

Irish Foreign Affairs

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“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

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Sanctions

Editorial

Sponsored by President Bill Clinton, Madeleine Albright achieved the highest U.S. office ever achieved by a female, prior to Condoleezza Rice and Hilary Clinton. In 1997 Albright became Secretary of State, having served as Ambassador to the United Nations from 1993. Being foreign-born she was not herself eligible for the Presidency.

In 1996 she was asked on the 60 Minutes news programme: “We have heard that half a million children have died [*as a result of the sanctions against Iraq*]. That’s more children than died in Hiroshima. Is the price worth it?” Albright replied “We think the price is worth it.”

Like “fascist” or “war-crime”, the word “terrorist” is flung around so much that it is hard to know what it actually means. One man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter, so to speak. But it is still possible to observe and describe actual facts and actions.

Actions causing harm or injury or death to categories of “innocent” non-combatants, such as unarmed, surrendered, imprisoned or retired ex-combatants, or potential future combatants, children, the sick, the elderly or other uninvolved civilians who can’t resist or fight back. The effect is sometimes called “collateral damage” whenever it is the unintended or accidental result of engaging with armed opponents.

In contrast there is the policy of intentionally harming, injuring or killing such people, instead of combatants, and regardless of whether an actual state of war exists. How can such policy be described and evaluated?

In his final conquest of Gaul (roughly the same as modern France), Julius Caesar besieged Vercingetorix at Alesia. When food ran out Vercingetorix sent the women and children, 180,000 of them it is said, out of his fortified camp so that they would not starve to death with his fighters. But instead of relieving or releasing them Caesar forced them to stay in the

no-mans-land between the Gaulish and Roman lines until they all died.

Perhaps this speeded up the defeat and surrender of Vercingetorix and saved the lives of Roman soldiers and helped to pacify Gaul; just like the atom-bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

At a crucial stage in the first siege of Limerick (1690), the women of the city helped the defending soldiers to repel King William III and his army by throwing stones and bottles at them from the city walls. Though technically civilian maybe they could be described as combatants and “legitimate targets”.

If it is reprehensible to conduct operations against civilians during war, what can be said when there is no war? Rudyard Kipling described the threat to civilian food supplies:

*Oh, where are you going to, all you Big Steamers,
With England’s own coal, up and down the salt seas?
“We are going to fetch you your bread and your butter,
Your beef, pork, and mutton, eggs, apples, and
cheese.” ...*

*Then what can I do for you, all you Big Steamers,
Oh, what can I do for your comfort and good?
“Send out your big warships to watch your big waters,
That no one may stop us from bringing you food.”*

In the course of the Great War the food blockade was effective against German non-combatants. When military combat ended it was even more effective, killing hundreds of thousands of the most vulnerable German civilians. This must have provided a potent lesson to the survivors on how non-combatants are treated by winners. In the next war the Warsaw

and Lodz ghettos were similarly put on starvation rations in advance of actually killing the inhabitants.

to our security, forty million Mexicans will die laughing” .

When Hamas was elected in Gaza an advisor to the Israeli Prime Minister described their policy. “The idea,” he said, “is to put the Palestinians on a diet, but not to make them die of hunger.” Israel reduced food supply to the blockaded area to less than half of the amount needed for bare survival.

While the blockade continues, sheer survival of the Cuban population requires a system of rations of rice, beans and other basics, along with close government protection and management of whatever industry can endure the blockade. And the relentless hostility of the U.S. ensures the popularity of the Cuban government which shields and protects its people from this never-ending aggression.

The longest-lasting sanctions against civilians is the blockade of Cuba by the U.S., imposed fifty one years ago when the two countries were not at war with each other. The sanctions continue even after the Cold War was won by the U.S. more than twenty years ago. Year after year this aggression against innocent civilians is condemned at the United Nations, with only Israel and the Marshall Islands supporting the U.S. action.

So, rather than undermining state regulation of the Cuban economy, the U.S. sanctions actually entrench it.

U.S. diplomat Ronald Godard dismissed the most recent U.N. condemnation, saying that while Washington welcomed some of the recent changes in Cuba, the country “still has one of the most restrictive economic systems in the world.” No suggestion of any military threat by Cuba to the U.S., just disagreement with economic policy. When President Kennedy urged Mexico to back the U.S. blockade on military grounds, a Mexican diplomat said: “If we publicly declare that Cuba is a threat

After initially keeping on-side with the Muslim rulers of northern India, Britain eventually undertook modernisation and subversion. As advisor to the Governor-General of India, the leading progressive Thomas Babington Macaulay was prime mover in this.

A backlash occurred in the form of frequent revolts by Wahhabi militants. When the 1857 “Mutiny” of the Indian Army took place, even the Hindus turned to the Muslim Emperor in Delhi. *The Indian Muslims*, a 19th century book by WW Hunter, a British civil servant in India, provides a study of Muslim resistance, including the complex and sophisticated religious rules for jihad.

One of the Judaeo-Christian Ten Commandments is “Thou shalt not kill.” St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas developed “Just War” rules for military combat. *Jus ad bellum* provides conditions for engaging in war, while *Jus in bello* gives rules for the conduct of war. For instance, civilians must never be a target of war.

But it seems that the Enlightenment has finally got rid of all constraints on war, religious or otherwise.

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France's Greatest Irishman

A review of *De Gaulle the Ruler: 1945 – 1970* by Jean Lacouture

by John Martin

De Gaulle the Ruler: 1945 – 1970 by Jean Lacouture, published 1993, a review.

About ten years ago there was an opinion poll in Britain and France concerning the greatest person in each country. Winston Churchill came out on top in Britain – ahead of William Shakespeare, Isaac Newton and Elizabeth the First – while de Gaulle was the most popular choice in France.

Churchill and de Gaulle were, of course, contemporaries. But while Churchill himself—as distinct from his legacy—was largely a spent force by 1955, de Gaulle remained active in politics until April 1969.

One may or may not agree with de Gaulle, but it would be impossible to deny his claims to an honoured place in the pantheon. It is almost impossible to imagine what France would have been like without him. Indeed his greatness was tacitly accepted by some of his most implacable critics such as François Mitterrand who remained faithful to his legacy.

Lacouture begins this story in April 1944 with de Gaulle's "coronation" at Notre Dame Cathedral in the midst of bullets flying. The General had come to personify the hopes and aspirations of a France ravaged by war and military defeat. The author identifies three elements to de Gaulle's political orientation: a) animosity towards the Allies b) mistrust of the Resistance and c) confidence in the support of the masses.

He perceived the Americans and British as attempting to undermine him—and therefore France!—at every turn. He also distrusted the Soviet Union.

Around the time of Hitler's suicide in April 1945 Heinrich Himmler sent a message to de Gaulle urging him not to put himself in the hands of either the Anglo-Saxons (who will treat him as a satellite) or of the Soviets who will liquidate him. De Gaulle had no hesitation in rejecting Himmler's desperate overture, but he confided with colleagues that there was "an element of truth" in the picture that Himmler had sketched.

At every opportunity de Gaulle attempted to assert the independence of France. He demanded allied military aid for the French Army and was prepared to countermand allied military tactics when the interests of France were at stake. In particular he refused to allow General Leclerc to withdraw from Strasbourg at the end of 1944 when the Germans looked like they were making a counter attack. There is no doubt that he exasperated the Allied leaders. Stalin remarked to Roosevelt that he found de Gaulle: "unsubtle and devoid of realism in his judgement of the contribution of France to victory." Be that as it may, he managed to elbow his way to the top table. At the Yalta Conference to which France was not admitted, she was allowed to join that exclusive club of permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. She was also given an

occupation zone in Germany as well as being part of the Allied Control Commission, which was the military government there. The author suggests that in this instance Britain did some of France's bidding because she wanted a counterweight to US and Soviet power.

De Gaulle's overriding political objective was to restore the authority of the State. After Vichy the State had collapsed. There was no civil war in France because no element in French society was prepared to rally to the cause of Vichy. Vichyism was an accommodation to defeat and therefore had no function once the Germans had left.

When de Gaulle occupied the seat of power he called a meeting of the Resistance leaders. He asked each of them individually what they did before the war. He then told them to go back to being carpenters, teachers etc. With very few exceptions they meekly accepted.

After he came to power he ordered the Cross of Lorraine flag (the symbol of the Resistance) to be taken down from all public buildings because the "Resistance" and "Free France" had to give way to "France". He also disbanded the Resistance militias. There could be no rival to the State. De Gaulle refused to declare a Republic on the grounds that the Republic had not ceased to exist. On the other hand, he ignored Marshall Pétain's offer of a formal transfer of power on the grounds that Pétain's government had not been legitimate.

The Communists were given a couple of cabinet seats in government, which under represented their political strength in terms of votes. The effect was to implicate them in the State, which was being constructed by de Gaulle.

Another factor which worked in de Gaulle's favour was the close relationship that the French Communist Party had with the Soviet Union. In particular, its leader Maurice Thorez had deserted the French Army in 1939 and sat out the rest of the war in Moscow. Stalin feared a "reversal of alliances"; that the Anglo-Saxons would join up with the forces of the Reich and move eastwards. In Stalin's view they must not be given the pretext of a political victory of the Reds in France. The significance of Thorez's return from Moscow was that the French Communist Party had chosen the State in preference to the Revolution.

Lacouture comments that Thorez believed that de Gaulle's France was the ally of the USSR and:

"The strength of the French State came before serving the masses. Unity, production, independence from the English-speaking Allies, even the temporary maintenance of the Empire—in these aims which Thorez imposed on the party, the Communist leader was in agreement with de Gaulle".

The implication of the foregoing seems to be that Thorez's position was somehow a betrayal of communist principles.

But “the strength of the French State” is not incompatible with “serving the masses”. Indeed it could be said that without a strong State there was no means of “serving the masses”. And if de Gaulle was not exactly an ally of the Soviet Union his subsequent political career showed that he was capable of following an independent foreign policy, which was often in conflict with that of the United States.

In my view the Communist Party’s reformist orientation was reasonable in the circumstances. The Communist Party did not have the military strength to seize power. A revolutionary situation did not exist after the Liberation. As Lacouture himself points out:

“Charles de Gaulle was to show that in France the nation tends spontaneously to pour into the mould of the State, which has seniority over it.”

When de Gaulle acceded to power in 1944 the infrastructure of the country was severely damaged and the Germans were still occupying parts of France. It was not until October 1945 that a democratic mandate for the government could be secured. The people were given the opportunity to vote on two questions. The first was the setting up of a Constituent Assembly; the second proposed limiting the powers of that Assembly. The first question was a foregone conclusion and indeed elections for the proposed assembly were held on the same day as the referendum to set it up!

The second question was more controversial. De Gaulle wanted a Parliament with limited powers:

“As I saw it the State must have a head, that is, a leader in whom the nation could see beyond its own fluctuations, a man in charge of essential matters and the guarantor of its fate. It was also necessary that this executive must not originate in Parliament.”

It could be said that this view was self-serving since there was only going to be one candidate for Head of State: de Gaulle himself. However, there was a widespread belief that a parliamentary system had led to stagnation since no political party could form a government on its own. The former Socialist Prime Minister Léon Blum supported de Gaulle’s proposal.

The French Communist Party opposed the limitation of parliamentary powers since it had no prospect of winning a presidential election, but was nevertheless the largest party in the State. At the parliamentary election it received 26.1%; the MRP (*Mouvement Républicain Populaire*) won 25.6% and the Socialists 24.6%.

96% voted for the setting up of a Constituent Assembly, but thanks to a vigorous campaign by the Communist Party the result of the referendum on limiting the powers of the Constituent Assembly was less decisive. 66% supported the limitation of its powers.

At the time de Gaulle concluded:

“The overwhelming majority of the French people is socialist inclined, though it is not communist. France is on the left. She

is social or socialist. She is profoundly democratic, perhaps more democratic than parliamentary.”

The MRP (*Mouvement Républicain Populaire*), which was the second largest party, was not a right wing party. It supported de Gaulle, but de Gaulle was not a member of it since he considered himself above party politics. He thought that the MRP should have been a conservative party, but that it was, in his opinion, closer to “humanist socialism”.

Lacouture makes the point that de Gaulle had a cordial relationship with the Socialist Party or SFIO (*Section Française de l’Internationale Ouvrière*). In a famous speech in his hometown of Lille in October 1945 he outlined his economic policies, which in today’s terms could be described as communist:

“What we want is to harness in common all that we possess on this earth and, to do this, there is no other way than what is called the planned economy. We want the State to plan the economic effort of the entire nation. To the benefit of all and to do so in such a way as to improve the life of every Frenchman and Frenchwoman. At the point at which we find ourselves it is no longer possible to accept those concentrations of interest that are called in the world, trusts. The collectivity, that is to say the State, must take direction of the great sources of the common wealth and supervise certain other activities without, of course, excluding those great levers in human activity, initiative and fair profit.”

De Gaulle excluded the Communist Party from certain cabinet positions. His objection was on the grounds that its allegiance was to a foreign power rather than opposition to its economic policies, as the following famous speech makes clear:

“Much as I was disposed to associate the men of the Party in question broadly in the economic and social work of the government, I did not believe it possible to entrust them with any of the three levers controlling foreign policy, namely: the diplomacy that expresses it, the army that sustains it and the police that protects it.”

De Gaulle was quite happy to let Pierre Mendès France the Socialist leader run the economy. However, a conflict arose over the socialist leader’s policies of austerity. René Pleven, the Finance Minister, favoured less budgetary restraint. The matter was resolved at a meeting with de Gaulle. Pleven took 20 minutes to present his case, whereas Mendès France gave a three hour lecture. De Gaulle swore that as long as he lived he would never again sit through three hours of economics. Not long afterwards Mendès France tendered his resignation. It was initially refused but he eventually felt that he had to leave the government.

Lacouture says that the Communists were also opposed to austerity, but the evidence for this is inconclusive. For example, Maurice Thorez, who was in charge of the public sector, opposed a strike of public sector workers because in such circumstances “to go on strike would be a crime against the nation”. The socialists supported it.

Lacouture suggests that the attitude of the respective parties was influenced by the strikers themselves, who were office

employees and middle management and tended to support the Socialists rather than the Communists.

There was a wave of nationalisations under this government. Only two banks—Rothschild and Paribas—remained in private hands. Pleven wanted an Alsatian banker adversely affected by a measure in the general interest to receive some distinction. But de Gaulle was uncompromising:

“Is the Minister of Finance suggesting that when we shut the brothels, we should hand out the *Légion d’Honneur* to the pimps?”

Apart from the economy, the most pressing domestic issue was the question of war crimes committed under the previous regime. De Gaulle described the emotions of post war France as follows:

“60,000 had been executed and more than 200,000 deported of whom a bare 50,000 survived. Furthermore, 35,000 men and women had been condemned by Vichy tribunals; 15,000 officers degraded under suspicion of being in the Resistance. Now resentment was beyond control. The Government’s duty was to keep a cool head, but to pass the sponge over so many crimes and abuses would have meant to leave a monstrous abscess to infect the country forever. Justice must be done.”

These figures are exaggerations but served their purpose in making a clear break between Vichy and the Liberation forces.

De Gaulle was a restraining force and liberally used the right of pardon: two thirds of death sentences that crossed his desk received a reprieve.

But the writer Francois Mauriac was less forgiving of the Liberation:

“...the purge was as a result of a lie and flagrant injustice. The lie consisted in denying the evident legality (I am not saying the legitimacy) of Vichy. Those who followed its political orders ought all therefore (traitors, denouncers, and torturers apart) to benefit at the very least from mitigating circumstances.

“The injustice lay in the emergency courts. It was a useless injustice since hostilities were still continuing and courts martial would have been sufficient to the task. It was a stupid injustice because it played the Communists’ game and provided them with a weapon that they used in an appalling way. At that time, in masterly fashion whatever one says, General de Gaulle deprived them of all others but he left them that one.”

The French Empire

Whatever about domestic issues, there was never any debate about foreign policy: that was the exclusive domain of de Gaulle. After obtaining power he tried a rapprochement with Moscow, but the British and Americans had already done so many deals that France had very little to offer.

He also tried to preserve French imperial influence, with mixed results. As a result of her defeat in 1940 the French presence in Indo-China was diminished. The Japanese had set

up governments declared to be “independent” in various capitals. Lacouture admits that in fact many of these Japanese sponsored governments were more independent than is generally admitted.

Admiral Decoux (a Pétain appointee) advised de Gaulle to leave Japan alone. In hindsight the General’s anti Japanese stance was a mistake. America did not defend French interests as a result and they lost sympathy with the native populations.

De Gaulle’s schemes for what became Vietnam did not meet with success. His plan was to divide the area into three, reflecting old imperial aims rather than current political realities.

De Gaulle cultivated Prince Vinh San as a potential leader of Vietnam. Ten days after Vinh San met de Gaulle his plane disappeared without trace. De Gaulle believed that this was the work of the British Secret service.

In the Middle East de Gaulle believed that the British were fomenting Arab nationalism against French imperial interests. In April 1945, three French battalions were sent to Syria to suppress an uprising. By the end of May 1945 1,000 Syrians had died in the uprising. De Gaulle was outraged that Britain objected and that the matter was raised in the House of Commons.

It was bad enough presiding over imperial retrenchment, but what really rankled with de Gaulle was leaving the field to another imperial power. Perhaps unrealistically he thought the United Nations might solve this problem:

“The day would soon come when a functioning United Nations would assume the responsibility the League of Nations entrusted to France in Syria and Lebanon. We would then be justified in removing the last vestiges of our authority from the Levant, without having abandoned this area to any other power. I did not doubt that the agitation supported in the Levant by our former allies would spread throughout the entire Middle East to the detriment of these sorcerer’s apprentices, and that eventually the British and Americans would pay dearly for the enterprise they had launched against France.”

De Gaulle’s view of other colonies was as follows:

“We mustn’t let North Africa slip between our fingers as we are liberating France.”

Nevertheless he was realistic enough to recognise that the two victors in the war—the United States and the Soviet Union—had made the destruction of the old colonial system an article of faith. He was also aware that North African troops had spilt blood for France’s liberation. There was a link between bloodshed and rights acquired.

The suppression of the Algerian uprising had led to tens of thousands being killed in May 1945. The Liberation was not anti-imperialist.

We can only speculate as to how France would have dealt with its colonies if de Gaulle had remained at the helm, but he resigned in January 1946 over what he thought was an encroachment of his powers. He claimed that the “exclusive regime of parties” had reappeared.

Lacouture thinks that that this was a miscalculation and that de Gaulle expected the French Constituent Assembly to reject his resignation. However, it proved to be the beginning of a 12 year period in the political wilderness. Nevertheless he claimed that his period in office had been successful. Among his achievements were:

- a) extension of social insurance to all salaried workers.
- b) revision of farm tenancy, which facilitated ownership of the land.
- c) setting up of factory committees which “freed the workers from the role of instruments to which they had hitherto been confirmed”.

The Communist Party was quick to seize the opportunity. Maurice Thorez noted:

“... he [i.e. de Gaulle – JM] considers the experiment has not succeeded. We would go as far as to say: will a formula that has not succeeded with de Gaulle succeed without de Gaulle?”

The Communist Party in alliance with the Socialists sought to change the Constitution in favour of a parliamentary system. But their referendum proposal was rejected by 53% to 47%.

Nevertheless the departure of de Gaulle had shifted the balance of power in favour of Parliament. De Gaulle’s successor could not have had the same prestige. Vincent Auriol (SFIO) took over de Gaulle’s responsibilities initially, but was then vetoed by the Communists. Félix Gouin (another Socialist) was then appointed. The key point is that the President was elected by the Parliament.

This was complete anathema to de Gaulle. At the time his view was as follows:

“The present system in which rigid, opposed parties, divide up power among themselves, must therefore be replaced by another, in which the executive power proceeds from the country and not from the parties, and in which each insoluble conflict is settled by the people itself”.

It is interesting that the Communist Party did not feel that it could form a government with the Socialists even though that was possible. Thorez preferred a three party coalition which included the MRP “for reasons of international, financial, and economic policy.” This reflected Stalinist orthodoxy, which urged the communist parties of Western Europe to adopt a reformist road to socialism.

De Gaulle had departed from the centre of power, but he hung like a spectre over French politics. In 1947 a new Gaullist party emerged called the *Rassemblement du Peuple Français* (RPF). As well as being a political party, which opposed the power of political parties its distinctive characteristic was its anti communism. De Gaulle made a number of speeches criticising the Communist Party without mentioning it by name. This was unprecedented since the French Communist Party had such prestige at the time. His grounds for criticism were not its economic policies but its allegiance to a foreign power. He referred to the party as “separatist”.

At the local elections in October 1947 the RPF won a massive 40% of the vote. It was not just a case of people voting

for the party, there was a massive influx of members to the new party. Lacouture gives some interesting statistics on party membership in October 1947:

RPF	400,000
PCF (the Communist Party)	500,000

The combined membership of the MRP and the SFIO (the socialist party) was less than 400,000.

Lacouture thinks that the membership of the RPF, unlike the PCF, was drawn from a relatively apolitical section of the population.

The RPF was never to reach the heights of the October 47 local elections. It became involved in street riots against the PCF, which alarmed its potential supporters. In the 1951 parliamentary election its vote dropped to 22%, which was less than the Communist vote of 26%. De Gaulle expressed satisfaction with the result, but Lacouture suggests that the General hardly returned to politics in order to finish “a brilliant second to Maurice Thorez”.

Jacques Soustelle – a close confidant of de Gaulle who later split with him over Algeria – had a much more realistic assessment of the result:

“Having failed to win all, we were in danger of losing everything.”

This is the classic weakness of a revolutionary party in a democratic society and was also a problem for the Communist Party. In order to implement its programme it must have overwhelming support. In the absence of such support it is in danger of withering on the vine and reducing itself to irrelevance. Such was the fate of the RPF within a few years.

Algeria

The RPF experiment had enabled de Gaulle to engage again with the French public but he remained out of power. It must have seemed that the Fourth Republic was settling down to a parliamentary system in which there was no way back for de Gaulle. But the appearance of stability was about to be shattered in 1958 over Algeria.

The Algerian crisis threatened to culminate in a military coup d’état in mainland France. Lacouture describes the plans of one of the insurrectionists, General Jouhaud, as follows:

“Two regiments of paratroops from Algeria and two formations of paratroops stationed in the South-West of mainland France were to be assembled at intervals of a few hours in the Paris region. With the complicity or passivity of the police and CRS, the paratroops were to occupy the Hotel de Ville, the prefecture of police, the regional centre of the postal service, the Eiffel Tower, the studios of French radio and television, the National Assembly, the Foreign Ministry, the office of the President of the Council”.

In response to the crisis there was a demonstration of Republican defence in which between 150,000 and 200,000 attended. It was led by Albert Gazier, socialist Minister of

information, Pierre Mendès France, François Mitterrand, Edouard Daladier, André Philip, and the Communist leader Waldeck Rochet.

But could a demonstration prevent a military *coup d'état*? It was widely believed that there was only one man who could retrieve the situation. President René Coty invited de Gaulle to save the Republic.

De Gaulle placed himself above the various factions. His analysis was as follows:

“The army only rebels when it is frustrated of its natural instinct to obey. If there is no government, the army will seize power in Algiers. And seeing there is no longer a State, I shall seize power in Paris, in order to save the Republic.”

