But, like the Poles in 1939, that's all they were for many in Britain. Having served their importance in the launching of a general war on Germany they were largely forgotten until they became part of the strategic position again in late 1915 after Turkey and Germany had proved more difficult nuts to crack than anticipated.

The Reverend Laffan believed the Serbs were worth more than that and gave a series of lectures about the Serbs to the British occupiers of Salonika. His lectures were collected in a book entitled *The Guardians of the Gate* and published by Oxford, Clarendon in 1918. A Foreword by Vice Admiral Troubridge was included.

The book marked the reappearance of the Serbs on the 'usefulness to England' list, beside the Greeks and Italians.

## **To Hell with Servia!**

In his Introduction the Reverend Laffan noted that Englishmen were generally ignorant of the importance and specialness of the Serbs when they invaded neutral Greece to rescue them:

"When we arrived at Salonika last summer, most of us were entirely ignorant of the Balkan peninsula... In the past most Englishmen, who have spoken to me about the Balkans, have expressed very decided views. Nine out of ten have said that all the Balkan nations were as bad as each other; that, as between Turks and Christians, it was six of one and half-a-dozen of the other; that all were savages and cut-throats and past praying for... Now, when we return to England, we shall, at any rate, be in a position to declare that we found one Balkan race, the Serbs, to consist of the best of fellows... the Serbs look back with pride to the great days of their independence in the Middle Ages, and to their empire which once embraced the whole Balkan peninsula, except southern Greece and the coast-towns. They were a great people six hundred years ago. Never have they been more glorious than in their present humiliation, exile, and disruption. But, please God, that spiritual glory which encircles them to-day will soon be expressed in the 'outward and visible signs' of material greatness, and they will again take their place among the mighty nations of the earth." (p.13)

Perhaps Laffan was thinking of some of the press coverage directed at the Serbs in Britain when it began to become apparent that Britain was to shed blood and treasure on their behalf.

Horatio Bottomley, who founded the *Financial Times*, was Liberal MP for Hackney from 1906 to 1912. After being charged with conspiracy to defraud he was declared bankrupt and thus lost his seat in Parliament. Bottomley also, however, set up *John Bull* in 1906, an enormously popular patriotic paper that sold more than a million copies weekly - mostly to a working class readership. At the start of 1915 it was said that "*next to Kitchener the most influential man today is Mr. Horatio Bottomley*" (Julian Symons, *Horatio Bottomley*, p. 164.)

*John Bull* produced a famous headline on August 8th 1914: "*To Hell with Servia.*" The underlying article contained more than a grain of truth in it - later lost by the war propaganda produced in service of the 'war for small nations' to mobilise Liberal support:

"We see no reason whatever why the peace of Europe should be imperilled by Austria's just demands, and we wish the old Emperor the satisfaction of seeing... the 'elimination' of the Servian nation. At any rate we most solemnly protest against the shedding of a single drop of English blood to save these people from the Nemesis which threatens to overtake them... The foul murders of the Archduke and Archduchess of Austria by a Servian assassin in the pay of the Belgrade plotters, encouraged by the press and people of the country, have at last precipitated a just vengeance... and we would not lift a finger to write a word to save them. We repeat what we said a few weeks ago – Servia must be wiped out. Let Servia be removed from the map of Europe."

However, a week later, when Britain had declared war on Germany *John Bull* headlined with '*Day of Britain's Greatest Glory*' and explained its turnabout thus:

"We still hold that the blood-guiltiness of Servia has robbed her of all sympathies of Europe; and had it been possible to confine the issues... we should still have contended that the intervention of Great Britain was wholly unjustified, if not, indeed, tantamount to the aiding and abetting of a crime. 'To Hell with Servia' we cried last week, and 'To Hell with Servia' we repeat with no less fervour to-day. But in the immensity of the later crisis, the murders of Sarajevo and the murderers of Belgrade have faded into the background. To recall them to-day would be to confuse the issues of the mighty conflict which has been thrust upon us... We shall fight to the death, for compromise would be tantamount to surrender. We shall neither ask or accept quarter... We make no mistake as to the magnitude of the task before us... the German fleet must be swept from the face of the seas. Her pretensions to the mastery of the waves must be buried ocean deep. No false notions of humanity or of economy must be permitted to hinder the work of destruction." (August 15, 1914)



*Map of Europe in 1914*

Showing Germany, then called "German Empire"  
 Poland is an area within Russia  
 Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia do not exist  
 Serbia stands between Albania and Bulgaria



A week later 'To Hell with Serbia' had become, 'To Hell with Germany':

"As regards Germany herself, we repeat, she must be wiped off the map of Europe. Her colonies must be taken over by either France or ourselves or both of us, and whatever ships she has left must be added in equal proportions to the French and British navies." (August 23, 1914)

And so "plucky little Serbia" became one of those heroic small nations on whose behalf Britain threw the world into chaos in August 1914.

*John Bull's* Liberal Imperialist attitude to the war seems to have been the most honest of all the Liberal press in describing Serbia as a despicable 'rogue state' but supporting a war on her side all the same. (The Unionist press such as *The Times* on the 29th July, for instance, described it as a pure Balance of Power war on England's part, for which the Ententes with France and Russia had been formed and which had to be followed through with for their ultimate purpose: "it is our settled interest and traditional policy to uphold the balance of power in Europe.")

Serbia had been the detonator for a local war with Austria; this had led to a wider European war provoked by Russian support for the Serbian 'rogue state,' (as it would be called today) backed by her ally, France. And having drawn Berlin in to defend Austria this was the opportunity for Britain's Great War on Germany to be launched. *John Bull* said it was the 'Day of Britain's Greatest Glory' – An English *Der Tag*, perhaps?

During 1916 after the evacuation at Gallipoli and the transference of British forces to Salonika there was a revival of enthusiasm for Serbia in England. By this time the Serbian army had suffered severe defeats at the hands of the Germans, Austrians and Bulgarians and it had gone into full retreat. The Allied army at Salonika failed to link up with the Serbs and their fate was sealed:

"Posters that praised 'brave Serbia' and urged prayers for Serbia on 'the Kossovo Day' could be seen... in London and other British cities. The same year the Kossovo Day Committee was formed in London. It was chaired by Dr Elsie Inglis, and its members included R.W. Seton-Watson. Seton-Watson was a leading British expert on East-Central Europe alongside Arthur Evans of the London Times, who worked closely with the Committee, as did the Oxford-based historian Charles Oman and his Cambridge counterpart R.G.D. Laffan. Seton-Watson's essay 'Serbia: Yesterday, To-day, To-morrow' was read aloud in schools across the country.

'The Kossovo Day' in fact turned into a 'Kosovo week'. On 2 July 1916, which was made the 'Serbian Sunday', Anglican priests prayed for Serbia and its dynasty; the Serbian priest Fr Nikolaj Velimirović officiated at a service in an Anglican church in London's Soho – the first time a Serbian Orthodox priest had done so in an Anglican church. Five days later Fr Velimirović and the Archbishop of Canterbury held a joint service in London's St Paul's cathedral. The event was advertised with posters all over London, with the heading: 'Think of Serbia, Pray for Serbia, Restore Serbia'. (Djokic, Dejan 'Whose Myth? Which Nation? The Serbian Kosovo Myth Revisited', p.21)

## Greater Serbia Imagined

Whilst Serbia was almost no more Reverend Laffan's book begins to make the case for rewarding the vanquished detonator/rogue state with greater territory after the war, for services rendered to humanity:

"There are three distinguishable parts of Serbia... - 'Serbia proper', 'Old Serbia', and 'Serbian Macedonia'. By 'Serbia proper' I mean the roughly triangular little State which we knew as Serbia before 1912... By 'Old Serbia' I mean the central belt round Skoplye, Kumanovo, and the Kossovo plain, including the old Sandjak of Novi Pazar, which ran up to the Bosnian frontier. Here are the towns and sacred places of mediaeval Serbia; Skoplye, where Stephen Dushan was crowned emperor; ... Kossovo, where the Serbian power went down before the Turks. By 'Serbian Macedonia' I mean the middle Vardar valley below Veles and the hilly country which lies between that and the lake of Ohrida." (p.17)

Not only had Serbia a greater existence from what it was in 1914, it had people elsewhere who could be incorporated with their neighbours into a greater Yugoslav state of the future:

"Let us remember throughout that only a part of the Serbian race lives in Serbia. Bosnia and Herzegovina are Serbian lands... Almost the whole population of the Austrian province of Dalmatia is Serbo-Croat, while the Slovenes of the country round Lyublyana (Laibach), though devotedly Roman Catholic and so divided from the Serbs on religious grounds, are Slavs and use a language closely akin to Serbian. Hungary, too, has its large percentage of the same race... Also in Croatia and Slavonia there are the Croats, Roman Catholic in religion, but using the Serbian language, though written in the Latin or western characters, not in the Cyrillic alphabet of Serbia. Lastly, the little state of Montenegro differs on no test of race, language, or religion from Serbia and its inhabitants are but an independent and allied portion of the Serbian nation.

"Consequently, of recent years when Serbia showed signs of growing strength and vitality, not unnaturally many of her friends expected her to play a great role in the future and to be the nucleus round which a state should grow up, embracing all the Slav peoples of southern Austria-Hungary, as well as the Serbian portions of the old Turkish Empire.

"There have been many obstacles to the fulfilment of such a hope. Quite apart from the present catastrophe that has overtaken our Serbian friends, the religious difficulty still exists, though similarity of race and speech have drawn Catholics and Orthodox into the common movement. Also the Slavs of the Dual Monarchy in Croatia have felt themselves the superiors of the Serbs in civilization, and have been unready whole-heartedly to seek national salvation at Belgrade. But the tyranny of the Hungarian Government, which has done so much to draw the Southern Slavs together, has nearly succeeded in removing all the moral barriers to what is called Yugoslav solidarity." (pp.20-1)

Laffan's passages include footnotes directing the reader to the publication, *The New Europe*. The *New Europe* was a weekly periodical running through 1916 and 1917 which sought to develop ideas from various contributors amongst the Allied nations about the type of Europe they would construct after the defeat of Germany and Austro-Hungary. It was founded by R.W. Seton-Watson, a British academic, whose purpose was: "To provide a rallying ground" for those favouring "European reconstruction on the basis of nationality, the rights of minorities and the hard facts of geography and economics" as the best answer to "the Pan-German project and Berlin-Bagdad." In other words, it was concerned with what buffer-states could be manufactured in Eastern Europe in place of the Austro-Hungarian Empire to keep Germany from Russia and avoid the possibility of a future alliance developing between them – the nightmare of British geopolitics that was given full

expression by Sir Halford Mackinder's dictum 'He who controls the Heartland controls the World.'

Those who wrote for *The New Europe* included such luminaries as Masaryk, Benes, Harold Nicolson and Sir Samuel Hoare. They produced Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia and an Austrian stump out of the Hapsburg Empire. So it could be said it was very responsible for the Europe between the Wars, which produced a rise in anti-Semitism, the breeding ground for Hitler, and ultimately another World War.

The Yugoslav State that was constructed after the Great War included Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes and was called The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, until 1929. It was what Laffan defined as Greater Serbia plus. The Croats would have preferred to remain part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire but Britain decided to destroy this leaving the Croats with no choice but independence or being part of a South Slav State. The former option became closed off to them because of the irredentist promises made to the Italians to entice them into the war. In the secret 1915 Treaty of London the Croatian and Slovene coasts and hinterlands had been promised to the Italians. Only by joining with the Serbs were the Croats and Slovenes able to resist the Italians and preserve their territories.

From Laffan's book we infer that he would not have been happy with England's subsequent relations with the Serbs. In 1944 Churchill helped create and impose communist government on the Yugoslav State by demoralizing Serbian national resistance and arming the communists against it. He also compelled the King of Yugoslavia to dismiss the leader of Serbian resistance, General Mihailovitch, as War Minister. Tito accomplished his communist revolution through Churchill's assistance and had General Mihailovitch executed for treason.

## The Rule of Turkish Gentlemen

Before Britain was engaged in promoting and expanding Serbia and then subsequently breaking it apart the Reverend Laffan had some things to say about the five hundred year period of Ottoman rule over the Serbs (which was considerably more orderly and stable than the last three-quarters of a century in which Britain practised her statecraft in the Balkans):

"Now let us turn to the history. Serbia was conquered by the Turks about five hundred years ago. Although the Serbs suffered a crushing defeat on the plain of Kossovo in 1389, they cannot be said to have been brought definitely under Turkish rule for the next seventy years... Then the Serbs sank into a deep sleep of four hundred years. The gross darkness of Turkish rule covered the land. From having been an independent and conquering people they became the working class of a Turkish pashalik or province. As against their Moslem lords, who took possession of the land and for whom they laboured, they had few rights and little chance of successful appeal to the distant government of the Sultan.

There has been and is now a tendency in England to regard the Turks as a race of honourable gentlemen, clean fighters, and even, when left to themselves, very tolerable governors.

The nations whom they have ruled have thought very differently... It seems as though the Turk had retained the chivalry of caste coloured by Mohammedan contempt for 'infidels'. To his equal in wealth or military prowess the Turk has usually appeared as a gentleman, with the qualities of the gallant fighter, but woe to those whom Allah has made weak and delivered into his hand, should they not submit to all his wishes!" (pp.21-2)

How often does one come across the phrases: "The Turk is a gentleman" and "the clean-fighting Turk" in British speeches and literature of this period?

When the Ottoman Turks were taken on as another enemy by Britain in 1914, to facilitate the giving of Constantinople to the Czar for services rendered against Germany and to grab Palestine and Iraq for the British Empire, the propaganda departments concentrated their efforts against the Turks. The big problem Wellington House was confronted with in creating propaganda against the Turks was the notion that existed in England at the time which can be summed up in the phrase 'the Turk is a gentleman'. This came about because the traditional view of the Turk in Britain presented him as 'a clean fighter' and an honorable and honest opponent to all and sundry. The propagandists therefore attempted to overcome this view with a great output of atrocity propaganda.

The classic example was Mark Sykes's famous article in *The Times* called, 'The clean fighting Turk - a spurious claim'. (Sykes was involved in carving up the Middle East with the French at the same time as Britain was promising an Arab state to the Arabs.)

Laffan tried to get over the high regard that the Turk was held in, particularly in Tory circles in England, by putting forward the view that Turks were only honorable, clean-fighting gentlemen to their equals or betters.

Suffice to say, I have read many accounts written by Arabs, Jews and even Balkan Christians that wished the Ottoman rulers had remained after they saw what happened to their lands and peoples after they were 'liberated' by England.

## Ireland – Another English Blindspot

Reverend Laffan became very excited when he considered how the Serbs may have survived as a nation under all this 'oppression' from the Ottomans:

"In this long period of extinction two forces were mainly responsible for keeping alive the national spirit of the Serbs. One was their church, part of the Holy Orthodox Church of the East. True to the precepts of Mohammed, the Turks did not force their religion on the peoples whom they conquered. They offered the three-fold choice of Islam, the sword, or tribute. Should a subject-race reject the Mohammedan faith and also not wish to be exterminated, it was spared on condition of paying tribute. So it came about that, at a time when Western Europe thought it the first duty of a government to impose what it considered the true religion on its subjects, the Sultan of Turkey drew his revenues from subjects who were allowed to abhor the faith of their ruler. Separate nationalities have never been allowed in the Turkish Empire. Religion is for the Turk the mark of distinction between men, and the people who would retain a united social life must find it in ecclesiastical organization. This the Serbs possessed in their national church with its patriarchate of Fetch; and thus it was their church, the one institution left to them, that embodied the traditions, the hopes, and the unity of the people.

The second influence that preserved the national spirit was that of the folk-songs and ballads (*pesme*). In these the lays of the saints and heroes of the glorious past were gathered, and they formed the whole sum of learning and culture to the greater portion of the people. The singing of these mournful and haunting ballads, which may often be heard from the lips of Serb soldiers, was the special business of the blind musicians who accompanied themselves on their one-stringed gousle, but every Serb would know several by heart and, his memory not being weakened by the arts of reading and writing, the words would remain indelibly printed on his mind. Thus the *pesme* would be handed on from generation to generation without ever being committed to paper; and though many have been collected and edited

during the last century, there must be many that have never been written. In the long winter evenings, when the Serbian farmers could not work, they would gather round the fire and sing together of past heroes and the golden age. Thus the Serbian soldier of to-day has a rich store of national history in his songs and knows far more of the tradition, the triumphs, and the struggles of his own people than does his English brother-in-arms. The great figures of English history are to most of our countrymen nothing but names in history books. To the Serbs the old heroes are familiar characters, some of whom... will appear in moments of national crisis to lead their people to victory." (p.22-4)

It never ceases to amaze what blind spots England has in its view of the world. How could an Englishman who must have been aware of how his country treated Ireland not notice how Ottoman rule in the Balkans was so much more admirable than the English treatment of Ireland? The Reverend Laffan argued that the Turks "offered the three-fold choice of Islam, the sword, or tribute" to the Serbs. How generous of them!

In August 1892, Wilfred Scawen Blunt, the English Radical, recorded in his diary how he had had a discussion on politics with Arthur and Gerald Balfour during a visit to the country:

"Drove with the Balfours... had a grand discussion about patriotism, Gerald maintaining that patriotism was the Imperial instinct in Englishmen, who should support the country's quarrels even when in the wrong... Gerald has all his brother's scientific inhumanity in politics, and it is a school of thought decidedly on the increase, for it flatters the selfish instincts of the strong by proving to them that their selfishness is right... On our way home we renewed our argument as applied especially to the Irish. 'They ought to have been exterminated long ago,' said Gerald, 'but it is too late now.' (*My Diaries*, Vol I., p.85.)

