

Irish Foreign Affairs

Volume 8, Number 3

September 2015

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

Contents

Editorial: Refugees and Europe p. 2

Heligoland: Postscript
The Riddle of Erskine Childers – Was he a British Agent? *Pat Muldowney* p.7

The Great War on Turkey 1914-24 *Pat Walsh* p. 10

Meetings in Creameries *Pat Muldowney* p.14

“REFIT: A TTIP Without TTIP!” *Manus O’Riordan* p. 15

Soumission, by Michel Houellebecq *John Martin* p. 18

Charlie Hebdo and the Euro *Cathy Winch* p. 20

Documents

“USSR, Twenty Years After, A Trip in War-Time Ukraine” p. 24

Dominique de Villepin, UN Security Council, 14 February 2003 p. 28

Maps: Refugees in July 2015 p. 6

Serbia p.13

Crimea p. 23

Editorial

Refugees and Europe

Europe has suddenly been overtaken by a migration of peoples.

This migration of peoples signifies the failure of the re-ordering of the world undertaken by Britain when it declared itself an Empire close on 500 years ago, and in the cause of which it launched a series of Great Wars.

The second last Great War—that one which we are being required to commemorate in an attitude of piety this year—concluded with the patterning of the civilised world into a series of nation states, each a sovereign state in command of its own destiny. Within that framework there was no allowance for the migration of peoples. Why should there be migrations? The world had been reduced to an orderly system, each sovereign bit of it authorised to look after its own affairs and prohibited from interfering in the affairs of the other sovereign bits.

But the League of Nations was found to be inadequate to its task of nationalising the whole world. Things went wrong. Certain regions of the world were identified as not having undergone sufficient ‘civilising’ to enable them to be established immediately into sovereign nation-states, so they were put under tutelage to ‘civilisation’ by means of Mandates.

The League awarded Mandates over certain regions to established Empires, which were thereby recognised as the civilising force in the world. (It could hardly have done otherwise as the Empires who had won the Great War of 1914-1919 were the masters of the League.)

The Mandates, however, were only awarded over regions of the Ottoman Empire that were conquered by the British and French Empires in the course of their war on the Ottoman state. The regions of the world which had already been taken into the possession of the victorious Empires of 1918 before 1914 were not included in the League of Nations’s nationalising of the world. The British, French and Italian Empires retained discretionary authority over their possessions, regardless of the principles which they proclaimed to the world in their capacity as creators and masters of the League.

There were two outstanding instances in which the principles proclaimed by the league, as guiding principles for the world, were set aside by the League itself in the first year of its existence.

Ireland, in an Election conducted by the British state, voted to establish an independent national Government in Ireland. Three-quarters of the Members of Parliament elected in Ireland met as an Irish Parliament, declared Irish independence, and established an Irish Government. The Irish Government appointed delegates to the Versailles Conference. Those delegates were locked out of the Conference, which recognised the British state as the sovereign authority in Ireland, thus setting aside the principle of national self-determination.

The other instance was the acceptance by the Conference of a British Imperial decision to establish a Jewish state in Palestine and to admit the Jewish Agency to the Conference as the representative of the Jewish nationalist movement in Palestine. There was no Jewish nationalist movement in Palestine. The Jewish population of Palestine was small, about

10%, and it was predominantly religious rather than nationalist. The function of the Jewish Agency, as the representative of world Jewry, was colonial rather than national. It was to bring a nationalist Jewish population from around the world into Palestine as a colony on which a state could be established.

The project was launched by Arthur Balfour, British Foreign Secretary, in 1917, as a war measure. Balfour frankly admitted that it was a breach of the principles for which Britain had declared it was waging war.

In the late 1920s, when Jewish colonisation was meeting with resistance from the native population of Palestine, a British Government announced that it was considering abandoning the project. Strong Jewish nationalist (Zionist) pressure was exerted on it from the United States, in which it was said that the wishes of the actual population of Palestine were not the determinant of national right: the Jewish claim to Palestine was securely based on Imperial right, which had precedence over the wishes of the native population.

The Zionist project was maintained by Imperial Britain throughout the 1930s, at the cost of a war to subordinate the native population to it.

The intention behind the Balfour Declaration was to introduce a large Jewish population into Palestine as a British colony which would be gradually nurtured towards statehood within the Empire. In 1945, however, the Jewish colony, though still only a minority of the Palestinian population, declared its independence of Britain and launched a terrorist offensive against the British authorities. The British Government capitulated to the terrorism. Morally exhausted and politically disoriented by its second War on Germany—a strategically and militarily bungled War—it resigned its Mandate for the development of Palestine: a Mandate which it had given itself as the dominant Power in the League.

On Britain’s abdication, international responsibility for Palestine was taken over by the successor organisation of the League of Nations, the United Nations. The effective authority of the UN was its Security Council, which is made up of five Permanent Members, each of which has a power of Veto on action, and even on discussion, and nine temporary members which, though a majority, have no power of action.

Britain did not allow the Security Council to take up the Palestine Mandate which it had resigned. The issue of what was to be done with Palestine was referred to the General Assembly, to be decided by a two-thirds majority. The USA and its client states, and the Soviet Union and the states which had come under its control as the Power which had defeated Germany, ensured that the General Assembly supported a resolution which Partitioned Palestine and awarded the greater part of it to the Jewish minority.

The territory awarded by the General Assembly for the Jewish State contained a very large Arab minority—a minority of about 49%, if indeed a minority at all. All that was meant by a Jewish State could not have been constructed, by methods that bore any resemblance to democracy, against the opposition of 49% of the population. The first requirement of the Jewish State was therefore to engage in drastic action to reduce that

minority very substantially and very quickly. The terrorist campaign which had been conducted successfully against Britain was now turned on the Arab population of the UN-authorized Jewish State. Hundreds of thousands of Arabs were driven out of it by one means and another. The Jewish nationalist forces then went beyond the borders of the territory awarded by the UN and occupied territory designated for an Arab State.

The UN General Assembly, which had set this development in motion, had no authority to control it and prevent it from getting out of hand. The General Assembly has no Executive power. Only the Security Council can act. And the Security Council refused to police the award made by the General Assembly.

None of the Jewish nationalist parties were committed to constructing the Jewish State within the territory of the UN award. That territory did not include many areas necessary to Jewish national existence under the award that God made to Moses. The territory the UN awarded was accepted only as a base area which would be expanded.

Britain, having washed its hands of responsibility for the colonisation project which it had launched, acted belatedly to put a limit on Jewish military expansion in 1948 beyond the borders of the UN award. Its purpose was to prevent itself being entirely discredited in the eyes of the Arab states which it still hoped to control and exploit. It sent its Arab Legion in Jordan into action to stop the Jewish expansion from over-running the whole of Palestine. A Ceasefire was arranged. That Ceasefire left extensive Arab territory beyond the borders of the Jewish State, as decided by the UN, under the control of the Jewish State. That 1948 Ceasefire line came to be regarded *de facto* as the legitimate border of the Jewish State, but no major party in Israel has ever accepted it as such. Conquest had to continue.

In 1967 the Jewish State conquered the remainder of Palestine in what it presented as a 'pre-emptive' war of defence. This conquest, unlike the conquest of 1948, is officially designated as Occupied Territory by the UN. It is being systematically colonised by Jews under protection of the Jewish State, in contravention of UN rules about Occupied Territories.

There is a problem here about names. If Israel is the UN name of the state constructed from 1948 to 1972, incorporating both the territory of the UN award and the 1948 conquest, it is not in Jewish nationalist eyes the complete Jewish state. *The Jewish State* remains a work in progress, and even the territory expanded by conquest in 1948 is only a base area.