In another speech he elaborated:

“The degradation of the State inevitably brings with it the distancing of the associated peoples, disturbance in the fighting forces, national dislocation, loss of independence. For twelve years, France, in the grip of problems too severe to be solved by the regime of parties, has embarked on this disastrous process.

“Not so long ago the country, in its depths, trusted me to lead it in its entirety to its salvation.

“Today, with the trials that face it once again, let it know that I am ready to assume the powers of the Republic.”

Was this a dictatorship? A parliamentary delegation accused de Gaulle of precisely this. His response was:

“Well if Parliament follows you, I shall have no alternative but let you have it out with the paratroops, while I go back into retirement and shut myself up with my grief.”

In the event de Gaulle was awarded full powers for six months and the army insurrection was called off. The Fourth Republic was liquidated without a shot being fired.

De Gaulle's new powers were ratified by a substantial parliamentary majority, but there were a few notable dissenters. Pierre Mendès France voted against the investiture because he could not “accept a vote under the threat of an insurrection and a military uprising.”

Maître Tixier-Vignancour, an old supporter of Marshall Pétain, remarked:

“I never thought that I would be asked to delegate my constituent powers twice in my life and that the man who was asking me the second time was he who had punished me for having done so the first. “

Lacouture comments that this time it was different, that there was “no foreign army occupying national territory”. But it is not easy to say how submitting to the *threat* of a domestic military coup is morally superior to submitting to an *actual* foreign occupation.

Although the Fourth Republic had collapsed, de Gaulle appointed many of its personages in the new Government such as Pierre Pflimlin and Guy Mollet. There were only three committed Gaullists in the cabinet.

Following his investiture in May 1958 de Gaulle set about establishing a new Constitution. His Constitutional Commission didn't take too long to report. It was largely based on a speech de Gaulle had made in Bayeux in June 1946. It re-established the powers of the President against parliament and the parties.

The new Constitution was submitted to the people in September 1958. The MRP which had evolved into France's Christian Democratic Party campaigned for a “yes” vote, while the Communist Party urged a “no” vote. All the other political parties were split. While most of the opponents of the Constitution denounced de Gaulle, Jean Paul Sartre in *Les Temps Modernes* reserved his ire for the people:

“They are frogs who are asking for a king”.

The referendum was passed with a 79% yes vote. Significantly, the number of “no” votes was about a million short of the Communist Party vote. The President was given increased powers, but curiously there was little debate on how he should be elected. De Gaulle was chosen by an electoral college of elected representatives for a 7 year term. It was not until 1965 that the President was elected by universal suffrage.

The first task was to resolve the Algerian crisis. Three quarters of de Gaulle's supporters were against self-determination for Algeria. It was a measure of his greatness that de Gaulle went against his supporters in order to end the crisis in a decisive manner.

He would have preferred Algeria to remain as part of France or at least retain close ties with the mother country. He tried to seek out “moderate” elements, but ultimately resigned himself to negotiating with the FLN (Front de Libération Nationale).

The negotiations for Algerian independence were concluded in 1962 and ratified by a referendum in France which was passed by 90%.

The Right assumed that de Gaulle on coming to power would re-establish imperial dominance and therefore experienced his actions as a betrayal. There were a number of assassination attempts against him in the early 1960s. Even to this day de Gaulle remains a hate figure for the extreme right.

Lacouture makes the point that the Right had no grounds for feeling betrayed; that in numerous speeches before 1958 de Gaulle had made clear that the attempt to suppress rebellions in the colonies would distract France from actions on Continental Europe.

Franco-German Alliance

One of the first foreign policy initiatives of de Gaulle was a meeting with Adenauer in September 1958. The meeting was considered a great success. Lacouture comments:

“He [de Gaulle- JM] knew that he had obtained nothing from Adenauer that would not be at the expense of the British. This did not displease him.”

De Gaulle took it for granted that Britain wanted to disrupt political development on the continent. He saw the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), which was thought up by Reginald Maudling, as an attempt by Britain "to drown the European community".

Lacouture says de Gaulle believed that:

"The history of Europe was a matter of British manoeuvres to divide the continent and that its future could therefore only reproduce this schema, aggravated by London's collusion with the "hegemonic" United States."

He quotes de Gaulle as follows:

"Having failed from without to prevent the birth of the Community, they (the British) now planned to paralyze it from within. "

De Gaulle saw the Franco-German axis as a key element in European development. In May 1962 he made his position clear:

"There is an interdependence between France and Germany. On that interdependence depends the immediate security of the two peoples. One has only to look at the map to see this. On that interdependence depends any hope of uniting Europe in the political field as also in the defence or economic fields. On that interdependence depends, consequently, the destiny of Europe as a whole."

In the negotiations for greater European unity (the Fouchet plan) the French were exasperated by the Dutch and Belgians, who wanted greater integration and power to supra national institutions as well as insisting on British membership of the EEC. Apparently, they did not see the obvious contradiction.

Such was French concern in 1962 that de Gaulle's foreign minister Couve de Murville asked Adenauer, if the other members of the 6 persisted in a negative position, would the Federal Republic agree to conclude the political union envisaged with France alone? The Chancellor gave his consent, adding that if the others really did not understand the need for a union, we would have done everything necessary to enlighten them.

In 17 January 1963 de Gaulle declared:

"The Franco-German entente was the very foundation of the foreign policy of France."

However, there was a weakness in the Franco-German alliance. Adenauer wanted to retain the link with America as security against the Soviets. De Gaulle, on the other hand, saw the Franco-German alliance as a means of being independent of America.

Nevertheless Adenauer in 1963 wanted to sign a solemn Franco-German treaty that would bind his successors and be the final important act of his political life.

This was met with resistance in Germany; in particular from the Anglophile Mayor of Berlin, Willy Brandt. There was also

displeasure in London which had just received de Gaulle's refusal of its application to join the European community. Harold Macmillan's reaction was noted in his diary of 28/1/63:

"Our whole policy, external and internal, is destroyed. French domination in Europe is now a new, alarming fact."

There was also opposition within France. Jean Monnet boasted of his role in watering down the text.

On his last visit to Adenauer in July 1963 the General had to accept the political reality. Referring to a line from Victor Hugo he said:

"Treaties are like girls and roses; they don't last long".

To which Adenauer replied:

"I have read somewhere that roses and girls soon fade. Girls perhaps. But you see I know something of roses and the plants that have the most thorns are the most resistant. The Rhöndorf roses survived the winter brilliantly. The friendship between France and Germany is like a rose that will always produce buds and flowers."

The Americans were alarmed. John F. Kennedy's trip to Berlin, famous for his "Ich bin ein Berliner" speech, was an attempt to undermine the Franco-German alliance by emphasising Cold War realities.

The Cold War

The United States did not hesitate to use the Soviet threat to keep her allies in line. However de Gaulle was impervious to this.

At a meeting in the late 1950s with de Gaulle, John Foster Dulles, American Secretary of State, presented his Manichean view of the world, divided between western liberals and communists. He was astonished when de Gaulle replied that the ideas of nationhood were pre-eminent and they counted much more than the ideological contradictions between Marxism-Leninism and capitalism.

French initiatives in 1964-66 such as the recognition of the People's Republic of China and leaving NATO had left Adenauer's successor Ludwig Erhard aghast.

Although France left NATO in 1966 the catalyst may have occurred at a meeting in September 1958 between de Gaulle and NATO's military leadership. General Norstad in the presence of his Allied General Staff made an extremely brilliant exposition of the disposition of NATO troops in France. De Gaulle congratulated him and asked the American general to tell him the locations of nuclear weapons in France and secondly, what their targets were.

"I'm afraid I cannot answer those questions unless we are alone," said Norstad.

"Very well", said de Gaulle. The entourage of the two generals left.

“Well”?

“Well, General, I’m afraid I can’t answer your question.”

“General”, de Gaulle concluded, “this is the last time, I am telling you, that a French leader will hear such an answer.”

De Gaulle believed nuclear weapons were an essential attribute of national independence. In October 1945 he set up the Commissariat à l’Energie Atomique (CEA) entrusting its direction to Frédéric Joliot, a member of the Communist Party. De Gaulle never doubted his loyalty. However, Joliot resigned in 1949 as he saw the Commissariat orientated towards military research. But his wife Irène Joliot-Curie (daughter of Marie Curie) continued working for the organisation.

On 13th February 1960 the first French atomic bomb exploded, which was a cause of celebration for de Gaulle. He was afraid that the Americans and Soviets would conduct a nuclear war by proxy with medium range nuclear weapons confined to Europe and was therefore uncompromising in his defence of France’s independent nuclear deterrent. He told Eisenhower:

“...the Soviets know me. They know that if I possess the strike force, in order to respond to an invasion of Western Europe, I shall use it, and that will be an extra dissuasion for them. To do that I have to be unbearable on my own.”

The nuclear independence of France contrasted with that of Britain, which was dependent on the United States for her nuclear capability.

Lacouture quotes from a December 1967 document written by General Ailleret on France’s nuclear strategy:

“Our autonomous force ought not, therefore, be pointed in a single direction, that of some *a priori* enemy, but be capable of intervening everywhere, be therefore what we call in our military jargon, ‘all round’. So France’s objective must be to form “an all round”, world wide thermonuclear force.”

So, France did not rule out using her thermonuclear force against the United States. Nevertheless, de Gaulle recognised that the two super powers had their spheres of influence. For example, he completely supported Kennedy during the Cuban missile crisis, but opposed US military intervention in Vietnam.

De Gaulle accepted Soviet hegemony over Eastern Europe as a fact and thought there was no point in developing diplomatic relations with Eastern Europe independently of Moscow. Interestingly, de Gaulle was not dismayed at the erection of the Berlin wall on 13 August 1961. He saw it as primarily a defensive measure and recognition by the Soviet Union that she could not make any more incursions to the West.

He also took a realistic view of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968:

“...no unit of the Czech army, either on land or in the air, had fired a single shot at the invaders. Of course, there had been hostile and courageous demonstrations by the populations of the cities, but nothing from the armed forces. That scandalised de Gaulle, who observed to me that East German police had

fought in Berlin against the Soviet tanks, that the Hungarian had done as much, that if such an invasion had taken place in Yugoslavia or Poland, the army would probably have opened fire. “What can you do for a nation that does not want to defend itself?” (conversation with Alain de Boissieu, de Gaulle’s son in law).

The cordial nature of de Gaulle’s visit to the Soviet Union in June 1966 aroused suspicions in the US.

But the most bitter conflict between France and the US related to the relationship of the dollar with gold. Here are de Gaulle’s thoughts, which seem even more relevant today:

“The convention whereby the dollar is given a transcendent value as international currency no longer rests on its initial base, namely, the possession by America of most of the gold in the world. The fact that many States accept dollars as equivalent to gold, in order to make up for the deficits of any American balance of payments, has enabled the United States to be indebted to foreign countries free of charge. Indeed, what they owe those countries, they pay, at least in part, in dollars that they themselves can issue as they wish, instead of paying them totally on gold, which has a real value, and which one possesses only if one has earned it. The unilateral facility attributed to America has helped to spread the idea that the dollar is an impartial, international sign of exchange, whereas it is a means of credit appropriated to one state.”

Israel

Although de Gaulle was sympathetic to Israel, he had no illusion about its expansionist aims:

“When Ben Gurion spoke to me of his plan to settle four or five million Jews in Israel, which could not contain them in her present frontiers, and revealed to me his intention of extending these frontiers at the earliest opportunity, I urged him not to do so. “France”, I said, “will help you to survive in the future as she has helped you in the past, whatever happens. But she is not prepared to provide you with the means of conquering new territory. You have brought off a remarkable achievement. Do not overdo it now. Rather than pursue ambitions which would plunge the Middle East into terrible upheavals and would gradually lose you international sympathy, devote yourselves to pursuing the astonishing exploitation of a country that was until recently a desert, and to establishing harmonious relations with your neighbours.”

De Gaulle had no doubts that Israel was the aggressor in the 1967 Six Day War. Although the blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba by Egypt following the Israeli mobilisation against Syria sparked the war, that was not its cause.

“We saw appear a State of Israel that was warlike and determined to expand. On 22 May, the Aqaba affair, unfortunately created by Egypt, was to offer a pretext to those who were dreaming of breaking loose. Israel, having attacked, seized, in six days of combat, objectives that she wanted to attain. Now she is organising, on the territories that she has taken, an occupation that cannot but involve oppression, repression, expropriation, and there has appeared against her a resistance that she, in turn, describes as terrorism.”

In November 1967 he made a controversial speech on the Zionist project, which caused outrage at the time:

“Many people wondered, even many Jews wondered, whether the establishment of that community on lands that had been acquired in more or less justifiable conditions and in the midst of Arab peoples who were profoundly hostile to it would not lead to incessant, interminable friction and conflict. Some people even feared that the Jews, hitherto dispersed, but who had remained what they had been for all time, that is to say an elite people, self confident and dominating, might not once it was gathered together on the site of its ancient grandeur, change into ardent, conquering ambition the very moving desire that they have felt for nineteen centuries.”

In December 1968 the Israelis destroyed Lebanon’s commercial air fleet. France announced an embargo on weapons to Israel. De Gaulle also denounced Israeli influence in the media.

Canada

De Gaulle’s visit to Canada was one of the highlights of his final years in power. He felt strongly that the French Canadians had been abandoned by the mother country: a defect he was determined to remedy. Lacouture comments that the conservative French Canadians were more sympathetic towards pious Vichy than the Free French, many of whom were Freemasons, who fought for the Resistance. Nevertheless, his speech at City Hall in Montreal was electrifying. He compared his reception in Quebec to Paris, 1944 and concluded with: “Vive Montréal. Vive Québec.” He then paused for breath before proclaiming: “Vive le Québec libre.” The crowd went wild. Before it calmed down he resumed: “Vive, Vive, Vive le Canada Français” and, as the crowd reached a crescendo, finally “Et Vive La France”.

Understandably, the Canadian Prime Minister, Lester Pearson, denounced this intervention in domestic politics. The media also criticised the speech. It is interesting to note de Gaulle’s reaction to the criticism:

“That the Anglo-Saxon press is furious at the revelation of the French fact is obvious, too. But that the French press should join in is incredible. *Le Monde* is a scandal.”

Elsewhere in the book Lacouture says de Gaulle considered *Le Monde* “not national”.

The Irish also have a connection with French Canada. During the famine years Canadian capitalists exported wood to Europe. Their ships were empty on the return journey to Canada, until they hit on the idea of importing human cargo from Ireland. Only the poorest of emigrants went to Quebec. In many cases the parents sacrificed themselves on the trip so that their children might see the new land. These Irish orphans arrived with nothing but their name and the French Canadians were careful not to deny them that, which is why there are many French Canadians to this day with Irish names.

A few years ago, President McAleese tried to re-establish this forgotten link in her visit to Canada, but the Irish media

was no better than the French media in 1967: it could only think of reporting some clerical abuse scandal that was happening in the country at the time.

May 1968

The 1968 protests in France began as a student rebellion, which escalated into workers strikes. The initial protest in March related to the sexual segregation of student residences in Nanterre University in Paris. Daniel Cohn-Bendit accused the Minister for Youth and Sport of ignoring students’ sexual problems. To which the Minister responded: “Jump in a swimming pool”. The Government closed Nanterre campus, which only succeeded in transferring the protest to the Sorbonne.

The student body UNEF (which was infiltrated by Trotskyists and Anarchists) called on workers and students to protest. The Communist Party and CGT (the largest Trade Union, which was dominated by the Communist Party) forbade members to respond.

Georges Marchais, the future leader of the French Communist Party, denounced Cohn-Bendit in the columns of *l’Humanité* as a “German Anarchist”. Cohn-Bendit responded by describing the Communists as “Stalinist scum”. The “German Anarchist” denunciation was twisted by the student revolutionaries and given an anti-Semitic meaning by suggesting that Marchais really meant “German Jew”.

The riots began on 11th May. No one was killed; 500 were arrested; 376 injured and hundreds of cars were burnt.

The difficulty that the Communists had was that Prime Minister Pompidou conceded everything that the students wanted. The CGT and the Teachers’ Unions, perhaps sensing weakness in the State, decided to go on strike. On 13th May there was a demonstration of 300,000 which passed off peacefully, but it was noticeable that the Student leaders were to the forefront eclipsing both the Trade Union and political leaders.

Between 25th and 28th of May the riots resumed and the Paris Bourse was burnt. The Communist Party organised a demonstration for the 29th. Lacouture quotes a very interesting analysis by Prime Minister Pompidou in a conversation with de Gaulle on the eve of the demonstration:

“The Communist Party demonstration is going to be an important demonstration. The problem concerns its intentions. Is it trying to organise a really revolutionary action? It’s possible. The fact that the march starts from behind the Hotel de Ville may suggest that it is thinking of seizing it and doing a re-run of the Paris Commune. In that case if you agree, I shall bring in the tanks if you are ready. But all in all, I don’t think so. In my opinion the PCF analysis is that the situation is not a revolutionary one. So I think it will stick to a show of force to remind everyone that it alone has the big battalions and, consequently is alone capable of taking power if the State collapses. In that case, I think the crisis is over and we’ve won, public opinion having had enough.”

This is precisely what happened. In the parliamentary elections in June the Gaullist Party had a landslide victory, winning 360 out of 485 seats.

The “*événements*” of 1968 took the Communist Party by surprise and disorientated it. Lacouture notes that the Communist leader Waldeck Rochet actually implored de Gaulle’s brother-in-law to urge the General not to resign.

Lacouture suggest that Rochet was fomenting divisions within the Gaullist Party, but could there be another explanation? Remember, as far back as March, Georges Marchais was denouncing Cohn-Bendit in the columns of *l’Humanité*. Could it be that the Communist Party felt in its bones that Cohn-Bendit represented a new type of politics that would not augur well for the Party’s future? The rise of bourgeois individualism!

This reviewer is an occasional reader of *l’Humanité* and is under the impression that the Party still has not come to terms with 1968.

Although the Gaullist party, the UDR, was rampant in the aftermath, de Gaulle himself was a beaten man. At the height of the crisis he fled to a French military base in Baden-Baden, Germany. It took him two days to recover his composure. His analysis of 1968 was interesting:

“There is fear neither of war nor of poverty. When the French are no longer afraid, they challenge the authority of the State. The country is caught up in a movement that it cannot understand; that of mechanical, technological civilisation. If it is young people who are expressing their disturbed reactions first, it is because University is no longer adapted to its purpose... We must both re-establish public order and negotiate without compromising the most important thing, the security of the Nation.”

Also, in an address to the nation he said:

“The university must be reconstructed in terms of the real needs of the country’s development and of the actual working possibilities of young people. Our economy must be adapted, by improving the living and working conditions of employees, by organising their participation in the running of affairs. This is the aim that the nation as a whole must lay down for itself.”

These were fine speeches, but the young people sniggered at the old man. The Gaullist spell had been broken.

Lacouture says that the idea of employee “participation in the running of affairs” was a constant theme of de Gaulle in the late 1960s, but he was thwarted by the French employers’ organisation and Georges Pompidou, who had a more free market orientation. After May 1968 de Gaulle had the idea of putting some of these policies to the people.

But by the time the referendum was held in April 1969 the ideas on industrial democracy had been watered down. The referendum had, in theory, become more about Senate Reform, but in reality it was a referendum on de Gaulle himself. When the referendum was lost by 53% to 47% the General knew that it was time to go.

The End

On his resignation it was time for reflection. He wanted to leave France and he chose Ireland.

His mother’s family were descended from the McCartans who came to France with the Wild Geese. On his father’s side his grandmother, Joséphine de Gaulle wrote a biography of Daniel O’Connell. His uncle wrote a history of the Celts.

He first stayed in Kerry. He was delighted with Kerry and wanted to stay there, but when he moved to Connemara he was equally happy.

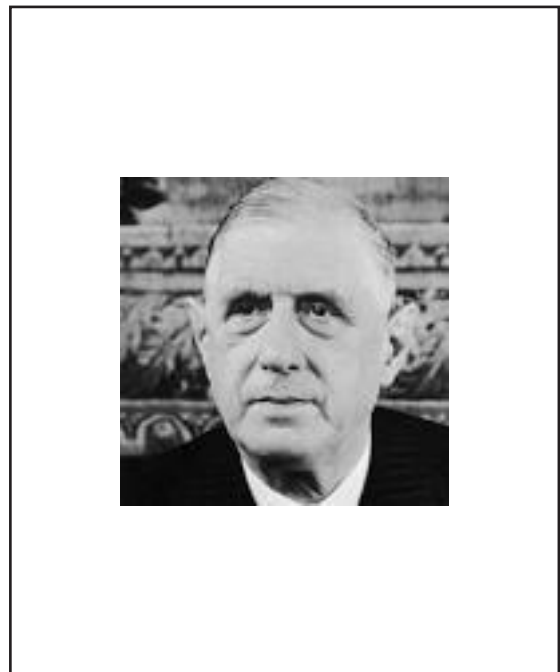
He remarked that between Sinn Fein and France Libre a certain kinship could be detected.

President de Valera invited him to plant a tree. Lacouture tells us that many of those present couldn’t help noticing the resemblance of the two tall bony old men, making their way through the Phoenix Park like twins.

After dinner with de Valera de Gaulle was in confidential mood:

“At this grave point in my long life, I have found here what I was looking for: to be face to face with myself. Ireland has given me this, in the most delicate, the most friendly way ... It was a sort of instinct that led me towards Ireland, perhaps because of the Irish blood that courses in my veins. One always goes back to one’s source.... I raise my glass to a United Ireland.”

Welcome home, Charles!



Charles de Gaulle

Not So Much Poles Apart: The Markievicz Two Nations

by Manus O’Riordan

Professor John A Murphy, University College Cork’s Emeritus Professor of History, had certainly been prepared to play the role of nasty little man in the *Irish Times* of 22 October 2004 when, under the heading of “Markievicz and the Rising”, he gave vent to the following piece of misogynistic West Brit character assassination:

“The argument in your columns about Countess Markievicz’s activities in Easter Week 1916 recalls W.E. Wylie’s interesting account of her demeanour at the courts martial. Wylie was appointed to act as prosecuting counsel. He was impressed by some of the prisoners, notably Eamon Ceannt and John MacBride, but not by Constance Markievicz. According to him, the court expected she would make a scene and throw things at the judge and counsel. ‘In fact’, said Wylie, ‘I saw the General (Blackadder, court president) getting out his revolver and putting it on the table beside him. But he needn’t have troubled, for she curled up completely. *‘I am only a woman’,* she cried, *‘and you cannot shoot a woman. You must not shoot a woman.’* She never stopped moaning, the whole time she was in the courtroom.’ Though she had been ‘full of fight’ in Stephen’s Green, ‘she crumpled up in the courtroom’. ‘I think we all felt slightly disgusted. . . She had been preaching to a lot of silly boys, death and glory, die for your country, etc., and yet she was literally crawling. I won’t say any more, it revolts me still.’ Wylie’s memoir of 1916 was written in 1939 when he was 58. But is there any reason to think he was lying about Markievicz, or that his recall was defective?”

In my then capacity as SIPTU Head Of Research in Liberty Hall, I submitted the following reply, which was published on 28 October:

‘In the 1916 Rebellion Handbook, first published in that year by the *Weekly Irish Times*, there is a self-revealing observation on the Irish Citizen Army from *‘The Steward of Christendom’* himself, Dublin Metropolitan Police Superintendent Thomas Dunne. (This is the title of the play penned in his memory by Dunne’s great-grandson, Sebastian Barry – MO’R). He complains that

‘it is a serious state of affairs to have the city endangered by a gang of roughs with rifles and bayonets, at large at that time of night with a female like the Countess Markievicz in charge’.