The three-pronged seventeenth century English policy of Protestantism, the sword and tribute had not been thorough enough to enact an extermination of the Irish – although it had not been for want of trying. Whilst the English 'civilizing' of Ireland had involved the destruction of Gaelic society, and the attempted eradication of Catholicism, there were not the population resources necessary in England and Scotland to supplant an exterminated native population with enough colonists. The English State had to rule out extermination as a practical policy and the Irish lived to fight another day and eventually to thwart the English design.

Ireland preserved its distinctiveness from England through the very means that Laffan admired with regard to the Serbs – religion and music. The English conquest more or less wiped out the other badges of peculiarity that they found in Ireland which were obstacles to civilizing 'progress' – Gaelic culture and the language. The Irish were left with their distinctive religion, which they took care to preserve as an act of resistance. And having failed to destroy it the English sought to utilize Catholicism as a moderating force against revolution with the result that it had uses for Britain even after the Treaty was signed.

Music and song were the fundamental means by which Irish identity preserved itself over the centuries in which England attempted to eradicate it. Memory of the longer time seems to be the last thing that leaves the human mind (This was a thing brought home to me personally when my mother-in-law developed dementia to the extent she no longer recognized her family. One day she picked up a concertina, the first time in thirty years, and played a set of jigs without forgetting a note.)

As per usual, however, where England was concerned, what was admirable and exemplary in nations outside the British

Empire was something to be disdained and discouraged within its own dominion.

## The Ottomans and the Wreckage Peoples

Nicolae Batzaria was a Christian from Monastir in Macedonia who became a Young Turk. His Memoirs, *Din Lumea Islamului* [From the World of Islam], contain a useful analogy concerning the Ottoman attitude to the races contained in their Empire. He notes that from the time the Turks conquered the Balkans, in the Fourteenth Century:

"Turks did not, either at that time or later, think about denationalizing other peoples or about imposing upon them a different culture... The Turk rule from this viewpoint had a good effect upon nationalities. This rule could be compared to the snow that covers the crops and protects them from winter freeze. The Young Turks desired to depart from this policy and sought to introduce a policy of denationalization. It was too late and the policy was doomed to fail. It was too late because, due to the regime of tolerance adopted by Turks with regard to ethnic groups in national and cultural matters, the existing national groups had developed and strengthened themselves to the point where they could cope with any action likely to threaten their existence and ethnic structure." (p.123)

In the latter part of the nineteenth century the Ottoman Empire was assailed by Western 'progress' in the shape of nationalism. The Ottoman Empire had become the 'sick man of Europe' because it was the last holdout of ethnic complexity and diversity (as well as being rooked by Western governments and financiers). When the Young Turks attempted to save the Ottoman Empire by making concessions to the Western version of progress they found that the tolerance of the Ottomans, which had created a multi-national empire, proved too much of an obstacle to an alternative course.

The Balkans was an unstable region that the Ottomans had managed to govern effectively for centuries and keep remarkably stable. But after the deluge of nationalism that was sponsored by the Europeans, and the intrigues of the Great Powers in the region, the Ottomans began to fight a losing battle in stabilizing the region.

Joseph Starke, an American writer, put in all quite well in 1921 in surveying the Balkans:

"Within a comparatively small territory there are thrown together in that area some seven or eight nationalities, and semi-nationalities: Greece, Roumania, Bulgaria, Servia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Montenegro and Albania, to which we must add Hungary, Croatia, Slavonia, Turkey and Italy to make this political crazy-quilt complete. The Balkan and adjoining Slavic nationalities are largely intermixed along their real and imaginary boundary lines, and the whole area is permeated by Greeks, Turks, Italians and numerous Jews, also some Austrians and Germans. Each country claims parts of the others on ethnological and historical grounds; each has proud traditions of former independence; they all claim the glories of ancient Greece and Rome as their heritage. In reality they are a collection of 'wreckage peoples,' evolved from the transition periods of ancient civilizations, mixed with nomadic settlers from the east, and hence, of most indefinite lineage. In character they are turbulent... and of the worst political reputation... England is directly responsible for this exasperating and baffling state of affairs. By nourishing in these peoples, under the impulse of Gladstone's humanitarian eloquence, an inordinate sense of importance quite beyond their deserts and the nationalistic possibilities of the situation as it stood at that

time, she directly encouraged their restlessness and violence, increased the racial jealousies between them and interfered with the natural evolution of these related countries to a strong and united Slavic state under Austrian guidance - the fertile scheme of the murdered prince Francis Ferdinand.” (Light And Truth After The World Tragedy, p.39)

The achievement of the Ottomans in managing these “wreckage peoples” was put into perspective during the twentieth century when the Balkans passed out of the Ottoman sphere and into the realm of Christian European influence. When the Ottoman administration began to retreat from the region the Balkans became a killing ground for the best part of a century. Millions died and millions more were uprooted by the ‘march of progress,’ when nationalist passions were unleashed and nation states on the Western model were constructed out of the peoples of these regions.

## Transfer to Vienna

As Starke contended, the Balkan region might still have remained stable if the other great Empire in the region had been allowed to stabilize it.

The Austro-Hungarian Hapsburg Empire, like the Ottoman Empire, was not an Empire in the same sense of the word as the British one - with its far-flung colonies and racialist order ruling over the “lesser breeds.” It was a single land block of territories combining together a number of different nationalities of mostly German, Hungarian and Slavic origin, which were being added to the governing of what originally had been a Viennese Empire of the Hapsburg dynasty. Since 1867 it had been governed as a Dual Monarchy, with a single King governing two Austrian/German and Hungarian State systems. And it was greatly admired by Arthur Griffith’s Sinn Fein as a vast improvement on the Union between Britain and Ireland - in the knowledge that nothing further would be permissible.

In 1914 Austro-Hungary was in the process of becoming a triple monarchy by incorporating the Slavs into the system. The principal advocate for introducing a distinct Slav component to the dual monarchy was the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the Hapsburg throne.

But in 1908 Austro-Hungary annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina, and this event formed the basis of conflict with Serbia - which was encouraged by Russia in its expansionist ambitions to incorporate all Serbs into a Greater Serbia.

Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina had both been part of the Ottoman Empire but by 1878 they had become independent. Bosnia-Herzegovina had a mixed religious population of Orthodox and Catholic Christians and Moslems. The territory was claimed by the Serb nationalists and to prevent a Serb takeover of the area the Hapsburgs occupied it at the time of the Congress of Berlin in 1878, with the agreement of Britain and Russia. The reasoning behind the acceptance of Austria’s protectorate was that the mixed population of Croats, Serbs and Moslems would be best administered by a powerful state that had the experience of reconciling these elements together effectively. And in relation to the Moslem population this proved a wise move since this community actually grew under Austrian rule whilst everywhere else in the Balkans that Ottoman territory fell into the hands of a Christian state the followers of Islam were wiped out by one means or another.

The Austro-Hungarians presumed that the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina would be a matter of routine. The Austrian rule of thirty years was generally accepted as progressive across Europe, Bosnia-Herzegovina had a liberal and representative diet containing all the communities, the territory was stable,

and the transition between protectorate and annexation was a common British and French policy of the time.

But Vienna miscalculated on two counts. Firstly, on account of the return of Russian expansionism to the area: The fact that Russia had turned her eyes back to the Balkans as an area for expansion as a result of being blocked from an outlet to the ocean in the Middle and Far East - by Britain in Persia and by Britain’s ally, Japan, in the war of 1905.

And secondly, the Anglo-Russian understanding of 1907 had removed the main barrier toward Russian expansion in the Balkans.

The effect of this latter factor was seen almost immediately. Russia had a secret agreement with Austro-Hungary from May 1897 to preserve stability in the Balkans. But this was undermined by the 1907 Agreement between England and Russia. In January 1908 the Austrians obtained a concession from the Sultan at Istanbul to conduct survey work on a railway line across a strip of territory between Serbia and Montenegro. Over the previous decade this would have presented no difficulty to the Russians but in the circumstances of the 1907 Agreement the Austrian railway began to be seen as an a German attempt to link up with the Ottomans and the Railway to Baghdad.

Austria-Hungary and Russia had reached an understanding that if Russia was supported by the Hapsburg State in her desire to have free passage through the Straits for her navy the Russians would not object to the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. But when the Russian Minister informed the British and French of the agreement they found the Entente objecting to it as an infringement of the terms of the Triple Alliance. Having found themselves rebuffed, the Russians began to attack the Austrian annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and work up the Serbs about it.

## A Serbian View

To M. Bogitshevich, the Serbian Chargé d’affaires in Berlin, England’s attitude to the annexation was a real eye-opener. He noted in his book *Causes of the War* (p.25) that England had assured the Austro-Hungarians of its entire support at the Congress of Berlin with regard to incorporating Bosnia in its empire but in 1909 changed its position entirely. It not only supported the Greater Serbian nationalists but also put pressure on the Russians to take a more uncompromising attitude to Vienna.

Bosnia would have remained with good and stable government if it had been a part of the reforming Hapsburg State in a region where the Ottoman State also revived under German assistance. It would have simply transferred from one multi-national state to another with the experience of handling regions of mixed nationalities.

However, the British interest in the area had changed. Previously, the British desire to prevent Russia coming down to Constantinople by blocking her in the Balkans had produced a stabilizing influence in the region by curbing Russian expansionism and holding Serbian ambitions in check.

At the Congress of Berlin in 1878 England nullified the gains that Russia thought she had made in her war with Turkey (1877-8) and which had been agreed at San Stefano. The frustration of Russia was directed, however, not against Britain but against Austria-Hungary because she gained territorially in the Balkans at the expense of the Ottomans and began to successfully integrate the Southern Slavs into her state rather than the Slavs becoming the recipients of Russian expansionism. So when Britain removed her block on Russia in 1907, as part of the preliminaries for war on Germany, all the Russian antagonism became directed at Vienna - as England hoped. “*The Russo-*

*Austrian antagonism was the inducing cause of the European war.*" (M. Bogitshevich, *Causes of the War*, p.5)

Bogitshevich's book is interesting for another reason. The Serbian reveals how much his country was indebted toward Austria for its territorial borders. At the time of the Congress of Berlin Austria took Serbia 'under her wing' and won for it territory that Russia had already assigned to Bulgaria at San Stefano. Again in 1885 after the war between Serbia and Bulgaria the Austrians checked the advance of the Bulgarian forces into Serbia.

From the 1880s the Russians intrigued to gain influence in Serbia but it was not until 1903 that Moscow managed to detach Serbia from its friendship with Vienna. King Alexander and his wife were assassinated in an army coup and were replaced by King Peter. King Peter was a strong Francophile who had been brought up and educated in France and had even fought in France's army in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1. France had gone into alliance with Russia after the Kaiser failed to renew the reinsurance treaty with the Czar. Under the weak and Francophile new King Peter the Greater Serbian Radicals took charge of foreign affairs in Serbia and gravitated toward Russia and against Austria. Thus began a great Serbian propaganda offensive against the Austrians that aimed to sow seeds of discontent amongst all Slavs living within the Austro-Hungarian state at the very time that their formal representation was being advocated in a 'Triple Monarchy.'

By 1908 England had instituted a complete reorientation in its foreign policy in order to cut Germany down to size as a commercial competitor. Britain, from preventing Russia from expanding its influence in the Balkans now supported Russian and Serb expansionism. However, Britain still found it necessary to block Russia advancing her objectives in the Balkans diplomatically and in agreement with the Austro-Hungarians - so that she was maintained in a position of hostility against Vienna and Berlin. In such a hold Russia would welcome a general European war conducted against Germany when a favourable opportunity came.

The first fruit of the reorientation of British foreign policy and the re-alignment in the Balkans was the Balkans War of 1912 which drove the Ottomans out of most of the region. This emerged from Russia bringing Bulgaria and Serbia together and a British adventurer (James Borchier) helping to add the Greeks to the mix to form the Balkan League. In this way the former antagonistic elements of the region were brought together by Russia (with nods and winks from London) to disrupt the stability of the region and throw it into the melting pot - where it has largely been ever since.

This aspect will be explored in a future article marking the centenary of this event.

Bogitshevich also notes that it was significant that Serbia did absolutely nothing to satisfy Austria in the three weeks after the assassination of the royal couple in Sarajevo. Serbia remained totally indifferent to what might befall her and attempted no conciliatory measures that might have brought about some sort of accord with Vienna. Why? Because she knew that the backing of Russia was there, and behind it the backing of France, and the backing of England.

Bogitshevich has some interesting material in the Appendices of his book. It is clear from many included Serbian documents from 1908 to 1914 that it was common knowledge the Entente powers were planning a war against Germany and Serbia was advised to hold back in any action against Austria until the time was right for war (rather than be disowned as an aggressor and be left high and dry). In 1912 a Serbian Minister advised the Ministry of Foreign Affairs not to push for an outlet for land-

locked Serbia to the Adriatic as yet but to "await with as great a degree of preparedness as possible the important events which must make their appearance among the Great Powers."(p.98)

In 1911, just after the Agadir crisis, which nearly resulted in war between the Entente and Germany, the Serbian Chargé d'affaires in London reported to his Ministry of Foreign Affairs a conversation he had with the French Ambassador to London, Paul Cambon. This document explains why the Entente decided not to launch the war against Germany at that particular moment:

"M. Cambon is of the opinion that the present negotiations with Germany will be conducted to a conclusion and that an agreement will be reached... The agreement has the one result that the war will be postponed three or four years... France and her allies are of the opinion, that the war - even at the expense of greater sacrifices - must be postponed to a later time, that is to say until the year 1914-15. The necessity of this postponement is required less by France's material preparedness for war, which is complete, than by the organisation of the upper command, which is not yet finished. This delay is wanted also by Russia. England alone will derive no advantage from this arrangement, because the superiority of her fleet over that of Germany decreases every year. Out of consideration for the preparedness of her allies, France urges that an understanding be reached with Germany for the present."(p.108-9)

Bogitshevich had the following to say about Russia's calculations and England's position after the Sarajevo assassinations, which was chosen by the Entente as the detonator for war:

"There is no other explanation for the fact that in the summer of 1914 the war had become unavoidable because... Russia would no longer permit postponement of a war which the Entente Powers regarded as inevitable... a war, too, which they had firmly resolved upon. Russia desired no postponement for the reason that there was no prospect at any time in the future there would arise a relatively better political and military constellation of facts..."

It is often contended that England would not have taken part but for the violation of Belgium's neutrality by Germany. But already on July 16 I had it direct from Jules Cambon... that Sir Edward Grey had already stated to Prince Lichnowski (this was therefore before the Austrian ultimatum became known) the following, namely, that England could not remain uninterested in the struggle in case it came to a conflict on Serbia's account between France-Russia on the one side and Germany-Austria on the other; in other words that she would take part on the side of Russia and France.

Thereby, Sir Edward Grey encouraged Russia and France to make war, whereas his purpose was to discourage Germany from doing so... For the maintenance of peace England's strongest card was to keep herself free from binding obligations, and this trump card she played out of her hand too soon, and into the very hands of those who wished the war... If Sir Edward Grey, at the beginning of the war, was really opposed to a European war or to a war by England against Germany, then, to put it mildly, he made a mess of it..."(pp.67-8)

I think Bogitshevich gets his interpretation of Edward Grey mostly right. But he does not see or develop the significance of his sentence: "Sir Edward Grey encouraged Russia and France to make war, whereas his purpose was to discourage Germany from doing so." What he actually saw, in all probability, was Grey encouraging the Russians and French on whilst making his position to Germany deliberately unclear. Bogitshevich is

probably right that Grey would have gone to war even without the German entry into Belgium but he wanted to lure the Germans into Belgium in order to bring his party, the Liberals, with the government. If it had been made clear to the Germans that Britain would go to war with them (as it was three years previous in the Agadir crisis) if they crossed Belgian territory then the Kaiser would have certainly thought again.

## The Guardians of the Gate

In his Preface to *The Guardians of the Gate* Laffan explained the meaning of his book's title:

"The title, *The Guardians of the Gate*, is borrowed from a phrase applied to the Serbs by several speakers, in particular by Mr. Lloyd George in his speech on August 8 (1917). It is a summary of the services which the Serbs have always done their best to render to Christendom: for their country is, indeed, one of the gateways of civilized Europe. Despite their unhappy divisions and their weakness in numbers they have never ceased to struggle against the barbarisms of Turkestan and Berlin, which at different times have threatened to overflow the Western nations and the Mediterranean lands." (p.3)

The Serbs' strategic importance for England lay in the "*the great importance of the position which the country occupies*":

"The Balkan peninsula consists largely of barren uplands and mountain ranges producing little in the way of valuable merchandise. But across it run at least two great trade-routes, from Belgrade to Salonika and from Belgrade to Constantinople, connecting Central Europe with the Aegean Sea and the East. There have been other routes, but to-day the peninsula is traversed by only two main railway lines which follow the two routes I have mentioned. These two corridors open the way through the inhospitable country and connect the rich plains of Hungary with the Levantine world... Foreign Powers, Roman, Frank and Ottoman, Austrian, Russian, and German, have desired and determined to control the overland routes of the Balkan countries. Now, athwart those lines of communication and commanding the north-western portions of both, lies Serbia... The little country stands in a position of world importance. She holds a gate-way between the mountain walls, and therefore she is in a situation of the utmost danger. Her stormy history, the long centuries of her subjection to foreign rule, and her present disastrous condition show how her more powerful neighbours have coveted the passage-ways which she commands." (pp.18-9)

That was the geographical bit, but the contemporary importance of the Serbs lay in the fact that they were the gatekeepers who had closed the gates between Germany/Austro-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire and particularly in relation to the Berlin-Baghdad Railway. As Robert William Seton Watson (who played a very active role in encouraging the breakup of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the construction of both Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia) noted in another book, *The Spirit of the Serb*, published in 1915, on behalf of the Serbian Relief Fund: "*Serbia has formed a rampart between the Central Powers and Turkey, a fatal flaw in the design which extended from Berlin to Bagdad, from Vienna and Budapest to Salonica.*"(p.11)

The Reverend Laffan developed Seton Watson's idea:

"To understand the relation of Serbia to German policy we must stop a moment and consider the map of the world. Germany, disunited till 1871 and absorbed in European affairs till 1882, had entered very late into the competition of the Powers for colonies. But for the last thirty years she had grown continuously more eager for the addition to her

Empire of new countries. She was determined to be a world-power, with a decisive voice in international questions and the control of remote continents. Her writers made no secret of the national ambition. An admirable and ever-increasing fleet proclaimed her intention of ultimately challenging the British navy.