A brave attempt was made at one time to discourage the use of the term *Jewish State* in connection with Israel by branding it as anti-Semitic. We recall an apology by the *Irish Times*, after it had published a cartoon, in which the word *Jew* was mentioned, about some particularly inhumane Israeli action against Palestinians. But that was about forty years ago, before the extension of the Jewish State beyond what one usually considered to be the borders of Israel, with active Israeli support, had been much noticed.

The Palestinian mass migration of 1948 was one of the first mass migrations of the era of the United Nations. The United Nations has direct responsibility for it by the irresponsible way in which it took up responsibility for Palestine after the submission of the British Empire to terrorism.

Czechoslovakia was the main supplier of arms to the Jewish State in 1948. The Czechs at the time were just completing a great ethnic cleansing of their own, which involved both the mass killings and mass migration of Germans. But, since the Czech ethnic cleansing of Germans was officially approved by the United Nations, not much was ever said about it in the media. It was not conducted in secret. It was just taken out of the news. The scale of it, and the brutality of it, were not difficult to discover. It was just that it was considered best not to dwell on them—just as Himmler thought it best that the German populace should not know what he was doing to the Jews.

There was no question of the ethnic cleansing of Germans being kept secret from the Czech populace because it was the Czech populace that was doing it. (Exterminationist action against the Jews during the few years of the War on Russia was not done by the German populace. It was done outside Germany and the great bulk of the German populace seems to have been unaware of it. But, in certain areas under German occupation, in which the occupation was experienced as liberation, sections of the populace did engage in spontaneous exterminationist actions against the Jews, regarding them as agents of Communist, or possibly just Russian, tyranny.

The hotbed of Anti-Semitism was the line of nationalist states suddenly conjured into existence by Britain and France when they decided in 1918-19 to destroy the Austro-Hungarian Empire in which the Jews had constituted the Imperial middle class. The new nation-states, constructed Imperially from the outside, did not have substantive national movements, as was the case with Ireland. Their nationalist development lay ahead of them, and the Jewish middle class that had developed under the Empire was an obstacle to it. That situation was well-explained by a Jewish writer in the late 1930s, Oscar Janowski, but History as developed by the victors in 1945 preferred not to take account of it.

The European settlement of 1945, idealised in recent times, was achieved by extensive population movements and the shifting of the borders of states. Implicit in it was the principle that national or ethnic homogeneity was necessary to the stability of states in which democratic political systems might be established.

Yugoslavia was the exception.

Various peoples of the Hapsburg Empire, who had not rebelled against the Empire during the first World War but had fought for it to the end, were combined with Serbia, which had

Irish Foreign Affairs is a publication of
the *Irish Political Review* Group.
55 St Peter's Tce., Howth, Dublin 13

Editor: Philip O'Connor
ISSN 2009-132X

Printers: Athol Books, Belfast
www.atholbooks.org
Price per issue: €4 (Sterling £3)
Annual postal subscription €16 (£14)
Annual electronic subscription €4 (£3)

All correspondence:
Philip@atholbooks.org
Orders to:
atholbooks-sales.org

sparked off the War by action against the Hapsburgs, in the South Slav (Yugoslav) state. But it was quickly established that South Slav nationality was a mirage. Great discontent quickly became evident.

The combination of Serbia, an ambitious independent state, with peoples who had lived contentedly in the Hapsburg state did not take root. Serbia was a minority in the state, but the functioning of the State depended on it.

In 1941, when British intervention in the Greek/Italian War led Germany to support the Italians, the Yugoslav Government made an agreement with Hitler allowing him to march an army through to Greece. Serbia repudiated the agreement, though it did not have any legal basis for doing so. The German army was welcomed in Croatia as a force that liberated it from the confinement of Yugoslavia, but had to fight its way through Serbia. That event demonstrated that Yugoslavia was not a possible nation-state. Britain decided, however, that it should be restored after the war. Restoration took the form of a conquest of Serbia by a Communist Partisan movement armed by Britain.

Yugoslavia survived for more than forty years as an independent Communist state in conflict with the Soviet Union. Because it was an independent construction, it did not fall when the Soviet system collapsed in 1990.

Western Europe had constructed itself into a kind of Union during the 45 years of the Cold War. It was given a substantial degree of coherence by the Cold War, which gave it fixed eastern borders. And it developed a kind of protected, “*social market*”, capitalism for itself, that was largely in accordance with the socio-economic arrangements encouraged by the Catholic Church. The political force guiding the Union was the Christian Democracy of Germany, Italy and Belgium. And the foreign policy of the Union was, on the one hand, to maintain a united front against the Communist east and on the other, in the west, to put an end to the balance-of-power game which England had been playing against Europe since about 1700.

The collapse of the Soviet system de-stabilised the Union by opening up the possibility of expansion eastwards. Britain, which had been foolishly admitted to the Union after the death of Adenauer and De Gaulle, pressed for eastward expansion in order to weaken the internal European dynamic, and encouraged megalomaniac delusions. And it pressed for the reduction of the protected social market into a mere capitalist market.

However, it cannot be said that it was chiefly British influence that was responsible for the assault on the independent Communist state that stood after the Soviet system fell. As far as we recall it was Germany that took the lead in that adventure, stoking up nationalist passions for the purpose, treating the Yugoslav Constitution (which had been much admired during the Cold War) as a kind of gangster law, and recognising component parts of the Yugoslav State as independent states. And so we got the Balkan carnage of the 1990s.

Then, after years of ethnic cleansing etc., the former Yugoslavia, that should never have been constructed, settled down into separate bits, but with Serbia ostracised. (Serbia is heroic or demonic, depending on the kind of use being made of it by powerful outsiders.)

Europe was at peace, after its fashion.

But now it is being overrun *by swarms of migrants*—as the British Prime Minister puts it.

Where have they come from?

From some obscure corner of the world that we did not hear about and were therefore unable to civilise?

Not at all. They are products of the civilising process.

Civilisation decreed that the Taliban State in Afghanistan, created for the purpose of destroying the Communist State, should be destroyed. And the UN Security Council (with the support of the post-Communist State in Russia) authorised its destruction.

It was said that the attack on the World Trade Centre in New York was planned by Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. The Taliban leader said he would arrest the Al Qaida leader if he was shown evidence to support the charge. Washington saw that as impertinence. The Security Council agreed. The UN made war on Afghanistan. Mullah Omar went into hiding. Washington put up a big reward for information about him. The doyen of BBC Foreign Correspondents, the worldly-wise John Simpson, said it was only a matter of time until Omar was caught, because “*betrayal is the national culture of Afghanistan*”. But Omar died in his bed, and the Taliban are resuming governmental authority in Afghanistan. Westernised Afghans are fleeing.

Iraq, which had been a secure liberal State, but not a democracy, was ‘bombed into democracy’ by the greatest display of “*shock and awe*” the world has ever seen. The democratic elements, which had been held in check so that the lifestyles of Western liberalism might prosper, were set free by Tony Blair and George Bush, with marginal assistance from the Dublin Government. And then, as should have been expected, the forces in the populace which had been restrained by the liberal dictatorship of Saddam Hussein, and which had been encouraged into action by the propaganda barrage that accompanied the invasion, set about establishing an Islamic State.

What was suppressed by the dictatorship was Islam, and it followed that what was set free by its destruction was Islam. The broad stratum of liberal life which had developed in conjunction with the liberal dictatorship did not have the dynamic power to dominate the chaos when the Baath State which had cultivated it was destroyed.