Constance Markievicz’s reputation has indeed been bedevilled by a combination of misogyny and contempt for her association with the working class that this union set out to organise, and whom Superintendent Dunne chose to christen *‘the disorderly class’*. All the more reason, then, to expect professional rigour to be applied when UCC’s Emeritus Professor of History, John A. Murphy, intervenes (October 22nd) in what he calls the ‘argument in your columns’ concerning Markievicz’s role in 1916. Surprisingly, however, he has nothing to say on the actual issue in dispute: that either Markievicz had shot Constable Lahiff at Stephen’s Green, as maintained by Kevin Myers (October 14th), or that she could

not possibly have done so, being at that time at the City Hall, as evidenced by Claire McGrath Guerin (October 19th).”

“Prof Murphy has instead chosen to open up a new line of attack, by endorsing, without any qualification, the character assassination of Markievicz offered in his memoirs by the death penalty prosecutor of the 1916 leaders, W.E. Wylie. It is a pity that Prof Murphy has not kept abreast of more recent scholarship in this area, most notably Brian Barton’s *From Behind a Closed Door: Secret Court Martial Records of the 1916 Easter Rising*

(2002). Writing of Markievicz, whose record had been kept a close secret by the British government for 85 years before they finally agreed to its release in 2001, Barton observes: ‘In fact the official record of Markievicz’s trial shows that she acted bravely and with characteristic defiance throughout. . . When speaking in her own defence, she retracted nothing, stating simply: *‘I went out to fight for Ireland’s freedom and it doesn’t matter what happens to me. I did what I thought was right and I stand by it.’*”

“Barton further comments:

‘Wylie’s wilful and scurrilous distortion of her response at her trial is difficult to interpret. It may reflect a personal sense of irritation at her self-assurance and boldness, which he may have considered an insult to the court. Perhaps it reflected deep-rooted sexual prejudice and rank misogyny on his part. More likely, his fictitious account sprang, above all, from a feeling that the Countess had by her actions betrayed both her religion and her class (she had been presented at court to Queen Victoria in her jubilee year, 1887). Such considerations certainly influenced the Trinity College Provost’s daughter Miss Mahaffy’s assessment of her . . . (as) ‘the one woman amongst them of high birth and therefore the most deprived . . . She took to politics and left our class’.

“She did indeed. Appointed Minister of Labour in 1919 in the democratically elected Government of the Irish Republic, Markievicz had previously been Vice-President of the Irish Women Workers’ Union. She was also made an honorary member of the ITGWU, in tribute to her outstanding work during the 1913 Lockout in organising – with Delia Larkin – the provision, here at Liberty Hall, of 3,000 meals a day to our suffering members and their families. And for that commitment the name of Constance Markievicz will always be an honoured one in the annals of the Irish trade union movement.”

Patrick Quigley’s 2012 biography, *THE POLISH IRISHMAN: The Life and Times of Count Casimir Markievicz*, is in reality a binational portrait of both Constance and Casimir. And there are other nasty little men to be dealt with in the process. As Quigley writes, if ever so politely:

“According to the journalist Kevin Myers, Casimir was ‘the unfortunate Polish husband, who fled her neurotic badness for the security of war on the eastern front’. The reader must

allow for journalistic exaggeration, but this interpretation has become the popular version of events.” (151).

In 1934, two years after Casimir’s death, and five after Constance’s, Jonathan Cape of London published *Constance Markievicz, or the Average Revolutionary* by Sean O’Faolain. Quigley writes:

“When Sean O’Faolain wrote a biography of Constance Markievicz he included so many stories about her husband that it became a dual biography... Some blamed him (Casimir) for deserting her and returning to Poland; others condemned her for abandoning her family for public life. The accepted version is that her involvement in the Irish struggle for independence was the wedge that divided them.” (p 1).

Quietly, Quigley sets out to correct where O’Faolain had misled in that regard.

In the December 1918 General Election, Constance Markievicz (née Gore-Booth) (1868-1927) became the very first woman to be elected to the British House of Commons but, of course, took her seat in an independent Dáil Éireann, and was continuously re-elected up to and including the June 1927 General Election. In January 1919 she became the second woman in the world to become a government minister, being pipped only by Alexandra Kollontai who, following the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, became Soviet Russia’s People’s Commissar for Social Affairs. In April 1926 Constance would also chair the inaugural meeting of Fianna Fáil, thereby becoming that party’s only female TD. It was because of her record as both a trade unionist and a founding member of Fianna Fáil that Constance Markievicz had been treated with such shameful disrespect by the Free State government on the occasion of her death in July 1927. Following a meeting of the Fianna Fáil executive, she had been taken ill and was immediately hospitalised. De Valera wanted her to be treated in a private room, but she insisted on sharing a public ward with the poor of Dublin, as she was operated on for appendicitis. But she then developed peritonitis and – following a second, unsuccessful, operation – she died on July 15. (It has been further speculated that she was also suffering from cancer). In his funeral oration on July 17, de Valera declared:

“Madame Markievicz is gone from us; Madame the friend of the toiler, the lover of the poor. Ease and station she put aside, and took the hard way of service with the weak and downtrodden. Sacrifice, misunderstanding and scorn lay on the road she adopted, but she trod it unflinchingly... We knew the kindness, the great woman’s heart of her, the great Irish soul of her, and we know the loss we have suffered is not to be repaired.”

Yet Constance Gore-Booth had begun, not just her childhood, but also her early adult life, neither as a “lover of the poor” nor with a “great Irish soul”. She was, however, to be punished for having ended up as such, by an unforgiving Free State establishment. It has been suggested that no great malice was involved in the Free State government’s interference in her funeral arrangements; that it was the product of a logistical clash with the July 1927 funeral of the assassinated Free State Minister for Justice, Kevin O’Higgins. After all, both funeral services were scheduled to take place in St Andrew’s Church, Westland Row, and both burials in Glasnevin cemetery. But this argument will not wash. O’Higgins had been shot on July 10 and buried on July 13, two days before Markievicz herself passed away. There was a marked contrast between the two

funerals. O’Higgins, naturally enough, received a state funeral, the Mansion House being provided for his remains to lie in state, with General Eoin O’Duffy personally lighting the six tall candles surrounding his open coffin, and with Trinity College flying both the Union Jack and Tricolour at half mast in his honour. The great and the good of both Church and State were present at the funeral in full force. It was a colourful procession. As the *Irish Times* reported on July 14, there were four bands, two battalions of Free State infantry as well as Civic Guards:

“The British Legion of Ex-Service Men, wearing their war decorations, and headed by their brass and reed band, made a splendid turn-out. Next to them marched behind the St James’s Band four hundred members of the Association of the old Dublin Brigade of the IRA. They wore button-hole badges of green, white and orange, bound in crêpe. Then came the black-shirted representatives of the Italian Fascisti in Dublin ... all adding to the impressiveness of the occasion.”

The Polish Irishman, the 2012 biography by Patrick Quigley of Constance’s husband Casimir Markievicz, tells readers how the Free State government forbade the use of any public building where Constance’s remains might lie in state, so that they were instead brought to the Rotunda Pillar Room. There was also a strong presence of Free State troops at her funeral, not, however, to pay tribute, but to intimidate the mourners. And yet, despite such intimidation, there was an even greater turnout at the Markievicz funeral than at that of O’Higgins. And if O’Higgins had the Italian Fascisti Blackshirts paying tribute, there would also be a touch of continental European colour at Markievicz’s own funeral. As the *Irish Times* reported on July 19:

“The tricolour was wrapped around the coffin, on which was placed a wreath from Count Markiewicz and family. Count Markiewicz and his son Count Stasco Markiewicz were in the first mourning coach... A large number of members of the Workers’ Union of Ireland marched. They carried a red banner, which bore an inscription in Russian. This emblem was said to have been presented to the Irish workers by the workers of Moscow.”

But Larkin’s Russian Bolshevik banner was not particularly welcomed by Constance’s Polish family, as her stepson would later make clear. Quigley’s biography of Casimir relates:

“On Sunday Casi (husband), Stasko (stepson) and Maeve (daughter) were joined by the Gore-Booth family. Molly (wife of Constance’s brother, Sir Josslyn Gore-Booth) persuaded Joss to overcome his disapproval and attend. It was one of the biggest funerals in Dublin, eclipsing that of Kevin O’Higgins... All of Republican Ireland, along with labour, republican and feminist elements, showed a rare display of unity in the funeral procession. Jim Larkin appeared with a red rosette in his lapel leading an army of trade unionists. Casi and Stasko were dismayed at a banner inscribed with Russian script offering solidarity from the USSR. They were annoyed at the Bolshevik tinge to the funeral, but kept it to themselves. (*Do you think I LIKED Larkin and his Red Flag!*)” Stasko wrote to Molly, still fuming eleven years later.)” (pp 204-5). And yet, Stasko could blow hot and cold about Larkin and (admittedly, a different) Russia. In between Larkin’s Russian banner causing offence at the 1927 Markievicz funeral and his 1938 fuming about it, Stasko Markievicz (1896-1971) could write about his father’s First World War service in the Tsarist Russian Army: ““A good horse from our estate and the boon companions of a

crack cavalry regiment were his companions during the bitter (1914-15) winter campaign in the Carpathians.” (p 160). And for whom had Stasko written that account? Why, for none other than Larkin himself, who published it on 17 October 1931 in the columns of his *Irish Worker*!

The Quigley biography gives as much insight into the developing social and national awareness of Constance herself, as it does of her husband. Kazimierz Markiewicz (1874-1932), who would later change the spelling of his name to Casimir Markiewicz, had been born near Kiev, as a subject of Tsarist Russia. He hailed from a family of minor Polish landowners in Ukraine. It was as a widowed artist, and father of a young son, that Constance met and fell in love with him in Paris in 1899. There is nothing to indicate that this daughter of Sligo’s Lissadell House possessed any sense of national identification at this juncture, other than English. A fellow-Pole and friend of Casimir described Constance as an Englishwoman on witnessing their first meeting (p19), and when announcing her engagement to her brother, Sir Josslyn, Constance herself wrote that “I wish he was English because of you all”. (p 23). But her mother, Lady Georgina Gore-Booth (known in the family as Ga-Ga) remained unimpressed by a man hailing from

“a portion of the continent that one only heard of as an appendage to another portion associated with the idiosyncrasies of barbarians like Peter the Great or Ivan the Terrible”. (p 30).

It was 1902 before Constance travelled with her husband to the family manor at Zywtowka. Quigley relates that

“as they travelled there was plenty of time for conversation and Casi was full of stories of the land that Poles called Kresy, the country of the ends, the Borderland.” (p 49).

On her arrival in Zywtowka, she was confronted with the complexities of the national question in that “country of the ends”:

“The villagers were Ukrainian peasants, a hardworking folk who spoke their own language and worshipped in the icon-laden shadows of the Orthodox church.” (p 50).

And yet the Poles of the manor were themselves an oppressed nationality, so different from Constance’s own Gore-Booth family, and such Markiewicz conversations may well have led Constance to begin to reflect on identifying herself as Irish rather than as an Englishwoman:

“The Markiewiczzes were reasonably wealthy, but displayed a divided attitude to the Russian Empire. They took part in its institutions, but talked of partitioned Poland as a Christ among the nations and Poles as a suffering and oppressed people. They told stories of the rebellions at firesides and over the dining tables. The elderly aunts had been alive when bands of insurgents armed with scythes and shotguns fought Russian armies. It was all remarkably similar to stories of the Great Rebellion of 1798 in Ireland.” (p 51).

This book is filled with the art work of both Casimir and Constance. Casimir’s lyrical, if melancholy, *Ukrainian Landscape* was later bought by the 1916 leader Thomas MacDonagh and now hangs in the Pearse Museum. But Constance’s *Russian Harvest* (1902-3) suggests a growing

social awareness, as portrayed in the work-weary expression on the peasant woman’s face. Quigley further relates:

“She painted the most dramatic picture of her artistic career in Zywtowka. *The Conscript* (1902) shows the last meal in a peasant cabin as the only son prepares for a long journey. He has been conscripted into the Russian army and may never see his family or home again... The son sits between them (mother and father), but nobody can say anything. The dramatic composition highlights the oppression and hopelessness which has crushed the family. *The Conscript* is a fine genre painting that makes a sharp social comment... The picture was based on a real-life drama in the village. The boy never did return – he was killed in the Russian-Japanese war of 1905.” (p 55).

As they set out to return from Ukraine in 1903, Constance was determined to save a Jewish youth from a similar fate:

“They were asked to help a young conscript from Zywtowka to escape. The boy’s father was the tenant in the water-mill, sometimes described as a Polish Jew. He pleaded with them to help his son, Janko, evade the ruthless military authorities. Casi and Con were willing to defy the Russians by pretending that Janko was in their service... At the station in Oratow (*en route* to Kiev) Con showed she had learned some Polish when she leaned out the train window and shouted *Moskal swinja* (Muscovite pig) to an astounded gendarme on the platform. She had absorbed some of the Markiewicz aunts’ disrespect for authority and had started on a path that would lead her to revolution... They had a rendezvous in Berlin with Janko who had crossed the border into the German Empire. They managed his escape like an episode in an adventure novel. He dressed as a servant and worked in that capacity for the journey to Ireland... Janko stayed for a short time as footman before departing to make his way in the world with the help of a loan of ten pounds from Con.” (pp 58-61).

But Constance had not yet made the full leap in consciousness as far as her own homeland was concerned. On returning to Ireland in 1903 the Markiewiczzes were very much part of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy set, regularly attending balls in Dublin Castle, with Casimir commissioned in 1905 to paint *The Investiture of the Rt Hon The Earl of Mayo as Knight of St Patrick*. They attended their last Castle ball in March 1908, and when asked by a friend the following year why she had stopped attending, Constance replied: “I want to blow it up.” (p 75). For, in March 1909, Constance had become co-founder of the Republican Boy Scout movement, Fianna Éireann, she herself designing their uniforms and writing a marching song to a Polish air. And, as Pearse would later say, without Fianna Éireann there would have been no 1916 Rising. That the slow-burning emergence of her Irish nationalism had been rooted in her earlier sympathies with Polish nationalism was further underscored in a lecture which Constance had also delivered in March 1909, wherein she said:

“In Russia, among the people who are working to overthrow the tyrannical and unjust government of the Czar and his officials, and in Poland where, to be a nationalist, men and women must take their lives in their hands, women work as comrades, shoulder to shoulder, with their men. No duty is too hard, no act too dangerous for them to undertake... Catholic emancipation ... has come even in Russian Poland, where the whole nation was in arms against Russia as late as ’63, and where it stands for a much greater thing than it does here. Catholicism is an integral part of a Pole’s Nationality,

the Orthodox religion an integral part of a Russian's, for all Poles are Catholic, all Russians Orthodox – and a Pole of the Orthodox religion would even now be regarded with suspicion in Poland and could not possibly enter any Polish National Movement... The '63 revolution in Poland was chiefly organised by students. Cannot the young men and women of Ireland realise their strength?... Arm yourselves with weapons to fight for your nation's cause. Arm yourselves with noble and free ideas... May this aspiration towards life and freedom among the women of Ireland bring forth a Joan of Arc to free our nation!" (pp 109-111).

If Constance's adherence to Polish nationalism had preceded her conversion to Irish nationalism, once she had gone down that latter road Casimir at least followed her in his cultural work. A regular singer, he soon added "The Wearing of the Green" to his repertoire and, under the pen-name Seamus Cassidy, he wrote *After '48*, a short story about the Young Ireland Rebellion. In April 1910, under his own name, he premiered a play in the Abbey Theatre about the 1798 Rebellion entitled *The Memory of the Dead*, which was regularly revived. In later years, Casimir himself also produced that same United Irishmen play in Kiev, Moscow and Warsaw. It had already cost him any further commissions from the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy. He told his friend and fellow-Pole Mieczyslaw Fijalkowski that such a play about Irish freedom had been inspired by his own nation's servitude: "Only a Polish person would know what it is to fight for independence." The friend would later surmise:

"Kazimierz Markiewicz, a Pole from beyond the Vistula, has become unwittingly the perpetrator of a fire which spread in the Englishwoman's soul who felt in her veins Irish blood." (p 109).

The Markiewicz marriage was an unconventional one, but it was far from being the caricature portrayed by O'Faolain (a hypocrite, if ever there was one, when posing as "The Ideal Husband" himself!). Even when they had decided to split up, with Casimir returning to the Ukraine, the bonds of mutual respect, affection and concern remained unbroken. And before he departed, Casimir would be responsible for introducing, by borrowing from the experience of Tsarist Russia, a description which, both immediately in 1913 itself, as well as later again in 1920 and 1972, would be readily adopted in Ireland: Bloody Sunday. During the 1913 Dublin Lockout, Larkin had been in hiding in the Markiewicz home at Surrey House, Rathmines, on the eve of his appearance in O'Connell Street on Sunday, 31 August, disguised in Casimir's frock coat and top hat. Casimir was horrified by the vicious police brutality he was to witness, and immediately penned a letter of outrage which was published in both the *Freeman's Journal* and the *Irish Times* on the following morning:

"There was no sign of excitement, no attempt at rescue [of an arrested Larkin – MO'R], and no attempted breach of the peace, when the savage and cruel order for a baton charge – unprecedented in such circumstances in any civilised country – was given to the police. It was equaled, perhaps, by the bloody Sunday events in St Petersburg (1905)... I saw a young man pursued by a huge policeman, knocked down by a baton stroke, and then, whilst bleeding on the ground, batoned and kicked, not only by this policeman, but by his colleagues lusty for slaughter. I saw many batoned people lying on the ground, senseless and bleeding... It was indeed a bloody Sunday for Ireland." (pp 146-7). In the wake of Ireland's own first Bloody Sunday, Constance would be visited

by a Dublin Jewish businessman, a blast from the Ukrainian past of a decade previously: "Con was one of the first to join Connolly's Irish Citizen Army in defence of the workers. Con was familiar with Connolly who was a lodger in Surrey House. Con was busy that autumn in the soup kitchens in Liberty Hall, supplying food to the hungry. One of her visitors was Janko, the (conscript) escapee from Zywtowka, who was now a successful businessman. He returned to pay back the loan and gave a donation to the cause." (p 148).

Constance and Casimir would be on opposite sides in the First World War. As a 1916 Rising leader herself Constance, of course, identified with that Proclamation's reference to "our gallant allies in Europe", Germany and Austria. Moreover, her now close comrade, Connolly, had applauded the Polish Socialist Nationalist forces of Josef Pilsudski who were fighting in the ranks of the Austrian army against Tsarist Russia. Casimir, however, followed what we might call the Redmondite equivalent in Polish Nationalism, and he enlisted in the Tsarist Russian cavalry. Quigley explains:

"There was rejoicing in Warsaw on 14 August 1914 when the Grand Duke Nicholas, Commander-in-Chief of the Russian armies, issued a proclamation: 'May the frontiers disappear that divide the Polish people, thus making them a unity under the sceptre of the Emperor of Russia. Under that sceptre Poland will be born again, free in religion, in language, and in self-government.' The majority of Poles in Russian Poland were ecstatic. Nothing like this had been heard from the Russians in the long years since Catherine the Great annexed the greater portion of their country. They rushed to support the Russian war effort. Con was caught up in the enthusiasm ... to join the 12th Achtyrski Regiment of Hussars... Other Poles took different views on the conflict and its implications for Polish freedom. In Austrian Poland the future leader of the country, Josef Pilsudski, organised Polish legions to fight for the Central Powers against the Russians. The Poles in Russian Poland may have been optimistic, but the Russians had no intention of giving power to any nationality. A secret memorandum of late 1914 clarified the terms of the declaration – it would only apply to Poles in territories conquered in the course of the war." (pp 156-7).

Casimir fought courageously in the 1914-15 winter campaign, was awarded the St George Cross for bravery, was wounded and invalided out. No degrees of separation or conflicting perspectives on that War could prevent ongoing, solicitous correspondence between Casimir and Constance. It is not surprising that he disapproved of the 1916 Rising, but again Casimir wrote further solicitous letters to Constance which, however, the British prison authorities withheld from her. Between the February and October 1917 Revolutions in Russia, he worked as art manager for the Polish Theatre in both Moscow and Kiev. During those hectic months Casimir authored a Russian-language pamphlet on the Irish question. Quigley relates:

"He mentioned Con as a leader in 1916 and noted her release in July 1917. He skirted any judgment on the rebellion by insisting he was trying to be objective 'without considering whether an armed revolt against powerful England was appropriate or senseless'. But he found it impossible to avoid hard judgment on England's influence in Ireland. 'It has plundered the country, killed industry and agriculture ... Of the eight million (people) which Ireland counted in the 1840s not quite four million remain at the present time.' ... The solution was for England

to change its approach to Ireland and he ended on a rhetorical appeal to the Liberal Party in Westminster: *'May the Liberal leaders of the English parliament grant to Ireland freedom and political life on an unlimited democratic basis. May they find a way out of the conflict created by the protest of Ulster against Irish autonomy... Then, at the same time as the reestablishment of an independent and united Poland, her younger sister in bondage, Ireland, will be rewarded for a much suffering past... May the sun of Russian freedom, illuminating the whole world warm even in this distant island, the victims of the historical errors of the cultured English people.'* Casi showed that his heart was, politically speaking, left of centre. His plea for justice and reason was doomed to go unheard and Ireland would be drenched in blood before a partial independence was reluctantly conceded. The pamphlet had no effect on England's policy; it is unlikely that anyone in Ireland knew of its existence, but it was read in revolutionary Russia. When the First Dáil declared Ireland's independence in January 1919 and sought foreign support, the only country to recognise the new state was Bolshevik Russia." (pp 172-3).

But Casimir himself, as a Polish landowner, could have no future in a Soviet Ukraine. The remainder of his life would be spent in Pilsudski's Poland. Quigley recounts:

"Despite Casi's attempts to write, Con did not receive even one of his letters in prison. During her second long jail term in Holloway prison in 1918 she wrote to her sister Eva: *'It's very slow here and everything seems to be going at a great pace outside. Empires and Governments seem to be like the Gadarene swine just now. Many thanks for Litvinoff's book. Poor Russia! I often think about my Polish relations. Poor Casi hated wars, revolutions and politics: and there he is – or was – in Kiev, or in the Ukraine.'* Con balanced her Catholic faith (she converted after a mystical experience in 1916) with hopes for a better world following the Russian Revolution. She had consideration for the feelings of her Polish family for whom the Bolshevik experience was utterly negative. Like many initial sympathisers she gradually became disillusioned and feared Russia could follow France after 1789. She could be vociferous in political debate, but she had enough humanity to separate political differences from personal relationships... The Great War ended with the complete collapse of the three empires that had divided Poland for over a century. Pilsudski said he arrived in Warsaw and found power lying in the street. When Poland became independent in November 1918 the rush to leave Ukraine and to return to the homeland was on." (p 175).

But what of Constance's stepson Stasko, with whom, unlike with her natural daughter Maeve, she always maintained a warm personal relationship? Having served in the Tsarist Russian Navy during the World War, he remained on in Archangel and served as a translator between the British Expeditionary Force and the White Russian Army that was trying to overthrow Soviet power. When the counterrevolution was defeated, Stasko moved to Moscow, but when a new Polish-Russian War broke out in 1920, it was inevitable that Stasko would be imprisoned by the Bolsheviks that June. He was moved to the notorious Butryka Prison in Moscow in January 1921, and further moved to an extremely harsh concentration camp at Kojochowo in June. He would not be released until March 1922, when he was allowed to join his father in Warsaw. In the meantime, Constance was on an Irish Republican, anti-Treaty, fundraising tour of the USA, having been granted both Polish citizenship and a Polish passport, following her refusal to travel on a British passport.