Foiled in the hope of using the Boers to establish German power in South Africa, German statesmen turned their attention to the Far East. Unable, owing to the common action of the Powers and the rise of Japan, to convert their territory of Kiao-Chau into an eastern empire, they then entered on their struggle with France for Morocco and the north-west coast of Africa. The solid resistance of France and Great Britain to German expansion in that quarter caused the Pan-Germans to put their faith in another plan to which no one was prepared to take exception. This great plan is best known under the short title of 'Berlin-Baghdad'. The main idea was the erection of a system or chain of allied States under the hegemony of Germany, and stretching from the North Sea to the Persian Gulf. Berlin had long been joined to Constantinople by excellent railways, and German engineers were busy with the completion of a further line which should stretch across the 900 miles of Turkey in Asia to Bagdad and Basra and link itself up with the railway running south from Damascus to Mecca.

This railway was to develop and complete Germany's economic and military control of the Ottoman Empire. The great untapped riches of Asia Minor should flow westwards to Germany, and German officers would be found in control of everything as far as the Persian mountains and the deserts of Arabia.

The plan was admirably feasible, and has been put in force almost completely in the course of this war (not quite, for our troops are solidly established on the Persian Gulf and hold Bagdad, while the Russians have penetrated far into Armenia). If 'Berlin-Baghdad' were achieved, a huge block of territory producing every kind of economic wealth and unassailable by sea-power would be united under German authority. Russia would be cut off by this barrier from her western friends, Great Britain and France. German and Turkish armies would be within easy striking distance of our Egyptian interests, and from the Persian Gulf our Indian Empire would be threatened. The port of Alexandretta and the control of the Dardanelles would soon give Germany enormous naval power in the Mediterranean.

A glance at the map of the world will show how the chain of States stretched from Berlin to Bagdad. The German Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Bulgaria, Turkey.

One little strip of territory alone blocked the way and prevented the two ends of the chain from being linked together. That little strip was Serbia. Serbia stood small but defiant between Germany and the great ports of Constantinople and Salonika, holding the gate of the East. Little though we knew or cared in England, Serbia was really the first line of defence of our eastern possessions. If she were crushed or enticed into the 'Berlin-Baghdad' system, then our vast but slightly defended empire would soon have felt the shock of Germany's eastward thrust.

To Germany, therefore, Serbia was an intolerable nuisance. Serbia would not be cajoled into the family of Germany's vassal-states. Therefore, Serbia must be crushed. The Serbs knew well that the Treaty of Bucharest was not the end of war in the Balkans. As soon as the German military preparations were completed, an excuse would not be wanting, and then the Serbs might look to themselves, for the last and most terrible of their wars would burst upon them." (pp.162-4)

That passage should be read in the opposite way in which Laffan intended it to be read. What it really expresses is the British fear of Germany as an honest commercial competitor that, if it is anything like Britain, might develop into a superior development of Britain itself. In many ways it is like England looking into a mirror and seeing itself, rather than Germany. All the things that Laffan sees in Germany and which he sees as threatening to England's position are the very things that England itself practised to become king of the world.

### From Serbia to Yugoslavia

*From Serbia to Yugoslavia* by Gordon Gordon-Smith (with a Preface by Dr Slavco Grouitch, Minister of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes to the United States) published in 1920 has a part devoted to the Salonika expedition in which Laffan participated.

Gordon-Smith reinforced Laffan's geopolitical views and revealed that the Salonika expedition was understood to have a wider strategic objective that the London government should have supported with more men and treasure:

“During the eighteen months I spent with the Headquarters Staff of the Serbian Army, I had continual opportunity of discussing with officers of the highest rank the importance of the whole Balkan front, and in the ten months I passed on the Salonika front, of discussing the real mission of the Army of the Orient. I found them unanimous in their opinion as to the importance of the operations in Macedonia.

In their opinion, the objective of the Army of the Orient was the cutting of the Berlin-Constantinople Railway... The

possession of the Berlin-Constantinople Railroad assured the Central Powers the mastery of the Dardanelles. As Germany controlled the entrances to the Baltic, Russia was practically isolated from her Allies. The only means they had of forwarding war material to her was via Vladivostok or Archangel. In other words “Mittel-Europa” was realized and a situation created which, if it could have been made permanent, would have assured to Germany the domination of Europe, the first step to world dominion.

There is not the slightest doubt but that the cutting of the railway would have brought about the immediate collapse of Turkey... the collapse of Turkey as a military Power would have set free the British armies in Egypt, Mesopotamia and Palestine and the Russian army in the Caucasus for service elsewhere.

The appearance of the Allied fleets in the Black Sea would undoubtedly have called a halt to the intrigue of the pro-German court camarilla surrounding the Czar and even if the Russian revolution had taken place, the Kerensky army, as a “force in being,” would have been maintained, Bolshevism would have been nipped in the bud and the whole course of the war might have been changed. The failure to recognize these elementary truths constitutes the second capital error of the Allies in the Balkans and undoubtedly prolonged the war by at least two years.

Once Bulgaria and Turkey were disposed of, the Army of the Orient could have reoccupied Serbia, moved on the Danube and threatened Budapest. The Hungarian capital



Serbia, between Bulgaria and Albania  
No longer a separate entity after 1919

would then have been menaced from three sides — from the Danube, from the Roumanian front and by the Russian Army then operating in the Bukovina.” (pp.211-4)

Gordon-Smith believed that it was the Unionists’ obsession with winning the war of attrition on the Western Front that starved the Army of the Orient from making a more significant contribution to Britain’s war effort.

## **The Serbs and the destruction of Mittel-Europa**

*‘The Role of Serbia - A brief account of Serbia’s place in world politics and her services during the war’* by W.H. Crawford Price (1918) takes up the analysis where Gordon-Smith leaves off. Crawford Price was the celebrated Times correspondent in the Balkans who wrote a number of books about the region’s politics. It explains that because Serbia had provided the most service to England in seeing off German ‘Mittel-Europa’ it should be around a Serbian nucleus that a great buffer be constructed to prevent any further German attempts at dominating the Eurasian heartland:

“There has admittedly been a persistent evolution of British thought in regard to the aims and objects for which Germany plunged the world into the direst tragedy in all history. At the outset we were obsessed with the defence of Belgian independence; later it became evident that the retrocession of Alsace-Lorraine to France was an affair of international importance; and at last it slowly dawned upon public opinion that we were face-to-face with a German bid for world conquest. Mittel Europa and Pan-Germanism these were the issues of the world conflict. At length we recognised that we were fighting, not merely the armies of the Quadruple Alliance, but a grandiose political ambition which aimed at nothing short of the domination of the earth’s surface.

Briefly put, the Teuton scheme sought, in the first place, to establish a German-controlled corridor stretching across Europe and Asia Minor from the North Sea to the Persian Gulf, which would split the British Empire in twain, supplant British naval supremacy by German land dominion, and render Germany to a large extent independent of overseas supplies. Northern France and Belgium were to be controlled for their mineral wealth and manufacturing resources, a process capable of serving the dual purpose of enriching Germany and beggaring France; the Baltic provinces of Russia for their agricultural possibilities; the Balkans and Turkey, principally because they held the high road to the East, and also because they contained rich prizes in the shape of raw materials, man-power and commercial markets.

This confederation Mittel Europa, as it was generally called, was to provide Germany with the sinews of future wars and form the foundation of the German plan of world conquest. Thus solidly entrenched, Germany, wielding her augmented strength and exploiting Pan-Islamism as an advanced guard of Pan-Germanism, hoped to stretch forth her mailed fist and grasp the most treasured possessions of Asia, Africa and South America, until the glories of Imperial Britain lay as dross amidst the glitter of the Kaiser’s realms.

A dream, it is true; and at this date, happily, a dream which has been dissipated. But it would be unwise for us to forget that Mittel Europa constitutes an ideal for which the German people worked assiduously for twenty-five years, for which they suffered losses and privations in war which would early have destroyed the morale of any less determined nation, and for which they may strive in the future unless we erect such

a barrier as shall dam for ever the onrush of Pan-German ambition.

Prior to the triumphant onslaught of the martyred Serbian Army in September, 1918, Mittel Europa was an accomplished fact. The foundations of world dominion had been laid. The Central Empires controlled a population of over 200 millions, capable of yielding an army of 25 millions and vast resources of raw materials. The Balkan Peninsula had become a bridge over which Pan-Germanism was passing to the conquest of the world, to the mastery of the Eastern Mediterranean, to the exploitation of Pan-Islamism, to Egypt and to India.

The menace has been temporarily removed. The Balkan bridge has been destroyed. But that is not sufficient. The Peninsula must become the rampart against Pan-Germanism. Only by such means can the security of our African and Asiatic possessions be practically assured.” (pp.3-5)

I think this passage encompasses many of the British geopolitical understandings that made two world wars against Germany in the twentieth century a strategic imperative for its ruling class. There is the understanding that Germany during the late nineteenth century entered the world market to the extent that she could no longer feed herself. This made her commercial rise and prosperity vulnerable to the guns of the Royal Navy - which constituted a kind of world’s policeman whose role it was to keep other nations from challenging England’s commercial and military domination of the world.

However, Germany took two steps to deal with this problem and maintain her commercial advance. Firstly, she began building a navy capable of acting as a deterrent to Britain so that England would think twice before entering into war with Germany and suffer such loss of blood and treasure that it would endanger her world-wide Empire and Imperial dominance. Secondly, she began to make provision for feeding herself and protecting her trade by developing trade routes across central Europe that would be not as vulnerable to the guns of the Royal Navy. This would make it more difficult for Britain to use its senior armed service in blockading Germany into submission through starvation of its civilian population – a thing that Royal Navy officers, like Admiral Fisher, had signalled their intention to do.

The Berlin-Baghdad Railway and the relationship with Ottoman Turkey were manifestations of this German commercial defence policy that Britain became obsessive about when they realised that one day the British Empire and its navy might no longer be capable of destroying its emerging rival for the trade of the world.

But Serbia saved England as the guardian of the gate and it sacrificed itself accordingly. It enabled Britain to frustrate the development of a European market under German supervision (perhaps in alliance with other European states) and free from the interference of the Royal Navy and England’s traditional Balance of Power politics that disrupted it by the promotion of war. It meant that England could construct buffers against a future German rise and encircle Germany with hostile states to prevent her securing commercial and military security in the near future.

Crawford Price thought that deserved both respect and reward:

“It is necessary to bear these and other similar facts in mind, for we require a tried and trusted friend in the Balkans, not one ready to sell her trust to anyone at any time for a mess of pottage. And, fortunately, we have such a one bound to us by the truest ties of friendship, one who has proved her loyalty beyond any shadow of doubt. I refer to Serbia.



Serbia has played the game throughout. If it be any honour to keep the gate for Britain, then she has already earned the distinction.” (p.7)

## **Postscript – Reverend Laffan’s great betrayal of the Serbs**

In the course of writing this piece I searched for biographical details of Reverend Robert George Dalrymple Laffan. I found that he had come to be known as Robin Laffan in the 1940s through an obscure book. This book also told me that Laffan was an Anglican chaplain who later in life converted to Catholicism and became a great advocate of the restoration of the Hapsburgs in 1945 on the lines of the English Restoration of the 1660s. That notion rang alarm bells with me since Laffan seemed to have earlier desired the dissolution of the Hapsburg Empire out of which Yugoslavia could come about.

I discovered that Laffan also went on to work for the Royal Institute of Foreign Affairs (Chatham House) and became head of the Yugoslav Desk at the British Foreign Office during the Second World War. Having got this information I began wondering what Laffan must have thought about how Churchill betrayed the Yugoslavia he had been such an advocate of and had written so enthusiastically for. And it was then that the bombshell hit!

I was led to an article by David Martin. The name was familiar to me from writings that Athol Street had reproduced about Yugoslavia about 20 years ago as England began the business of a second betrayal. Martin had written ‘An Ally Betrayed’ in 1946 about how Britain had betrayed General Mihailovitch and Yugoslavia to Tito and the communists.

I found another piece by him which begins:

### **“THE MIHAILOVICH STORY: A RETELLING BY DAVID MARTIN**

To those who are familiar with the story, General Draja Mihailovitch ranks as perhaps the noblest, the most heroic and the most tragic and the most misunderstood figure of World War II.

The name of Mihailovitch first appeared in the Western press during the summer of 1941 when the German armies were driving toward Moscow and Leningrad and the news was black from every side.

The story that a certain Colonel Draja Mihailovitch had repudiated the capitulation to the Germans and had raised the flag of resistance in occupied Europe, came like a tonic after an unbroken diet of disaster. The name of Draja Mihailovitch became an international symbol of resistance to Nazi tyranny. Time magazine voted him the man of the year. Most lavish of all in its praise of Mihailovitch was the Communist press.

Two years later, in August, 1943, Draja Mihailovitch had, for all practical purposes, been abandoned by Britain and America. Stories began to appear in the press to the effect that Mihailovitch was collaborating with the Axis, that the Partisans were doing all the fighting against the Germans, and that it was for this reason that Anglo-American support was being shifted to the Partisans.

Once we committed ourselves to the support of Tito, the commitment was total. We armed his movement; we airdropped supplies to his forces when they were attacking the nationalist forces of General Mihailovitch; we converted B.B.C. and the Voice of America into instruments of Tito’s propaganda; we sent in recruiting missions to urge the Yugoslav peoples to join his forces; we carried out bombing at his request, directed against targets which he specified.

The scale of our military assistance to Tito was colossal. According to Brigadier General Fitzroy Maclean, during 1944 alone, the Western allies supplied the Partisans with over 100,000 rifles, over 50,000 light machine guns and submachine guns, 1,380 mortars, 324,000 mortar bombs, 636,000 grenades, 7,500,000 rounds of small-arm ammunition, 700 wireless sets, 175 000 suits of battle dress, 260,000 pairs of boots. In the light of these statistics, surely it is no exaggeration to say that Britain and America made Tito.

Inevitably, Mihailovitch and the Serbian people were doomed by this betrayal.”

Martin gives a number of reasons for the betrayal of Mihailovitch – one of which is “The Weaknesses and Prejudices of Churchill.” He also says: “Although President Roosevelt was never happy about the abandonment of Mihailovitch, he was handicapped because of the agreement that the British would have final say on Allied policy towards Yugoslavia.”

And it is then that we come to the Reverend Laffan. Martin gives as one of his major reasons for British actions:

“Anti-Serbian Prejudices in the Foreign office.

... Systematic falsification and disinformation made it easy for the anti-Serbian prejudices of key people in the Foreign Office and of Winston Churchill himself to come into play.

The spirit of the Serbian people and the vital role they have played in the preservation of European freedom, were summed up in these words by an Englishman, Mr. Robin Laffan, who fought with the Serbs on the Salonika front in World War I and who, in World War II, was head of the Yugoslav desk in the British Foreign Office:

‘If ever a nation bought its union and its liberty with blood and tears, the Serbs have paid that price. For five hundred years they have never been content to submit to slavery but have struggled unremittingly towards the light... They have kept faith with us to the utmost and have accepted the loss of all as better than surrender. Let us rather ask ourselves how it was that they came to be abandoned to their fate, and resolve that never now for lack of Great Britain’s sympathy and help shall they fail in the achievement of their national liberty’.

These words were written in 1918. They might well have been written again in 1945. It is sad to think that the man who wrote these words presided over the betrayal of Draja Mihailovitch. What motivated him?

Subsequent to World War I, Mr. Laffan became a convert to Catholicism. The author wishes to make it clear that he writes without personal religious prejudice of any kind. But the inevitable result of Mr. Laffan’s conversion was that he lost some of his earlier enthusiasm for the Serbs and developed a new-found enthusiasm for the Croats. Mr. Laffan was one of those who were disposed to believe that the accounts of the Ustashi massacres were greatly exaggerated and who were inclined to look upon Mihailovitch as the bearer of a Serbian vengeance. Mr. Laffan was in no way procommunist. He was a devout Catholic, a political conservative, a man of complete integrity, by every reasonable standard a man who was anti-Communist. But the sad fact is that Mr. Laffan and other Catholic conservatives were won over to the support of Tito, because Tito’s propaganda succeeded in persuading them that only he could save the Croatian people from a Serbian vengeance after the war.”

But had the Reverend Laffan really betrayed the Serbs because he became a Catholic? Or had he just become a loyal

servant of the British State, like many before him (and of much higher intellectual calibre, like Arnold Toynbee, for instance)?