The liberal dictatorship might have evolved into a liberal democracy—which is the sequence in which liberal democracy came about in England. The development of liberalism in a fundamentalist democracy is much more problematical.

There was a time when Western Philosophy understood such things.

The result of interference was an exodus of Christians (mainly to Syria) and of liberal Iraqis.

Next in the sequence of events which led to the mass migration of the summer of 2015 was the destruction of the liberal regime in Libya by NATO. Gadhafi, the most reliable and influential friend of the West in North Africa, who was actively cultivating a liberal middle class in the Libyan population, was brought down.

There was an Islamist rebellion in the city of Benghazi. He made a rhetorically exaggerated speech about how he would deal with it. His Western friends responded to his rhetoric—in which there was nothing new—by deciding to destroy him. They got a Security Council resolution—foolishly agreed to by Russia in the Medvedev hiatus—authorising NATO control of Libyan air space in order to save civilian lives. NATO interpreted this as authority to destroy the regime.

It was not possible to hold the Resolution to its intended meaning. Once a Security Council Resolution is passed, it cannot be recalled and nothing can be done about perverse interpretations of it.

NATO adopted a small Islamist rebellion and nursed it into a destructive assault on the State. And the British Foreign Secretary made a little joke about the rebels “outsourcing” the bombing to NATO.

The Secretary General of NATO later explained that NATO had no responsibility for the destruction of the Libyan State. NATO did only what it was authorised to do. It prevented the Libyan air force from operating. But NATO is not an autonomous organisation. It is an instrument of European Governments under United States hegemony. And one must presume that those Governments knew what they were doing—they are democracies, aren’t they?—when they ensured the destructive success of an Islamist rebellion—which had little prospect of succeeding on its own.

In the outcome, what had been the effective State of Libya became a chaotic territory with only the name of a state. It became an open door from Africa to Europe.

Then it was the turn of Syria—a state in which many peoples were held together in relations of comparatively easy tolerance of each other by the liberal Baathist dictatorship of Assad.

Despite the Libyan experience, a few demonstrations by a confused protest movement were declared by Britain and the USA to be the authentic voice of Syria. The Government in Damascus was formally declared to be a usurpation and one of the protest groups which agreed to put up a façade of being liberal-democratic was recognised as the legitimate State authority and was supported officially with aid and unofficially with arms. The core of the opposition to Assad was Islamist. Nothing else would have made sense. It was Islamism that was curbed by the regime, and it was Islamism that profited from the Western liberal-democratic destabilisation of the regime.

Liberal-democratic internal opposition to the regime—assuming that it had some actual existence, was an illusion entertained on the margin of the liberal culture developed by the regime which could not see why the State could not be democratic as well as liberal.

They soon found out why. And they went on migration.

The liberal middle class social strata, fostered by the liberal dictatorships in North Africa and the Middle East, which were necessary to development on Western lines, are being destroyed systematically by Western liberal-democratic interventions in those states.

Their growth would have continued under the dictatorships, and Iraq, Libya, Syria etc. would have been their homelands. But the West, which they had been imitating, destroyed the States which had fostered them. The suppressed democracies arose and overwhelmed them. They came to realise that they were living abroad, and they decided to come home.

Is that not the substantive meaning of the migration?

Europe is their Fatherland. It fathered them Imperially in other Continents. And then, by its conduct towards the states in which they found themselves, it made expatriates of them. And now they are coming home—taking considerable risks in order to get home.

And Europe, which has become so progressive that it has stopped reproducing itself, needs them. *All’s well that ends well.*

(Perhaps it is only as an instrument of the United States that Europe has done all of this. But it has done it. And the Atlantic can’t be crossed in rubber dinghies.)

Israel has had a policy of bringing down strong Arab States around it, and replacing them with divided entities. It regarded them as a potential threat to expansion. However, in the long-term, it may come to regret the policies it has promoted in America and elsewhere.

It seems that the cycle of events set off by the World War whose centenary we are obliged to celebrate is approaching a conclusion.

The Victors of 1918 set up a series of makeshift states to serve their own purposes in the Middle East—where the various peoples had lived harmoniously under Ottoman rule. Social realities which were momentarily overridden by raw Imperial power are asserting themselves—and are doing so violently because they were handled violently.

The centrepiece of European mistreatment of the Middle East was, of course, the imposition on it of the colonial state of Israel, which was allowed to break free of colonial restraint and build itself into a Power that was capable of exterminating all its neighbours.

Israel pleads that it is only doing what the United States did, and there are many in the United States who agree.

Both the League of Nations and the United Nations broke their own rules at the outset by approving Jewish nationalist colonial conquest of Palestine—and conquest has its logic.

It is considered necessary in Britain and Europe to deny this logic, and to deny the interconnectedness of Middle Eastern events since the conquest was set in motion.

Tony Blair, when he was Prime Minister, said that the quality of leadership involves an ability to dissociate yourself from the consequences of your actions. In connection with the decision to destroy the Iraqi State because it had weapons of mass destruction, he said that history would forgive them if they invaded and found no such weapons. The remote possibility that Saddam Hussein had developed such weapons under ten years of close supervision and continuous bombing was all that counted morally. And, with regard to a report on the state of his knowledge of Iraq when he decided to invade, it was put to him the report was 99% accurate. He replied that something that was 99% accurate was a hundred per cent wrong.

Blair was a political philosopher, not unacquainted with metaphysics.

It was a virtual certainty that Iraq had no w.m.d. in 2003. And it is virtually certain that the decision to invade was taken on that assumption.

The interconnectedness of the events described here can be denied metaphysically because causation is problematical in metaphysics. But *the metaphysicist of modern Europe, Kant*, allowed the idea of “sufficient reason” as a practical necessity.

“The principle of sufficient reason is the ground of possible experience”, he wrote. Therefore, though—*“all attempts to prove the principle of sufficient reason have been fruitless”* in metaphysics, *“it was thought better, since that principle could not be surrendered, to appeal boldly to the common sense of mankind”* (*Critique Of Pure Reason*, Ch.2, Section 3).

There is sufficient reason in European conduct in the Middle East and North Africa in the course of the past century for the migration phenomenon of the summer of 2015. □

Migrant scorecard

Some of the countries that have received the largest number of Syrian refugees and asylum applicants.

- Syrians registered as refugees since 2012
- Asylum applications received from Syrians between April 2011 and July 2015



Source: UNHCR,
Times reporting
@latimesgraphics

Map showing refugees from Syria up to July 2015; they are mainly in Turkey, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon, and, in Europe, only in Germany and Sweden.

Heligoland: Postscript

The Riddle of Erskine Childers – Was he a British Agent?

By Pat Muldowney

IFA of March 2015 gave a potted history of Heligoland. This is a small island of about one square mile inhabited by two thousand or so fishing people, located off the North Sea coast of Germany, close to Cuxhaven, Bremen, Hamburg and the Kiel Canal.

The island was captured by Britain during the Napoleonic Wars. To the dismay of Queen Victoria it was handed over to Germany in 1890. But Britain received in exchange a huge chunk of East Africa which had been held by Germany as a result of the activities of the freelance German imperialist Carl Peters.

In Germany, Heligoland was regarded as a final act in the 80-year process of German unification which started when the Prussian statesmen Stein and Hardenberg defied the King of Prussia by entering into an alliance with Russia against Napoleon. This alliance brought about the defeat of Napoleon in the battle of Leipzig, 1813; Waterloo was just a postscript.