From America, in May 1922, Constance wrote to Stasko of her efforts on his behalf:

"I never wrote to you because I was afraid of compromising you, but I sent you many messages by Eva... I did what I could to help you and I think some of the people whom I got to intercede for you may have been of some little help... I got a letter from Michael Flick, a fellow-sufferer of yours... I was getting it copied and sending it to Jim Larkin who had already promised to get certain Bolshie friends of his to try and get you set free. He is in prison here, I think because he was too revolutionary and made wild speeches. But he's awfully decent and promised to do all he could to get you out... You rail against the Bolshies. I know very little about them but I do know our people suffered far more from the English; and what I begin to believe is that all governments are the same, and that men in power use that power for themselves and are absolutely unscrupulous with those who disagree with them." (pp 188-9).

As previously noted, Casimir Markievicz would pass away in 1932, five years after Constance. Quigley relates how his portrait painting had resumed.

"He used his Polish contacts to secure commissions and landed his most notable subject with Marshal Pilsudski. The painting is one of the highlights of the section devoted to Poland's military history in the National Museum in Krakow. Pilsudski was the personification of Poland for many of his countrymen and was in retirement in 1924 [before seizing power in 1926 – MO'R]. Casi's picture is a conventional, but vivid rendering of the great man... His *Portrait of Pilsudski* is a sober portrayal of the statesman resting his elbow on a table. The patriot keeps his gaze fixed on the distant horizon. The two ex-soldiers fought on opposite sides in the Great War but Pilsudski urged Poles to unite after the conflict. We might wonder if the veterans mentioned how they might have faced each other in 1915." (pp 198-9).

And that, indeed, is the wonderful bonus of this book. It is replete with reproductions of the art work of both Casimir and Constance, including her 1902 *Conscript*, the original of which can no longer be located. The sheer brilliance of colour in the book's plates is a joy to view, particularly Casimir's 1899 portrait of Constance, one copy of which hangs in the National Gallery of Ireland and the other in Dáil Éireann, and, of course, Markievicz's portrait of Pilsudski, which hangs in the Polish National Museum in Krakow. There are, indeed, so many reasons for me to highly recommend this biography by Patrick Quigley.

Constance Markievicz



Starving The Germans: The Evolution of Britain's Strategy Of Economic Warfare During The First World War – The French Connection Part 5

by Eamon Dyas

France, Germany and Morocco (Continuing the serialisation of Eamon Dyas's forthcoming book)

French financial rapprochement with Germany.

Eugène Etienne, the most politically competent representative of the French colonialist group, was a believer in a balanced approach between diplomacy combined with direct action to advance the French cause in Morocco. Initially, he viewed Britain as the main pivot on which to hang French ambitions in that country and consequently his diplomatic efforts were directed at Britain - efforts that resulted in the 1904 *Entente Cordiale* which provided British recognition of French claims on Morocco. In the aftermath of Algeciras, in common with the French Government, as far as Etienne and his colonial party were concerned, the acquiescence by Germany in French ambitions in Morocco was a critical element in their plans to make that country a French Protectorate. Germany, on the other hand, was also anxious to advance her commercial and political interests through the cultivation of French goodwill and this applied both to her relationship with the French Government and what she recognised as a significant force in French politics – the French colonialists. Consequently Etienne, in his capacity of deputy for the Algerian area of Oran, close political and business friend of Rouvier and leader of the colonial group in the Chamber of Deputies, visited Germany in June 1907:

“Etienne was received by the Kaiser and by Bülow, with both of whom he discussed Franco-German relations. He turned aside the Kaiser's unexpected proposal of a Franco-German alliance, saying to Bülow that French opinion was not ripe for such an advance. He promised, however, to work in France for better relations with Germany and put forward the view that a co-operation between French and German capital ‘perhaps even in Morocco’ would be a good preparation for political understanding.” (Edwards, op. cit., p.485).

Although Etienne's visit was private it was encouraged by Stephen Pichon, the French Foreign Minister. By now there had arisen a certain community of interest between Clemenceau and his Foreign Minister and Etienne's party. Both sought to offer encouragement to Germany along the road to agreement with French interests in Morocco and both were now suspicious of Britain's motives towards France in the event of war.

In the same month as Etienne's visit to Germany unofficial talks were agreed between the French colonists and the German *chargé d'affaires* in Tangier, Ernst Langwerth von Simmern, while, on an official level, the German Government sought to open a channel directly with the French Government through Jules Cambon, the French ambassador to Berlin:

“In Tangier Langwerth, the German *chargé d'affaires*, influenced by the views of German financial circles anxious to penetrate Morocco but aware that this could be done effectively only with French consent, secured the approval of the German foreign office for the initiation of unofficial discussions through intermediaries with the French legation. At the same time in Berlin hints were dropped to Jules Cambon of the possibility

of a Franco-German financial and economic co-operation in Morocco and he was invited to visit Bülow at his summer residence in Nordeney. Saint-Aulaire, the French *chargé* in Tangier unofficially took up the conversations proposed by the German legation while at the same time Pichon gave cautious instructions to Jules Cambon:

‘We are not opposed in principle to eventual association of French and German economic interests, he telegraphed on 2 July. But in Morocco it could be realised only by reconciling it with the earlier engagements which already link us to the British and the Spaniards. We could treat with the Germans alone only on those matters in which the British and the Spanish would refuse to participate. . . .

. . . . there would be serious inconveniences in increasing the importance of German interests, up to the present very much inferior to ours, an increase which would justify the intervention of German policy in Moroccan questions. We must therefore be very reserved in that connexion while we admit such a participation within reduced and reasonable limits when we cannot do otherwise.’”

Clemenceau, to whom this telegram was shown and who was, therefore, aware of the proposed negotiations, also stressed the need for caution lest the visit to Bülow be exploited so as to give the impression of a reversal of French foreign policy.

The conversations thus initiated went on for several weeks. They were conducted on two levels, vague and general by Jules Cambon and the German Foreign Office; detailed and precise though unofficial in Tangier, where at the end of August draft letters were drawn up by the two *chargés* [d'affaires – ED] registering a local agreement on the basis of a co-operation of French and German commercial and industrial interests in Morocco in return for which Germany was to make a closely-defined renunciation of political interest there, a provision on which the French had insisted.” (ibid., pp.488-489).

In the official talks the German Government was always aware that the price which the French Government was demanding for the advancement of German commercial interests was a renunciation by Germany of her political interests in Morocco – interests that essentially related to the preservation of Moroccan sovereignty as the best means of preserving her commercial interests in the country. In the unofficial talks this was also the ultimate price that the French colonialists expected from Germany. However, the different manner in which both sets of talks failed revealed the way that British policy impacted negatively on progress being made through either route.

In August 1907 the unofficial talks had been abandoned by the German side as a result of the French colonialists Casablanca campaign. These illegal incursions inspired and led by French colonialists into Morocco had left the French Government in the position of having to express its support

despite the fact that what took place had been without official sanction. The difficulties of the Government in this situation were compounded by the enthusiastic endorsement of these maverick actions by the British Government. Had Britain acted in accordance with her obligations as a signatory of the Act of Algeciras and condemned the Moroccan incursions as a breach of Moroccan sovereignty, it would have been easier for the French Government to openly condemn the actions of its maverick colonialists. However, once Britain came out and openly supported these actions, it was almost impossible for the French Government to adopt any other position than support. Finding itself thus bounced into adopting a position by the combined actions of the French colonialists and the British, the French Government had no option but to assume a more intractable position in the official talks with Germany. The official talks between the representatives of the French and German governments went on until well into September. In the meantime one can reasonably assume that the French Government was made aware of British concerns that the talks were even taking place (Sir Edward Grey had written to this effect to Sir Frank Lascelles, British ambassador to Berlin, on this matter on 18 September 1907 and it is inconceivable that the French Government was not likewise informed at this time). Pichon, the French Foreign Minister, subsequently became more insistent on German abandonment of her political interest as a pre-condition for the continuance of the talks with the not unexpected response of a German refusal. Consequently, by mid-September 1907 the official conversations between the German and French Governments came to an end without any agreement.

Despite this setback however, the natural inclination of both the French Government and colonialists to reach an accommodation with Germany continued to inform their actions. In August 1907, Etienne published a subtle attack on the Anglo-French *Entente* in the *Dépêche Coloniale* in a move that looked like an attempt to induce the German Government to continue with the talks. At the same time the French Government sought to maintain good relations with Germany by its refusal to be drawn directly into the colonialists' strategy in Morocco by any further action that was outside the terms of the Act of Algeciras.

In the Moroccan civil war caused by the colonialists' Casablanca campaign, the colonialists did not wish to see the Sultan, Abd-el-Azis, toppled as he at least was a known quantity and his brother, Mulai Hafid, was challenging him on the basis of his being in the pocket of the French. As the military initiative moved away from the Sultan and towards Mulai Hafid the French colonialists were eager for the French Government to intervene to prop up the Sultan's government. This of course would have been seen as interference in the internal affairs of the country and an open violation of Moroccan sovereignty and consequently in breach of the Act of Algeciras.

“Pichon was pressed by Regnault [the colonialist minister in Tangier – ED] to support the Sultan's cause but he was determined not to move outside the limits imposed by the Act of Algeciras. In the occupation of Oudjda and in the action taken after the Casablanca riots France had in fact exceeded her mandate without serious repercussions in Germany. It would be unwise to count indefinitely on such a degree of compliance and the government was resolved to run no risks. When by the early part of 1908 it was clear that the German colony in Morocco was markedly well disposed towards Mulay Hafid whose movement was steadily gaining in strength, the pressure on Pichon to give support to the Sultan became stronger. He

refused, however, to move from non-intervention in what was now a civil war and he kept a strict control over the French authorities in Morocco who were eager to assist Abd-el-Azis.” (ibid., p.491).

Although it undoubtedly had support among sections of the Government, it had not been the French Government itself which had exceeded the French mandate in Casablanca and Oudjda. That was entirely the result of the actions of the French colonialists, the aftermath of which compelled Clemenceau and Pichon to retain a close control over the local colonialist authorities.

As a result of the restraint on the side of both the French and German Governments during the Casablanca crisis, after a short interval the commercial co-operation between the two countries continued albeit without any corresponding political talks:

“Meanwhile the tendencies towards co-operation between French and German financial and industrial interests gained in strength. The German appetite for French capital, always considerable, was increased by the financial crisis of 1907, and French bankers, attracted by the high rate of interest were ready, clandestinely, to satisfy it. The Baghdad railway in particular drew away money to the anger of those in France who saw in the resources of the Paris bourse a great national asset which was being thrown away by financiers who showed no concern for the political interests of the country. The prospect of exploiting the asset, of striking a bargain in which authorization by the French government of French participation in the railway venture could be a means of bringing Germany to a discussion of the respective situations of the two countries in Morocco was, however, not ignored in the French Foreign Office.” (ibid., p.492).

But the French Government's room for advancing the Franco-German arrangements remained under the constraints of British sensibilities. In the aftermath of a campaign in the German press for the opening of the French market to German shares (at this time trading in shares in German enterprises was forbidden on the Paris Bourse – an action initiated by Clemenceau aware of earlier British disapproval) the British made their feelings discretely known. In September 1907, in order to forestall any prospect of the prohibition rules being relaxed, Paul Cambon, brother of Jules and the French ambassador in London, reminded Pichon of British sensitivities on this matter:

“On 27 September Paul Cambon had warned him that the campaign in the German press for the opening of the French market to German shares was watched with interest in London. Cambon [who, at the opposite end of the political spectrum to his brother Jules, was an adherent of the Delcassé tradition – ED] had a poor opinion of French financiers, ‘careless of the higher interests of their country’ and feared that under the influence of German associates and greedy for gain they might ‘overwhelm our government with their detestable advice’ though he felt confident that the present Cabinet would not follow them. Pichon quickly assured Cambon.

‘ . . . I believe, he replied, that we cannot show too much reserve concerning the eventuality of a financial co-operation between France and Germany. You may give the most formal assurances in this respect to Sir

Edward Grey and Sir Charles Hardinge should they question you on the subject.’

(*ibid.*, p.492).

Notwithstanding these formal assurances to the British, Franco-German economic associations continued to develop. In November 1907 the Union des Mines Marocaines was formed. This was an international syndicate but was founded and dominated by a Franco-German group which included such giants as Schneider-Creusot on the French side and Krupp on the German side and was established for the purpose of surveying Morocco in order to obtain mining concessions. Yet, although the economic co-operation continued there was no resumption of the official talks despite the fact that in January 1908 Pichon had authorised the French ambassador in Berlin, Jules Cambon, to resume the talks when the opportunity arose. The German Government however, in the aftermath of the Casablanca affair was not immediately eager to resume any such talks particularly as the ongoing economic momentum continued to serve the cause of German commerce without them. But of course, such momentum must eventually find some political expression:

“The association of the major representatives of French and German heavy industry for economic co-operation in Morocco, however, could not be without political significance. Taken with the steady movement of French money into German enterprises, it was a development indicative of the climate of opinion in financial and industrial circles in France favourable to closer relations with Germany. . . .

Encouraged, no doubt, by such signs, those elements in the German foreign service who were anxious to bring about a Franco-German rapprochement and in particular a settlement of the Moroccan problem which was the essential preliminary to closer political relations, became active once more in the summer of 1908. The scene, however, was shifted from Tangier to Paris. The leading role in this second unofficial campaign to bring the governments to action was taken by von der Lancken, the Counsellor of the German embassy in Paris. Lancken’s assessment of the Moroccan situation was very similar to that of Langwerth. Germany, he argued, must recognize the facts. France was established in Morocco and was, if slowly, extending her position. The opportunity for Germany to gain a coaling station there by negotiation with France had passed. Yet German public opinion would not support a war for Morocco. Hence Germany must abandon political ambitions there and concentrate upon the safeguarding and development of her economic interests, which could be best realized through a co-operation with France from which could also come the opening of the French money markets to German enterprises. These views, he writes, gained support in Berlin; and he then began a campaign to influence public as well as official opinion in France.” (*ibid.*, pp.493-494).

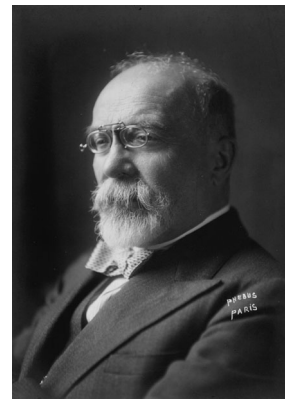
The case was put to André Tardieu, who was later in the 1930s three times Prime Minister of France but at this time was the foreign editor of the Temps, the paper most in touch with the centres of economic and political power in France. It was unofficially made clear that what Germany expected in return for ceding any political interest in Morocco was an abandonment by France of her special relationship with Britain.

“Tardieu’s reaction to the views put before him was comforting to the Germans. He reflected, on the one hand, that obsession with Morocco which, in Wagenheim’s opinion [Baron Hans

Freiherr von Wagenheim was at this time German *Chargé d’affaires* at Tangiers – ED], had now come to replace Alsace-Lorraine as the pivot on which Franco-German relations turned. On the other, the coolness he showed towards Britain and his slighting of British military worth (if, as Lancken suspected, possibly designed to cater to his listeners) nevertheless approximated to the current of disenchantment towards the entente which was now evident in France despite the consistent support which the British government had given to the French policy in Morocco.” (*ibid.*, p.495).

By 1908 it was clear that the impetus towards ever-closer commercial co-operation between France and Germany was not dependent upon any political agreement. While both governments would have liked to exploit this development to gain political concessions from each other—in the case of France to get Germany to concede her political interests in Morocco and in the case of Germany to get France to distance herself from the hostile Anglo-French *Entente*—the strength of the natural momentum towards economic co-operation was something that took place in any case. In these circumstances the only thing that a political agreement could offer would be the possibility of accelerating such developments. However, given the impetus of this growing commercial co-operation it was bound at some stage to create a significant disfunction between the economic direction in which it was moving and the political position France occupied with regards to Britain. The first political expression of this tendency was the Franco-German Agreement signed on 9 February 1909.

Jules Cambon and the Franco-German agreement of 1909.



Jules Cambon

Taken by itself the 1909 Franco-German Agreement would not have constituted much of a problem for Britain but viewed in the context of the dynamics of a growing commercial co-operation between both countries it certainly was. The real concerns of the Liberal Imperialists in 1909 were articulated three years later by Sir Eyre Crowe. In 1912 Crowe had just been promoted from senior clerk in charge of the western department of the Foreign Office to assistant under-secretary of state and he reflected on the event three years earlier:

“He maintained that the Franco-German exchange of notes [it is alternatively described as an agreement depending on which country is providing the description – ED] of 9 February 1909, by which Germany had pledged her political disinterest in Morocco, and she and France had agreed to encourage the association of their nationals in joint business ventures there, was ‘only a portion of a wider plan which comprised, at least so far as German intentions were concerned, a far-reaching scheme or co-operation between the two Governments in other parts of the world besides Morocco, and which would have formed, perhaps, to begin with, a counterpoise to, but eventually the end of, the entente.’ (The ‘Wild Talk’ of Joseph Caillaux: A Sequel to the Agadir Crisis, by Keith A. Hamilton, Published in The International History Review, Vol. 9, No. 2, May 1987, p.198).

Crowe had been born in Leipzig and educated at Düsseldorf and Berlin. His father was a British diplomat in Germany and his mother German. He came to England for the first time when he was seventeen years of age and embarked on a career in the Foreign Office where he became its leading German expert. Discriminated against in the Foreign Office because of his German origins (his talents and intelligence warranted a higher position than he ever achieved) he attempted to compensate by being virulently anti-German and an enthusiastic exponent of an aggressively hostile attitude towards that country. As a result he became an extremely influential figure in the higher echelons of Liberal Imperialist circles.

The threat posed by the Franco-German agreement of 1909 to the future of the *Entente Cordiale* helped to inject a sense of urgency into the Liberal Imperialists’ war planning. This was needed not only to reinforce the position of their allies within the French ‘*bureaux*’ (the constituency which provided the main organised opposition in France to any Franco-German rapprochement) but also to neutralise the sceptical component in French politics about British intentions in the event of war. For this reason 1909 represents an important milestone in the British road to war and the issues and decisions affecting British politics that year have to be viewed in this context. The figure who most clearly represents the French political tendency for seeking a *rapprochement* with Germany was Jules Cambon.

Jules Cambon became French Ambassador to Berlin in January 1906 on the tide of a growing political sentiment which sought to encourage the growth of commercial and financial *rapprochement* with Germany. However, he immediately came up against the elements which would eventually destroy any chance of such a development becoming politically meaningful:

“A member of the old generation of Republican ambassadors, he was more moderate than the younger nationalist diplomats who increasingly filled the foreign ministry. Cambon believed that overtures to France from the German chancellor, von Bülow, and the undersecretary of state, von Mühlberg, in late 1906 and early 1907 demanded a constructive response. But economic and financial negotiations quickly encountered the hostility of the nationalist press both in France and Germany. At the Quai d’Orsay diplomats such as Camille Barrère and Paul Cambon, Jules’ brother, spoke out against any agreement with Berlin and official negotiations soon ceased.” (Jules Cambon and Franco-German Détente, 1907-1914, by John Keiger. Published in The Historical Journal, Vol.26, No.3, September 1983, p.642).

Clemenceau’s government showed all the characteristics of his position vis à vis Britain and Germany. The Quai d’Orsay

was renowned as the defender of French honour - an honour that was intrinsically tied in with the sentiment of regaining the lost provinces of Alsace and Lorraine as well as the territorial expansion of the French empire. It suffered a setback as a result of the Algeciras conference of 1906 but the traditional anti-German expression continued to exert a strong influence on French foreign policy through those civil servants and diplomats who remained attached to the Delcassé school and the element that became known as the ‘*bureaux*’ mentioned earlier. Clemenceau sought to balance the anti-German influence of the ‘*bureaux*’ by the appointment of Stephen Pichon as Foreign Minister (a position he held during three consecutive governments from 25 October 1906 to 2 March 1911). In the years of his ministry Pichon encouraged Jules Cambon in his efforts at a French-German *rapprochement*. Aware of their relationship, the ‘*bureaux*’ sought to sabotage efforts in this direction to the extent that Pichon and Cambon had to resort to secret personal correspondence in order to circumvent the ‘*bureaux*’ whenever issues of Franco-German relations were being reported (see Keiger, op. cit., p.642). Jules Cambon had no doubt as to who was responsible for the difficulties put in the way of the early Franco-German negotiations of 1907. Whatever about the role played in the matter by the adverse reaction in the German press, he was quite clear that the responsibility for the breakdown did not lie in that direction. As far as he was concerned:

“It was the intransigent French officials and press who, by their ceaseless provocation of Germany, were responsible for the atmosphere of tension between the two countries making war more likely. He attacked their belief since 1905 in the inevitability of war. . .” (Keiger, op. cit., pp.642-643).

In the meantime his brother Paul Cambon was operating to a completely different agenda in London where he effectively became the mouthpiece of Grey and Liberal Imperialist opinion. This led in 1908 to a fairly public spat between the two brothers when, in the course of a diplomatic incident surrounding the ‘deserters of Casablanca affair’ (see earlier):

“Jules claimed his brother misinterpreted German policy towards France in thinking it was based on perfidy rather than economic interests. He cited Paul’s diplomacy during the formation of the *Entente Cordiale* as an object lesson in how enemies could be transformed into allies.” (Keiger, op. cit., p.643).

Despite the best efforts of the ‘*bureaux*’, Pichon and Cambon, with Clemenceau’s approval, continued their contacts with German representatives and this resulted in the Franco-German Agreement being signed on 9 February 1909. Under this agreement France’s special political interests in Morocco were recognised by Germany on the condition that both countries respected each other’s rights to share in the commercial and financial exploitation of the country. This agreement was in some regards a negation of the Algeciras Act which was meant to ensure that Morocco remained an open door with regards to the provision of access to investment from all countries. This was something that Germany attempted to retain during the negotiations but was forced to concede in the light of French intransigence (see Edwards, op. cit., p.506). In many ways however, the economic provisions in the agreement simply acknowledged the economic reality that it was both France and Germany which at this time provided most of the commercial investment in the country. Regarding the main political aspects of the Act, Germany’s position continued to

be that of guarantor of Moroccan sovereignty. There was an obvious hope among that section of the French establishment represented by Pichon and Cambon that the 1909 agreement would be the forerunner of a wider political agreement. This was something that Germany certainly wanted but in France the 'bureaux' continued to actively plot against.

Negotiations surrounding the 1909 agreement were undertaken in secret and France informed neither of her allies, Russia or Britain, until the eve of the signing.

"Though it was in terms restricted to Morocco, the implications of the Franco-German settlement were far-reaching and could not be dissociated from the general political situation. A rapprochement with Germany on so acute an issue as Morocco, concluded at a time of high crisis was a major political act. . . A Franco-German rapprochement at this juncture was not likely to be warmly received in London and still less so in St. Petersburg. The secrecy maintained over the negotiations – no word was divulged by France to Russia or Britain until the eve of signature – as well as the timing of the signature which took place in Berlin on the morning of King Edward's arrival there for the first state visit of his reign, could only add to unease." (Edwards, op. cit., p.508).