As it was pointed out in Athol Street publications of years ago (*Problems of Communism and Capitalism: Yugoslavia the Great Betrayal and Victory in Europe, The Yugoslav Aspect*) the bizarre turn of events is only explicable by a combination of the collapse of British power in 1940 and Churchill's personal qualities.

Churchill abandoned the Royalist resistance movement in Yugoslavia and armed Tito's Communist Partisans against it on the pretext that the Royalist leader, General Mihailovitch, was collaborating with the Nazis and that Tito's Partisans were engaged in a very effective all-out war against them. As a result Churchill facilitated the extension of the Partisan movement into Serbia (where things really counted) and sold out his own side on dubious military grounds.

This British disorientation (combined with Churchill's personal lack of judgement) came from the experience of 1940 when England's war on Hitler was ended in a few weeks in France. From then on Churchill acted the role as a great warlord determining the future of the world when in reality such things were being determined by others. England showed itself to be incapable of fighting (and unwilling to on a number of occasions) that soon communicated to its allies that Britain was a beaten docket.

What underlies the story of Britain's Second War on Germany after 1940 is something very insubstantial indeed:

small espionage/terrorist attacks on the continent that provoked retribution on local populations; a skirmish in the desert at El Alamein to protect Egypt; the loss of the Far East Empire through an inglorious surrender to a smaller Japanese force at Singapore; the terror bombing of German civilians that killed hundreds of thousands of children and some 'great escapes' from prison camps.

All Churchill really presided over as regards anything of consequence (aside from the liquidation of the British Empire) was the future of the 'guardians of the gate.' And that was messed up in the great betrayal of the Serbs.

Of course, Britain 'rectified' this error after nearly a half century of communism in Yugoslavia by breaking up what it had helped put together. At the end of the Cold War in 1989, when Yugoslavia had outlived its usefulness as a bulwark against the Soviet Union, Britain contrived to undo it by promoting nationalism within it. Mrs. Thatcher preached nationalism to it partly in continuance of the Cold War in order to eradicate the last vestige of communism in Europe and partly as an exhibition to Europe of the futility of multi-national entities. And Tony Blair then persuaded Bill Clinton to threaten a ground invasion, against his better judgment, in 1998 to detach 'Old Serbia' or Kosovo from the Serbian State. And so the Balkan Wars began again, and the ethnic cleansing, and the genocide etc.

Perhaps it was John Bull that was right all along: To Hell with The Guardians of the Gate'!

---

## Advertisement

### *Ireland's Great War on Turkey*

by Pat Walsh

Athol Books, 2009

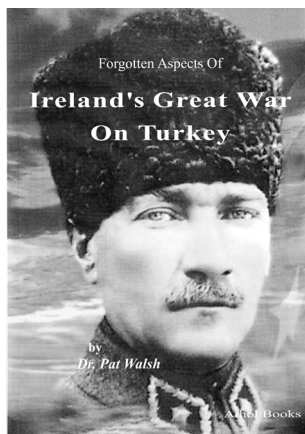
Ireland's Great War on Turkey is largely a forgotten event in Irish history. That is despite the fact that it was probably the most significant thing Ireland ever did in the world. That war lasted from 1914 until 1924 when the Irish Free State ratified the Treaty of Lausanne and finally, along with the rest of the British Empire, made peace with the Turks. It made the Middle East (including Palestine and Iraq) what it is today, and had the catastrophic effects on the Moslem world that persist to the present.

Ireland's part in the Great War on Turkey was an embarrassment to Republican Ireland and its historians and the details of the War became forgotten. The more recent historians of a revisionist disposition and the Remembrance commemorators have also refrained from remembering it, for other reasons.

This book, the first history of Ireland's War on Turkey, explains why the British Empire really made war on the

Ottoman Empire and why Irishmen found themselves part of the invasion force it sent to Gallipoli. It describes the forgotten political and military assault launched on neutral Greece and the devastating effect this ultimately had on the Greek people across the Balkans and Asia Minor. It explains the reasons for the establishment of Palestine and Iraq and why the United States was repelled from the League of Nations by the behaviour of the British Empire in the conquered Ottoman territories after the War.

It concludes on a positive note, describing the great achievement of Ataturk in leading the Turkish nation to independence from the Imperialist Powers. This was an event that Republican Ireland could only marvel at, from the confines of the Treaty and the British Empire's Empire whose demise Ataturk set in motion through the successful Turkish War of Independence.



## Introduction by Manus O’Riordan:

On 4<sup>th</sup> November last, the Kilmainham and Inchicore Heritage Group unveiled memorial plaques to William Partridge and Michael Mallin, leading members of the Irish Citizen Army, at Emmet Hall, Emmet Road, in the Dublin neighbourhood of Inchicore. The plaques were funded by SIPTU, successor union of Larkin and Connolly’s Irish Transport & General Workers’ Union. The Emmet Hall premises were first purchased in 1913 by Jim Larkin, founder of the I.T.G.W.U., and his name was inscribed on the deeds. Larkin appointed William Partridge as manager of the Emmet Hall in 1913. Partridge organised I.T.G.W.U. meetings and activities in the Hall and he also travelled extensively around Ireland organising the activities of the union.

Partridge was instrumental in the setting up of the Irish Citizen Army. In the 1916 Rising he fought in the College of Surgeons. Arrested and sent to Lewes Prison, his health deteriorated and he died soon after his release in 1917.

James Connolly nominated Michael Mallin as Chief-of-Staff of the Irish Citizen Army in 1914 and Irish Citizen Army volunteers drilled in the Emmet Hall from 1914 until 1916.

In 1915 the Mallin Family moved into the premises and lived above the Hall. In 1916, when James Connolly was in the GPO, the main command of the Irish Citizen Army devolved to Michael Mallin at the Royal College of Surgeons at St. Stephen’s Green.

When the Rebellion ended Michael Mallin was captured, tried by Court-Martial and executed on May 8<sup>th</sup> 1916 in Kilmainham Gaol, which actually overlooks Emmet Road. He was survived by his wife Agnes Hickey, his three sons and two daughters, all of whom continued to live at the Emmet Hall premises.

Chaired by Michael O’Flanagan of the Heritage Group, speakers at the memorial ceremony were Michael Mallin’s granddaughter Úna Ní Chalanáin and relative-by-marriage Dónal Donnelly, SIPTU General President Jack O’Connor, a cross section of TDs – Michael Conaghan (Labour), Éamon Ó Cuív (Fianna Fáil), Aengus Ó Snodaigh (Sinn Féin), Catherine Byrne (Fine Gael) and Joan Collins (United Left), local and labour historians Seosamh Ó Broin and Pádraig Yeates, and myself as Ireland Secretary of the International Brigade Memorial Trust. I included the following in my remarks:

“I want to thank the Kilmainham and Inchicore Heritage Group for inviting me to speak at this ceremony outside the historic local drilling hall of the Irish Citizen Army that proved to be such an inspiration to those Irish International Brigade volunteers who - two decades later - would fight against Fascism in defence of the Spanish Republic. Next month marks the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death in action on the Córdoba front, in December 1936, of two Inchicore volunteers from the James Connolly Unit - Tony Fox and Michael May. Indeed, I know of no other area of Dublin with such a concentrated commitment to the International Brigades, with a number of neighbouring Inchicore streets providing six volunteers, three of whom would be killed in action. In September 1938, Inchicore man Liam McGregor would give his life, alongside that of fellow Dubliner Jack Nalty, on the Ebro front, in the very last military engagement

of the International Brigades before their withdrawal from Spain, having fought side-by-side on that same front since July with my late father, Micheál O’Riordan, until he was wounded in action in August. The three Inchicore International Brigaders who survived the Spanish War were Bill Scott, Joe Monks (author of *With the Reds in Andalusia* and a personal friend of mine) and Paddy McElroy.”

“As we approach the centenary of the 1916 Rising we are already being told by some that we should tone down its commemoration, for fear of “causing offence”. But to whom could it be “offensive”? The aim of that Easter Rising was the Irish Republican one of uniting Catholics, Protestants and Dissenters. And firmly upholding that objective from the very outset in the Emmet Hall behind me had been the Irish Citizen Army. One of that army’s earliest recruits was the Inchicore Protestant Republican, William Scott, a professing member of the Church of Ireland and an activist in the Bricklayers’ Trade Union. During the 1916 Rising, Scott fought alongside William Partridge in the College of Surgeons garrison, under the command of ICA Chief-of-Staff Michael Mallin and his deputy, Constance Markievicz. It was no accident that, inspired by that legacy, Scott’s son, William Jnr – better known as Bill Scott - was the very first Irish International Brigade volunteer to arrive to fight in defence of the Spanish Republic in September 1936.”

“Esther McGregor was yet another Inchicore Protestant radical, and one whom it was my privilege to have known personally. She had been a fellow candidate of James Larkin Jnr, standing on behalf of the Revolutionary Workers’ Groups, in the 1930 Local Elections; as a member of the Inchicore Branch of the Labour she had nominated Joe Deasy to successfully contest the 1945 Local Elections and serve on Dublin City Council alongside Big Jim Larkin for his final year of political activity; and at the time of her death in 1980 Esther was still a committed activist, this time in the Communist Party of Ireland. In February 1937 the Irish International Brigade commander Frank Ryan had stated from Spain: *‘Our 50,000 who died in the Great War were sacrificed uselessly; no life given here is given in vain.’* Esther McGregor knew both the pain mixed with a sense of betrayal of the former War, and the pain mixed with pride in respect of Spain. Widowed when her husband perished in the British Army during the Imperialist War, Esther was to suffer the loss of her son Bill (Liam) McGregor when he fell in the Spanish Anti-Fascist War in September 1938, two years to the month after his Inchicore neighbour, Bill Scott, had been the first Irish volunteer to arrive to fight in defence of the Spanish Republic. I want to thank you for enabling me to make these connections as we honour the memory of the Irish Citizen Army here in Inchicore today.”

Upon completion of the ceremony, I was approached by a man in the crowd to thank me for mentioning both his grandfather and uncle - William Scott of the Irish Citizen Army and Bill Scott of the International Brigades’ Connolly Column. Bill Scott’s Catalan-language militia identity card can be viewed in the Spanish War display case of the “Soldiers and Chiefs” Exhibition in the National Museum of Ireland

at Collins Barracks. It is indeed particularly fitting that Bill Scott's signature should be the first on the Manifesto reprinted hereunder, while that of Jack Nalty should, more poignantly, be the last. In the September 2011 issue of *Irish Foreign Affairs* I documented two contrasting Irish standpoints in respect of the Spanish Civil War – that articulated by Éamon de Valera in championing Irish neutrality and that expressed by Desmond FitzGerald in championing Fascism. The third – very much a small minority - Irish standpoint was, of course, that of the volunteers who actually fought against Fascism in Spain. The following Manifesto was issued by a group of those International Brigaders in October 1937, and was first published in the *Irish Democrat*.

## **Manifesto from Men who fought for Democracy in Spain**

[The following statement has been issued by a number of the members of the Irish Unit of the International Brigade. Published in *Irish Democrat*, 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1937.]

We, the undersigned, wounded members of the Irish Unit serving under Frank Ryan with the Spanish Republican Army, feel that it is now necessary to raise our voices in a direct appeal to the Irish nation. In the name of our fifty comrades whose graves dot the Spanish battlefields, in the name of our comrades still in action, we speak on behalf of their cause.

When the conflict in Spain opened in July 1936 we saw Ireland deluged by a propaganda such as had not been seen since 1914. An attempt was made to sweep the country in a wave of hysteria. We were told that the Government elected by an alliance of Trade Unionists, workers' parties, liberal Republicans, tenant farmers and separatists of Catalonia and the Basque country, were really no Government, but a mob of assassins, priest-murderers, and church burners. We saw Franco and the rebel generals described as the 'Patriot forces' and as defenders of Christianity. It was represented that every Irishman and woman could be on only one side in this dreadful struggle - the side of the rebels.

We saw the powerful nations of Europe uniting - possibly for the first time in history - to deny a properly elected Government its right, long established under international law, to purchase arms and other supplies abroad. We saw Franco bringing back the Moors to Europe, to crush his own people. We saw later a regular Italian Army landed in Spain. Yet the Spanish people, whom we were told were against their Government, fought on, almost without arms, against both the military forces that had risen against them and the new foreign invaders.

Then we saw Franco's acts in the territory conquered by him. While claiming to be a Republican, he abolished the Republican flag and restored the monarchist standard. Though we were told he was a man of the people, he executed Trade Union leaders, made the Fascist salute compulsory, outlined a 'corporative' system, and sent as his representatives abroad the marquises, counts and grandees of the old regime.

Above all, we noted those who supported Franco in this and other countries. We saw the *Irish Independent* spreading atrocity propaganda as it did about 'Catholic Belgium' in 1914. We saw that its allies in Britain were the *Daily Mail*, the *Morning Post*, and diehard Tories, well-known to us for their attitude to Ireland and any other people striving towards liberty. We saw General O'Duffy, Mr Patrick Belton and others, who but three years ago were in the forefront of a blatant effort to uproot democratic government in this country, organising financial and even military support for the war to overthrow the Spanish Republican Government.

It was now clear to us that the same sinister forces that had stampeded the Irish people into the Great War in 1914 were again at work, for as false a cause, with as cynical a propaganda.

Madrid was ringed round with enemies, foreign artillery and aircraft raining death upon its people, destroying its treasures of art and architecture, while even its women and children were digging trenches to hold back the invaders. At that moment the call went out to the democracy of the world to rally where their rulers had failed.

Their response was the most moving episode of latter-day history. By sea and illegally across frontiers, 30,000 men of all nations answered the call. Men of all parties and none, of all creeds and colours and tongues; staking their lives as proof of their unity with the outraged Spanish people. The International Brigade marched into beleaguered Madrid, to give new heart to its ill-armed defenders.

Ireland, with its matchless record of resistance to oppression, would have been found wanting before the eyes of the world had it stood apart. But we did not stand apart. We assembled under Frank Ryan in Spain: Republicans, trade unionists, members of Labour Parties and even Fianna Fáil, exiles from overseas. We were less than 200 in number, and have been in action since last December (1936). We will leave it to the Spanish historian of the near future to tell whether we worthily acquitted ourselves, whether we upheld the honour of Ireland. We will say only that we fought on five fronts, that our small band has lost nearly 50 dead and at least another 50 wounded, and that our Irish Unit still holds their line.

In Andalusia, on Christmas Day, we lost our first seven heroes. In January we were transferred to Guadarrama and lost more. At Jarama, in storming the heights of Pingarron, our captain, Kit Conway, fell and our commandant and leader, Frank Ryan, always with his men in action, was twice wounded. Here, too, we lost the Rev. R M Hilliard, a Church of Ireland clergyman, who had taken his place in the ranks. At Brunete, in July, four of our Unit were killed and a number wounded.

Our experience in Spain has convinced us that we were right in taking the step we did. We saw for ourselves that the propaganda still being circulated here was a grotesque misrepresentation. We say to the Irish people that there is no 'Red mob' in Republican Spain; that all parties have united to defend the Republic, so that the Spanish people may freely determine their own destinies in the future; that in the Spanish Republic there will be unqualified liberty of conscience and freedom to practice religion, with an end to attempts - such as that made by the 'Christian' Front here - to make the Church of the majority of us an adjunct of political parties; and that all the Spanish people want are the independence of their historic country, the right to work and live in peace on the land they till, and the means to educate their children out of the illiteracy they have been condemned to themselves.

And we ask these questions of the Irish people: Is a nation that has striven for centuries to rid itself of an alien yoke now to support those who would deprive Catalans and Basques of their national liberties, customs and language and who will make the whole Iberian peninsula a Fascist colony? Are Irish farmers, whose fathers fought under Davitt, to support a merciless and rack-renting landlord class in its efforts to crush tenant farmers? Are Irish trade unionists to support those who have outlawed all Unions and executed thousands

whose only offence was that they carried a union card? Are Irish teachers and others engaged in cultural work to take sides with those who aped Hitler barbarism by burning the works of Spain's greatest thinkers, who dragged Spain's greatest poet, Federico Garcia Lorca, through the streets of Grenada before killing him, who hurled bombs on the Prado?

There can be only one side for the Irish people. And it is on the side that has been shamefully traduced. As yesterday, so it is today. The lordlings and generals, with the wealth and mighty ones of the earth behind them, have made the world ring with new 'Scullabogues' and 'Wexford Bridges'; the men in frieze-coats and dungarees, the poor teachers and scholars, cannot be heard. Though every fact attests the justice of their cause.

We call on the Irish people, then, to rise up against the press lords and unscrupulous politicians who are misleading us now as they misled us before. We call on the Government of the Free State to end its subservience to this powerful and noisy group, and to grant the Spanish Republic the full recognition it had before the conflict. We demand this in the name of our comrades who have died to redeem this nation's honour, in the name of our comrades who are ready to die, and in the name of the traditions handed down by our National Fathers.

**Signed: William Scott, Terence Flanagan, James Prendergast, Joseph Monks, Patrick Smith, Sean Goff, Patrick Duff, Frank Edwards, John Power, Peter O'Connor, James O'Beirne, Donal O'Reilly, Jack Nalty.**

---

## Document

---

### **Coalition in Britain - Coalitions in Europe? An Analysis of the UK's European Policy**

---

#### **IIEA Institute of International and European Affairs**

[The IIEA is an important institution, modelled on Chatham House and driven from the start 25 years ago by Brendan Halligan.]