A barren rock in the foggy, storm-ridden North Sea, swapped for a huge chunk of Africa? At the time it looked like a very bad deal driven by foolish romantic sentiment. This was a time when Britain, with its German Royal Family, still seemed to be joined at the hip in unbreakable friendship with its historic continental ally. In fact Heligoland turned out to have great strategic value for Germany in World Wars 1 and 2; and has been called the Gibraltar of the North.

Enter Erskine Childers. Serving in the Boer War, Childers and many others became conscious of the military and political weaknesses of the British Empire, including how the massive edifice would have crumbled if the nearby German forces had come to the aid of their Boer kith-and-kin.

After this, and with no war to go to, Childers got an administrative job in Westminster. He took up sailing and came to know the North Sea waters of Heligoland and the German Bight in great detail. His 1903 book *The Riddle of the Sands* lit a fuse in the public mind about an impending invasion of Britain by Germany via the German Bight.

His American wife Molly was radical-minded. Childers switched from a Unionist to a Home Rule position on Ireland and in 1911 wrote a major study of the subject, *The Framework of Home Rule*.

In July 1914, in collaboration with Roger Casement and others, he smuggled arms from Germany, through the German Bight, into Howth for the Irish Volunteers. Soon after, his call-up papers for the Great War arrived in Volunteer headquarters in Dublin. Childers played an important intelligence and military role in the war, particularly in the German Bight area.

Childers' mother was one of the Bartons whose house in Kildare is now the K-Club. Childers' cousin Robert Barton was a member of the 1921 Sinn Féin delegation who took the anti-Treaty side; as did Childers himself, who was secretary to the delegation.

Some on the Irish side, both Republican and Free State, remained suspicious of Childers. De Valera trusted him fully. On his execution by the Free State in November 1922, Childers famously shook hands with each member of the firing squad, saying: "*Take a step or two forwards, lads. It will be easier that way.*"

A different take on Childers is provided by Scottish authors Gerry Docherty and Jim Macgregor in their 2013 book *Hidden History: the Secret Origins of the First World War*. They allege that Childers was a member of what they dub the *Secret Elite*, a conspiratorial group of intellectuals, financiers, academics and top politicians who sought to reform and preserve the British Empire as a federation of self-governing Dominions, turning the Empire into a united force which would re-engage with the USA in order to create a power which would dominate the world for the foreseeable future.

Docherty and Macgregor say that this *Secret Elite* engineered a war to defeat the Boers and to conquer the vast riches of South Africa; and that they then conspired with France and Russia to bring about a Great War of destruction of Germany. When the near-pacifist Liberal Party was in power, the *Secret Elite* engaged its three leading members, Asquith, Grey and Haldane, in the conspiracy to carry out the seemingly impossible task of getting this war under way.

Crucial to this task was getting the British public into such a frenzy that they could stomach the barbarism that such a war would entail. The means of stirring up this frenzy was to be an invasion of Belgium by Germany, if only this could be engineered.

But, even though Germany was encircled by aggressive, hostile powers and had few military options, it was not a foregone conclusion that the sought-after invasion of Belgium by Germany would actually take place.

So, according to Docherty and Macgregor, there was a Plan B. The *Secret Elite* aided and supported both sides, Unionist and Nationalist, in the 1912 Home Rule Crisis in Ireland. They arranged that German arms would be supplied to both sides, so that, in the event that Germany did NOT invade Belgium, sufficient clashes could be organised in the tense Irish situation, clashes which could be put down to outrageous German interference in the United Kingdom, and which could provide the goad needed to drive the British public into war.

Is this realistic? Was Childers actually a well-placed British agent in the Irish independence movement?

Docherty and Macgregor's *Hidden History of the origins of the Great War* is interesting and stimulating. They base their ideas of a "Secret Elite" on the work of American Professor Carroll Quigley who described such a group, known as the *Round Table* and various other names, in his book *The Anglo-American Establishment* which was written in 1949 and published posthumously in 1981.

Quigley relates that in 1891 the imperialist Cecil Rhodes organised a secret society, complete with oaths, handshakes etc, whose purpose was to engage power, wealth, propaganda and influence in a dedicated movement to re-shape and strengthen the British Empire, and see off any potential threats to its future unchallengeable domination of the world. The Rhodes secret society intersected with the Cecil Group of leading Tory-Unionists and the Toynbee group of influential academics of which Alfred Milner was the centre.

He says that after Rhodes' death in 1902, the society was run by Alfred Milner who discarded the secret handshakes etc, and brought the group to its highest point of influence. Milner died in 1925. Lionel Curtis (d. 1955), who took over from Milner, founded the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House) as the public face of the society. Chatham House has an American equivalent, the Council on Foreign Relations. The group's *Round Table* publication still exists, as does their British Commonwealth.

"The Toynbee group gave [Milner] the ideology and the personal loyalties which he needed; the Cecil Bloc gave him the political influence without which his ideas could easily have died in the seed; and the Rhodes secret society gave him the economic resources which made it possible for him to create his own group independent of the Cecil Bloc. By 1902, when the leadership of the Cecil Bloc had fallen from the masterful grasp of Lord Salisbury into the rather indifferent hands of Arthur Balfour, and Rhodes had died, leaving Milner as the chief controller of his vast estate, the Milner Group was already established and had a most hopeful future. The long period of Liberal government which began in 1906 cast a temporary cloud over that future, but by 1916 the Milner Group had made its entrance into the citadel of political power and for the next twenty-three years steadily extended its influence until, by 1938, it was the most potent political force in Britain. ...

"The Milner Group was out of power for a decade from 1906 to 1915. We have already indicated our grounds for believing that this condition was not regarded with distaste, since its members were engaged in important activities of their own and approved of the conduct of foreign policy (their chief field of interest) by the Liberal Party under Asquith, Grey, and Haldane. During this period came the Union of South Africa, the Morley-Minto reforms, the naval race with Germany, the military conversations with France, the agreement of 1907 with Russia, the British attitude against Germany in the Agadir crisis (a crisis to whose creation *The Times* had contributed no little material) — in fact, a whole series of events in which the point of view of the Milner Group was carried out just as if they were in office. ...

"The Group got to power in 1916 by a method which they repeated with the Labour Party in 1931. By a secret intrigue with a parvenu leader of the government, the Group offered to make him head of a new government if he would split his own party and become Prime Minister, supported by the Group and whatever members he could split off from his own party. The chief difference between 1916 and 1931 is that in the former

year the minority that was being betrayed was the Group's own social class — in fact, the Liberal Party members of the Cecil Bloc. Another difference is that in 1916 the plot worked — the Liberal Party was split and permanently destroyed — while in 1931 the plotters broke off only a fragment of the Labour Party and damaged it only temporarily (for fourteen years). This last difference, however, was not caused by any lack of skill in carrying out the intrigue but by the sociological differences between the Liberal Party and the Labour Party in the twentieth century. The latter was riding the wave of the future, while the former was merely one of two "teams" put on the field by the same school for an intramural game, and, as such, it was bound to fuse with its temporary antagonist as soon as the future produced an extramural challenger. This strange (to an outsider) point of view will explain why Asquith had no real animosity for Bonar Law or Balfour (who really betrayed him) but devoted the rest of his life to belittling the actions of Lloyd George. Asquith talked later about how he was deceived (and even lied to) in December 1915, but never made any personal attack on Bonar Law, who did the prevaricating (if any). The actions of Bonar Law were acceptable in the code of British politics, a code largely constructed on the playing fields of Eton and Harrow, but Lloyd George's actions, which were considerably less deliberate and cold-blooded, were quite unforgivable, coming as they did from a parvenu who had been built up to a high place in the Liberal Party because of his undeniable personal ability, but who, nonetheless, was an outsider who had never been near the playing fields of Eton." (Quigley, *The Anglo-American Establishment*).