With regards to Russia, the timing of the agreement was particularly inopportune. Tensions between Russia and Germany's ally Austro-Hungary had been building since the previous summer and degenerated further after the Austro-Hungarian proclamation of her intent to annex Bosnia—an intention that was made public on 6 October 1908. Between then and the effective annexation of Bosnia in March 1909 the threat of war was hanging in the balance. Russia's response to France's agreement with Germany at this time left her in no doubt of Russian feelings in the matter and France was to experience the effect of this during the Agadir crisis of 1911 when Russia told France that she could not take Russian military support for granted in the event of war (see: *The Perception of Power: Russia in the Pre-1914 Balance*, by William C. Wohlforth. Published in *World Politics*, Vol. 39, No. 3, April 1987, pp.358-359). This ambivalence of Russia on the issue of military support for France during the Agadir crisis was an influential factor, although not the only one, in the fact that war did not happen in 1911—of which more later.

But not only were the negotiations kept secret from Russia and England but also from elements associated with the 'bureaux' as well as Paul Cambon, the French ambassador to London. The reception which the agreement received in France reflected the ongoing political landscape:

"French opinion generally welcomed the agreement as a sign of declining tension. The colonial group was naturally pleased at a settlement that promised the removal of the major obstacle to French predominance in Morocco, while those who looked to a closer association of France and Germany were gratified at the arrangements for economic co-operation which could be the forerunner of more extensive partnerships. Within the French foreign service, however, there were disapproving voices. . . . The Moroccan experts, Regnault and Saint-Aulaire, were opposed to it and so too, according to Saint-Aulaire, were the officials of the French Foreign Office." (Edwards, op. cit., pp.507-508).

However, the agreement would not have been possible without the approval of Clemenceau and the extent to which he facilitated it is an indication of how far the issue of Franco-German rapprochement had come during the years of his first premiership:

"What influenced him [Clemenceau – ED] was the situation in Europe. His warnings about the military weakness of Britain, his awareness of the feebleness of Russia, his appreciation of the dangerous situation of France the hostage, were all heightened by the Bosnian crisis. Subsidiary but additional was his irritation with British policy in the Near and Far East which may have indicated some sympathy with Jules Cambon's feeling that the British were apt to take France too much for granted." (ibid., p.509).

Thus, in the Spring of 1909, British reliance on the *Entente Cordiale* as a means of keeping France and Germany apart was beginning to show real signs of unravelling and required an effective response from Britain. Although the signals had been clearly sent out in 1909 the fact that the Liberal Imperialists got themselves into domestic difficulties in Britain at this time (the 'People's budget' and two general elections intervened) meant that its response to the French situation was compelled to extend from then until 1911 when the French colonialists felt confident enough to trigger another crisis with Germany over Morocco. (Continued in Next Issue of IFA)

(continued from page opposite)

the following European Commission statement: "Today, Member States encounter difficulties to equip their armed forces adequately. Recent operations in Libya have highlighted important shortfalls in key military capabilities." I argued that those European "statesmen", who had embarked on such offensive military operations, not only had blood on their hands in Libya itself, they were also to blame for the hundreds of deaths by drowning off Lampedusa during the fortnight just passed. I pointed out that a major international conflagration had only recently been narrowly avoided, with Western powers being forced to pull back from the brink of military intervention in Syria. Yet the dangers of international wars would regularly re-appear if the lessons of the folly involved in the Libyan military adventure were not fully absorbed. An EESC opinion, with an accompanying information memo that could quote, without criticism, a Commission statement suggesting that the only shortcoming of the military intervention in Libya was that it had not been accompanied by bigger and better firepower, embodied a moral faultline that I felt compelled to oppose.

Following the meeting, a former President of the EESC approached me to say that I had made a very good, necessary intervention. It was not clear to me whether he had actually voted against the opinion or had just registered an abstention. But that was very much the problem, allowing the *rapporteur*, in his summing up, to avoid making even the slightest reference to my arguments. The vote on the opinion was 171 in favour, 23 against and 24 abstentions. Had other EESC members opposing that "defence" opinion also been willing to give voice to the courage of their convictions, and not left me alone in being the sole speaker to call for its rejection, considerably more members again might have been persuaded to vote against such militarism.

Manus O'Riordan is Member for Ireland, Workers' Group, European Economic & Social Committee

European “Defence” in Libya and its Lampedusa Victims A report from the European Economic & Social Committee

by Manus O’Riordan

The European Economic and Social Committee met in plenary session in Brussels on October 16 and 17, within a fortnight of more than 550 migrants having been drowned off the Italian Mediterranean island of Lampedusa, from two – separate – overcrowded shipwrecks operated by Libyan-based people trafficker/smugglers. (In recent years, the numbers of such drowning victims have averaged 1,000 per year). A few days before the EESC meeting, Italian Defence Minister Mario Mauro announced: “We intend to triple our presence, in terms of both men and means, in the southern Mediterranean, for a military-humanitarian mission that has been made necessary, in part, by the fact that Libya is currently a ‘non-state’. We need strong action to stop these shipwrecks out to sea”. At the same time, Prime Minister Joseph Muscat of Malta, close to whose waters most such shipwrecks occur and which country consequently carries the main burden of air/sea rescue operations, further stated: “The fact is that as things stand, we are just building a cemetery within our Mediterranean Sea. No real progress will be made until order is restored along the African coast. To have a permanent solution or at least a better way of dealing with the issue of illegal emigration, there needs to be stability in Libya.”

An EESC press release related: “At its plenary session in Brussels on October 16, in the wake of the Lampedusa disaster, the European Economic and Social Committee made a loud and clear call for a coherent EU immigration policy based on burden-sharing. With an own-initiative opinion, the EESC reiterated its already well-established position on this issue: irregular immigration into the EU is a European problem that can only be solved by European means. Panagiotis Gkofas (Various Interests Group, Greece), EESC *rapporteur* for an opinion on irregular immigration by sea, highlighted the scope of the problem: ‘We need a policy based on solidarity so that it is not just southern Europe shouldering the responsibility. These people do not come to stay in a small village in southern Europe. They are using these countries as entry point to northern Europe; and this makes it a European problem’. The Member States that, because of their geographical location, are dealing with a large influx of irregular immigrants, should be supported through mechanisms to share the cost of irregular immigration. ‘No other issue has shown so openly the lack of solidarity among EU Member States: a lack of solidarity to those Member States on the frontline and a lack of solidarity towards people fleeing war in their own countries’, said Stefano Mallia (Employers’ Group, Malta), *co-rapporteur* of the opinion.”

Strangely enough, this EESC press release made no reference whatsoever to the first three sentences of the opinion itself, outlining why such an own-initiative had been found necessary: “The EU Member States with a coastline on the Mediterranean Sea have been faced with a rapid surge of irregular immigration by sea in the last couple of years. This includes Member States worst affected by the financial and economic crisis. This phenomenon is partly a consequence of the ‘Arab Spring’, which has seen thousands of persons escaping from repression, social unrest or even civil war.” The missing two words from the text of the opinion itself were, of course, “regime change”. But perhaps the EESC press release silence on any ‘Arab Spring’

aspect was due the fact that in a debate on the following day, October 17, I insisted on once again raising that precise issue, as I have been forced to do in the past. As far back as two and a half years ago, I had strongly argued against a May 2011 draft EESC opinion which declared that “the whole of North Africa is aflame with revolts against authoritarian regimes” and which then proceeded to argue that the European Union “must act more swiftly and without delay, better than it did in cases such as the intervention in the Mediterranean (Libya, for example)”. This, to my mind, was effectively championing Anglo-French military activity aimed at “regime change”. “There is no such entity as the whole of North Africa”, I argued. What was taking place in Libya was tribal warfare. The draft opinion was a very dangerous one, as it was associating the EESC with the Anglo-French military intervention in a Libyan civil war. The war to effect regime change in Iraq had brought chaos to Iraqi society. And the war being waged by British and French imperialism to bring about regime change in Libya would result in even more catastrophic chaos. I therefore declared my opposition to that draft opinion, as it sought to bring about EU support for that war and render the EU responsible for bringing such chaos to North Africa through the disintegration of Libyan society.

That, of course, is precisely what unfolded. The Gaddafi regime had faced down the people trafficker/smugglers and minimised their ability to exploit the Libyan coastline as a springboard for illegal immigration into the EU. The war on Libya and the “regime change” it effected has brought about what the Italian Defence Minister described as the “non-state” of Libya, from whence the mass deaths off Lampedusa resulted. And the reason why I had to return to this issue on October 17 was on foot of a debate on an opinion dealing with a strategy to strengthen Europe’s defence sector. *Rapporteur* Joost van Iersel, of the Dutch Employers’ Group, had been a Christian Democratic Member of Parliament in his native Netherlands 1979-1994, while his *co-rapporteur* Monika Hruševská, of the Slovak Workers’ Group, hails from a country with a significant armaments industry. The draft opinion proclaimed: “The EESC supports the aim of sustaining an independent European defence, commensurate with Europe’s economic weight and other interests in the world. The long-term goal should be autonomous protection of European citizens, ensuring that the military is provided with up to date equipment on an on-going basis, and guaranteeing the European way of life and European values.” The EESC Workers’ Group, as a whole, had drafted an amendment proposing to delete the final phrase after “basis”, but, as it happened, a compromise phrase was instead agreed, “guaranteeing European values (human rights, democracy).”

But that was hardly the main issue. I was the final speaker to offer in the debate, and the only one to call for outright rejection of the opinion, even if the Workers’ Group amendment had been fully accepted. I argued that it was bitterly ironic, having debated the Lampedusa disasters only one day previously, we would now be endorsing a line of action that had led to such deaths. For this opinion was not limited to some nice concept of **mere defence**. It was actually rubber-stamping **offensive action**. In the very first page of its accompanying information memo it quoted, without the slightest qualification,

(continued previous page)

Pat Walsh, speech at Book Launch of *'Twisted Law versus Proven Facts,'* London 29th November 2013

Geoffrey Robertson QC wishes for historians to stop discussing the Armenian tragedy. He declared on a visit to Yerevan that: *"The historians have completed their mission, now it is the time for judges, who will demand proper punishment for guilt and compensation for the Genocide victims. It is no longer a subject for historians but judges."*

He also said this: *"They say this is a matter for historians. It's not. Historians... are utterly ignorant of what genocide is in law. It's not a matter for historians. Genocide is a matter for judges. But we hear time and again, this is a matter for historians."* I would say that this is akin to being proscribed medicine by a pharmaceutical company rather than a doctor.

The Armenian Weekly of 15th June 2012 reported Mr. Robertson's view that: *"The Armenian government is right to reject calls for the genocide to be studied by a panel of historians."*

In the *'New Statesman'* of 10th December 2009 Geoffrey Robertson made it clear that the case, for him, is already closed: *"... genocide is a matter for legal judgment, not a matter for historians, and there is no dispute about the Armenian genocide among legal scholars."*

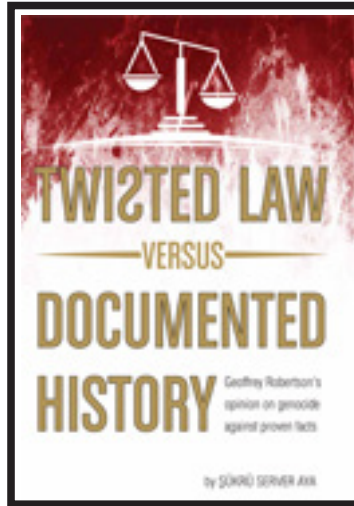
Presumably this means that to engage in debate about the Armenian issue you have to become a member of a small elite of legal scholars. Outside of that you are an illegal.

I must admit that I found this very shocking – the notion that history should be the domain of lawyers and not historians. That maybe is because I have come here from Belfast where the Law has been experienced as a perversion in the service of the state and there is very little faith in it as a source of truth and justice.

I got an idea of the thinking behind Mr. Robinson's view of law replacing history when I read the reports of his visit to Yerevan. He spoke at the University of America at an event, entitled "A Legal Lens on Genocide," the third in the "Thinking about Thinking" lecture series co-sponsored by AUA and the Luys Foundation. The *Armenian Weekly* says:

"In his opening remarks, AUA President Bruce Boghosian explained that the purpose of 'Thinking

about Thinking' is to propose new ways of thinking about various topics, even the Armenian Genocide. Discussion about the genocide is moving away from appeals to morality and toward the realm of law, he said, with lawsuits in recent years focusing on insurance claims and the return of property such as churches and land."



If Mr. Robertson had gone into such details as Mr. Aya did, he would have discovered that there was a settlement of such claims historically. With the Batum Treaty of June 2, 1918, the Dashnakist Armenian Republic was taken under an Ottoman Protectorate, as a country with preferential terms, involving the exchange of prisoners and the return of properties. But on October 30, 1918 the Ottoman Empire signed an Armistice at Mudros that the British turned into a surrender, re-imposing the Capitulations. An estimated 300,000 immigrants returned immediately and moved to their old properties. Hence, responsibility then belonged to the occupation forces. The Dashnakist Armenians abrogated their Treaty with the Turks and after November 30, 1918 started to occupy the lands which were ratified for the Ottomans in the Brest-Litovsk and Batum Treaties. This time the nationalist Turkish forces fought back, and the Armenians completely surrendered on December 2, 1920 with the Gumru-Alexandropol Treaty, re-granting citizenship. Finally after the Lausanne Treaty in July 1923, the new Republic of Turkey granted a 2 years grace period for everyone to return back home and make their claims. The US establishment and citizens immediately placed demands for compensation for damages during war time. These requests were studied by a joint commission and on September 5, 1937 the US and Turkey reached a settlement with Turkey paying the agreed amount plus interest.

So we take from this that Law has a very useful and intimate relationship with the acquiring of money and new tactics need to be developed for this pursuit when the historical debate cannot be won and facts ignored.

According to the *Armenian Weekly*: *"Robertson... described how genocide law is evolving". He said: "Genocide courts have been developing international criminal law in the last 10 years...we have been refining, defining, and developing the law of genocide in ways*

that bear directly on the issue of whether you can characterize the events of 1915 as genocide.”

What this seems to mean is that Law is being developed to achieve a particular verdict that is desired. It is being “improved” so as to close the case on the Armenian issue that historians discuss openly.

Another way of looking at it is that Law is being twisted, manipulated and perverted to achieve the desired result.

Now that is very disturbing but it shows why Mr. Robertson and those who support him wish to silence historians and leave the issue to lawyers to settle. Objective documented history is concerned with establishing the facts through open debate among all-comers. The Law that is preferable for Mr. Robertson seems to be about organising a shifting of the goal-posts in order to achieve a pre-destined outcome among the legal elite, to the exclusion of the masses.

That is why I am here to help launch Mr. Aya’s book, *‘Twisted Law Versus Documented History’*. He is the very antithesis of all this and his book is an antidote to it.

Mr. Aya is an independent man determined to get at the truth, to engage in debate on the subject with one object: to establish a greater understanding of these events. He is open to persuasion and any evidence put before him. For Mr. Aya there is no pre-determined verdict. He belongs to no elite; he is neither an academic nor a paid servant of any government. And he is all the better for that, living by his own efforts and resources and the depth of his historical knowledge.

‘Twisted Law versus Proven Facts’ is the answer of a historian to a jurist who has stated that historians have no business in interfering in history. History should be the business of lawyers, according to Mr. Robertson, and not historians. Mr. Aya begs to differ. . .

Sükrü Aya’s method is straightforward. He finds the documented facts and lays them down for the judgement of the reader. His main sources are not what some might call ‘Denialist’ arguments but the writings of those on the opposing side of the issue. Many of the sources Mr. Aya uses are from the blog site of “armenians-1915.blogspot.com” posted by anonymous Armenians.

This book not only challenges Mr. Robertson on the grounds of historical fact and his understanding of history with regard to what happened to the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire. It also challenges Mr. Robertson on his knowledge of his own chosen specialty, Law.

Mr. Aya provides a detailed commentary on Mr. Robertson’s Opinion, challenging it, line by line, to get at the truth of the matter. He is not interested in

constructing a case or winning an argument as lawyers are but in establishing the facts, as historians ought to. In doing so he produces another valuable contribution to the debate surrounding the tragic events of 1915 and after.

I would also like to say a little bit about Sükrü Server Aya’s book *‘Preposterous Paradoxes of Ambassador Morgenthau’*. Mr. Aya’s approach is to take Morgenthau’s statements and identify the false, the prejudiced and impossible things about them. He compares Morgenthau’s published accounts with his diaries, showing that much of the Ambassador’s famous book on which the Western case against the Young Turks is based, is pure invention and probably ghost written. He analyses the political motives that led to Morgenthau’s deception, locating it in the context of propaganda, designed to get the US to participate in the Great War.

For this book Mr. Aya feels indebted to the Gomidas Institute in London, who published the Morgenthau Diary on the internet. I was surprised that Mr. Robertson made no reference to Gomidas or the director Mr. Sarafian, who speaks Turkish and has spent some time in the Ottoman Archives, accompanying Lord Avebury’s trip to Ankara to distribute books directly to the members of the Turkish Parliament.

Finally, I would like to say a little about Mr. Robertson’s one adventure into the world of history because it does not inspire me with confidence about his judgement on matters of ‘genocide’.

In the *Guardian* of 23rd April 2011 Robertson described John Cooke, Oliver Cromwell’s Solicitor General and the man he appointed to be Chief Justice in the conquest of Ireland as “my hero”. He has written a book about his “hero” called *‘The Tyrannicide Brief.’*

A reviewer in *‘Westminster Wisdom’* (October 2009) has the following estimation of Mr. Robertson as a historian, which is very relevant to his ‘Opinion’ on the Armenians:

“Geoffrey Robertson... evaluates purely as a modern lawyer rather than demonstrating any political or historical nous and demonstrates at every page his ignorance of and contempt for the many great historical works written on the period.”

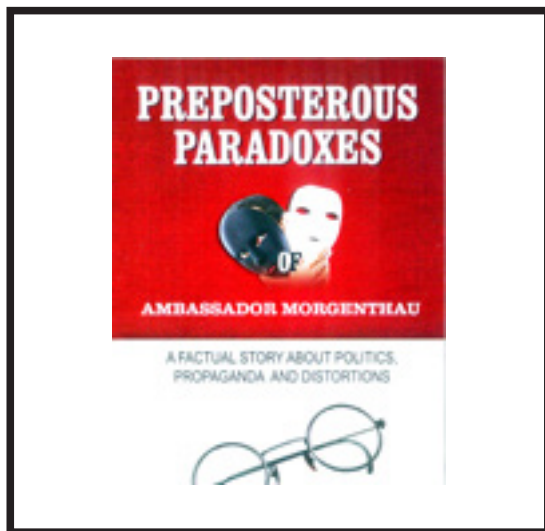
The reviewer continues, concerning Robertson’s claim that Cooke conducted the first “war crime trial” in history against the English King:

“Robertson does not really see Cooke as a figure in the historical past but as Robertson *avant la lettre*: Cooke was we are told the man who lit a blaze under tyrants, a blaze that would continue to the days of Milosevic and

Pinochet... and that he destroyed sovereign immunity. No matter that nowhere in the trial of Charles I... was the modern concept of war crimes mentioned, Robertson still believes that they believed in war crimes in exactly the same way as we did.”

This is twisted Law seeking to distort history.

Some of you may be familiar with the town of Drogheda in Ireland. It was here that the humanitarian relief sent to the starving Irish in 1848 by the Ottoman Sultan was landed. The town has a crescent in its emblem to this day. Two hundred years previously Cromwell conducted a notorious massacre in this town which historians recognise - but Mr. Robertson denies it took place.



After the massacre in Drogheda, Cromwell gave a justification of his actions to the English Parliament describing them as “a righteous judgment of God upon these barbarous wretches, who have imbrued their hands in so much innocent blood.” He claimed that “it will tend to prevent the effusion of blood for the future, which are satisfactory grounds to such actions, which otherwise work remorse and regret.”

In other words, the Irish had to be killed to prevent trouble in the future.

Cromwell’s and Cooke’s policy in Ireland would be called ‘genocide’ and ‘ethnic cleansing’ today. His statement about Irish hands “imbrued in blood.” is a reference to a rising in Ireland in 1641 in which tall tales reached England that up to 200,000 English colonists were massacred by the Irish in horrible ways. These tall tales were to be used for the purposes of conquest of Ireland and the attempted extermination of its people.

Mr. Robertson’s “hero” Justice Cooke declared that all Irish men and women living on October 23, 1641 or born in Ireland since that date were traitors and should be punished. Cooke provided the legal justification therefore for Oliver Cromwell’s policy that reduced

Ireland’s population by over a third, through death or expulsion to slavery in Barbados.

“These were turbulent times when England was under imminent threat from the Royalist army in Ireland” writes Robertson in ‘*England’s Bravest Barrister*’ (Counsel 2005). Presumably when a state is under threat of invasion, even by its lawful ruler, it must defend itself through extraordinary means.

I find it strange that Mr. Robertson is comfortable about all this and the parallels it has for his ‘Opinion’ on the Armenians. One historical fact here is that whilst in 1649 Ireland was a peaceful and loyal country, in 1915 the Ottomans very fighting for their very survival against invasion, blockade and insurrection.

Mr. Aya will be showing a short documentary later, just to acquaint you “not with the threat but actual state of war” which the League of Nations, British, French, Russian and American documents confirm in official memorandums. You can then decide about the Ottoman response to the situation that confronted them.

Let me say that I have come here from Belfast where a peace process has been taking place for a number of years with the object of achieving a historic compromise between Catholic and Protestant, Irish and British. That accommodation is taking place through our shared history and the disputes we have about it. I look forward to this being the case between Armenian and Turk over the tragic events of 1915 and after. But it can never come about through some kind of legal vengeance based on a pre-determined verdict.

I say let history and the people decide!

Preposterous Paradoxes of Ambassador Morgenthau by Sükrü Server Aya, Athol Books 2013

Justin McCarthy, Professor of History at the University of Louisville has written of this book: Sükrü Server Aya has done a service to our understanding of history with his analysis of Ambassador Morgenthau’s reports on the Armenian Question in the Ottoman Empire. Morgenthau has long held a prominent place in what has become the popularly accepted history of the events of World War I.

His descriptions of Armenian suffering feature prominently in accusations that the Ottomans committed genocide. The difficulty, as demonstrated by Aya, is that Morgenthau readily accepted fabricated evidence and himself falsified the record. Aya’s method is simple. He takes Morgenthau’s statements and identifies the false, the prejudiced, and the impossible. He compares Morgenthau’s written accounts with his diaries, showing that much of what Morgenthau allegedly heard from Ottoman officials on plans to exterminate Armenians was complete invention. He analyses the prejudices and political calculations that led to Morgenthau’s deception.

This book is not one of the polemics and baseless assertions that too often have characterised histories of the Turks and Armenians. It is a book of incredible detail that demands careful consideration.

The Assassination of JFK: Mischance or *Coup d'Etat*?