##### **Security and Defence Policy Newsletter No.1**

*By Linda Barry, linda.barry@iiea.com November 2011*

**Dáil approves Irish participation in two projects of the European Defence Agency** On 27 September 2011 the Dáil approved a motion authorising Ireland's participation in two European Defence Agency (EDA) projects. The first is a project relating to Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) protection. It is a joint investment programme covering the exchange of information between government laboratories as well as the initiation of new research and technology projects, including the detection and identification of such threats, the design of appropriate medical countermeasures...

---

[The editorial says (p3):

NATO, the Western half of the military alliance that defeated Nazi Germany established as a defensive measure against the other half, was not disbanded when the Soviet bloc collapsed. When it lost its defensive purpose, it was instantly, and without a moment's reflection, transformed into an aggressive force. It accorded itself a mandate to interfere anywhere in the world. Its first action was in the new Balkan War. And, through this action, which to many eyes appeared as a substitute for the war on the Soviet Union by the Free World which the Soviet acquisition of nuclear weapons had prevented, the distinction between the EU and NATO dissolved.]

[Here is the official view of the matter, by

Shane Fitzgerald,  
(2010) Coalition in Britain - Coalitions in Europe? An Analysis of the UK's European Policy. Dublin, Ireland. Institute of International and European Affairs

www.iiea.com

email: reception@iiea.com

8 North Great Georges Street, Dublin 1, Ireland]

#### **Coalition in Britain - Coalitions in Europe? An Analysis of the UK's European Policy**

The new Secretary of State for Defence, Dr Liam Fox, argues strongly that the EU should act only when NATO cannot, and should supplement rather than supplant national defence and NATO. NATO must continue to be seen as the cornerstone of Europe's defence, any tendency towards EU 'mission creep' should be resisted, and any blurring of the line between what is supranational and what is intergovernmental in EU defence planning opposed.

In contrast with these strong words, it is elsewhere recognised that great economies of scale can be achieved by increased collaboration on defence initiatives within the EU. A February 2010 green paper from the Ministry of Defence, *Adaptability and Partnership – Issues for the Strategic Defence Review* argues that "Stronger European defence co-operation offers many opportunities ... The UK will greatly improve its influence if we and our European partners speak and act in concert. A robust EU role in crisis management will strengthen NATO. Playing a leading role at the heart of Europe will strengthen our relationship with the US."49 Also, as Clara Marina O'Donnell of the Centre for European Reform argues:

Britain stands to benefit from collaborative efforts under the [European Defence Agency]'s umbrella, not least because it can be used to encourage other European countries to develop some badly needed equipment, including for Afghanistan. In addition, France might be less keen to work bilaterally with the UK on big ticket items, if London undermines EU defence efforts in which Paris has invested much political capital over the last decade.

# Starving the Germans: the evolution of Britain's strategy of blockade during the First World War – Part Four.

by Eamon Dyas

## Parliamentary shenanigans.

As already stated, the outcome of the London Naval Conference was not a complete success from the British viewpoint as it had introduced a compromise on the issue of “continuous voyage” which restricted the circumstances under which its use could be justified. Basically, it stipulated that the practice of “continuous voyage” was legitimate in circumstances where the cargo involved came within the category of absolute contraband and was destined for the enemy's territory, government or armed forces. Similarly cargoes consisting of materials defined as conditional contraband were also only subject to the practice of “continuous voyage” and confiscation but only if there was evidence that such materials were destined for the use of the enemies forces and government irrespective of whether such materials had an intermediate destination that was not within the enemy territory. However, such materials could not be subject to the condition of “continuous voyage” if its ultimate use was a civilian one. As food was not on the list of absolute contraband drawn up by the Conference but was only to be considered conditional contraband, a belligerent, in the absence of evidence that a cargo of food was destined for the enemy's government or armed forces, was prohibited from subjecting such cargo to the practice of “continuous voyage”. It stands to reason therefore that any attempt to redefine food as being subject to the practice of “continuous voyage” must have as its object the deprivation of civilian populations of its food supply.

In the normal course of events it is possible that the Liberal Imperialists could have lived with the formal restrictions placed on the use “continuous voyage” by the London Naval Conference as the traditional sentiment in the Admiralty was that anything agreed in times of peace was secondary to the pursuit of an object in times of war (see *Records*, by Lord Fisher. Pub. Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1919, pp. 75-76). This tendency was confirmed by the fact that within a short time after the Conference one of the American delegates, Charles H. Stockton, had already become aware of attempts in some quarters in Britain to redefine foodstuffs in a way that would have enabled such material to be embraced within the terms of “continuous voyage”. And, as was experienced earlier during the Boer War and would be experienced later during the First World War, the ingenuity of the British in getting around any international conventions that got in the way of the Admiralty's strategy of economic blockade was supreme. However, the Liberal Imperialists had already committed themselves to a Parliamentary process and despite the limitations imposed by the outcome of the London Naval Conference they were compelled at the end of that Conference to continue to be associated with its outcome. This meant that a Parliamentary process of some sort was now required. The issue was – what sort of Parliamentary process.

The Government had always claimed justification for calling the London Naval Conference because it was necessary to encapsulate the work of the International Prize Court within

a code which restricted its operation to one of application rather than interpretation. The problem for Britain all along had been that the International Prize Court had been provided, in certain circumstances, with the power of interpretation of naval convention by the Second Hague Convention of 1907 and given that the court would have judges from other countries on its panel this left too much leeway for British comfort. The London Naval Conference had come up with an agreed code which restricted the court to a role of applying that code and nothing more.

Though the Prize Court issue and the agreed Declaration of London code were to be linked for the purpose of parliamentary procedure they remained separate issues. The issue which the Hague Conference Convention XII threw up did impact on British judicial jurisdiction in that it introduced a court of higher appeal for its citizens and a case could be made that this warranted parliamentary approval, the independence of such a court had effectively been neutralised by the terms of the Declaration of London and in the process had been reduced to a shadow court with a corresponding reduction in its impact on the British judicial system. And even if it could be argued that it remained the case that the International Prize Court continued to warrant Parliamentary approval this was not the case with the Declaration of London. The Declaration was quite a separate thing in that it was designed to provide an international code for the conduct of naval warfare with no constitutional issues involved. It was possible for the Government to simply drop the International Prize Court and merely by an order in council, ratify the Declaration of London.

In these circumstances the simple thing for the Government to do was to present a bill to Parliament which addressed the issue that actually required its approval, i.e. the establishment of the International Prize Court and, armed with the concessions it gained from the London Declaration make the case for its approval. However, for reasons explained earlier the Government was in no hurry to gain Parliamentary approval for the International Prize Court based on such arguments. The London Naval Conference ended on 26 February 1909 but it was not until nearly 18 months later, on 23 June 1910 that it presented the Naval Prize Bill to Parliament in the following terms:

“To consolidate, with Amendments, the enactments relating to Naval Prize of War,’ presented by Secretary Sir Edward Grey; supported by Mr. McKenna, Mr. Attorney-General, Mr. Solicitor-General, and Mr. McKinnon Wood; to be read a second time upon; Tuesday, 5<sup>th</sup> July.” (Hansard, 23 June 1910).

Then, a week before the bill was due for its Second Reading and without any reason given, McKinnon Wood, the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, announced that the

Second Reading was to be postponed. The Bill was designed to address the issue of the establishment of the International Prize Court but early on it became obvious that aside from the arguments for and against the International Prize Court and the Declaration of London, three procedural issues dominated the concerns of the Members of Parliament. Firstly, what was the relationship which the Bill sought to establish between the issue of the International Prize Court and the Declaration of London; secondly, what means was there for Members of Parliament to express their feelings on the relative merits or demerits of either; and thirdly, what standing did the fate of the Naval Prize Bill have with regards to the future ratification or otherwise of the Declaration of London.

In answering such concerns the Government did all it could from the outset to confuse the issue of the International Prize Court with the Declaration of London and used the Naval Prize Bill to bind the fate of the latter with that of the former. The issue of the relationship between the International Prize Court and the Declaration of London was addressed in the following written exchange relating to this question in the House of Commons on the 27 July 1910:

“Mr. Eyres-Monsell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether the code of international law contained in the provisions of the Declaration of London, should be ratified, will be the code upon which the proceedings in British prize courts and the Supreme Prize Court, as well as those of the International Prize Court of Appeal, are to be based; and whether, if this is so, further legislation beyond that contained in the Naval Prize Bill, 1910, will be necessary in order to give effect to the change in the law and customs which have hitherto governed the decisions of prize courts in this country?”

Mr. McKinnon Wood. The answer to the first part of the question is in the affirmative. With regard to the latter part, His Majesty’s Government are advised that no legislation is necessary for the purpose mentioned by the hon. Member.” (Hansard, 27 July 1910).

Although this reply at first appears to indicate correctly that there was no necessary legislative linkage between the International Prize Court with the Declaration of London a re-reading of it also conveys the impression that there is – at least in the sense that one is bound in with the other. This conflation was a totally unnecessary device and can only be explained by the fact that the Government were eager to ensure that any unpopularity attached to the idea of the International Prize Court would bring the Declaration down in its wake.

At this time, despite the Second Reading having been postponed, the Government continued to assure the House that it would be presented in due course. But, eighteen months having elapsed before the Bill was presented to Parliament, the scheduled date for its Second Reading came and went and, after further delays, the Government announced on 21 November 1910 presumably on account of the forthcoming General Election of the following month that the Bill was being withdrawn.

After being returned to Government for a second time in a year with the assistance of the Irish Parliamentary Party the Liberals finally presented the Naval Prize Bill for its Second

Reading on the 28 June 1911. Although the various domestic tribulations experienced by the Liberal Government in 1910 was undoubtedly a consideration, the fact that it was now nearly two and a half years since the end of the London Naval Conference and getting on for four years after the end of the Second Hague Peace Conference which triggered the whole odyssey, it had taken an inordinate amount of time to reach the stage where the Second Reading of the relevant Bill was reached. In the meantime, the confusion created by the way in which the Government insisted in merging the two elements continued. On 9<sup>th</sup> February 1911, within a couple do months of the Government being returned to power the issue was again raised in the following encounter in the House of Commons: -

“Mr. Hunt asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether, in view of the fact that he has promised that both Houses of Parliament should have an opportunity of fully discussing the Declaration of London, and that Ministers would not advise His Majesty to ratify a treaty to which Parliamentary approval had been expressly refused, he would say whether the Declaration of London would be ratified if the House of Lords expressly refused its approval?”

The Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Mr. McKinnon Wood). The Declaration of London is in a certain sense subsidiary to the Prize Court Convention. In order that effect should be given to that convention in this country, legislation is necessary. Such legislation is embodied in the Naval Prize Bill which will in due course be submitted to both Houses of Parliament.

Mr. Arthur Lee. Do we understand from that reply that the Declaration will in no case be ratified until after the Naval Prize Bill has passed through both Houses?

Mr. McKinnon Wood. The Declaration will not be ratified until after the Naval Prize Bill has been discussed.” (Hansard, 9 February 1911).

What is significant here is the very pointed refusal of the Under-Secretary to address the fate of the Declaration of London in the event of the Naval Prize Bill being rejected by the House of Lords. As the Bill only fell because of just such an event the behaviour of the Government in its aftermath speaks volumes. The kind of deliberate ambiguity epitomised above became a feature of Government behaviour for the duration of the transit of the Bill through Parliament. Again during the same encounter: -

“Lord Charles Beresford asked whether the discussion on the Naval Prize Bill would cover the whole of the ground of the Declaration of London; whether there would be a discussion on the Declaration of London separately; and whether a Parliamentary Vote would be taken on the Declaration of London and on the Naval Prize Bill?”

The Prime Minister. I have already stated that in our opinion a convenient opportunity for discussing the whole of the Declaration of London will arise on the Second Reading of the Naval Prize Bill; and my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and I myself, have made it abundantly clear that Parliament will have full opportunity of discussing the provisions of the Declaration before His Majesty is advised to ratify it.

Mr. Butcher. Will any opportunity be given to Parliament to express their view, yes or no, whether the Declaration should be ratified?

The Prime Minister. Ratification is a matter not for Parliament, but for the Crown. The Crown will not be advised to ratify if the House of Commons gives an adverse vote." (Hansard, 9 February 1911).

Aside from the fact that the Prime Minister deliberately avoided the question of whether there would be a vote on, what had now come to be understood, as the two elements of the Bill, Asquith in his reply does say quite clearly, albeit with no legal justification, that the Government will not ratify the Declaration in the event of the Naval Prize Bill being rejected by the House of Commons. However, no mention is made of its fate in the event of it being accepted by the House of Commons but rejected in the House of Lords (an all too likely scenario at this time). But the issue of how the House of Commons was to express its separate feelings on the International Prize Court and on the Declaration was something that continued to create confusion. This issue was aired by W.R. Peel on the 21 March 1911: -

"Mr. W.R. Peel. May I ask whether it is not a fact that the two questions – the setting up of an international prize court, and the ratification of the Declaration of London – are two quite different questions, and how, in view of the fact that this House might be in favour of the one and against the other, it will be able to express its opinion on the Second Reading of the Naval Prize Bill?

The Prime Minister. That was a matter frequently discussed in the last Parliament, and I do not think there is any practical difficulty." (Hansard, 21 March 1911).

So, despite the fact that several Members of Parliament had expressed confusion on this issue, as far as the Government was concerned, it did not think there was any practical difficulty. That it had remained possible for the Government to ratify the Declaration of London without waiting for Parliament to pass a Naval Prize Bill purely designed around the International Prize Court was admitted by the Government in a response given in the House of Commons on the 21 July 1911:

"Mr. Gibson Bowles: If His Majesty's Government can ratify the Declaration [of London – ED] by sole prerogative, why is it proposed to take the House into the confidence of the Government at all?

Mr. McKinnon Wood (Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs): We thought there was a desire on the part of hon. Members to discuss it.

Mr. Worthington-Evans: Will the Government not ratify it unless this House approves it?

Mr. McKinnon-Wood: I cannot undertake to answer that."

(Hansard, 21 July 1911)

Any examination of the way in which the Government answered questions relating to the Naval Prize Bill in the context of the International Prize Court and the Declaration of London will reveal numerous examples of the way in which the issue was very deliberately shrouded in confusion.

One of the most persistent Members in questioning the Government's attitude towards the Naval Prize Bill during its transit through Parliament was J.G. Butcher (Conservative M.P. and son of the Church of Ireland Bishop of Meath) and he was reduced to desperation in the way his efforts were stonewalled by the Government. The obfuscation of Sir Edward Grey on the issue compelled him to write a letter to *The Times* on 15 June 1911. The letter was headed "Sir Edward Grey and Questions":

"Sir, - May I be allowed to draw attention to an entirely novel method adopted by the Foreign Secretary for disposing of inconvenient questions put to him in the House?

I had four specific questions on the paper to-day, relating to grave matters in connection with the Declaration of London.

The Foreign Secretary declined to answer any one of these questions. He did not suggest they were otherwise than important, or that it was contrary to the public interest to reply to them. He contented himself with a promise to make a statement on the points raised when the discussion on the Declaration came on.

It is important that we should have the information sought before the discussion takes place, and in any case announcements made in the course of debate on a technical subject have neither the precision nor the authoritative character of carefully prepared printed replies to questions.

I was under the impression that one of the few rights left to private members was to interrogate Ministers and to receive answers on matters on which Parliament and the country should be informed. It would seem that I was mistaken.

I am, Sir, yours truly.

J.G. Butcher,

House of Commons, June 15."

(*The Times*, 16 June 1911, p.13.

But Liberal Imperialist shenanigans did not end there. Alongside obfuscation and obstruction there was the tactic of diversion. To provide further parliamentary confusion the Government also introduced the "Second Peace Conference (Conventions) Bill" on 14 June 1911. The object of the "Second Peace Conference (Conventions) Bill" was "To make such amendments in the Law with respect to international Tribunals, Neutrality, and other matters as are necessary to enable certain Conventions to be carried into effect." It appears that this particular Bill was designed to provide Parliamentary sanction for all Conventions passed by the Second Hague Peace Conference other than Convention XII – the one setting up the International Prize Court. Again, it appears that there was absolutely no reason why Parliamentary approval was required for the ratification of these Conventions as they consisted of minor issues of administrative adjustment to existing procedures (and were criticised for being such at the time). This Bill was then withdrawn on 16 December 1911 four days after the Naval Prize Bill had been safely (as far as the Government was concerned) rejected by the House of Lords.



Was any of this really necessary? Beyond the fact that the Liberal Imperialists used the excuse of the need for Parliamentary approval to delay the ratification of any agreements resulting from the London Naval Conference it is difficult to see why this Parliamentary circus was set in motion. While there may have been a case for Parliamentary approval being necessary with regards the legal implications of the International Prize Court, there seems little justification for similar legislation being required for the ratification of the other Conventions agreed at the Second Hague Peace Conference or for the terms of the Declaration of London. Even in the case of the International Prize Court it is arguable if in fact parliamentary approval was strictly necessary. The relationship between the proposed International Prize Court and the American Supreme Court was far more problematic than was the case with regards to the position that Court occupied in terms of the British legal system and yet the Americans managed to get around this without referring the issue to Congress. If the modicum of will existed in Government to ratify any of these elements, but particularly the Declaration of London, it could have been done without any fuss. But of course the will was absent and, as subsequent events were to confirm, the main position that the Government wished to preserve was one which retained as much freedom as possible for its Navy to achieve the economic destruction of Germany without the hindrance of international codes of behaviour. The price of achieving such freedom in domestic politics was the reduction of Parliament to a charade as the main Liberal Imperialist spokesmen continued to offer 'support' for the Naval Prize Bill in its 'progress' to the House of Lords.