While broadly supporting its values and objectives, Quigley criticised the role of the Milner/Curtis group in the post-war Versailles conference, and also criticised its policy for India, and its inter-war policy on the gold standard and on the appeasement of Germany. Its final major act, he says, was "*the drawing of the Italo-Yugoslav boundary in 1946.*"

In 1891 the first job of Rhodes' secret society was to conquer the South African Boers who were sitting on priceless gold and diamond mines. With the aid of their Boer agent Jan Smuts, and after a failed first invasion (the 1895 Jameson raid), they finally got the war they wanted.

As it turned out, the Boer War showed that the immediate threat to British domination of the world was Germany; and, according to Docherty and Macgregor, the Rhodes secret society set about their next task of re-aligning Britain towards its traditional enemies France and Russia, in order to make a war of conquest of its traditional ally Germany. Extending its activities into the highest levels of power in Britain, the British Dominions and the United States, it operated through the cross-party Committee of Imperial Defence, the existing political power blocs, the Rothschild and other finance houses, the *Times* newspaper, and through elite academic networks and Colleges in Oxford. Cecil Rhodes' money was enough to get all this started.

Quigley's information is well-sourced and well-documented. Docherty and Macgregor provide a lively and vivid summary. There is a curious gap in Quigley's work, where he says relatively little about the role of the Milner group in the run-up to the Great War. Docherty and Macgregor fill this gap, but in a somewhat speculative way, which appears less authoritative than Quigley's book.

Essentially, Liberal leaders Asquith, Grey and Haldane conspired with Milner and Cecil Group members in the Committee of Imperial Defence to start a war of destruction

against Germany. The radical Chancellor Lloyd George, whose personal life was adventurous and risky, was blackmailed into supporting the conspiracy. Erskine Childers, said by Docherty and Macgregor to be a member of the *Secret Elite*, played his part by joining the Irish Volunteers and smuggling German arms into Ireland in July 1914.

Much of this is presented as plausible speculation rather than documented fact. Anyway, say Docherty and Macgregor, the vast bulk of the incriminating documentation was carefully culled and destroyed by the Great War victors.

After a lapse of around seventy years, Carroll Quigley's "Anglo-American Establishment" is now somewhat tedious to read. This is because much of it consists of long lists of people, who were no doubt notable in their day, and who, according to evidence which he presents, were involved in Milner's imperial/commonwealth conspiracy.

The ultimate failure of their Commonwealth Dominion plan for Ireland is a significant part of Quigley's critique of the Milner Group. Erskine Childers, who ultimately paid with his life for opposing this plan, is mentioned in Quigley's book. But nowhere is it claimed by him that Childers was a member of Milner's secret society. Docherty and Macgregor make this claim, but give no documentary evidence for it.

Douglas Newton's book *The Darkest Hours* was published in 2014, a year later than Docherty and Macgregor's *Hidden History*. Newton pretty well proves beyond doubt that Grey conspired with Asquith, Haldane and the Committee of Imperial Defence to overcome the peace party in the Liberal Party and in Britain, and to start a war against Germany.

Other parts of Docherty and Macgregor's argument are plausible enough, but sometimes speculative. Are they grinding axes? Does their *Secret Elite* idea constitute "conspiracy theory"? Is this Lizard People territory?

The secretive and conspiratorial methods of the Rhodes/Milner/Curtis group are not unusual. Politics operates by means of factions and cabals, both open and hidden. Think of the Freemasons, the Bilderberg Group, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, the Golden Circle, the Galway Tent, the Federal Reserve, the Militant Tendency, Opus Dei, the oath-bound *Irish Times*, and so on.

Quigley himself wrote from an American establishment political viewpoint. He was not neutral; he had axes to grind. He noted that Rhodes/Milner/Curtis wanted an Imperial Federation or Commonwealth of self-ruling Dominions. Rhodes supported Parnell to the tune of £10,000:

"The subsequent revolt of de Valera and the Irish Republicans against the [Milner-supported] Free State government, and the ultimate victory of their ideas, is not part of our story. It was a development which the Milner Group were powerless to prevent. They continued to believe that the Irish, like others, could be bound to Britain by invisible ties if all visible ones were destroyed. This extraordinary belief, admirable as it was, had its basis in a profoundly Christian outlook and, like appeasement of Hitler, self-government for India, or the Statute of Westminster, had its ultimate roots in the Sermon on the Mount. Unfortunately, such Christian tactics were acutely

dangerous in a non-Christian world, and in this respect the Irish were only moderately different from Hitler.

The Milner Group's reward for their concessions to Ireland was not to be obtained in

this world. This became clear during the Second World War, when the inability of the

British to use Irish naval bases against German submarines had fatal consequences for many gallant British seamen. These bases had been retained for Britain as a result of the agreement of 1922 but were surrendered to the Irish on 25 April 1938, just when Hitler's threat to Britain was becoming acute. The Round Table of June 1938 welcomed this surrender, saying: "The defence of the Irish coast, as John Redmond vainly urged in 1914, should be primarily a matter for Irishmen."

As the official links between Eire and Britain were slowly severed, the Group made

every effort to continue unofficial relationships such as those through the Irish Institute of International Affairs and the unofficial British Commonwealth relations conference, which had Irish members in 1938. (The Anglo-American Establishment.)

What about Erskine Childers? Originally a Unionist, did he become a secret Milner group agent, a British spy in the Irish Republican movement?

There are plenty of superficially unlikely examples of people changing their political views. St. John Brodrick (Lord Middleton) was a member of the Cecil Group of Tories, and leader of Southern Irish Unionism. But his sister Gobnait Ní Bhruidair became a prominent Irish Republican.

It is likely that de Valera's view of Childers was correct. Childers was exactly what it says on the tin: an honest English patriot; a soldier who came to support Irish Republicanism simply on its merits.

Links

Childers: *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903)

<https://archive.org/details/riddlesandsarec00chilgoog>

Childers: *The Framework of Home Rule* (1911)

https://archive.org/stream/frameworkofhomer00chiliala/frameworkofhomer00chiliala_djvu.txt

Docherty and Macgregor: *Hidden History* website <http://www.wv1hiddenhistory.co.uk/>

Quigley: *The Anglo-American Establishment* (1949, 1981)

http://www.voltairenet.org/IMG/pdf/Quigley_Anglo_American_Establishment.pdf

Round Table website: <http://www.moot.org.uk/index.asp>

Sleepwalkers: <http://www.amazon.co.uk/The-Sleepwalkers-Europe-Went-1914/dp/071399942X>

Docherty & Macgregor: <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Hidden-History-Secret-Origins-First/dp/1780576307>

<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/sep/19/darkest-days-truth-behind-britains-rush-to-war-douglas-newton-review>

A review of Douglas Newton's *The Darkest Days: The Truth Behind Britain's Rush to War* by Christopher Clark is the author of *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914*

Extract from the review:

“Douglas Newton’s *The Darkest Days* is a timely and important contribution to this debate. [...] Newton targets three key claims that together constitute what he describes as the “received view” of Britain’s entry into the Great War. The first is that Britain was “wholly in the right, for she did all that she could to avert war”. The second is that Britain’s decision for war was not made until 4 August and was an inexorable response to the German aggression of that day, the invasion of neutral Belgium. The third is that the decision for war received almost universal approval in Britain – only a rump of pacifists and other misfits dissented.