By Tim O'Sullivan

The official version of the story of the killing of President Kennedy in Dallas, Texas on November 22, 1963 is well known. Three shots rang out from a window on the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository Building behind the motorcade in which Kennedy was travelling. The final fatal bullet struck the president in the head. After being rushed to Parkland Hospital he expired beneath the eyes of medical staff. About three quarters of an hour after the first shooting police patrolman Tippit was cut down by gunfire from a handgun. The assailant was a nervous Lee Harvey Oswald. He was soon cornered by police in a cinema where he was arrested. Later he was charged with the murder of Tippit and of John Kennedy. He denied the charges and claimed before television cameras he was "a patsy", i.e. a scapegoat.

It was learned that Oswald was a young man of 24 of far left-wing political affiliations. He had for a time defected to the Soviet Union. He had returned with a Russian wife and became the father of two small children. As Oswald was being escorted from the basement of Dallas police headquarters for transfer to the more secure county jail TV cameras recorded the event live. Suddenly Jack Ruby, a Dallas strip club owner emerged from the crowd and fired a single shot from a 0.38 revolver into Oswald's abdomen. After some hours Oswald died in the same hospital as JFK two days earlier. Ruby was charged with first degree murder. He offered as an explanation for his action his grief at the death of the president. He claimed he wanted to save Mrs Kennedy the trauma of a trial. It was a bizarre and unprecedented explanation for what was bizarre and unprecedented behaviour. It carried the ring of a thin and expedient excuse. Theories of conspiracy were coaxed into life.

In 1964 a commission, headed by Chief Justice Earl Warren, carried out what was described as a thorough investigation of all matters pertaining to the tragic events in Dallas. The work on the ground was entrusted to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the FBI, led by its longstanding supremo, Jay Edgar Hoover. The Warren Report, consisting of an impressive 26 volumes, announced there had been no conspiracy on the part of either Oswald or Ruby. Oswald, a former US Marine, was described as a competent marksman. His motives were unclear. Factors which might have had an influence included his deep-rooted resentment of authority, his inability to enter into meaningful relationships with people, his urge to try to find a place in history and despair at times over failings in his various undertakings, his capacity for violence as evidenced by his alleged attempt, some months previously, on the life of the ultra-conservative General Edwin Walker and his avowed commitment to Communism.

Rumours regarding conspiracy continued to circulate, however. The radical leftist associations of Oswald helped to fuel these rumours. The report painted Ruby as a violent buffoon, a type of urban village idiot. Yet, in the public mind, owners of such establishments, such as what Ruby had presided over, where women disrobed to entertain late night drinkers, were creatures of a cynical, knowing underworld. They inhabited a domain where organised crime and public law enforcement

commingled and met on more or less equal terms. Ruby was said to be a low-life and a crook. In an age where there was paranoia about Communism the notion that Oswald was part of a dark political intrigue would not go away.

While the media as a whole accepted the official story at face value, there were from the very start exceptions. Within a week of Kennedy's death, from the pen of gossip columnist, crime reporter and radio and TV personality, Dorothy Kilgallen, appeared the following: [1]

"President Lyndon Johnson has been elevated so swiftly to his new high post that in one sense he has been snatched up into an ivory tower.

As Chief Executive, he is no longer in a position to hear the voices of ordinary people talking candidly.

If he could walk invisible along the streets of the nation and listen to ordinary people talking he would realize that he must make sure that the mystery of Lee Harvey Oswald is solved and laid before the nation down to the smallest shred of evidence.

.....

President Johnson has directed the FBI to look into every aspect of the case, but he must go a giant step further.

He must satisfy the public's uneasy mind about this peculiar assassination of the assassin

The case is closed is it? Well I'd like to know how in a big smart town like Dallas, a man like Jack Ruby - operator of a striptease honky tonk - could stroll in and out of police headquarters as if it were a health club at a time when a small army of law enforcers was keeping a "tight security guard" on Oswald.

That is why so many people are saying there is "something queer" about the killing of Oswald, something strange about the way his case was handled, and a great deal missing in the official account of his crime."

An agency report from the *Herald Tribune News Service* described how a former Marine colleague of Oswald, a Nelson Delgado, had been "badgered" by an FBI Warren Commission investigator in an effort to distort his testimony. Delgado claimed that during his Marine service Oswald was "a poor rifle shot". [2]

In 1964 Dorothy Kilgallen managed to obtain a private interview with Jack Ruby during his trial. She never published the text of that interview. In the *New York Journal-American* she wrote several articles about how important witnesses had been threatened by the Dallas Police or the FBI. On Sept 25th 1964 she published an interview with Acquilla Clemons, a witness to the shooting of patrolman Tippit. Clemons told Kilgallen she saw two men running from the scene, neither of whom fitted Oswald's description. Kilgallen was found dead in her New York apartment on 8th November 1965. The cause of death was described as an overdose of alcohol and barbiturates. Oddly, her corpse was discovered in a bedroom she was not in the habit of using. No trace of her Jack Ruby interview notes survives. Friends reported she had been planning to travel to New Orleans to further investigate the Kennedy case.

The publication of the Warren Report in late 1964 was met with a generally favourable reaction from the press and media. A number of people pored over the volumes of the report and came to a different conclusion. The attitude of author Harold Weisberg is self evident in the title of his 1965 book: *Whitewash*. In 1966 *Rush to Judgement* by Mark Lane appeared in print. This book inspired a famous like named documentary televised in the US in 1967. Witnesses reported hearing more than three shots. They heard shots coming from the front and right of the presidential motorcade as well as from the rear. Many of the Warren findings were called into question. [3] [4]

The District Attorney for New Orleans, Jim Garrison, as a result of doubts expressed by other parties began to look into the Warren Report. Eventually he became convinced that a group of right-wing activists connected to the CIA had been involved in a conspiracy to kill Kennedy. These had been formerly involved in the covert war against Castro's Cuba. A newspaper reported in February 1967 that Garrison was investigating the assassination. Five days later, one of the suspects, David Ferrie, was found dead in his New Orleans apartment. Garrison immediately announced Ferrie had been part of a murder conspiracy against JFK and that he had been making preparations for his arrest. Another suspect, Eladio del Valle, was found dead in a Miami car park, twelve hours after Ferrie had been found dead in New Orleans. A week later Garrison had Clay Shaw arrested. Shaw, a wealthy retired businessman was charged with conspiracy to murder Kennedy. The trial took place in February 1969 and Shaw was found not guilty. [5]

As part of the Garrison investigation, the *Zapruder film* was subpoenaed from Time-Life Corporation. This silent colour 8 mm film was taken by Abraham Zapruder as the motorcade passed. It shows the assassination in brutal graphic detail. It was purchased by Time-Life the morning after the assassination. The Warren Report reached its conclusions without reference to this extraordinary short film. Time-Life resisted the subpoena. The case went to the Supreme Court which ruled in favour of the film's release. A grainy version of the film was handed over. Soon bootleg versions were in the hands of various assassination researchers. [6]

The film shows the head of the president snap back and to the left as the fatal bullet strikes. Bone and brain matter are sprayed outwards to the back and left with the impulse of the bullet. Jackie Kennedy is seen climbing onto the back of the limousine in spontaneous desperation, vainly attempting to retrieve her husband's shattered body matter. It is indicative of a shot from the grassy knoll to the front and right. There, there was a wooden fence behind which gunmen could hide and take aim. Testimony from medical personnel substantiates this scenario. Dr Crenshaw told how he witnessed the president's wounds later in Parkland hospital. There was a small entry wound at the front of the neck. There was another small entry wound at the front right part of the head at the hairline and a massive exit wound at the back right side of the head. [7] Dr Don Teal Curtis also attended Kennedy at Parkland Hospital that fateful day. He reported: "the posterior part of his head was blown out". He was in no doubt that the exit wound in the head was at the back. [8]

Some defenders of the Warren Report have attempted to explain the sharp sudden backward motion of Kennedy's head in terms of a "neuromuscular reaction", a reflex of the nervous system in reaction to sudden trauma. They have listed no precedents from medical history for such a reaction. They have provided no back up information from the work of neuroscientists.

Dr Crenshaw described how the president's body, in defiance of Texas law, was forcefully taken from Parkland Hospital and

put on a plane bound for the east coast. According to Texan law an autopsy should first have been carried out in Dallas.

Later, after Lyndon Johnson was sworn in as the new president on board the plane a dubious and improper autopsy was carried out at Bethesda Naval Hospital, Maryland. According to Douglas P. Horne, an employee of the 1990s Assassination Records Review Board, this was so as to produce a report consistent with a fatal shot from behind. [9]

As a result of a new public awareness of the misuse of power by intelligence agencies such as the CIA and FBI in the wake of the Watergate scandal there emerged a new interest among politicians in the 1970s in a reinvestigation of the assassination. This produced the House Select Committee on Assassinations which looked into the JFK case along with that of Martin Luther King. The committee did not prove very effective. However, an audio recording from the Dallas police from the moments of the assassination was unearthed. It came from a microphone attached to one of the motorcycles escorting the motorcade. Acoustics experts examined the recording and were able to distinguish four rifle shots over a period of 7.91 seconds. One shot was determined to have come from the Grassy Knoll. The committee concluded that on the balance of probability the president was killed as a result of a conspiracy.

President Kennedy was extremely popular among the masses. However, among the powerful, he had made a wide range of enemies. Among these were Vice-president Johnson and J. Edgar Hoover, boss of the FBI. He had refused to authorize air support for the Cuban exiles who mounted a CIA backed invasion of Cuba in April 1961. They were soon cut to pieces by Castro's forces. After the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962 Kennedy was drawn to a new course in foreign policy. A policy of covert warfare against Cuba was halted. It is noteworthy that a book by Cuban intelligence expert Fabian Escalante is called *The Secret War: CIA Covert Operations against Cuba, 1959-62*. By 1963 Operation Mongoose, the covert war on Cuba, had been called off by Kennedy.

On June 10th 1963 JFK delivered his moving American University speech. It included the words:

"Today the expenditure of billions of dollars every year on weapons acquired for the purpose of making sure we never need them is essential to the keeping of peace. But surely the acquisition of such idle stockpiles—which can only destroy and never create—is not the only, much less the most efficient, means of assuring peace. I speak of peace, therefore, as the necessary, rational end of rational men. I realize the pursuit of peace is not as dramatic as the pursuit of war, and frequently the words of the pursuers fall on deaf ears. But we have no more urgent task."

He sought a world where the threat from nuclear weapons could be eliminated. As well as seeking the end of the nuclear arms race he actively opposed the proliferation of nuclear weapons technology.

Kennedy was developing the idea of co-operation with the Soviet Union in space exploration. [10] This was something wildly at odds with the spirit of the Cold War. He was also reaching out to Cuba via intermediaries. He was beginning the process of withdrawing military advisers from South Vietnam.

However, there were forces which could perceive such changes as betrayal and sell-out and as an impediment to the realising of grandiose plans.

Kennedy had provoked the wealthy and influential Texas oilmen by his plan to withdraw the *oil depletion allowance* which enhanced their profits. Robert Kennedy, brother of JFK and Attorney General, had pursued a vigorous campaign

against organised crime. The Kennedy dynasty had made a great number of powerful enemies.

According to commentator Michael Parenti (writing in 1996):

“Sociologist David Simone compiled a study of the books published on the Kennedy assassination, some 600 titles, and found that 20 percent of them blamed either a lone assassin or the mafia or the Cubans or Russians. The other 80 percent ascribed the assassination to a conspiracy linked to U.S. intelligence agencies, some of these also saying that mobsters were involved at the operational level. Ignoring this 80 percent of the literature, publications like the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* have listed the various theories about the [JFK](#) assassination as follows: (a) lone assassin, (b) mafia, (c) Cubans/Soviets, and (d) the “Oliver Stone movie theory.” In other words, they ignore the existence of a vast literature from which the [Oliver Stone movie, JFK] is derived and ascribe the critical theme presented within the film solely to the imagination of a film maker. The mainstream press would have us believe that the notion of a state-sponsored assassination conspiracy and cover-up came out of a movie—when actually the movie was based on a rich and revealing investigative literature.

Like the Warren Commission itself, the press assumed a priori that Oswald was the killer. The only question it asked was: Did Oswald act alone? The answer was a loudly orchestrated YES. Meanwhile, almost every in-depth investigator had a different conclusion: Oswald did not act at all. He was not one of the people who shot Kennedy, although he was involved in another way, as a fall guy, in his own words ‘just a patsy.’” [11] [12]

Only a powerful combination of intelligence/security agencies, organised criminals, politicians and business leaders would be able to carry out such a daring murder and cover-up.

Very many material witnesses have died in suspicious circumstances since that day in 1963. Much documentation related to the case is still classified, a half century afterwards. These matters speak for themselves.

Yet there have been people who have claimed inside knowledge. E Howard Hunt, the one time Watergate burglar, made a deathbed confession of his participation in the conspiracy as part of the CIA. The code name for the operation he claimed was “the Big Event”. Madeline Duncan Brown, onetime mistress of Lyndon Johnson, gave an interview before she died in 2002 to author Robert Gaylon Ross. She told how, at a party at the house of Clint Murchison in Dallas the night before the killing, Johnson emerged from a conference and confided “those SOBs would never embarrass him again”.

Irish Foreign Affairs has carried a number of articles from John Martin on the Kennedy killing. These articles have not ventured into true “conspiracy buff” territory. There is a mass of evidence related to the assassination much of it unearthed by independent researchers. The Warren Commission evidence represents only a subset of this greater mass. John has restricted himself to this subset and so by definition he must reach conclusions much the same as the Warren Report. He did mention the work of Anthony Summers. Summers is not typical of independent researchers in this field. At a talk he gave in Dublin a decade ago attended by this writer, Summers claimed that the number of material witnesses in the case who died by misadventure was not statistically significant. Given the great actual number of such individuals this does not inspire confidence. It is hard to number Summers among serious proponents of conspiracy in relation to the assassination.

Could it be JFK died not as a result of the mischance of crossing the path of a bewildered young man but as the result of a cunningly orchestrated *coup d'état*?

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Did the US close their embassy to the Vatican?

The US are relocating their embassy to the Vatican to the same building as their Italian embassy in Rome; each embassy still has a separate address. This address is reportedly slightly nearer to the Vatican than the present building. Israel and Great Britain also have their Vatican and Italian embassies housed within one building, with separate entrances and addresses.

Should this be seen as a downgrading of US-Vatican relations?

‘The Fact Checker’ Glenn Kessler, in the *Washington Post* 4.12.13, says:

“The *National Catholic Reporter* (US) wrote that the move was “drawing fire from five former American envoys despite the tacit consent of the Vatican itself.” The paper’s account was thorough and balanced, quoting a number of former U.S. ambassadors, Republican and Democrat, who said they feared that being perceived as an adjunct of the Rome embassy threatened to degrade the importance of the Vatican embassy.

CNN quoted Vatican officials as saying that they understood the security concerns and had accepted the shift, as long as the address and entrance remain different. (One unidentified official was quoted as saying the move was “an exception, not the ideal, but not the end of the world.”)”

A Good Deal for Iran

by David Morrison

A Joint Plan of Action [1] was agreed between Iran and the US in Geneva on 24 November 2013.

Nominally, this agreement was between Iran and the P5+1 (that is, the five permanent members of the Security Council plus Germany) but in reality it was between Iran and the US. The groundwork for it was laid in secret high-level discussions between Iran and the US which began in March 2013, while President Ahmadinejad was still in power in Iran [2].

Israel was kept in the dark about these discussions until late September. By then, President Rouhani had concluded a very successful visit to New York, which included addressing the UN General Assembly and culminated in a telephone conversation with President Obama. Only then, when a deal seemed to be in the offing, was Prime Minister Netanyahu informed about these secret discussions. He was told by President Obama, when they met in the White House on 30 September 2013 – which may account for his near hysterical speech to the UN General Assembly the next day.

The Joint Plan of Action

The Joint Plan of Action contains an interim agreement to last for six months at least, setting out a series of steps to be taken by Iran, in exchange for a small scale reduction in economic sanctions. The Plan also establishes the principles on which “a mutually-agreed long-term comprehensive solution that would ensure Iran’s nuclear programme will be exclusively peaceful” is to be based:

- An Iranian reaffirmation that “under no circumstances will Iran ever seek or develop any nuclear weapons”
- “Iran to fully enjoy its right to nuclear energy for peaceful purposes under the relevant articles of the NPT in conformity with its obligations therein”
- “a mutually defined enrichment programme with practical limits and transparency measures to ensure the peaceful nature of the programme”
- “the comprehensive lifting of all UN

Security Council sanctions, as well as multilateral and national sanctions related to Iran’s nuclear programme”

So, the US has agreed that Iran is going to have enrichment capability on a permanent basis, albeit with mutually agreed constraints on its operation and sufficient transparency measures to assure the outside world that its nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes.

In other words, the endgame for the US is that Iran be treated like other states in this world, for example, Argentina, Brazil, Germany, Japan and the Netherlands, which possess enrichment facilities but have not developed nuclear weapons. As John Kerry said at his press conference afterwards:

“Iran says it doesn’t want a nuclear weaponTherefore, it ought to be really easy to do the things that other nations do who enrich, and prove that their program is peaceful. So that’s what we’re looking for.” [3]

Extraordinary U-turn by the US

This is an extraordinary U-turn by the US, which has barely got a mention in mainstream media reporting on the agreement.

The BBC’s Middle East Editor Jeremy Bowen described it as “a quite remarkable diplomatic breakthrough” but he didn’t give the slightest clue as to why, having been at daggers drawn over Iran’s nuclear activities for more than a decade, there was suddenly a meeting of minds between the US and Iran. The answer is that the US has reversed its policy and the final agreement will be essentially on Iran’s terms, since it will include Iran’s bottom line, namely, the continuation of enrichment.

The other fundamental fact about the agreement is that, as we will see, it could have been reached in 2005, on more favourable terms to the US, had the US been prepared to concede Iran’s bottom line at that time.

For the last decade and more, the US has expended an immense amount of political capital dragooning the world into applying political and economic pressure on Iran in an attempt to force it to cease enrichment. These efforts have failed abysmally: a decade ago there were no centrifuges enriching uranium in Iran; today, according to

an IAEA report last August [4], around 19,000 centrifuges are installed (though only about 10,000 of them are in operation).

At the instigation of the US, the Security Council passed six Chapter VII resolutions, the first in 2006 and the sixth in 2010, demanding that Iran cease enrichment and various other nuclear activities. Now, the interim agreement allows Iran to continue uranium enrichment over the next six months with minor curtailments and there isn't the slightest doubt that any long-term comprehensive agreement to be negotiated will do likewise.

In addition, in the past two years Iran has been subject to ferocious economic pressure, which was not endorsed by the Security Council. It is the product of legislation passed by the US Congress in December 2011 at the behest of the Israeli lobby in the US. The legislation requires the US administration to bully other states around the world to stop (or at least reduce) purchases of Iranian oil, by threatening to cut off foreign financial institutions from the US financial system, if they conduct transactions with the Central Bank of Iran or other Iranian financial institutions.

Now, however, the US has conceded defeat and accepted that Iran is going to have a domestic uranium enrichment capability on a permanent basis, albeit with mutually agreed constraints on its operation.

No right to enrichment

At his press conference, the US Secretary of State, John Kerry, was at pains to emphasise that it “does not say that Iran has a right to enrichment”. He continued:

“No matter what interpretive comments are made, it is not in this document. There is no right to enrich within the four corners of the NPT. And this document does not do that.”

It is true that the Plan of Action does not state explicitly that Iran has a right to enrichment under the NPT, but what does that matter when it is going to have enrichment in practice with US approval.

(It was strange to hear this coming out John Kerry's mouth, since in an interview with the *Financial Times* in June 2009 [5], when he was Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he said that Iran had “a right to peaceful nuclear power and to enrichment in that purpose” and described the inflexibility by the Bush administration about Iran as “bombastic diplomacy” that “wasted energy” and “hardened the lines”.)

Kerry acknowledges US failure

John Kerry actually acknowledged that the US inspired sanctions against Iran had been a complete failure, saying:

“In ... 2003, when the Iranians made an offer to the former Administration with respect to their nuclear program, there were 164 centrifuges. That offer was not taken. Subsequently, sanctions came in, and today there are 19,000 centrifuges and growing.”

The offer to which he is referring was actually made in 2005 when President Rouhani was Iran's chief nuclear negotiator. To be precise, it was made on 23 March 2005 in the Quai d'Orsay in Paris [6] to representatives of the EU3 (the UK, France and Germany) by the present Iranian Foreign Minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif. It involved the continuation of domestic enrichment, but it also proposed unprecedented measures to reassure the outside world that Iran's nuclear activities were for peaceful purposes, measures of the kind that the US is now seeking.

(This was followed by further even more generous offers from Iran, including the most remarkable offer of all by President Ahmadinejad at the UN General Assembly on 17 September 2005, when he said that “the Islamic Republic of Iran is prepared to engage in serious partnership with private and public sectors of other countries in the implementation of [a] uranium enrichment program in Iran” [7]).

John Kerry did not acknowledge that the EU3, and by extension the US, could have reached a settlement with Iran at that time, had the US been prepared to countenance Iran having enrichment on its own soil. But it wasn't – and the EU3 bowed to Washington's wishes and refused to accept the offer even as a basis for negotiations. With that, the possibility of a settlement, which contained unprecedented transparency measures, was aborted at a time when Iran's enrichment programme was in its infancy.

(For discussion of this Iranian offer and the events which followed from the EU3's refusal to even consider it, see my book with Peter Osborne *A Dangerous Delusion: Why the West is Wrong about Nuclear Iran* [8] and my article *Has the US conceded defeat and accepted Iran's right to uranium enrichment?* [9]).

Selling point for the US

The interim agreement's selling point for the US is that it involves arrangements that will help prevent Iran developing nuclear weapons, if it has a mind to do so, and will ensure that the world knows almost immediately, if it ever did take steps in that direction.

Not that there is any hard evidence that Iran has, or ever had, any intention of developing nuclear weapons. Iran's leaders have repeatedly denied that they have any ambitions to do so. What is more, in 2005 the Supreme Leader of Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, issued a fatwa – a religious edict – saying that “the production, stockpiling, and use of nuclear weapons are forbidden under Islam and that the Islamic Republic of Iran shall never acquire these weapons” [10] (page 121) and he has repeated this message many times since then [11].

Recently (8 October 2013), Sergey Lavrov had this to say about the issue in an interview with RT:

“As for the statements regarding the Iranians playing another game and trying to dupe people, I haven't seen any confirmation by any intelligence – be it Russian, be it European, be it the United States, be it Mossad, which would categorically say that the Iranian leadership has taken a political decision to have a military nuclear program. No intelligence agency on earth was able so far to make this conclusion. And we spoke to our American colleagues just recently. They agreed that Iran hasn't taken a political decision to go military in its nuclear program” [12]

Obama says agreement cuts off Iran's most likely paths to a bomb

Commenting on the interim agreement, President Obama said:

"Iran has committed to halting certain levels of enrichment and neutralizing part of its stockpiles.

"Iran cannot use its next-generation centrifuges, which are used for enriching uranium.

"Iran cannot install or start up new centrifuges, and its production of centrifuges will be limited.

"Iran will halt work at its plutonium reactor.

"And new inspections will provide extensive access to Iran's nuclear facilities and allow the international community to verify whether Iran is keeping its commitments.

"These are substantial limitations which will help prevent Iran from building a nuclear weapon. Simply put, they cut off Iran's most likely paths to a bomb." [13]

These comments are more or less correct. Let us look at each in turn:

(1) Iran has committed to halting certain levels of enrichment and neutralizing part of its stockpiles.