Further proof of the insincerity of the Government in its commitment to the International Prize Court and the Declaration of London is provided by the way it behaved in the aftermath of the inevitable rejection of the Naval Prize Bill by the House of Lords on 12 December 1911. If the implication of Asquith's reply to a question from J.G. Butcher on 9 February is to be believed, the government retained the right to proceed with the bill on the basis of its approval by the House of Commons. If they had been sincere in trying to get the required legislation through Parliament there was nothing to stop them sending the Bill back to the House of Lords – now devoid of its veto since the passing of the Parliamentary Bill on 29 May of that year. On 21 February 1912, Asquith was asked by William Peel M.P. in the House of Commons if the Government proposed to reintroduce the Naval Prize Bill and Asquith replied that he did intend to reintroduce the Bill but could not, at that time, provide a date for its reintroduction. Similar questions were asked on 7 May 1912, on 31 July 1912, on 17 October 1912, on the 20 March 1913, on 22 April 1913, and on 12 February 1914 and all met with the same response.

What of the Declaration of London as a separate issue from the Naval Prize Bill? A year after the rejection of the Naval Prize Bill by the House of Lords on 12 December 1911, on 5 December 1912, the following interaction took place between Sir J.D. Rees and Sir Edward Grey in the House of Commons:

“Sir J. D. Rees asked the Secretary for Foreign Affairs what law now obtains in respect to contraband and blockade; what effect, if any, is to be given to the Declaration of London; whether the action of Italy and Turkey in the recent war is to be regarded as a precedent; whether other States are strengthening, or contemplate strengthening, their legislation against breaches of neutrality; and whether, since Great Britain is more adversely affected than any other power by

a stiffening of the standard of neutrality, the Government proposes to persist in efforts to obtain the ratification of the Declaration of London.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Sir Edward Grey). The rules now governing questions of contraband and blockade are those based on the view of international law prevailing in the several belligerent countries. The Declaration of London, not having been ratified, is not, as such, binding on any country, although, in several instances, belligerents have declared their acceptance of the provisions of the Declaration, so far as they do not conflict with their national law. I do not know what action on the part of Italy and Turkey the honourable member refers to as raising the question of precedent. I have no information respecting the intentions of other Governments in the matter of legislation directed against breaches of neutrality. I am not prepared to accept the view of the honourable member as regards the effect on this country of a raising of the standard of neutrality, nor to admit that this would be the general effect of the Declaration of London. The circumstance which does adversely affect Great Britain is the uncertainty as to what is at present accepted by foreign powers as the correct rule of international law on these matters. This would be removed by the ratification of the Declaration of London and it is therefore desirable to effect it.”

The reference to “the action of Italy and Turkey in the recent war” in Sir J.D. Rees' question related to the fact that during the Turco-Italian War in 1912 the Italian authorities seized two French merchant ships, the *Cartage* and the *Manouba*, in transit from a neutral port and bound for neutral ports in North Africa. The Italians claimed that the ships were seized on suspicion that they carried contraband. The Hague International Court of Arbitration subsequently found the Italian Government in breach of international law on the grounds that they were neutral ships travelling from one neutral port to another and consequently the Italian authorities had no right to seize the ships on the high seas and forcibly take them to an Italian port on mere suspicion and without actual proof of them carrying contraband. The ships were subsequently found to be free of contraband and The Hague Court ordered the Italian Government to pay the French Government the sum of 164,000 francs by way of compensation. Although the Hague judgment was only made in 1913, the facts of the incident as well as the arguments were known at the time Grey was asked the question and it beggars belief that the British Foreign Secretary expressed himself unaware of the issues raised by Italy's behaviour. What is more likely is that he did not want to go on record with either an honest or dishonest opinion on the specific issue of neutral ships travelling between neutral ports being seized by a belligerent. To have disagreed with the decision of the Court of Arbitration at The Hague would have revealed his hand but to had pretended to agree with it would have left just too obvious a hostage to fortune even for Grey to argue his way out of at a later stage. As to his fine words about the advantages to neutrals accruing from the Declaration of London, the fact that the Government had it in its powers at any point to ratify the Declaration independent of any Parliamentary procedure reveals the existence of some other agenda at work.

And then on the 29 June 1914 Willoughby Dickinson, M.P. asked the following question in the House of Commons:

“whether His Majesty's Government intend to reintroduce the Naval Prize Bill this Session; and if not, whether, in view

of the facts that the failure of Great Britain to ratify the Declaration of London is tending to postpone the summoning of the third Hague Conference, and that the Naval Prize Bill obtained the assent of the House of Commons in 1911, the Government will advise His Majesty to ratify that Declaration without further delay?

The Prime Minister. With regard to the first part of the question, I can at present add nothing to the answer given to the hon. Member for the Blackfriars Division of Glasgow on the 5<sup>th</sup> March, to the effect that the Government hope to reintroduce the Naval Prize Bill this Session, but are unable to make a definite statement. With regard to the second part, His Majesty cannot be advised to ratify an international treaty until the municipal law of this country has been so amended as to enable the Government to fulfil the obligations thereby assumed.” (Hansard, 29 June 1914).

The claim that the ratification of the Declaration of London required the amendment of the municipal law of the country was a completely spurious excuse for the refusal of the Government to undertake a commitment to the Declaration. But again it is obfuscation that is working here. What Asquith did not admit was that although an acceptance of the Declaration might involve a change in the law that change was not something that required the authority of Parliament. A complete rebuttal of that claim was provided by the Government itself at the outset of the introduction of the Naval Prize Bill. Here, in a moment of unguarded honesty on the part of the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, is the relevant exchange in the House of Commons on the 21 July 1910:

“Mr. Gibson Bowles asked the Prime Minister whether he has considered that the Naval Prize Bill is limited to the consolidation and amendment of Naval Prize Law, and neither deals with nor refers to the Declaration of London, 1909, and that no opportunity will therefore arise on the Second Reading of that Bill for debating the Declaration in question; and will he undertake that, before any steps are taken to ratify the Declaration of London, the question of its ratification shall be submitted to Parliament for express Parliamentary sanction?

Mr. McKinnon Wood. I have consulted the Prime Minister upon the subject, and if the Declaration of London cannot be raised upon the Naval Prize Bill another opportunity will be afforded to Members for discussing it. The Declaration does not require the sanction of Parliament, but, as already stated, the House will have an opportunity of considering it before ratification.

Mr. Gibson Bowles. On whose authority does the hon. Member state that a Declaration changing the law does not require the assent of Parliament?

Mr. McKinnon Wood. The Office I represent has taken the best legal advice on the subject.” (Hansard, 21 July 1910).

Whatever of the fate of the International Prize Court in terms of the Naval Prize Bill, it remained an option for the Government anytime between February 1909 and the rejection of that Bill by the House of Lords in December 1911 to ratify the Declaration of London. That option continued to be available to it until July 1914 when Asquith finally ended the charade. But,

of course, there was never any intention of ratifying either the International Prize Court or the Declaration of London.

Then, a few months before it declared war on Germany, the British Government, having failed to follow up either the Naval Prize Bill or to ratify the Declaration of London, reintroduced the mundane Second Peace Conference (Conventions) Bill on 6 April 1914 - the Bill that it had previously withdrawn on 16 December 1911. The reintroduction of the bill on this occasion was officially supported in its introduction by Winston Churchill, Mr. Attorney-General, Mr. Solicitor-General and Mr. Acland and was scheduled to be read a second time on 14 April 1914. However it's scheduled Second Reading never took place and the Bill was withdrawn again on the 20 July 1914, two weeks before the declaration of war. There seems no good reason why this should have happened unless it was to convince the U.S.A. that it was serious about international conventions. By now, of course, the Government already knew that the die was cast for the war on Germany. Thus, the Liberal Imperialists went into their war unfettered by the terms of the Second Hague Peace Conference or the Declaration of London. As the United States, unlike Britain, took the Declaration of London seriously and believed it provided the basis for the first proper codification of international law, they attempted to procure the commitment of all belligerents at the outset of the war to abide by the terms of the Declaration of London. Having received a positive commitment from Germany and Austria-Hungary the proposal fell because of Britain's determined opposition to abide by the Declaration in how it conducted its campaign of economic warfare.

Beneath all the Parliamentary meanderings and procedural obstacles constructed by Asquith's Government the purpose is not difficult to see. It has to be borne in mind that the core issue related to the continued supremacy of British commerce and the guarantee of that supremacy after 1905 was increasingly viewed by Government circles in terms of the commercial destruction and social dislocation of Germany. Not only was Germany beginning to challenge British manufacturing supremacy but also the German mercantile fleet was expanding in a way which also challenged British control over the movement of world trade. This was an important asset for Britain to protect as it was closely bound up with the world of finance and insurance, the world which provided so much wealth to the City of London.

Of course this was never publicly stated as a matter of Government policy but it determined events behind the scenes. The continued influence of the Liberal Imperialists was dependent upon the wider political Party out in the constituencies, a significant element of which continued to take issues of disarmament and peaceful coexistence seriously. In those circumstances, while continuing to engage with the existing politics, their real intention, which had to evolve under conditions of secrecy, was the maintenance of a situation where the Government was not forced into making a decision on the issues addressed by the Declaration of London. Hence the interminable parliamentary delays and procedural edifices constructed by the Government during the period from 1908 to 1914 and we see people like Grey appearing to take up positions in open parliament contrary to his and the Liberal Imperialist agenda behind the scenes.

## Food for thought.

It all came down to food and how you viewed it. From the belligerent point of view of the Liberal Imperialists any

international agreement which impaired the ability of the British Navy to implement an effective food blockade against German civilians was not a good thing. While in times of war such impairments could be treated as Fisher's "scrap of paper", public perception in times of peace is a highly important commodity and the prevailing public sentiment in Britain at this time was one which viewed the issue of food from the point of view of Britain as the potential victim of a blockade. Consequently, although the Government's instruction to its delegates to the 1908-09 London Naval Conference had been to protect the interests of Britain as a belligerent, the emotive nature of food supply ensured that it would be within the popular perception of Britain as a neutral that arguments for and against the Naval Prize Bill would find the clearest expression. There were other areas of course where the two sides clashed, the most insidious being the issue of converting merchant ships to ships of war during a conflict but as far as clarity was concerned the thing which concentrated people's minds was that of food supply.

In the decade before the First World War fear of German invasion and the reliance of the country on its trade routes for the supply of food were areas of anxiety among the English people. Both anxieties were raised from time to time to the level of hysteria by the Tory press and both were sometimes exploited by the Liberal Government to justify increased spending on the armed services and when these issues emerged in the course of parliamentary debate on the International Prize Court and the Declaration of London attitudes had to be struck - attitudes that, where the Liberal Imperialists were concerned, belied their true position.

Of course, it was not entirely a matter of striking attitudes, as there were many in the Liberal party who sincerely believed that the ratification of the Declaration of London was an advance on what already existed. Two such people who typified this element in the party were the Lord Chancellor, Lord Loreburn and the Secretary of State for India, Lord Morley. Both men were energetic supporters of the International Prize Court and the Declaration of London and both men represented the pacific element that remained influential in the Liberal Party at this time. Although resigning his position as Lord Chancellor in 1912 Loreburn was later to become a vocal critic of the role of the Liberal Imperialists in bringing about the First World War and Morley was later to resign his seat as Lord President of the Council (a Cabinet seat) in protest against the British declaration of War in 1914.

We see the lines of engagement on the issue of food supply being laid down in the period between the abandonment of the first Naval Prize Bill in November 1910 and the introduction of the new Naval Prize Bill in June 1911. It is worthwhile looking at these arguments in detail as the counter arguments against the legislation went on to provide the basis for Britain's defence of its blockade against Germany during the First World War. Although the likes of Asquith, Grey and McKinnon Wood denied the validity of the interpretation placed on the terms of the Declaration of London by the Conservative opposition they themselves used precisely such interpretations against American objections that Britain was infringing the terms of the Declaration of London in the way she operated the blockade during the First World War. The arguments that Grey and co argued against in 1911 they came to embrace in 1915.

Before the new Naval Prize Bill had been presented to Parliament, Lord Desborough (Conservative and president of the London Chamber of Commerce at the time) in a debate in the House of Lords, on 8 March 1911 began by drawing attention to the fact that nearly 30 Chambers of Commerce and 10 shipping companies had expressed concerns about the terms of the Declaration of London and how those terms impacted upon the issue of Britain's food supply in the event of war. He went on to say: -

As regards . . . the question of food supplies, it should be observed that there are three divisions of articles made by the Declaration. The first is absolute contraband, the second conditional contraband, and the third the free list. Articles exclusively used for war are absolute contraband. The free list contains articles which may not be declared contraband of war, and, which with the notable exception of cotton and hemp, never have been declared contraband of war. But what concerns most is the list of articles susceptible of use in war as well as for purposes of peace, which may, without notice, be treated as contraband of war under the name of 'conditional contraband.' The list of conditional contraband is given in article 24 of the Declaration, and . . . this list is a comprehensive one, but I suppose the first article 'foodstuffs' is to us living in islands which import food at the appalling rate of £484 a minute is the most important, and we must see what the Declaration has to say on the subject of the importation of conditional contraband. Under article 34 of the Declaration neutral ships are liable to capture, and under certain circumstances to destruction if the goods are consigned to enemy authorities, or to a contractor established in the enemy country, who as a matter of common knowledge supplies articles of this kind to the enemy. A similar presumption arises if the goods are consigned to a fortified place belonging to the enemy, or other places 'serving as a base for the armed forces of the enemy.' This article sets forth where neutral ships may not convey conditional contraband to. It is the most disputed article in the Declaration as regards its precise meaning. 'Enemy authorities,' 'contractor,' 'place serving as a base for the armed forces of the enemy,' require a most careful definition. It has been frequently pointed out that 'contractor' is a very limited translation of the authentic word, which is *commerçant*, or trader, and I suppose there are few great traders in this country who are absolutely free from the imputation of supplying the authorities with articles of conditional contraband. 'Enemy' is also ambiguous in this article. But the sentence which has caused the most alarm is 'other place serving as a base for the armed forces of the enemy.' These islands are small, and there is no port suitable for the reception of grain ships which could not serve as a base for our armed forces, or which, as a matter of fact, does not do so. The commentary, or report of M. Renault, whether authoritative or not, seems to make the matter worse. He says it may be a fortified place belonging to the enemy, or a place used as a base whether of operations 'or of supply,' for the armed forces of the enemy. This seems to adopt the German view, for articles 34, 35, and 49 are taken almost in their entirety from the German report laid before the London conference.

"The chambers of commerce and others representing the trading and shipping interests of this country are much alarmed by these articles. It appears to them that foodstuffs and other articles of conditional contraband would, when shipped to any port in the United Kingdom, be liable to capture, and under article 49 the neutral vessels carrying them would be liable to be sunk. They would be grateful if

the Government would name any ports in this country which they consider at the present time to be above suspicion – any ports in which, if this country were at war, neutral vessels could convey foodstuffs and the other articles of conditional contraband. The Chamber of Commerce of Glasgow asked the Foreign Office whether Glasgow would be considered a free port, but, the answer, put shortly, was that the question would have to be decided by the international prize court sitting at The Hague probably long after the war was over. The same uncertainty would exist when this country was a neutral. I am not sure indeed, that under article 34 it would not be the duty of a hostile commander to capture any neutral vessels conveying conditional contraband to any port in this country. The best and safest manner to wage warfare on this country is to cut off her supplies, especially food, and the sinking of neutral vessels carrying foodstuffs to this country would inevitably cause a serious rise in prices of food and freight and probably create a panic. . . .

“I am well aware that the supporters of the Declaration argue, with regard to foodstuffs, that this country would be no worse off under the Declaration than it is as matters stand now. They maintain that food can be declared contraband at the present time. But that is not so. As the Right Hon. James Bryce stated in the House of Commons on August 11, 1904:

‘Food, by the general consent of nations, was not contraband of war unless it is clearly proved to be intended for military or naval purposes. In 1885 a demand was made by the French government to treat rice as contraband of war. Lord Granville protested in a most energetic way, and stated that he would not recognize the decision of French prize courts which treated rice under that category, and in point of fact rice never was treated as contraband of war.’

”It may also be noted that, as regards this particular instance, in the French Chamber it was stated that rice was made contraband not as the food of the people, but because it was used as tribute and as payment for Chinese soldiers. Many more quotations could be given against the thesis that the food of the people can be declared contraband of war.