Newton presents a different view. Britain, he argues, was not a neutral bystander whose only credo was the maintenance of peace. Rather the country was – at least in terms of the policy pursued by the Foreign Office under foreign secretary Edward Grey – a determined supporter of the entente against Germany.

Newton also takes issue with the notion that Britain’s entry into war was triggered by the German invasion of Belgium. The violation of Belgian neutrality was crucial to securing broad moral support for British intervention, but it was not the reason for that intervention, which arose rather from the British government’s strategic commitment to France and was decided on some time before the presentation of a German ultimatum to Brussels.

Newton is particularly good on the swiftness of British pre-mobilisation measures during the July crisis. In a telegram to his naval commanders on 27 July placing the navy at a heightened state of readiness, First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill warned that the current political situation “makes war between Triple Entente and Triple Alliance powers by no means impossible”. The use of the term “Triple Entente” was particularly telling, given that no alliance between France, Britain and Russia yet existed and that the use of this term was still expressly banned from official British diplomatic reporting.” □

The Great War on Turkey 1914-24

A Talk given to the 1916-21 Club (Old Dublin Brigade, IRA) at the Pearse’s Residence, Dublin on August 15th 2015.

Pat Walsh

Britain’s Great War to destroy the Ottoman Empire became Ireland’s War courtesy of Redmondism and the Treaty of 1921. It was not “Our War” as some have recently claimed and Ireland’s involvement in it produced the Republican development that meant Britain’s wars would no longer be Ireland’s wars.

The War that was fought against Turkey by Redmondite Ireland and concluded by Treatyite Ireland in conjunction with Imperial Britain was the longest and most devastating part of the Great War whose centenary is now being commemorated. It was a Ten Year War in which whole populations disappeared and communities suffered casualties of enormous proportions. But it is the most forgotten about part of the Remembrance exercise. And this is no coincidence.

It is being said these days that Ireland has unjustly eradicated its “national memory” with regard to the Great War. I believe this to be a slight on past generations of Irish people. The older generations really did know better. They experienced the Great Fraud of 1914 that was perpetuated on Ireland by Redmond and by Britain on the wider world and they naturally recoiled from it. They did not forget. They remembered, and said no more! And they did something about it so that when Britain launched its future wars they were not part of them. And we all should be eternally grateful for them for that.

The areas of the world Britain messed up a hundred years ago, the Anglosphere continues to meddle in, looking for dupes to assist them, who they inevitably betray in the end, with catastrophic consequences.

Those who wish to restore the “national memory” about the Great War do not wish to restore the “national memory”

about certain issues and events in the war. Remembrance is very selective and largely confined to sentimentalism about the Western front.

On the other hand the war on Turkey is largely forgotten.

So why did Ireland fight Ottoman Turkey? Well it was all part of the Redmondite Home Rule project and the alliance they entered into with Liberal England to secure it. For about a decade prior to 1914 Britain had made plans for a Great War on Germany to be waged at a favourable opportunity. When that War became a reality Redmond pledged Ireland to it to show loyalty to Imperial Britain so that it would consent to a small measure of local government, to outflank the Ulster Unionists who were blocking the project, and to become an active part of Imperial affairs rather than an object of domination.

The Great War was proclaimed as a war for small nations. It was not supposed to be Imperial war Ireland was fighting - to add territory to the Empire! The Irish people would not have supported such a thing. But Loyalty meant Ireland had to take on whoever became England’s enemy and the secondary object of the War (after the primary one of *Germania delenda est*) was the destruction of the Ottoman Empire. So Redmond had to take on this project to get his Home Rule. He had to collaborate in the killing of Turks, Kurds, Arabs and various other peoples who had never bothered the Irish, on behalf of those who had done great harm to the Irish over centuries.

The Recruitment of Irish cannon-fodder was an imperative to show Loyalty – to keep Home Rule on the Statute Book. There was competition with Ulster Unionists to recruit. Also

the Redmondites felt they needed a military expression to deal with Ulster after the War because Ulster had brought force into the situation to prevent Redmond's objective, and he felt they needed to be faced down after the War by a triumphant Liberal England and an Irish military expression in the Imperial ranks.

In 1915 there was a great Recruitment drive in Ireland due to the formation of a British Coalition with anti-Home Rulers. Redmond took the attitude that the British had to be supplied with Irish volunteers as quick as they sacrificed them in their War of attrition, or they would conscript in Ireland and destroy his Party. That was what 1916 and subsequent events were largely about – a breakout from the terrible trap Redmond had led his Party and Ireland into.

At this point I need to say something about the Ottoman Empire – the so-called “sick man of Europe”. The Ottoman Empire had existed for five centuries as a stable political entity. It was a great Muslim state under a Sultan/Caliph. It incorporated a diverse range of elements through its functional Millet system that provided for freedom of worship and non-territorial autonomy for its communities. It had rescued Jews from persecution in Europe. It was Non-Racist and way before its time, incorporating its Christian elements into its political and economic structures to the highest levels of the Ottoman State.

It was, however, defamed by British Liberal propaganda. English Liberals were affronted that Moslems ruled Christians and they produced hysterical anti-Turk propaganda whenever the Ottomans had to deal with problems of internal security. Outrageous and exaggerated atrocity stories were invented to justify intervention and the ultimate destruction of the great Muslim state was always on the agenda of these fatal philanthropists.

By 1914 the Ottoman Empire was seriously threatened by the promotion of nationalism and “progress”. The Libyan and Balkan Wars of 1911-13 had seen great ethnic cleansings of Muslims and a shrinking of the Empire. British policy in the 19th Century had been to maintain it as a giant buffer against Tsarist expansion – “the Russians shall not have Constantinople” (the Jingo Song) whilst absorbing bits like Egypt. But the object was to prevent its collapse lest there be an Imperialist free for all with England's competitors taking territory.

The great complicating factor was German influence from 1899. This was aimed at rejuvenating and modernizing the Ottoman Empire in exchange for commercial rights there. The Germans believed that Islam was a civilisation worth preserving. England and Russia, however, had seen the Ottoman Empire as the ‘sick man of Europe’ and had been waiting around for his death. But now they looked on as Germany threatened to revive the sick man, and dash their dreams of conquest.

There was also a great fear of the new Berlin-Baghdad Railway connection, which Britain refused a stake in. The proposed Berlin-Baghdad Railway threatened to enhance Eurasian trade beyond the guns of the Royal Navy. It was believed to be a cheaper and faster way of moving goods, giving the continent a competitive edge over the world market established and controlled by maritime Britain. The British built railways in abundance but did not like others doing so, especially those leading to ports. So Kuwait was detached from the Ottomans to prevent the Railway getting to the Persian Gulf.

The Berlin-Baghdad Railway had another important link to the Great War. This can be seen by looking at a map. It shows the importance of Serbia – called “the guardian of the gate” by British writers – in blocking it. If Serbia could be preserved against the German-Turkish railway it could prevent a linking up. That was why Serbia was so important in July 1914 to England. It was not just a mere detonator.

As I said there was a great Re-orientation of British Foreign Policy from 1904-7 to destroy Germany. Agreements were made with former enemies, France and then Russia in 1904 and 1907. In these the Tsar had to be promised Constantinople, his great dream of returning the new Byzantium to its original source, for a loan of the “Russian Steamroller” against Germany.