Iran has agreed to limit enrichment to 5% (the level appropriate to fuel power reactors) from now on and to convert half of its existing 20% stockpile to uranium oxide to fuel its Tehran Research Reactor and dilute the other half to no more than 5%. When this is done, there will be no 20% enriched uranium in a form that can be readily enriched to 90% for a bomb, if Iran had a mind to do so.

This means that the scenario set out by Binyamin Netanyahu at the UN General Assembly in September 2013 (famously, with the aid of a cartoon) is no longer possible. Then he envisaged Iran soon having enough 20% enriched uranium to be able to produce enough 90% enriched uranium for a single bomb in a matter of months, if it wasn't stopped by military action. Then Netanyahu predicted that Iran would have enough 90% enriched uranium for a bomb by the spring/summer of 2013:

"By next spring, at most by next summer at current enrichment rates, they will have finished the medium enrichment [that is, enrichment to 20%] and move on to the final stage [that is, enrichment to 90%]. From there, it's only a few months, possibly a few weeks before they get enough enriched uranium for the first bomb."

This prophecy like others from him about Iran's nuclear activities has not come to pass. Once the measures set out in the interim agreement are complete any possibility of it coming to pass will be eliminated, since there will be no 20% enriched uranium in a form that can be readily enriched to 90% for a weapon.

Ceasing to enrich to 20% is not a great imposition for Iran. It began enriching to 20% in 2010, after failing to obtain fuel for its Tehran Research Reactor from abroad. It is generally believed that it now has enough 20% enriched uranium to manufacture fuel for this reactor for many years. So, stopping enrichment to 20% is not a great imposition.

Iran also agreed not to increase its existing stockpile of 3.5% enriched uranium held as uranium hexafluoride gas over the six month interim period. The interim agreement does not require enrichment to 3.5% to be halted, but any uranium newly enriched to 3.5% is to be converted into uranium oxide, so that it cannot be readily enriched further.

In the March 2005 offer, Iran proposed to do this immediately for all low enriched uranium.

Note that Iran will retain the capability of enriching to 20% and even to over 90%, but with inspectors in their enrichment plants daily (see below) that will not be possible without being detected by the IAEA.

(2) Iran cannot use its next-generation centrifuges, which are used for enriching uranium. Iran cannot install or start up new centrifuges, and its production of centrifuges will be limited.

Iran has installed a few next-generation centrifuges, which can enrich more quickly and therefore have the potential to enrich to weapons grade in a much shorter time. Iran has agreed not to start up these (or other) new centrifuges and to limit its building of centrifuges to the replacement of those needed to replace damaged machines. In other words, in the next six months, Iran will not be able to increase its stockpile of centrifuges, or to increase its rate of enrichment by putting more centrifuges into operation.

(3) Iran will halt work at its plutonium reactor

Here Obama is referring to the heavy water reactor which Iran is in the process of building at Arak. If it was in operation, it could be a source for plutonium, which can be used as fissile material for a bomb (as an alternative to 90% enriched uranium). However, the reactor isn't in operation.

To obtain plutonium for a bomb it has to be extracted from "spent" fuel from the reactor (that is, fuel that has been in an operating reactor for some time, certainly months, perhaps years). The process of extraction of plutonium from spent fuel is referred to as "reprocessing" - and Iran hasn't got any facilities for "reprocessing". So, the Arak reactor was years away from being a possible source of fissile material for a bomb.

(There is already an operational nuclear reactor in Iran in a nuclear power station at Bushehr on the Persian Gulf. The reactor was installed and fuelled by Russia and is operating under IAEA supervision. Theoretically, "spent" fuel from this reactor, which is supposed to be returned to Russia, could be "reprocessed" to extract plutonium, if Iran had a means of doing so. This possibility is never mentioned by those who kick up a fuss about the danger of Iran producing plutonium from the Arak reactor which isn't operational, and it isn't mentioned in

the Plan of Action. This demonstrates that the fuss about the possibility of plutonium being obtained from the Arak reactor is bogus.)

In the March 2005 offer, Iran proposed that it refrain from “reprocessing” spent fuel rods, thereby precluding the production of plutonium.

(4) New inspections will provide extensive access to Iran’s nuclear facilities and allow the international community to verify whether Iran is keeping its commitments.

This includes daily access by IAEA inspectors to the enrichment plants at Natanz and Fordow.

In the March 2005 offer, Iran proposed to allow continuous onsite presence of IAEA inspectors at Iran’s conversion and enrichment plants.

It also includes the provision of “certain key data and information called for in the Additional Protocol to Iran’s IAEA Safeguards Agreement [with the IAEA] and Modified Code 3.1”. (For explanation of these, see Annex to *Has the US conceded defeat and accepted Iran’s right to uranium enrichment?* [10]).

In the March 2005 offer, Iran proposed to continue to apply the Additional Protocol and Modified Code 3.1. The level of access for the IAEA and of reporting to the IAEA, which has now been agreed, was in operation in 2005 and would have been continued had the EU3 had accepted Iran’s March 2005 offer.

A good deal for Iran

The interim agreement is a good deal for Iran: in exchange for minor curtailments to its present nuclear activities, it has received a small scale reduction in economic sanctions. The latter includes ending the ban on the supply of spare parts for civil aircraft and making it easier to buy pharmaceuticals and medical equipment.

Much more important, the way has been opened to Iran’s right to enrichment being accepted internationally and sanctions being lifted completely. That being so, it is inconceivable that Iran will fail to carry out its obligations under the agreement. More likely, it will go further than it is required to do according to the letter of the agreement – and the US will have no excuse to re-impose the sanctions.

President Obama himself has the power to reduce sanctions as prescribed in the interim agreement. But is it possible that the US Congress will undermine the interim deal by imposing additional sanctions in the next months? It’s possible, but not likely.

The interim agreement says that during the interim period:

“The US Administration, acting consistent with the respective roles of the President and the Congress, will refrain from imposing new nuclear-related sanctions.”

This implies that if the Congress were to legislate for more sanctions in the next six months the President would have to veto the legislation, otherwise the agreement would be breached, but if enough votes are mustered in Congress to override the presidential veto, it wouldn’t.

My guess is that the White House will succeed in persuading Congress not to legislate for more sanctions. I say so for two reasons:

- (a) It is clear that the elimination of Iran’s existing stock of 20% enriched uranium will make it next to impossible for Iran to acquire highly enriched uranium for a bomb, if it had a mind to do so. In other words, the scenario set out by Prime Minister Netanyahu at the UN General Assembly in September 2012 with the aid of a cartoon is no longer possible.
- (b) There is popular support for the agreement in the US. According to a Reuters/Ipsos survey published on 26 November 2013 [14], 44% of Americans support the interim deal and 22% oppose it. In the event of the deal failing, only 20% of Americans favour the use of military force against Iran.

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“A Very Perfect Instrument” The ferocity and failure of America’s sanctions apparatus

By Andrew Cockburn

Germany 1919

At the beginning of World War I, Britain set up a blockade designed, according to one of its architects, Winston Churchill, to “starve the whole population of Germany — men, women and children, old and young, wounded and sound — into submission.” By January 1918, the country’s food supply had been reduced by half and its civilians were dying almost at the same rate as its soldiers. When the war finally ended eleven months later, the Germans assumed the blockade would be lifted and they would be fed again.

Instead the blockade went on, and was even tightened. By the following spring, German authorities were projecting a threefold increase in infant mortality. In March 1919, General Herbert Plumer, commander of British occupation forces in the Rhineland, told Prime Minister David Lloyd George that his men could no longer stand the sight of “hordes of skinny and bloated children pawing over the offal” from the British camps.

In a later memoir, the economist John Maynard Keynes, at the time a chief adviser to the British Treasury, attributed this collective punishment of the civilian population

“most profoundly to a cause inherent in bureaucracy. The blockade had become by that time a very perfect instrument. It had taken four years to create and was Whitehall’s finest achievement; it had evoked the qualities of the English at their subtlest. Its authors had grown to love it for its own sake; it included some recent improvements which would be wasted if it came to an end; it was very complicated, and a vast organization had established a vested interest. The experts reported, therefore, that it was our one instrument for imposing our peace terms on Germany, and that once suspended it could hardly be re-imposed.”

Not until five months after the armistice did the Allies allow Germany to import food — not out of concern for the ongoing death and suffering, but out of fear that desperate Germans would follow the Russians into Bolshevism. By the time it was lifted, the peacetime blockade had killed about a quarter of a million people, including many children who either starved or died from diseases associated with malnutrition. There were efforts meanwhile among the victors to blame the food crisis on the postwar chaos inside Germany itself. What Woodrow Wilson approvingly called “this economic, peaceful, silent deadly remedy” retained its place in the armory of nations powerful enough to use it, preserved in international law as a mechanism for dealing with recalcitrant foes.

The Cold War

During the Cold War, the United States deployed sanctions and embargoes on a routine basis to punish countries that had earned Washington’s disfavor. The Cubans were embargoed for having a revolution and rejecting U.S. supervision. The Vietnamese were embargoed for having the temerity to win the Vietnam War — and after the Vietnamese army ejected the genocidal Khmer Rouge from Cambodia, U.S. sanctions were brought to bear on that country too, down to school pencils. Sanctions also crushed the economy of Sandinista-ruled Nicaragua, where household goods such as toilet paper became virtually unobtainable.

Thanks to the Cold War standoff between the United States and the Soviet Union, countries subject to American sanctions, most notably Cuba, could survive on trade and aid

from the communist bloc. The fall of the Berlin Wall altered this equation. The United States was suddenly free to enforce peacetime sanctions quite in the spirit of 1919. Today, as America’s armies of occupation fly home and defense budgets get squeezed, such sanctions have in fact become our principal tool for global enforcement.

This tool has turned into a “machine unto itself,” claims Vali Nasr, who served in the State Department during Obama’s first term and is now dean of the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. “It becomes a rote habit,” he says, “operated by a bureaucracy that is always looking to close that last loophole. Pressure becomes the end, not the means.” The roster of the twenty-three separate U.S. sanctions programs ongoing today — a living memorial to the national-security preoccupations of past decades — tends to support Nasr’s contention, ranging alphabetically from the Balkans to Cuba (on the list since the Kennedy Administration) to Zimbabwe.

The Iraq Stabilization and Insurgency Sanctions Regulations are on the list, too, though sanctions on Iraq supposedly ended with the 2003 invasion. (There are still Americans in jail for violating them.) Iran has been targeted ever since the takeover of the U.S. Embassy in 1979, when David Cohen, now the Treasury Department’s undersecretary for terrorism and financial intelligence and the overall supervisor of American sanctions operations, was in high school. In consequence, Iran has lost 60 percent of its oil exports; it is not free to spend the money earned from remaining oil sales; it cannot insure its tankers; it has almost no access to the international banking system. Its economy is shrinking and inflation is gathering speed.

Though food and medicine are theoretically exempt from this blockade, Iranians face huge obstacles in importing them. Three thousand Iranian cargo ships are stranded. The dragnet is global. An American who inherits an Iranian business, for example, risks arrest for violating sanctions. Individuals face jail time for exporting medical equipment to Iran or investing in an Iranian certificate of deposit. Costco recently acknowledged that it had allowed six employees of targeted Iranian institutions in Japan and Britain to buy its deeply discounted goods — a clear violation of sanctions — and duly struck them from its membership rolls.

Elsewhere, Syrians shivered for much of last winter because sanctions had halted supplies of home heating oil. Lebanese banks, a traditional refuge for Syrian capital, have been threatened as well. Despite its recent elevation in U.S. favor, Burma still finds itself facing sanctions, either active or threatened. The system is enforced with punitive rigor. In sharp contrast to the benign treatment meted out to Wall Street banks following the 2008 crash, fines for sanctions infractions have risen to the hundreds of millions for foreign banks caught transferring Iranian payments.

Just as air power has evolved from the area bombing of entire cities during World War II to “precision” drone strikes, so the theory and practice of sanctions has evolved from straightforward blockades into a more ambitious and intricate system known as “conduct-based targeting,” aimed at the economic paralysis of thousands of designated “entities” — people, companies, organizations. Drone operations attract

widespread comment, inquiry, denunciation. Our modern economic warfare, though it bends the global financial system to its ends and can blight entire societies, operates well below the radar, frequently justified as a benign alternative to military action.

“Sanctions are the soft edge of hard power,” said Robert McBrien as he put aside the broad-brimmed hat and dark glasses he’d worn to our meeting at a downtown Washington hotel. “They make people suffer. They hurt. They can destroy.”

McBrien may be considered an authority on the subject, given his twenty-four years directing Global Targeting at the Office of Foreign Assets Control, the obscure but immensely potent executor of U.S. sanctions warfare. OFAC is headquartered in the Treasury Annex, a building across from the White House that bears no outward identification save a plaque attesting to its former role as the site of the Freedman’s Bank, which served emancipated slaves. The two hundred professionals in the well-guarded offices almost all carry SCI (Sensitive Compartmented Information) clearances, beyond Top Secret, authorizing them to read decrypted signals intelligence. Most of them are lawyers — increasingly, former federal prosecutors — and they tend to stay in the job.

Cohen has no qualms about acknowledging that his office does more than just enforce sanctions. “We very much see ourselves as involved in the policymaking process,” he told me.

“First they make the policy,” commented a Washington attorney with years of experience of the system. “Then they write the laws. Then they enforce the laws. Imagine if the police did all of that. It would be a scary world.”

“Specially Designated Nationals”

Should OFAC’s targetees (“I hired most of them,” says McBrien) even suspect that you are in some way connected with a violation of a U.S. sanctions program, you may suddenly discover you are an SDN (Specially Designated National). Roughly 5,500 people, organizations, and businesses are listed as such on the OFAC website. SDNs are essentially economic pariahs. Not only are they cut off from any contact with the U.S. financial system, but banks who deal with them are threatened with similar exclusion. Given that almost all international business is carried out in dollars or euros — and that the Europeans are willing partners in our sanctions enforcement — this is a persuasive threat. As a former Obama Administration official told me, “There are businessmen all over the world terrified that they might have had lunch with an SDN.”

“I tend to like sanctions programs that come as a complete surprise,” remarked McBrien, sipping an iced tea. “It’s shock and awe.” Thus, the first you may know of your newfound status is when a U.S. bank declines your ATM card, followed shortly after by a listing on the website for all to see. Finding out precisely why you have been listed can be tough, since OFAC is under no obligation to give anything but a vague explanation to Americans, and none at all to foreigners, nor even to wait for airtight proof that you are engaged in a sanctioned activity.

“This is considered an administrative matter,” explains Erich Ferrari, a Washington lawyer specializing in relief for SDNs. “So all they need is a ‘reason to believe’ you are up to something, which can be based on a press clipping or a blog entry. You start by listing your assets and business activities for them. They send you questions. You reply. And so it goes on,” he said, laughing ruefully, “for a number of years.”

Given a good lawyer and a lot of time, an SDN can get off the list, though with one’s assets frozen there is obviously a problem paying legal bills. OFAC will release money for fees —

but it caps them at a rate equivalent to \$175 an hour, chump change for the D.C. bar. And while foreign SDNs may have liquid funds, their lawyers risk having their own names added to the roster.

“The same people who put you on the list are the ones who decide whether to take you off,” says Ferrari. “It’s up to them whether to review the case. Often the evidence is classified and they won’t show it to me.” The classified information comes courtesy of OFAC’s access to U.S. intelligence, including the NSA’s ubiquitous communications intercepts. (“When you’ve just talked to a European finance minister,” one former Treasury official told me, “it’s quite useful to read the transcript of the call he then makes to the head of his central bank.”)

Death can bring relief from the list — but not automatically. Osama bin Laden is still there, the multiple spellings of his name meticulously noted. “Just because a party is dead does not mean that they cannot or will not be targeted for U.S. sanctions,” observes Ferrari. “Of course, it’s hard to change their behavior. But without the targeted party alive to contest the designation, no one is going to be overly concerned with that aspect of it.”

The system, according to the men who built it, has grown gradually but inexorably. The immediate predecessor to OFAC was created in 1950, when the Chinese entered the Korean War and President Truman decided to freeze all Chinese and North Korean assets. A Treasury official named Richard Newcomb took it over in 1987, when it had a staff of twenty, and ran it for the next seventeen years — one of those powerful Washington bureaucrats unknown to the wider world. He reminisced proudly to me about the invention of the SDN, which took place around the time the Cold War ended. It “really was a [new] foreign-policy tool in the state’s quiver,” Newcomb said.

He recalled a brief period in 1990 when it appeared that peace might break out all over and even the long-standing Cuban embargo was apparently winding down. “A major network was going to broadcast its morning show from Havana!”

Then, on August 2, 1990, came news that Saddam Hussein had invaded Kuwait. Summoned to an urgent meeting in the White House Situation Room, Newcomb was asked how quickly the U.S. could freeze Saddam’s assets. “I told them, ‘You can implement it overnight,’ and they woke up Bush to sign the order,” he said. “It was very exciting.” With the Soviets a spent force, the U.N. could easily be brought into line, and Iraq was soon under total blockade. As the merits of war with Iraq were hotly debated in Washington, sanctions drew hearty endorsements from the antiwar faction as a peaceful alternative: surely they could achieve the same objective if given “time to work.”

A Golden Age for Sanctions

It was the dawn of a golden age for sanctions. OFAC’s portfolio steadily expanded, targeting opponents of the Israeli-Palestinian peace accords, zeroing in on the Serbian regime of Slobodan Milošević, shredding the business empires of Colombian cartel chiefs. And even before 9/11, OFAC had assumed a growing role in counterterrorism as Newcomb connected with Richard Clarke, a rising star in the security and intelligence apparatus.

Though Saddam was long gone from Kuwait, sanctions on Iraq were still a major operation. Meanwhile, the sanctions on Iran imposed back in 1979 had never been totally lifted. Along with enforcing a trade embargo, Carter had seized \$12 billion of Iran’s money held in American banks. Supposedly the money was to be released and the trade embargo lifted once the embassy hostages came home, but a large portion remained frozen pending claims by U.S. corporations over contracts signed with the shah but never fulfilled. As McBrien puts it, “We grabbed much of Iran’s wealth and kept it.”

Formal sanctions were resurrected and gradually strengthened during the early 1990s, banning arms sales and spare parts for Iran's American-built warplanes and airliners, as well as all imports of Iranian oil into the United States. By 1995, U.S. investment in Iran's petroleum industry was forbidden, followed by a further bar on U.S. trade with the country. But efforts to get other countries to support the campaign withered in the face of European resistance.

Indeed, up until this point, sanctions had suffered from a fundamental flaw: true effectiveness required international cooperation. The Cubans had survived decades of U.S. embargo because the rest of the world had seen no reason to join in. But all that began to change when the United States learned to use its dominance of the international financial system as a weapon.

In 2004, George W. Bush appointed Stuart Levey, then an ambitious Justice Department lawyer, to oversee all sanctions operations. Levey realized that he could pressure foreign banks into cutting off relations with Iranian banks by threatening their access to U.S. financial markets — a process that Cohen has demurely described as a “vigorous outreach and education effort.” Since all international banks must be able to trade in dollars, this was a formidable threat. The point was driven home by an \$80 million fine, huge for its time, imposed on a Dutch bank, ABN Amro, that had processed dollar transactions for Iranian and Libyan banks. The Amro settlement set a pattern, with fines climbing toward \$1 billion within a few years.

“Secondary Sanctions”

The beauty of the “secondary sanctions” system lay in its self-enforcing nature. Repeatedly reminded of what could happen if they were caught dealing with a targeted Iranian, terrified foreign banks preferred to avoid contact with any Iranian of any description, whether they were on the target list or not. Meanwhile, the banks and other major corporations hurriedly expanded their “compliance” departments, a fruitful source of employment for OFAC veterans, to further ensure against unwitting contamination.

So for all the claims of precise, “conduct-based” targeting, Levey's revolution rendered sanctions far more blunt and indiscriminate than officially advertised. In theory, trade in humanitarian goods, food, and medicine has always been exempt — but if payments for such goods cannot be processed, then the effect is the same. Meanwhile, European governments were now obediently adopting their own stringent sanctions against Iran. Paris was especially vigorous in leading this united front — as a former French diplomat told me, the foreign ministry “drank from the cup of neoconservatism.”

If Iranians hoped that the election of Barack Obama would bring some relief, the new president's retention of Levey in his post was a clear indication that little would change. The same might be said of Levey's trip to Israel two weeks after the election. An instructive cable released by WikiLeaks detailed not only his reassurances to a slew of Israeli officials, but also the progress report he delivered on his success in curtailing most “major players” from doing business with Iran, as well as plans to hit Iran's oil-refining and insurance industries.

In contrast to Hillary Clinton, who threatened during her presidential campaign to “totally obliterate” Iran, candidate Obama had indicated an interest in a “dual track” approach to the Iranian nuclear issue — that is, pursuing diplomacy while maintaining “targeted” sanctions. In the end, though, it came to the same thing. Negotiations to swap Iranian stocks of low-enriched uranium for supplies of more highly enriched fuel (necessary for the production of medical isotopes to treat 850,000 Iranian cancer patients) ended up going nowhere. It was time, as David Cohen said later, to develop and implement “truly biting sanctions” against Iran.

So eager was the Obama Administration to proceed that other issues took second place. In return for Russian cooperation, for example, the United States abandoned its cherished goal of NATO expansion, discarded plans for a missile shield in Eastern Europe, stopped lecturing the Russians about human rights, and lifted earlier restrictions on Russian arms exports. Just as bombing strategists had searched for the “critical nodes” that would cripple the German, Korean, Vietnamese, and Iraqi war economies, so the sanctions planners successively targeted elements of the Iranian economy, including what Cohen called the “key node” for processing oil revenues: the Iranian central bank.

Since Iran refined little oil itself, gasoline imports were targeted in 2010 in the expectation that this would generate potentially destabilizing unrest. Fuel shortages did make it harder for ordinary Iranians to get around, thinning out Tehran's legendary traffic jams — but they also forced drivers to use low-quality, locally refined gasoline, increasing pollution to dangerous levels. A year later, sanctions were imposed on any foreign bank that processed oil deals with the Iranian central bank. In 2012, Obama signed the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act, cutting off access to the U.S. market for any foreign company doing business with Iran's energy sector and freezing any American assets they might have. A similar provision was inserted into Section 1245(d)(1) of the 2012 National Defense Authorization Act, which is meant to be about Pentagon funding, not sanctions.

Thanks to such “innovative tools,” as Cohen has proudly called them, Iran's oil exports plummeted from 2.4 million barrels a day in 2011 to 1 million just a year later. “We have in place now,” declared Cohen in September 2012, “an enormously powerful set of sanctions at home and around the world. It retains its essential conduct-based foundation as it broadens out to target an ever more comprehensive set of Iranian commercial and financial activities.”

Congress Imposed Sanctions

Once upon a time, such tactics had been the exclusive preserve of presidents. Kennedy had put Cuba under total embargo with a stroke of the pen (though not before securing a hoard of 1,200 Cuban cigars for himself). Carter had imposed sanctions on Iran in 1979 with a similar executive order, and Reagan had lifted them the same way — except, of course, for the frozen and effectively confiscated Iranian deposits in U.S. banks. But in the 1990s Congress began passing its own sanctions laws. As Nasr pointed out to me, “It's a way for Congress to have a foreign policy.” Having long since forfeited its ability to declare war, Congress can still impose sanctions — which it does with increasing avidity and no inhibitions about targeting ordinary citizens. (“Critics [have] argued that these measures will hurt the Iranian people,” wrote Brad Sherman, a Democratic congressman from California, in 2010. “Quite frankly, we need to do just that.”)