“”The worst of article 34 is that while good excuse is given for foodstuffs coming to this country in neutral vessels in time of war being seized and even destroyed, article 35 states that conditional contraband is not liable to capture when it is to be discharged in an intervening neutral port. That is to say, if we were to be at war with a continental power or powers neutral vessels carrying conditional contraband, which includes all the articles I have already enumerated, could be, as I understand it, addressed straight to their belligerent forces, but we could not interfere with it as long as it was to be discharged at a neutral intervening port. Our cruisers might meet them, but they could only wish them godspeed. These two articles taken together are grossly unfair to us as an island power. We have no neutral ports to draw these supplies from overland. All our ports would be suspect. It is said, indeed, that neutral vessels could take our food supplies to France if France were a neutral, which is perhaps improbable.” (*Debates in the British Parliament, 1911-1912 on the Declaration of London and Naval Prize Bill*, published by the Government Printing Office, Washington, 1919, pp.26-29)

The claim by the Rt. Hon. James Boyce that “Food, by the general consent of nations, was not contraband of war unless it is clearly proved to be intended for military or naval purposes” was used by the opposition to counter the argument that it was only by ratifying the Declaration of London that Britain’s food supply could be protected in time of war. Needless to say, this position was vigorously disputed by the pro-Declaration people and of course those in the know were aware of how food had been treated by the British during the Boer War. However, what they could not dispute was the way that the terminology of the Declaration could be interpreted differently to justify very different actions. It was the issue of terminology that again put the sincere Liberal pacifists on the back foot when, later that year, on 12 December the Naval Prize Bill was being debated in the House of Lords the issue again raised its head. In the course of his contribution to that debate the Earl of Selborne argued:

“At the present moment food is only contraband of war if destined for the armed forces of the enemy or for a port of naval or military equipment. Our courts have decided what is meant by that. For instance Brest is, and Bordeaux is not, such a port, according to the decisions of our courts; or, if you translate that into terms of English ports, I take it it would mean that Portsmouth is, and Southampton is not, such a port. By article 34 of the Declaration of London ‘a fortified place belonging to the enemy or other place serving as a base for the armed forces of the enemy’ constitutes a destination which would make food contraband. But the report says:

‘It may be a place used as a base of supply for the armed forces of the enemy.’

“Now, I am glad to see that there is no difference between the Government and the opposition as to the interpretation which we should wish to see placed upon the words ‘a base of supply,’ but the question is what interpretation would be placed upon those words by the international prize court of appeal. It is quite unnecessary after what has been said by Lord Beauchamp to repeat our arguments adduced to show how, with the instruction to do all he possibly could to interfere with the supply of food to the United Kingdom, the admiral of an enemy’s fleet would argue inevitably that every port in the United Kingdom was a base of supply. I will not develop that argument, but I will give, with the permission of your lordships, an illustration showing that view is not only likely to be held by the directors of naval operations in some continental countries, but is actually expressed as their view in military text-books at the present moment. General von Coemmerer says in his book, *The Development of Strategic Science*:

‘Railways have above all completely changed the term ‘base.’ One does not base oneself any more on a distinct district which is specially prepared for that object, but upon the whole country, which, owing to the railways, has become a single magazine with separate storerooms.’

“Then again, General Baron von der Goltz says in his book, *The Conduct of War*:

‘In western Europe the dense network of railways allows of reinforcements and supplies being brought up in a few days from the most remote parts of a country. It even obviates the necessity of restricting

the base to one district, the whole area of the State becoming the base.’

“That is the view in military text-books in Germany, and therefore I think it proves that we were justified in directing the attention of His Majesty’s Government and of the country to the immense importance of the interpretation of the words ‘base of supply.’

(*Debates in the British Parliament 1911-1912 on the Declaration of London and the Naval Prize Bill*, published by Government Printing Office, Washington, 1919, pp.631-632)

Lord Desborough, in the same debate made a similar point.

“M. Renault [the author of the official summary of the Declaration that was produced alongside the articles – ED] speaks of port of supply as any port which may supply food to the army, but he goes a great deal beyond that. What he says in this report is that ‘the State is one,’ and therefore if you supply food to a civil department, that civil department could send it on to the army department and therefore the food would be contraband. The Lord Chancellor shakes his head, but I think I am accurate. Monsieur Renault says:

‘The State is one although it necessarily acts through different departments. If a civil department may freely receive foodstuffs or money-

“That is not the question of a port, which the Government is going to define-

‘that department is not the only gainer, but the entire State, including its military administration, gains also, since the general resources of the State are thereby increased. Further, the receipts of the civil department may be considered of greater use to the military administration and directly assigned to the latter. Money or foodstuffs really destined for a civil department may thus come to be used directly for the needs of the army.’

“There is no question of a port here. This is his explanation of whether you may send food or not. You may not consign food to a civil department because, forsooth, they may turn it over to the war department, and therefore, as he says, the whole State might gain. But that is the position in England at present. We have no neutral ports. Directly you come to a question of ports under the Declaration of London, why every ounce of food coming into this country in neutral ships would be absolute contraband. The definition is in article 24:

‘The following articles, susceptible of use in war as well as for purposes of peace, may, without notice, be treated as contraband of war, under the name of conditional contraband.’

“And the first of these things is foodstuffs – the food of the people which we import at the appalling rate of £484 a minute, including tobacco. Here, under this precious article, all this food may, without notice, be declared conditional contraband. Article 34 goes on to show how this conditional contraband is converted into absolute contraband, and one of the reasons is that it may be taken directly to a port which

may be a port of supply for the army. Under the old law, it used to be a port of naval and military equipment – a port, as the noble earl, Lord Selborne, said, of equipment, like Portsmouth. The States who are going to sit in judgment on us, would be bound to construe it as it is put here, not according to what the Lord Chancellor or the Government says it means.” (ibid pp.652-654)

The Lord Chancellor (Lord Loreburn), could only fall back on the argument that the supporters of the Declaration did not place that interpretation on the terminology but acknowledged that it was something that would need to be clarified before any ratification could take place:

“The Lord Chancellor: I am sure the noble lord does not want to mislead the House. I would not presume to set my opinion against his as to construction, but we told you plainly by a written document that our construction is just the same as that acknowledged by the noble earl. We have said we will not bring this into effect unless we get the consent of the other nations to the same construction.” (ibid. pp.652-654)

Lord Loreburn never believed that this was the real object of the wording highlighted by the Earl of Selborne and Lord Desborough. Coming down, as it did, to differences of interpretation all that he could do was to promise that the Government would have the issue addressed and the correct interpretation agreed by all participating nations before they agreed to ratification. The Americans, as determined neutrals in any forthcoming war, shared the position of those advocating the ratification of the Declaration and Sir Edward Grey felt compelled to say, on 3 July 1911, during the debate on the Second Reading of the Naval Prize Bill: -

“If the Declaration were not ratified we should run the risk of seeing food declared absolute contraband; but if it was ratified no country without violating its provisions could treat food in this way.” (Debate on second reading of the Naval Prize Bill, 3 July 1911. Published in *The Times*, 4 July 1911, p.8).

This was, as subsequent history shows, Grey facing both ways - a position made necessary by the predicament of being in a position where he was planning for a war in which Britain would be a belligerent while at the same time not being able to reveal his hand and thereby compelled to adopt a public position based on Britain being a neutral where its food supply would be under threat. As a country that was absolutely dependent upon the importation of its food supplies the concerns of its political representatives for the protection of such supplies had to be addressed in terms that did not reveal the actual methods which Britain would rely upon in the event of a war. What Grey said only had relevance if Britain was a neutral in any forthcoming war but it made no sense if Britain was a belligerent. At this stage in 1911 it suited Grey and his fellow Liberal Imperialists to persist in the illusory role of Britain as a neutral in full knowledge that all bets were off when the real war was declared - a situation confirmed by the fact that the British Government never took the opportunity to ratify the Declaration, thereby, just as Sir Edward Grey predicted, leaving its hands free to declare food destined for Germany as absolute contraband during the First World War while relying on the vast superiority of the Royal Navy (together with the covert use of ‘civilian’ ships) to protect its own food supplies.

(to be continued).

# Travel Permit Card number K13918 – the Person Behind the Number.

by Eamon Dyas

My father experienced life as an immigrant Irish worker in Britain towards the end of World War II. In the early months of 1945 as the Allies began to control events on mainland Europe and the threat from Germany during the final stages of the V2 campaign began to recede the British authorities began to organise a concentrated campaign of rebuilding and reconstruction in the country. Part of this was what was called “Bomb Repair Work”. However, prior to the large scale demobbing of the army there was a dire shortage of workmen in Britain to undertake the necessary work. This was a new development in Britain as there was nothing like the damage to its civil infrastructure resulting from its earlier World War of 1914-18. Consequently, at that time the building industry did not experience anything like the boom which began in the last year of World War II and continued for some years afterwards.

his life up to this time. The closest he had come to the building trade was when, after leaving school at 14, he was apprenticed as a painter and decorator. This only lasted a couple of years before he chucked it in as a result of a row with his “master” (throughout his life he had a problem with what he called “them in charge”). After abandoning his apprenticeship he became a vanboy for McBirney’s department store in O’Connell Street where he taught himself to drive by observing the driver while out on deliveries. With his new skill he joined Ruddell’s Tobacco Company as a delivery van driver in late 1935 and by the time the war broke out he had been promoted to the role of delivery man cum salesman. However, always looking for the main chance, the war provided too much temptation for him and he began to use his access to the company’s tobacco (something akin to gold during the war) in order to enrich himself. After he was married in 1941 he purchased a nice house in a posher area of Drimnagh from his illegal proceeds (which sometimes involved smuggling the stuff across the border at weekends). At 25 years of age life was looking sweet for him but then came the inevitable downfall. His scam was exposed in 1944 and he was forced to sell the house and everything that he and my mother had built up (including their wedding presents), in order to make restitution. Having found it difficult to get other employment in Dublin in the aftermath of his tobacco enterprise the arrival in Dublin in early 1945 of representatives of George Wimpey & Co. offering work in London was a welcome opportunity to rebuild his life. Despite the fact that his wife was about to give birth to their first child and the work meant that he would have to move to London they decided that he had to take the opportunity on offer.

And so it was that in 1945 he travelled to London as an employee of George Wimpey & Co. However, it was no simple matter at this time to get the required documentation. Ireland, although holding Dominion status, was treated as an alien country and any Irish citizen wishing to take up the prospect of work in the UK had to go through a highly complex bureaucratic procedure in order to do so.

He first had to be issued with a Travel Permit Card (Carta Cead Taistil) by the Irish Government and having acquired this on 7 March 1945, then the Travel Permit Card had to be stamped by the United Kingdom Permit Office in Dublin - something he succeeded in doing on 22 March. This stamp confirmed that he was permitted a single journey to travel to the United Kingdom specifically to take up employment with George Wimpey & Co., and no other employer and that he had to travel to take up that employment before 9 April 1945. He seems to have delayed departure until the last moment in the hope that my mother



This need for labour led to a recruitment campaign in Dublin by British based builders eager to employ Irish bricklayers, carpenters, painters, plasterers, and building labourers on schemes such as bomb repair work. Such was the demand that even my father, who at only 5’2” in height and not your typical Irish navvy, was recruited as a building labourer by George Wimpey & Co. He had never done any labouring in

would give birth before his time ran out. This, unfortunately did not happen. Therefore, on 6 April, just three days before his permit expired, the stamp on his Travel Permit Card by the British Immigration Officer indicates his arrival at Holyhead. As he recounted many years later, his arrival at Holyhead was a traumatic experience as he was among a number of men who were randomly removed from the queue and forced to undertake the humiliation of a delousing ordeal. This involved having to strip and apply a type of whitewash before showering in front of an immigration official. If this was not bad enough they also had to contend with a continuous tirade from this individual describing the Irish as a dirty cowardly people who were willing to take advantage of work in a country that they had stabbed in the back. All of this was presumably a reflection of the resentment which certain officials harboured against the Irish on account of Irish neutrality.

But his problems were only beginning. The daughter, whose imminent birth he had delayed leaving Dublin for, was born a few days after he left and died a month later on VE Day, 9<sup>th</sup> May. Because sensitivities regarding infant mortality in those days was not as they are now it was made clear to him by George Wimpey & Co. that a return trip so soon after starting his job would have involved him losing the position. Despite this he made an attempt but as travel was severely disrupted for three days after the VE Day celebrations it proved a futile effort and so he stayed in London and never got to see the baptism or funeral of his first born.

The central conditions imposed by the British authorities on any Irish citizen working in the UK at this time were quite onerous. They included the obligation to report to a designated Police Station any change of personal address, employer's address, or employer's work location (the latter two rarely the same thing in the building trade). It meant that in the thirteen months that he was working in London he was obliged to report to the police on seven occasions as well as several times having to report to Labour Exchanges, as well as the National Registration Office on other occasions. Overall, he was having to report to officialdom, on average, more than once a month for the duration of the period of his work in London.

He was also not permitted to move from one employer to another without the permission of his allocated employer. This was something that was open to abuse as it ensured that employers could, if they so choose, refuse such permission to those workmen who might find alternative employment which paid better. It restricted the free movement of labour in a way which had the effect of suppressing wages. The fact that wages remained high was because the extent of the labour shortage meant that they had to be set high at the initial recruitment stage. After that, once they arrived in Britain, there was no real competition in wages. However, as will be seen, my father did manage to move between employers during his period in London.

Returning to Ireland, which he did for Christmas 1945, was also a troublesome affair. This is what it states on the reverse of the Leave Certificate issued by the authorities as permission to leave:

**“How to Obtain and Use a Leave Certificate to Enable you to Pay a Temporary Visit to Ireland and Return to Great Britain.** (emphasis and underlining as on original document).

If you are ordinarily resident in England, Wales or Scotland you do not need a Leave Certificate at all.

You may use a Leave Certificate if you have come from Ireland for employment since the outbreak of war, and are not ordinarily resident in this country, and have been allowed to land by the Immigration Officer on condition that you register with the Police.

After your employer has agreed to give you leave, you must apply to the Railway Company for a sailing ticket for the day on which you wish to travel. Give them alternative dates if you can. You can get a special form on which to apply from your employer or from the Local Employment Exchange. You must not apply more than four weeks before you wish to travel. When you have got your sailing ticket, take it with your travel permit card to your employer and ask him to fill up and sign this certificate.

Take the signed certificate with your sailing ticket, travel permit card, and National Registration Identity Card to your local Employment Exchange, where it will be checked and stamped, if in order. Your sailing ticket will also be stamped.

Take the certificate with you when you travel and TAKE GREAT CARE NOT TO LOSE IT. You must surrender it to the Immigration Officer at the port in Great Britain from which you leave and he will stamp your travel permit card to show that you are on a temporary visit to Ireland, and do not require a visa for return within one month. If you stay in Ireland beyond the authorised date you will have to apply to the United Kingdom Permit Office in Dublin for a visa before you can come back. Take care to get your sailing ticket for the return journey in good time.”

My father, resentful of his treatment in the aftermath of his daughter's death, managed to move from the employment of George Wimpey & Co. on 5 June 1945. This had to be cleared by the authorities through the issuing of a “UK Ministry of Labour and National Service Essential Work Certificate” where the permission of the existing employer is recorded and authorised. The fact that he took up his new employment on 19 June is indicated by an official stamp on his Travel Permit Card stating “Permission granted for employment as a labourer with W. Fuller & Co., Builders of 11a Kentish Town Road, NW5. Subject to review as necessary.”

The W. Fuller with whom he was now employed was in fact Bill Fuller, a Kerryman who made his fortune in London as a builder during the war. Even at the time my father came across him Bill Fuller was a legend. He had been a wrestler who had moved into the entertainment business before seeing the opportunities offered by the construction industry during the war in London. At the time he employed my father he was also the owner of the Buffalo ballroom on the Kentish Town Road which had a large Irish clientele. Fuller went on to own a chain of other ballrooms including, after the war, the famous Crystal Ballroom in Dublin. However, at this time, his main non-construction business was the Buffalo ballroom which he had expanded after the bombing of Camden Town Tube station in 1941 into a significant venue in north London. My father got to know Fuller well. They were both personalities of the roguish type and both interested in show business. The fact that my father was a very good singer with a prodigious memory capable of accommodating the words and tunes of hundreds of popular songs was also used by Fuller who gave him the opportunity to earn a bit on the side by singing at the Buffalo on the occasional

Saturday night. The Buffalo later became the Electric Ballroom in 1971 with people and groups like Sid Vicious, Phil Lynott, the Clash, Joy Division, U2, and The Smiths performing on its stage. If, in his later years, my father had any idea who these people were he would have been amused that at one time he had shared the same stage with them.

On 26 June, within a week of taking up employment with Fuller my father moved address to 126 Camden Street, not far from Fuller's business. This seems to have been a temporary address, perhaps made possible by Fuller, for on 1 July he moved again to the Grafton Hostel in Tottenham Court Road (on the corner with Warren Street). He remained employed by Bill Fuller for the duration of his time in London and continued to reside at the Grafton Hostel until a week before he left London for good on 10 May 1946. Although he enjoyed his association with Fuller he found life in the Grafton Hostel a bit problematic mainly on account of the fact that from time to time its transient clientele included Orangemen from the north of Ireland. His experience of most of the Protestant workmen from the north was quite positive but there were occasions when those of the more extreme persuasion set out to make life difficult for the Roman Catholic Irish staying in the hostel. Although some incidents relate to nights in the local pub, around the corner in Warren Street, the battle lines of the stories he recounted usually seemed to revolve around the shared bathrooms on each floor. As these were locked with a key, control of the key, which was supposed to remain in the door lock, meant control of the bathroom. It became the practice of some Orangemen to lock the bathrooms and remove the keys early on Sundays to ensure that the Roman Catholics could not wash or shave prior to going to mass on Sunday mornings and many a heave-ho resulted from such incidents.

He managed to revisit the Grafton Hostel in the 1980s during his only return to London. As both of us were nearby in Euston we decided to see if we could find the building. Amazingly, we came across it while it was in the early stages of refurbishment and whatever it had been used for since the war had been stripped back to the extent that some of the features which he remembered were once more revealed including the original lobby and grilled lift gates. We never got to see the bathrooms around which much of his memories of the building revolved but we did have lunch in his local, the Feathers, around the corner in Warren Street. The Grafton Hostel is now the 4-star £150 a night Radisson Edwardian Grafton Hotel.