Britain was primarily a naval power. It needed powerful European allies to break the Germans and to encircle the country so that the Royal Navy could do its work through blockade. That was the plan anyway – the traditional British Balance of Power War.

Maurice Hankey's spying missions for naval intelligence reveal the British object of including Ottoman Turkey in its Great War, whether the Turks wanted it or not. The Committee of Imperial Defence Plans for War on Germany included Plans made in 1907 to force the Straits. H.G. Wells famous War time novel ‘*Mr. Britling Sees It Through*’ shows how this was a natural characteristic of the popular imagination in England.

So the Ottoman Empire was to be liquidated. And because of this Britain wanted a new buffer of Palestine/Iraq to protect the Persian Gulf/Indian Empire. So its objectives were Imperialist and expansionary, although they were dressed up in moral clothes with fine phrases for purposes of disguise in the democratic era.

The Young Turks' Revolution of 1908 in Istanbul changed relations with the Germans, and they sought a new balancing. The Young Turks negotiated a British naval alliance and extensive defence contracts with London. From August-October 1914 the Ottomans tried to remain neutral, and six attempts were made for alliances with the Triple Entente. All were refused. This is definite proof of the war intent of the Entente on the Turks.

Churchill's seizure of two Turkish battleships built by the Royal Navy was a major provocation. It left the Turks defenceless in the Black Sea against the Russian fleet. One of these ships was re-Christened “HMS Erin” in honour of Irish loyalty. The Churchill provocation led to the mysterious Goeben and Breslau incident when two German ships were forced by the Royal Navy into Istanbul to complicate Turkish neutrality. This provided the excuse for a British blockade on the Ottoman capital – an act of war in itself. Then there was the Obscure Black Sea Incident when the German ships, now under Ottoman flags, engaged the Russians in the Black Sea. Russia and Britain used this incident to make Declarations of War by November 5th 1914.

In early 1915 Britain decided to force the Straits, first through a naval operation and then using landings at Gallipoli. Gallipoli proved a game changer and had an effect on 1916.

The British defeat led to the resignation of the First Sea Lord, Admiral Fisher. This triggered a Unionist coup in May 1915

in which Liberal Ministers (including Churchill) were replaced by anti-Home Rule Unionists in the British Government. The Liberal Prime Minister Asquith was damaged and his days in office were numbered. The Home Rule Bill that had been placed on the Statute Book in August 1914, and which Redmond had treated as an Act, for the purposes of recruiting the soldiers that were to be sent to Gallipoli, was still-born. From then on a chain of events, beginning at Gallipoli, including 1916 etc. put paid to Redmondite Imperialism, the Irish Parliamentary Party and Home Rule Ireland. I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that this was Ataturk's first part in Ireland's freedom struggle!

The Gallipoli defeat led to the British intervention in Greece at Salonika. The political and military assault launched by Britain on neutral Greece and the devastating effect this ultimately had on the Greek people across the Balkans and Asia Minor is almost completely forgotten about. The Greek King Constantine and his government and his chief of staff, General Metaxas, tried to remain neutral in the conflict but Britain was determined to enlist as many neutrals as possible in their Great War. So they made offers to the Greek Prime Minister, Venizélos, of territory in Anatolia if he joined the War, which he found too hard to resist.

The British believed they had made the Greek State in the 1820s and it was their political instrument to use at will. The Greek King, however, under the Greek Constitution, had the final say on matters of war and he attempted to defend his neutrality policy. King Constantine was then deposed by the actions of the British Army at Salonika, through a starvation blockade by the Royal Navy and a seizure of the harvest by Allied troops. This had the result of a widespread famine in the neutral nation - and this under the guise of 'the war for small nations!'

The Turks fought bravely in the War but in 1915 they were under extreme threat. The British were moving up through Mesopotamia, inciting Arab Revolts and blockading the coasts. The Russians had invaded from the East and in conjunction with a large Armenian Insurrection were moving forward. A division of Ottoman territory was made in the secret Treaty of London (Constantinople agreement) and the Sykes/Picot Treaty amongst Britain, France, Russia and Italy.

The Russian collapse in 1917 gave the Turks relief and meant they saw off the Armenian threat but by 1918 the Ottomans had to accept an Armistice that was turned into very harsh Peace Terms in the Treaty of Sèvres of 1920 which divided the Ottoman territories amongst the Imperialist victors, leaving the Turks with a small section of land in the Anatolian interior. This was obviously unacceptable.

These events led to the Greek tragedy in Anatolia because the puppet government under Venizélos, installed in Athens through Allied bayonets, was enlisted as a catspaw to bring the Turks to heel after the Armistice and Treaty. The Greeks were presented with the town of Smyrna/Ismir and then, encouraged and armed by Lloyd George, they advanced across Anatolia toward where the Turkish democracy had re-established, at Ankara, by Ataturk, after it had been suppressed in Constantinople.

Britain was using the Greeks and their desire for a new Byzantium in Anatolia - the Megali idea - to get Ataturk and the Turkish national forces to submit to the Treaty of Sèvres, and the destruction of not only the Ottoman State, but the Turks themselves.

The Treaty of Sèvres began the final chapter in the Greek Tragedy that began in 1915 when British violated the neutrality of Greece. Greece was used as a catspaw by Lloyd George to enforce Treaty of Sèvres on Turks in 1919-22. However, the Greeks voted Venizelos out and invited their King back. Britain then abandoned the Greeks and their army met disaster in Anatolia from Ataturk's forces. This led to the Smyrna catastrophe of 1922 and the end of the millenniums old Greek population in Asia Minor.

There was much hostile press coverage in Ireland concerning the Turkish defeat of the Greeks and Armenians. However, Sinn Fein stated that the atrocity stories were British propaganda and defended the Turks as "clean fighters, and the same type of men as those who have carried through the evolution in this country." They said: "We, who have suffered more than any other nation in the world from English propaganda, have no right to accept it when directed against another nation which for four years has been fighting for its life, and whose leaders have in public and in private expressed their sympathy and admiration for Ireland."

Another source of support for the Turks came from the famous (now infamous!) *Catholic Bulletin*. This was a popular religious periodical that supported the Irish Republican cause. It was edited by J.J. O'Kelly of Sinn Fein, who had introduced Ireland's Address to the Free Nations of the World to the Dail. This had been delivered to Ataturk's government in Ankara on behalf of Dail Eireann. Fr. Timothy Corcoran, Professor of Education at University College, Dublin, was the driving force behind the *Bulletin*. He had taught and was a close friend of DeValera. The Anti-Treaty *Catholic Bulletin* took great interest in events between the end of the Great War and the successful conclusion of Turkey's war of independence. It supported Turkey in its struggle against Britain and the other Imperialist powers and defended the Turkish position in relation to the Greek invasion, when most of the Western Christian press (including Ireland) were pro-Greek.

The *Bulletin* drew attention to the many parallels between the experience of Ireland and Turkey between 1919 and 1923. These included: Turkey had agreed to an armistice (ceasefire) at Mudros in October 1918. But that armistice was turned into a surrender when British and French Imperial forces entered Constantinople and occupied it soon after; Turkey found its parliament closed down and its representatives arrested or forced 'on the run', at the same time as England meted out similar treatment to the Irish democracy; A punitive treaty (The Treaty of Sèvres, August 1920) was imposed on the Turks at the point of a gun, sharing out the Ottoman possessions amongst the Entente Powers; Turkey itself was partitioned into spheres of influence, with the Greek Army being used to enforce the settlement in Anatolia, in exchange for its irredentist claims in Asia Minor.