In consequence, many of the “truly biting” measures cited by Cohen have come from Capitol Hill, passed with crushing bipartisan majorities, and can be repealed only from there. Certain members, such as Senators Mark Kirk of Illinois and Robert Menendez of New Jersey, as well as Ed Royce, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, have emerged as pacesetters on the issue. Behind these public figures stand an assortment of more shadowy aides, such as Kirk's deputy chief of staff Richard Goldberg or Royce's foreign-policy adviser Matthew Zweig. They in turn work closely with powerful outside players in the world of sanctions, most notably a group called the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, chaired by former CIA director James Woolsey.

“A friend told me recently that we are the Special Forces of the Washington think-tank community,” Woolsey said cheerfully

when I called. “I liked that.” Founded in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, the group has in the past secured its funding, currently around \$8 million a year, from such traditional wellsprings as Edgar Bronfman and Michael Steinhardt. Fusing in one entity the parallel tracks of sanctions and drone warfare, the FDD also publishes *The Long War Journal*, a chronicle of American military conflict in the twenty-first century.

Woolsey quickly referred me to the foundation’s executive director, Mark Dubowitz, who came to his \$300,000-a-year job from the world of venture capital. Dubowitz was happy to endorse the Special Forces accolade when I reached him, though he insisted that “being a Canadian, [and] by upbringing modest,” he couldn’t take much credit for crafting the destruction of the Iranian economy. Others in the community are more generous, noting Dubowitz’s handiwork in stipulations buried deep in congressional bills. Section 219 of the Iran Threat Reduction Act, for example, requires any company that files with the SEC to report any connection to trade with Iran — or any connection to *another* company that trades with Iran. This was the mechanism that unmasked the six Costco club members in Japan and Britain.

Iran

“The aim of sanctions,” Dubowitz told me, “is to try and bring the Iranian economy to the brink of economic collapse and, in doing so, create fear on the part of the Supreme Leader and [his Revolutionary Guards] that economic collapse will lead to political collapse and the end of their regime. . . . We’re trying to break the nuclear will of a hardened ideologue.”

Effortlessly reeling off statistics on hard-currency earnings and the technicalities of petroleum refining, Dubowitz lamented the resources still available to the enemy. He outlined a plan to cut off all remaining Iranian oil exports. “Countries would have to stop buying Iranian oil immediately, or their banks would be sanctioned,” he explained. “Chinese, Japanese, South Korean, Indian, South African, Turkish, Taiwanese — everyone who’s buying Iranian oil would be given a short period of time to go buy it somewhere else, or face sanctions against their financial institutions. . . . We could take a million barrels of Iranian oil off the market tomorrow.”

China? India? This seemed ambitious indeed. I asked Dubowitz whether the administration had the will to enact such measures. “Congress has the will to do this,” he answered firmly, and predicted that I would see legislation along these lines within a few weeks.

Sure enough, on May 22, Ed Royce’s Foreign Affairs Committee voted unanimously for the Nuclear Iran Prevention Act, aimed not only at eliminating practically all remaining Iranian oil exports but also at choking off Iran’s access to its dwindling foreign-currency reserves. “We squeeze — and then squeeze some more,” said Royce. Representative Tom Cotton, an Arkansas Republican, suggested a provision mandating punishment for relatives of sanctions violators, including uncles, nephews, great-grandparents, great-grandchildren, and so forth. But this was too much even for his colleagues, who rejected the proposal.

Meanwhile, across Capitol Hill, in the Hart Building, Senator Kirk was germinating another bill, one that would dispense with the fiction that Iranian sanctions are aimed purely at the country’s nuclear program. In theory, Iran’s abandonment of its nuclear ambitions would lead to the end of sanctions. But the ayatollahs don’t believe this. In their view, the United States has never accepted their revolution and is still bent on overthrowing them. According to two former State Department officials, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the Supreme Leader himself, made this very argument to the American diplomat Jeffrey Feltman (now U.N. under-secretary-general for political affairs) when the latter visited Tehran with a high-level U.N. delegation

in 2012. America’s credibility with the Iranians is shot. Or as Trita Parsi, president of the National Iranian American Council, puts it: “We have sanctioned ourselves out of any influence on Tehran.”

Khamenei will find no surprises in Kirk’s upcoming bill, which will condition sanctions not on the cessation of the nuclear program, but on OFAC’s certifying that

“the Government of Iran has released all political prisoners, is transitioning to a free and democratically elected government, and is protecting the rights and freedoms of all citizens of Iran, including women and minorities”.

As Parsi notes, the Iranian leadership has responded to previous sanctions by redoubling work on its nuclear program — not exactly the intended effect. Nor is the election of Hassan Rohani as president of Iran, despite his reputation as a “moderate,” likely to lead to any softening of sanctions. “My sense,” Dubowitz assured me shortly after the vote, “is that it’s full steam ahead.”

Of course, we have been here before. For twelve years, we were asked to accept that the sanctions on Iraq were tied to Saddam’s alleged weapons of mass destruction. U.N. inspectors dutifully combed the country year after year in an unrelenting search for the merest trace of a chemical, biological, or nuclear weapon, but after initial nuclear discoveries, nothing was ever found. Even at the very end, as George W. Bush and Tony Blair pushed us into war, dovish commentators lamented that the inspectors “had not been given more time.”

Once in a while, officials would casually concede the truth: WMDs had nothing to do with it. As George H. W. Bush noted immediately after the 1991 Gulf War, there would be no normal relations with Iraq until “Saddam Hussein is out of there,” and we would meanwhile “continue the economic sanctions.” In case anyone had missed the point, his deputy national-security adviser, Robert Gates, spelled it out a few weeks later: “Saddam is discredited and cannot be redeemed. Iraqis will pay the price while he remains in power. All possible sanctions will be maintained until he is gone.”

This sounded like an inducement to Iraqis to rise up and overthrow Saddam, and so relieve their misery. But I was assured at the time by CIA officials that an overthrow of the dictator by a desperate population was “the least likely alternative.” There could be only one conclusion about the purpose of the sanctions program: the impoverishment of Iraq was not a means to an end, it *was* the end.

Visiting Iraq in that first summer of postwar sanctions, I found a population stupefied by the disaster that was reducing them to a lower-tier Third World standard of living. Baghdad auction houses were filled with the heirlooms and furniture of the middle classes, hawked in a desperate effort to stay ahead of rising inflation. Doctors, most of them trained in Britain, displayed their empty pharmacies. “No Iraqi babies invaded Kuwait, so why must they suffer?” cried one staffer in a hospital in Amara, as I toured a ward of sickly, wasted infants. Everywhere, people asked when sanctions would be lifted, assuming that it could only be a matter of months at the outside (a belief initially shared by Saddam). The notion that they might still be in force a decade later was unimaginable.

In theory, the doctors should not have had anything to worry about. Sanctions made a specific exception for “supplies intended strictly for medical purposes, and in humanitarian circumstances, foodstuffs.” However, every single item that Iraq sought to import, including such clearly humanitarian commodities as food and medicine, had to be approved by the U.N. committee created for this purpose and staffed by diplomats from nations belonging to the Security Council,

including OFAC officials. It met in secret and published few records of its proceedings.

Throughout the entire period of sanctions, the United States blocked attempts to import pumps desperately needed in water-treatment plants along the Tigris. The river became an open sewer. Chlorine, vital for disinfecting such a tainted water supply, was excluded on the grounds that it could be used as a chemical weapon. The results were visible in hospitals' pediatric wards. Health specialists agreed that contaminated water was killing the children with gastroenteritis and cholera — diseases that overcame their victims with relative ease since the children were already weak from malnutrition.

Every so often a press report from Baghdad would highlight the immense, slow-motion disaster taking place in Iraq. For the most part, however, the conscience of the world, and especially that of the U.S. public, was left untroubled. Administration officials reassured themselves that any hardship was purely the fault of Saddam, and that in any case reports of civilian suffering were deliberately exaggerated by the Iraqi regime. As one U.S. official with a key role in the U.N. weapons inspections remarked to me with all sincerity at the time: "Those people who report all those dying babies are very carefully steered to certain hospitals by the government."

From time to time, this curtain of hypocrisy would slip, as when Madeleine Albright, then U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, told *60 Minutes* that the price paid by the multitude of dead Iraqi children was "worth it." When the chief U.N. inspector, a Swedish diplomat named Rolf Ekéus, concluded that there were no WMDs in Iraq and urged that the embargo be lifted, Albright had no shame in publicly proclaiming that sanctions would remain, WMDs or no. Saddam then ceased cooperating with inspectors — as the Clinton Administration fully expected he would — thus freezing both the bogus weapons issue and sanctions in place until superseded by war, occupation, I.E.D.'s, and suicide bombers.

Invading forces arriving in Baghdad found a society degenerated into criminality and corruption, its once vaunted education and health systems in tatters, its populace seeking solace in fundamentalist Islam. With the slender threads of state authority finally broken, the capital dissolved into anarchy. "We destroyed the middle class," observes Vali Nasr, "so when we arrived, we got Sadr City" — the impoverished slum from which rioters emerged to pillage Baghdad.

It should be noted in passing that although sanctions are frequently promoted as, in Cohen's words, "a heck of a lot better than war," Iraqi sanctions are conservatively estimated to have killed at least half a million children, while estimates of the total death toll from subsequent violence — a still horrific 174,000 — are lower.

No one in Washington these days likes to talk about Iraqi sanctions, or to reflect on whether they might have had anything to do with Iraq's inability to recover as a functioning state. "First of all, I don't believe half a million died," a former sanctions official told me. "And secondly, there were supplies of food and medicine, but Saddam controlled them. He was a brutal dictator." I asked Cohen if he saw any parallels between that era and his present activities. "Not really," he replied. "I think the sanctions that we have in place today are far different from those that we constructed at that time. . . . The differences far outweigh whatever similarities there may be."

Yet there are ominous echoes of the Iraqi disaster in recent reports from Iran. The most obvious similarity is the collapsing currency, dropping from 16,000 rials to the dollar in early 2012 to 36,000 a year later — very much according to the sanctions plan. (As Cohen noted with satisfaction in Senate testimony in mid-May, "There's a tremendous demand for gold among private Iranian citizens, which in some respects is an indication

of the success of our sanctions.") The price of a kilo of low-quality minced meat, for example, recently doubled in a week, to the equivalent of a day's pay for a construction worker.

The echoes recur in less statistically obvious ways. Aircraft are crashing in greater numbers, largely because of an ongoing shortage of long-embargoed spare parts. Crime and drug addiction are growing exponentially, there being absolutely no shortage of narcotics, especially heroin from nearby Afghanistan, but also cocaine, the perquisite of the rich. Just as sanctioned Iraqis found a class of "new billionaires" flaunting their wealth in the midst of want, so sanctions are enriching a similar class of Iranians, not only drug dealers but smugglers, refinery operators, and other profiteers.

The clearest echo of all is to be found in the sanctions on medicine. As in the case of Iraq, where "humanitarian" goods and services were supposedly exempt, this embargo does not officially exist. Even Congress, despite calls to "hurt" the Iranian people, makes an exception for such goods in its otherwise draconian legislation. OFAC will grant licenses for shipments, though not always expeditiously. (As a former OFAC staffer told me, "Licenses get done when they get done.") Cohen, too, insisted that his organization would not bar such aid: "The reality is that our sanctions do not forbid the export to Iran of food, medicines, [or] medical devices, whether it's some U.S. company or some foreign company that wants to export those humanitarian goods. There's nothing that forbids that."

Reality gives the lie to these assertions. Simply put, licenses and waivers are irrelevant, because the excision of Iranian banks from the global financial system makes it practically impossible for anyone exporting medical supplies to Iran to get paid. The U.S. campaign to scare banks out of dealing with Iran under any circumstances has seen to that. And while Levey, like Cohen, insists that "U.S. sanctions carve out transactions for medicine and agricultural products," Siamak Namazi, a Dubai-based researcher who has made the deepest study of this issue, argues otherwise. He quotes a senior Iranian pharmaceutical executive who flew to Paris to present a French bank with documents showing a trade was fully legal, only to be told: "Even if you bring a letter from the French president himself saying it is okay to do so, we will not risk this."

So, years pass. We "squeeze, and then squeeze some more" with no end in sight. I am told that there were high-level intelligence briefings in Washington late last year predicting popular unrest in Iran due to hardships inflicted by the sanctions. I myself saw evidence of this misapprehension in a chance dinner conversation with a very senior State Department official and a wealthy Iranian-American businessman.

"The Iranians will respond to pressure," said the official confidently.

I repeated this remark to the Iranian sitting beside him, whose eyes promptly widened in astonishment. "Oh no, not at all," he replied. "You should meet my aunts in Tehran. They are from the old regime, nothing to do with the government, and yet they are so angry about the sanctions, they demonstrate for a nuclear Iran."

The official looked astonished in turn. The notion that sanctions might be counterproductive was clearly new to him. But then, that was never the point of the "perfect instrument." As for those "skinny and bloated children" who so disgusted the British troops in Germany a century ago, a later survey of 600 young Nazis on their motivations for supporting Hitler suggested that a major influence was their vivid memories of childhood hunger and privation.

(Published in Harper's Magazine, September 2013)

Two examples of blockade: Cuba and Gaza

Cuba

Walter Lippmann see the website <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/CubaNews/> “Cuba - Un Paraíso bajo el bloqueo” [Cuba, a Paradise under Blockade]:

“Meanwhile, the negative U.S. policies toward Cuba keep causing problems. On November 26, the Cuban government announced that for the time being, its diplomats in the United States will suspend consular activities except for emergency and humanitarian cases. This is because the bank that Cuba was using, M&T Bank in Baltimore, had warned them on July 12 that it was going to cancel their accounts. The Cubans have not been able to find a U.S. or international bank that will open new accounts for them. Most observers agree that this is happening because banks fear that if they do business with the Cuban government, they run the risk of prosecution and huge fines imposed by the United States Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), as has happened on a [huge scale before](#).

No bank wants to undertake such a risk. This will cost Cuba lots of tourism money and be very unpleasant for Cuban-Americans and others who want to go and visit their relatives in Cuba, because they will not be able to get their visas from the Cuban Interests Section in Washington D.C. They will certainly raise a political stink about this, aimed at the U.S. government and not the Cuban one. The current policy authorizing extensive visits by Cuban Americans to the island was introduced by Obama at the beginning of his term, and was justified by the administration as a means for changing things in Cuba by allowing more people-to-people contact. That policy is now threatening to unravel because of harsh anti-Cuba measures which remain in force, especially the continued listing, against all objective information and common sense, of Cuba as a “state sponsor of terrorism.”

The Obama administration says it is working with Cuba to find another bank to handle their diplomatic transactions, but no results are reported yet. Stopping diplomatic missions from having access to routine banking services is a violation of the Vienna Convention on consular relations.

Over the years, the original attempt to overthrow Cuba’s revolution and its socialist government, by strangling the Cuban economy and thus creating a popular uprising, has failed. But so far, this has only led U.S. policy makers to heap more stupidities on top of the original arrogant mistake: The Torricelli Act in 1992, the Helms-Burton Act in 1996, the placement of Cuba on the state sponsors of terrorism list in 1982: each hostile step has encouraged a fanatically anti-Cuba faction within the Cuban exile community, within the Republican Party and even within the Democratic Party. These people fight tenaciously to prevent the U.S. government from even taking baby steps toward a more intelligent policy. OFAC does its bit by blindly implementing failed policies “efficiently,” leading to a substantial tightening of the [U.S. economic blockade](#) over the past several years.

Some of the [legal structure of the U.S. blockade against Cuba](#) can’t be changed at the initiative of the president, but require repeal by Congress. But the president still can, by executive action, take Cuba off the [list of state sponsors of terrorism](#). This, and dealing with the issue of the Cuban 5, would be important first steps. To get them to happen, public pressure is essential.”

Gaza

An Oxfam Document by Alun McDonald

Gaza: One Year Since the Ceasefire, The Blockade Goes On

On 21 November 2012—after eight days of a military escalation that cost the lives of at least 165 Palestinians and six Israelis and caused tens of millions of dollars worth of damage to Gaza’s civilian infrastructure—the Government of Israel and Hamas signed what appeared to be a ground-breaking ceasefire agreement.

As well as ending the escalation, the agreement also committed to ‘open the crossings and facilitate the movement of people and transfer of goods’ in and out of Gaza.

One year later, despite overall improvements in security, Israel’s’ blockade of Gaza continues and the promised improvements to the lives of Palestinian civilians have not materialised. The blockade has devastated the lives and livelihoods of Gaza’s population: 80 per cent of people in Gaza receive international aid, 57 per cent of households are food insecure, exports are virtually non-existent, many basic services are barely functioning, and unemployment is over 35 per cent and rising.

Genuine long-term security for civilians in Gaza and Israel alike will only come if the blockade is lifted and economic development in Gaza is allowed.

Security: The quietest period in 10 years, but violations continue

Overall, the past 12 months have been the quietest period in 10 years, with the lowest numbers of rocket attacks from Gaza and of Palestinian casualties from Israeli incursions into Gaza. However, the ceasefire has been violated on numerous occasions. In the past year, Israel has carried out 19 airstrikes and over 300 incidents of border and naval fire, causing seven fatalities and at least 132 injuries. Palestinian factions have fired over 140 homemade rockets towards Israel, with no casualties reported.

For some civilians, security has worsened. So far in 2013, there have been over 150 incidents of Israeli naval fire against Gaza fishermen – a 40% increase over the past two years.

Threats to fishermen and farmers in the “Access Restricted Areas”

Following the November 2012 ceasefire agreement, the “fishing zone” – the area offshore where Palestinian fishermen are permitted to fish by Israeli authorities – was increased from three nautical miles (NM) to six. (Between March and May 2013 it was again reduced to three NM). However, this is still far below the 20 NM limit agreed under the Oslo Accords, and still outside the most productive fishing areas, which begin at eight NM and beyond.

The Israeli military regularly uses live fire against fishermen, in violation of international law—even within the six NM zone. Fishermen have reportedly been shot and arrested within the six NM limit.

The fishing industry has been severely affected by these restrictions. There are currently 3,500 registered fishermen in Gaza, compared to 10,000 in the year 2000, and the restrictions cost an estimated 1,300 metric tons of fish a year in lost catch. 95% of fishermen receive humanitarian assistance.

On land, access to the “buffer zone” on the perimeter of the Gaza Strip – where movement is restricted and which extends from between 300 metres to 1km into Palestinian territory – marginally improved in the months after the ceasefire. Before the ceasefire, up to 35% of Gaza’s agricultural land was effectively inaccessible. Today, some farmers are able to reach land closer to the fence for the first time in years. However, the actual limits remain uncertain, and contradictory statements by Israeli authorities on which area Palestinians can access has left many farmers unwilling to take the physical and financial risks of resuming farming on the land. Farmers still risk being shot at while working in the buffer zone.

Entrance of goods into Gaza via Kerem Shalom, the sole Israeli-controlled crossing, stands at around 50% of pre-blockade levels.

Exports from Gaza have fallen by half since last year’s ceasefire agreement and sales of goods from Gaza to its natural markets in the West Bank and Israel remain almost wholly banned.

So far in 2013 (as of end-October), 111 commercial export trucks had left Gaza – compared to 254 trucks in 2012 and 270 in 2011. This year is on track to see the lowest level of exports since 2009. Currently, exports from Gaza to third countries represent less than 3% of pre-blockade levels.

Trapped on all sides: Restrictions on movement

Restrictions on movement of people remain largely unaltered. Fewer than 6,000 people a month are currently able to use the Erez crossing to travel from Gaza to the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Israel. In comparison, over half a million people exited through Erez every month in the year 2000. This decrease has severed countless economic, educational, familial, cultural and social ties.

Given these restrictions, the Rafah crossing into Egypt became Gaza’s main gateway to the world, with 20,000 people crossing monthly. However, after the recent political changes in Egypt, tightened restrictions at Rafah mean fewer than 4,000 people a month are currently allowed through. Thousands of people – including students registered in foreign universities

and professionals working in third countries – find themselves stranded in Gaza.

The closure of the tunnels, and a worsening power crisis

The Israeli blockade of Gaza left people with little alternative but to use tunnels from Egypt to bring in affordable goods, food and fuel. During the first half of 2013 over 50% of total imports entered Gaza through approximately 300 tunnels. Since July 2013 the Egyptian government has destroyed most of the tunnels – as of mid-October only 10-20 tunnels were reportedly operating.

One of the biggest impacts has been on the availability of affordable fuel. One million litres a day of Egyptian fuel used to come through the tunnels – the amount required to run Gaza’s power plant, hospitals, water treatment units, other basic services and household needs. Today, Egyptian fuel is almost non-existent in Gaza. Although fuel is available through Israel, only 3-400,000 litres a day (40% of what is needed) is currently entering through Kerem Shalom. The Israeli fuel is twice the price of Egyptian fuel, pushing it beyond the reach of many families, businesses and service providers.

The fuel shortage is having a severe impact on the provision of basic services and an already vulnerable economy. Power cuts of 12-16 hours a day are now routine, and Gaza’s only power plant temporarily closed. In November 2013, several streets in Gaza were flooded with sewage as one of the main pumping stations ran out of fuel.

Two thirds of Gaza’s population now receives clean water supply only once every three to four days. Shops and businesses that cannot afford fuel for generators are operating in near-darkness, with many owners worried they will be forced to close in the coming months. Many students are forced to work by candlelight, and perishable foods risk spoiling due to lack of refrigeration. The situation may worsen as energy needs increase as winter approaches.

[Below this article is added the note: *This update is compiled by Oxfam from the best available information drawn from reliable international sources. Some of the information is preliminary and may be updated in subsequent reports.*]

The Trans-Pacific Partnership Treaty.

The Trans-Pacific Partnership Treaty to be signed in December is a way of circumventing national legislation that might impede free trade, such as environmental law and consumer law. It would allow corporations to sue countries that put limits to their activities.

Most of the measures in the treaty are not directly to do with trade. For example provisions that will make it easier for pharmaceutical companies to get patents, including in developing countries; have these patents for more years; and extend the ability of these companies to limit access to the scientific data that is necessary for other researchers to develop new medicines. And the [United States](#) is even pushing for provisions that would allow surgical procedures to be patented – provisions that may be currently against US law.

TPP is worse than the WTO’s Trips (Trade-Related Aspects of International Property Rights). This, too, was a massive rip-off of consumers and patients throughout the world, but after years of struggle by health advocates and public interest groups, some of its worst features were attenuated, and further consolidation of pharmaceutical companies’ interests were blocked.

This information comes from WikiLeaks, because the draft negotiating texts are kept secret from the public. Even members of the US Congress and their staff have extremely limited access.

One part of the TPP that shows why negotiators want to minimize public awareness of the agreement consists of provisions giving corporations the right – as is the case under the North American Free Trade Agreement (Nafta) – to directly sue governments for regulations that infringe upon their profits or potential profits. This, too, is much worse than the WTO, where a corporation has to convince its government to file a case against another government. These private enforcement actions – which if won collect from the defendant government – are judged by special tribunals outside of either country’s judicial system, without the kinds of due process or openness that exists, for example, in the US legal system. A [currently infamous example](#) is the action by Lone Pine Resources, a Delaware-incorporated company, against the government of Quebec for its moratorium on fracking.

For more information see <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/nov/19/trans-pacific-partnership-corporate-usurp-congress>.