My father went on to become a staunch trade unionist in Dublin from the late 1940s until the 1970s working successively as a car assembly worker for Summerfields, Lincoln & Nolan, Brittain's, and finally Datsuns. He was thankful of the opportunity which London gave him to rebuild his life on a sounder footing but continued to be a rogue and a singer up to the last. On the night before his death the nurses told me that he had given them a rendition of "Some Enchanted Evening". He died on the 6<sup>th</sup> January 2008 age 91.

## FROM THE ARCHIVES

[A reprint from the Irish Times refers to the experience of Irishmen like John Dyas. It is to be noted that throughout the article, the war is referred to by the Minister as 'the war' and not as the 'emergency' as it is claimed the war was referred to at the time. ]

### October 10th, 1941

**FROM THE ARCHIVES:** As the second World War began its third year in autumn 1941, the Fianna Fáil government restricted emigration amid fears that too many young people were leaving as employment at home dwindled - JOE JOYCE. Mon, Oct 10, 2011.

'OF THE many problems which **the third year of the war** may bring to us, that of unemployment is fundamentally the most serious of them all and may have more permanent consequences on the nation's future,' said Mr. Seán Lemass, Minister for Supplies, addressing a Fianna Fáil meeting in the Catholic Club, Dublin, last night.

He stated that in the four months ending in August last, a total of 17,000 persons went to Britain to work, but said that that figure included migratory workers, who habitually go to Britain for harvest work.

The contraction of employment developed slowly at first, the Minister said, but it was gradually being experienced over an ever-widening field.

Notwithstanding efforts to keep open the channels of supply, these were deteriorating with increasing rapidity, and, unless some big changes occurred in the circumstances affecting this country, a serious crisis might develop.

War time unemployment could strip many homes of the comfort and security won by years of saving, and might reduce the power of recuperation **after the war**.

"It is," said Mr. Lemass, "the primary cause of the new tide of emigration which is now flowing. It can be the cause of social unrest and, therefore, a danger even to our national solidarity."

It had been proposed that the Government should prohibit this emigration. That, if adopted, would represent a very drastic use of authority in the case of **a State which was not at war**.

The State was undoubtedly entitled to command the services of its citizens in times of urgent necessity, but it would be an entirely different matter to restrict the movement of citizens for whose services there was no immediate demand at home.

To obviate any danger of the country's man power becoming so depleted by emigration as to endanger the supply of labour required for the production of food and fuel and other necessary work, the Government had decided to make arrangements whereby the recruitment of workers for employment outside the country would be brought under official supervision and control.

Except in the case of migratory agricultural labourers from Donegal and Mayo, travel permits would not be issued to persons until there had been a specific examination of individual circumstances by a local officer of the Department of Industry and Commerce, and a formal decision given that the applicant had not employment immediately available for him.

It had been arranged with the British authorities that all applications for employment made direct by Irish citizens to the British Ministry for Labour would be referred back here for examination.

---

Site for Athol Books sales:

<https://www.atholbooks-sales.org>



## Koenigsberg in East Prussia

[The following is taken from the website of the erstwhile capital of East Prussia, and birthplace of Immanuel Kant.]

[Koenigsberg website: <http://canitz.org>]

Koenigsberg was the capital of East Prussia and Kant's hometown. Unlike other great destroyed cities it was not rebuilt after WW2. It was built up again as something entirely different. The website describes the history of the city and presents photos of what it used to be. Words from the introduction are reproduced below.]

Arthur "Bomber" Harris, October 1938:

"The aims of the Combined Bomber Offensive ... should be unambiguously stated [as] the destruction of German cities, the killing of German workers, and the disruption of civilized life throughout Germany."

"It should be emphasised that the destruction of houses, public utilities, transport and lives, the creation of a refugee problem on an unprecedented scale, and the breakdown of morale both at home and at the battle fronts by fear of extended and intensified bombing, are accepted and intended aims of our bombing policy. They are not by-products of attempts to hit factories."

It is extremely interesting how those who deeply inside know very well what a horrendous crime was committed have swallowed and digested and now regurgitate all their own WWII propaganda they still need to defend those horrors against the inner voice in themselves. But they have a problem: Those massacres were not committed by a longtime vanished totalitarian regime like the Nazis, those were mass murders by

western nations still claiming to be the keeper of the world's ethical conscience. They think they can put others on trial. That assumption is based on one's own moral bigotry. It is an open wound until honestly processed. The world can take the good example of the Russians. Taking responsibility for Katyn in no way has scratched their international reputation, in contrary, it was seen as an act of honour and dignity. Exactly such an act is what the world is waiting for from those "great victorious nations" of WWII, present superpowers or former empires. Probably it helps to know that 13% of those 600.000 German civilians, annihilated by Winston Churchill and friends were below the age of 10 years. It doesn't hurt to say that killing of 80.000 children and babies was something really bad. Strategic necessity by the way is legally irrelevant. That excuse would render all laws of warfare and international conventions invalid.

There is still a crime of the present time to be prosecuted: all the world asks why those atrocities are completely erased from the minds of those who suffered from them and also their descendants. Instead, Germans torture themselves with alleged eternally lasting collective guilt. Look at "Stockholm Syndrome" and PTSD and remember that there is one German generation which was a target of 3 genocides in one life: the British blockade and famine in 1919 AFTER the end of WW I (800.000 victims), the fire bombings of WWII (600.000) and the expulsions, killings and deliberate starvation during 1945-1947 (17.000.000 of which 4-5 million died)- The result is a pathological traumatic reaction until the trauma is healed, and since this process didn't even start, this trauma will persist. The crime: The trauma is exploited by everyone. Not only by those having pressed € 200 Billion restitutions out of them but also by those misusing the victims' silence and pathologic level of guilt feelings for an alibi to justify their nations' own atrocities, deliberately misinterpreting those symptoms as confessions. However: every trauma creates another one. Its time to think.



Koenigsberg on the Baltic Sea. (Now Kaliningrad)

## **The U.S. military "is in 130 countries. We have 900 bases around the world."**

Ron Paul on Monday, September 12th, 2011 in a Republican presidential debate in Tampa

During the Sept. 12, 2011, Republican presidential debate in Tampa, Rep. Ron Paul, a staunch advocate of limited government and a more modest military footprint, offered a surprising statistic about the reach of the U.S. armed forces.

"We're under great threat, because we occupy so many countries," Paul said. "We're in 130 countries. We have 900 bases around the world. We're going broke. The purpose of al-Qaida was to attack us, invite us over there, where they can target us. And they have been doing it. They have more attacks against us and the American interests per month than occurred in all the years before 9/11, but we're there occupying their land. And if we think that we can do that and not have retaliation, we're kidding ourselves. We have to be honest with ourselves. What would we do if another country, say, China, did to us what we do to all those countries over there?"

That statement includes a lot of different claims, but we're going to focus on just one of them here that a reader asked us to check—that the U.S. military "is in 130 countries. We have 900 bases around the world."

We'll split this into two parts—checking whether the U.S. military has personnel in 130 countries, and whether the U.S. has 900 overseas military bases.

### **Personnel**

For the personnel question, we turned to a Sept. 30, 2010, Pentagon document titled, "Active Duty Military Personnel Strengths by Regional Area and by Country."

We tallied up all the countries with at least one member of the U.S. military, excluding those with personnel deemed to be "afloat." We found U.S. military personnel on the ground in a whopping 148 countries—even more than Paul had said. (There are varying standards for what constitutes a "country," so that may explain the divergence from Paul's number.)

However, we should add a caveat. In 56 of these 148 countries, the U.S. has less than 10 active-duty personnel present. These include such obscure locales as Mongolia, Nepal, Gabon, Togo and Suriname.

By contrast, the U.S. has disclosed only 13 countries outside the United States and its possessions that are host to more than 1,000 personnel. They are: Belgium, Germany, Italy, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom, Japan, Bahrain, Djibouti, South Korea, Iraq, Afghanistan and Kuwait.

In addition, this is a snapshot of the global military footprint, so it may not include all temporary training missions and humanitarian assistance activities. "Such activities are so

pervasive you almost have to wonder how the other 70 countries manage to avoid hosting such operations," said John Pike, the director of [globalsecurity.org](http://www.globalsecurity.org), a national security think tank.

### **Bases**

For this question, we turned to an official Pentagon accounting of U.S. military bases around the nation and the world, the "Base Structure Report, Fiscal 2010 Baseline."

According to this report, the U.S. has 662 overseas bases in 38 foreign countries, which is a smaller number than the 900 bases Paul cited. But here again, the list omits several nations integral to active operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, so it's conceivable that the actual number of sites approaches 900.

The Pentagon "is very reluctant to label anything a 'base' because of the negative political connotations associated with it," said Alexander Cooley, a political scientist at Barnard College and Columbia University who studies overseas bases. "Some of these facilities, such as the Manas Transit Center in Kyrgyzstan, may not be officially counted as 'bases,' but it is the most important U.S. facility in central Asia, staging every U.S. soldier transiting in and out of Afghanistan and conducting refueling operations."

Still, caveats are in order here, too. Of the 662 overseas sites listed—that is, those outside the active war zones—all but 32 of them are either small sites (with a replacement value of less than \$915 million) or sites essentially owned on paper only.

For instance, the sole site listed for Canada is 144 square feet of leased space—equal to a 12-foot-by-12-foot room. That's an extreme case, but other nations on the list—such as Aruba, Iceland, Indonesia, Kenya, Norway and Peru—have just a few U.S. military buildings, many of them leased. Some of the sites are unmanned radio relay towers or other minor facilities. "Most of them are a couple of acres with a cyclone fence and no troops," Pike said.

Cooley said that the "true figure is tough to determine and involves judgment calls about the nature and purpose" of the activities involved. "The fact that host countries often choose not to disclose a U.S. military presence adds to perceptions of a 'secret network' " that is larger than the officially disclosed number of bases.

### **Conclusion**

Given the incomplete figures available from the Pentagon, Paul's topline figures—130 nations, 900 bases—are plausible when active military operations are included.

Still, we think it's worth pointing out that many of the personnel deployments and facilities included in Paul's number are fairly minimal in nature.

### **Source:**

<http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2011/sep/14/ron-paul/ron-paul-says-us-has-military-personnel-130-nation/>

## Mass blinding of Ottoman POWs by the British

The following translation is from a book "*Katran Kazanında Sterilize*" ("*Sterilized in a Tar Cauldron*") written by Ahmet Duru and published by Imge Publications. In the following extract, which uses the diary of a sub-lieutenant, Ahmet Altınay from Karaman, Turkey, the extensive ill-treatment of Ottoman prisoners by Britain is revealed. These soldiers were captured defending Palestine from the Balfour Declaration and held in prison camps in occupied Egypt after the armistice at Mudros.

"In World War I, one hundred and fifty thousand of our soldiers were captured by the British. And some of these soldiers were imprisoned in Seydibesir Useray-i Harbiye Camp near the city of Alexandria in Egypt... In this camp, the Ottoman soldiers of the 16th Division's 48th Regiment who were captured at the Palestine front in 1918 were interned. For two years, until June 12th, 1920, they were subjected to all kinds of torture, oppression, extreme insults and humiliation.

The reason for this inhumane treatment was the Armenians.

The British commanders of the camp, because of the mendacious translations and provocations of Armenian translators who knew Turkish, had become fierce haters of the Turks.

The war was over. Nevertheless, the British decided not to release the Turkish soldiers, even though bad conditions in the camp had killed many of them. This was because the British were brainwashed by Armenian propaganda and were told that in a potential new war they could come up against these soldiers again. The solution was massacre...

Our soldiers, forced by bayonets, were put in disinfection pools with the excuse of wiping out germs. But the chemical, krizol, was added in amounts much larger than normal into the water. Even when they just put in their feet our soldiers got scalded. Despite this the British troops didn't let them get out of the pool and threatened them with rifles if they attempted to.

Our soldiers didn't want to put their heads under the water that reached up to waist level. But then the British started shooting in the air. Our soldiers knelt and put their heads under water for fear of death.

But the ones who got their heads out of the water couldn't see any more. Because their eyes were burned...The resistance of other soldiers who saw what happened to the ones that got out was of no use and fifteen thousand of our men got blinded.

This savagery was discussed in May 25th, 1921, in the Turkish Great National Assembly. The assemblymen Mr. Faik and Mr. Seref revealed that fifteen thousand sons of this country were blinded in Egypt by being put in the "krizol" pool; and wanted the Assembly to make an attempt to get the British physicians, commanders and soldiers who were guilty of this act punished.

Unfortunately the newly founded government had a thousand other problems. Demanding an explanation for this act from the British was easily forgotten."

## Advertisement

Irish Solidarity with Cuba Libre

A Fenian Eyewitness Account Of The First Cuban War Of Independence

Manus O'Riordan

2009

Midway through Cuba's first War of Independence (1868-78), as war correspondent for the New York Herald, the Fenian leader James J. O'Kelly (1843-1916) brought the Cuban fight for freedom to world attention.

As a contribution towards internationalist solidarity and understanding, this SIPTU publication wishes to commemorate both the centenary of its own foundation in 1909 and the 50th anniversary of the 1959 Cuban Revolution.

Primarily consisting of O'Kelly's own vivid and dramatic eyewitness reports from Cuba, it is introduced by an extensive biographical essay from SIPTU's Head of Research, Manus O'Riordan, in which he details and critically evaluates the lengthy political career of James J. O'Kelly: as Fenian leader, as Home Rule MP, and—above all else—as the foremost 19th century exponent of Irish internationalist solidarity with liberation struggles in both Cuba and Africa.

---

Site for Athol Books sales:

<https://www.atholbooks-sales.org>

Find out what's new at

<http://www.atholbooks.org/whatsnew.php>

## DeValera interview with New York Times August First, 1947

[Irish applications to join the UN were rejected several times by the Soviet Union, using its veto for some 10 years. This is Eamon de Valera's response on 31 July 1947, given to the Dublin correspondent of the *New York Times* and reprinted in the *Irish Times* of the next day.

The NYT title was "DeValera denies Russian charges, Premier says he is not disturbed by prospect of ban in the UN."]

IRELAND IS not disturbed at the prospect of being refused membership of the United Nations Organisation through the exercise of the Russian veto.

This was made clear to the Dublin correspondent of the *New York Times* by Mr. de Valera in an interview yesterday.

"The decision to apply for membership," Mr. de Valera said, "was taken by the Irish Government with no little misgiving and only because Ireland wished to play her full part in every effort to secure international co-operation and world peace. The reasons given by the Russian representative for opposing Ireland's admission are obviously a pretence.

"The statement that Ireland expressed sympathy with the Axis is simply untrue. The Irish people are genuinely a democratic people, who, while they do not desire to interfere with the manner in which other peoples organise their social life or govern themselves, dislike for their own part and fundamentally, dictatorships and dislike them whatever their variety.

"As for Ireland's attitude during the war, Ireland remained neutral, but she would have defended herself to the best of her ability if attacked.

"Russia did not enter the war until she was attacked and, for almost two years preceding her entry, Russia assisted Germany in accordance with the terms of a trade agreement which she made with Germany shortly before the war. Moreover, the immediate preparatory step to Germany's attack on Poland on September 1st, 1939, was the conclusion of the famous Non-Aggression Pact between Russia and Germany, signed by Mr. Molotov [Soviet Foreign Minister] and Herr Ribbentrop [German Foreign Minister] on August 23rd - i.e., one week before the war broke out. That agreement was interpreted by everyone at the time as giving Germany a free hand to go ahead.

"The Russian view of the qualities required in a nation for entry into the United Nations Organisation is a strange one.

"If Russia, which attacked Finland, Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, can be regarded as qualifying as a peace-loving nation, it is difficult to see how a nation which kept the peace and scrupulously fulfilled all its obligations as a member of the League of Nations can rightly be regarded as not qualifying—but, then," said Mr. de Valera, smiling, "we have no diplomatic relations with Russia.

"Russia's action in this matter is clearly an abuse of power and it is obvious that no organisation in which such action is possible will command the peoples' respect or can long endure."

## Advertisement

### *The Great War And The Forced Migration Of Armenians*

By Kemal Çiçek

Athol Books 2011

"The study of the history of the Turks and Armenians in World War I has suffered from an excess of unsupported assertion. *The Great War and The Forced Migration of Armenians* corrects the record with research that considers all sides of the issue and, more important, bases its conclusions on facts rather than ideology.

"Kemal Çiçek carefully analyzes the various claims that have until now been largely accepted without proper scholarly scrutiny. Utilizing Ottoman, European, and American sources, he shows what actually happened during the relocation of the Ottoman Armenians.

"*The Great War and The Forced Migration of Armenians* will become a cornerstone of the history of the Turks and Armenians in World War I. In the future, anyone who studies that history with an open mind will not be able to ignore Çiçek's detailed and convincing analysis."

Justin McCarthy

Professor of History

University of Louisville

---

## Ron Paul: Befriend Iran

### By Associated Press

November 07, 2011 "AP" -- WASHINGTON - Republican presidential hopeful Ron Paul says "offering friendship" to Iran, not sanctions, would be a more fruitful to achieving peace with Tehran.

The Texas congressman says fears about Iran's nuclear program have been "blown out of proportion." He says tough penalties are a mistake because, as he says was the case in Iraq, they only hurt the local population and still paved a path to war.

When asked on "Fox News Sunday" what he would do to deter Iran's alleged nuclear ambitions, Paul said "maybe offering friendship to them."

Paul's remarks put him at odds with both the Bush and Obama administrations; U.S. policy has relied heavily on sanctions and diplomacy to try to convince Tehran to abandon its atomic program. Iran says its nuclear program is peaceful.