The Turks, under the skillful leadership of Mustapha Kemal (Ataturk), decided not to lie down and resisted the imposed Treaty. The Greek catspaw was pushed out of Turkey and their Imperialist sponsors forced back to the conference table at Lausanne, after the British humiliation at Chanak.

The *Bulletin* recognised rightly Chanak as Britain's greatest defeat. It was the turning point in British power. Ataturk inflicted a moral defeat on the Empire at height of its power. It resulted in the fall of the Lloyd George coalition, the government of all the talents, including some of the greatest statesmen England ever

Map showing Serbia between Berlin and Istanbul



included in a government. It led to future British Governments of “*the Second XIs*” (in Churchill’s phrase) and Britain was never the same again.

This great event happened in 1922 just when the Irish Treaty was being ratified by Westminster.

At Lausanne the Turkish delegation refused to be browbeaten by Lord Curzon and his tactics, reminiscent of the Anglo-Irish Treaty negotiations, when the Irish plenipotentiaries were strong-armed into signing a dictat under the threat of “*immediate and terrible war.*” The Turks stonewalled. When Curzon said “*the train was waiting at the station,*” and it was a case of take it or leave it, the Turks left the offer and Curzon left on his train, never to return. There was a large Turkish delegation at Lausanne but President Ataturk, like Dev, did not go. But Ismet Inonu, unlike Michael Collins, reported back before signing it.

Terms much more advantageous to the Turks were signed by Sir Horace Rumbold six months later, and the Turkish Republic came into being – a free and independent state.

The *Catholic Bulletin* was particularly impressed with the Turkish negotiating skill at Lausanne and contrasted it to, what it saw as, the Irish failure in negotiating with the British in the Treaty of 1921 that left the country part of the British Empire and divided the national forces against each other. The Turks had successfully beaten the Imperial power and the *Catholic Bulletin* described Ataturk as the ‘*man of the year*’ in 1923 and

the greatest cause for optimism in a world that was shattered by the catastrophe of war.

The *Bulletin* saw Turkey’s achievement as an inspiration to Ireland. “*The whole Treaty was a stupendous British Surrender*” it said.

Then came a shock for the Treatyites in July 1924. They found that Ireland remained at war with Turkey in 1924, until the Free State ratified the Treaty of Lausanne and made peace with the Turks, along with the rest of the British Empire. The Free Staters had to admit a “*state of war*” existed between Ireland and Turkey due to the signing of the 1921 Treaty. It therefore had to be ended.

As the Dail debates show, it came as something of a surprise and embarrassment to the Free State Government that Ireland was still formally at war with Turkey in 1924. The Treatyites did not realize, when they signed the Treaty in 1921 they had inherited Redmond’s war, by remaining part of the Empire. They claimed to have been informed of some detail of the Imperial negotiations but were not consulted or allowed to be signatories. They simply had to ratify it or still be at war. More worryingly, the Lausanne Treaty committed the members of the British Empire to defend the settlement in the event of a new war, perhaps with Bolshevik Russia. The Farmers Party claimed if the Lausanne Treaty was broken, Ireland was at war again with Turkey. The Free State Government, unsure of its position, denied this.

In reply to an amendment, proposed in the Senate by Colonel Moore, the Minister for Foreign Affairs said:

“War was declared on behalf of the whole British Empire on November 5th, 1914. At that time I was on one side and Colonel Moore was on another. I strongly felt at that time that Ireland should not be connected with such a war. I was belonging to the Irish Volunteers that split upon that very point. Constitutionally and internationally I think we cannot get out of the fact that in a war declared on behalf of the British Empire, internationally Ireland was recognised as part of the British Empire, and was at war with Turkey...It is the fact—Senator Moore might wish it was not—but that it is unconstitutional for a Treaty negotiated on behalf of the whole British community of nations to be ratified without the concurrence or acquiescence of all the governments or states which form the British Empire...”

To finish let us consider three further consequences of this War: Firstly, the British conquest of Mesopotamia/Iraq, in which Tom Barry played a part.

A British Indian Army invaded Shia Basra on the opening day of war. The British pushed up to Baghdad and Mosul to create Iraq, taking in Sunni and Kurdish areas. Mosul was taken from the French when oil was discovered. The original intention was to simply incorporate Basra into the Indian Empire and plant Indians there. But the original policy was abandoned. Governor Arnold Wilson lost control due to the new policy of Mandates/‘client states’. A serious Iraqi insurgency was crushed by air power. Sir Percy Cox took over and rigged the first Iraqi ‘election’ by kidnapping the opposition candidate. And so this first lesson for the Iraqis in democratic politics by the British was one of force and duplicity. And it soon became evident that the State England had cobbled together out of disparate elements in the Imperial interest was only functional under a strongman.

Next to it was Syria which the French established. However, Ottoman Syria was truncated by Britain and France. England

took Palestine out of it, and France removed Lebanon to create a majority Christian enclave. These actions made Syria a difficult state to govern ever since.

Finally there is Palestine. This resulted from a British Triple Cross. The British promised the Arabs a large state if they fought the Turks. But Palestine was earmarked for Britain in Sykes/Picot. Britain then promised it to the Zionists in the Balfour Declaration (1917) as a “*national home*”.

The British had a fear of the “*power of the Jew*,” who they saw as a dangerous internationalist element in affairs. Giving a country to Zionists would produce a Taming of the Jew, it was reasoned and draw them away from support of the Germans and Ottomans. So Britain used the small Zionist movement to detach Palestine from Syria (which the French claimed). The Balfour Declaration promised Zionists land in Palestine without reference to actual inhabitants. The British Idea was summed up by Governor Storrs as “*a little loyal British Ulster in Palestine*”.

The British believed the stability of Palestine and good relations between communities established by Ottomans would continue after Britain took it. All that needed doing was managing the conflict to justify a continued British Imperial overlordship. But the Zionists had other ideas. Do we need to say anymore?

In conclusion we should say if it were “*our war*” here’s what “*we*” did: Killed thousands who did us no harm; destroyed the great Muslim state that brought stability in the region for five centuries; created the modern Middle East and its insolvable problems; helped bring about the Zionist project; undermined the Greek State and its independence; and helped produce the destruction of the ancient Christian communities of Asia Minor.

And all for Home Rule (which never actually came)! So remember to commemorate 1916 with pride. It was against all of this! □

Meetings in Creameries

Pat Muldowney

In the article ‘Fascism, Greece, Metaxas and Churchill’, Brendan Clifford, (IFA March 2015) in explanation of the defeat of the pro-Treaty party in early 1930’s: mentions farmers ‘... *discussing political affairs at daily meetings at the Creamery* ...’

Some readers might have thought this a bit odd.

Daily meetings? At Creamery???

A cow in milk whose calf been taken away has to be milked twice a day, first thing in the morning, and in the evening.

Somebody who has just one cow, say, might use the milk for the household.

A herd of milch cows, small or big, is kept in order to sell the milk, direct to consumers, or via a processing plant called a Creamery or dairy. The farm co-operative movement in Ireland, in the late 1800’s, built dairies in every locality, so distance from farm to dairy was not more than a couple of miles, so it was feasible to transport the milk in milk-churn(s), by horse/pony/donkey and cart, from each farm to local dairy or Creamery.

This was done after morning milking. Buckets of milk were poured into churns which when filled were small enough to be handled by two persons, then the churns were carted to

the creamery. Queues would build up to unload at creamery. Since this happened every day, there was plenty of time for group conversations about, firstly, sport; then everything else, including politics.

The end-products of creameries were milk for households with no cows, butter for households which did not make their own butter, and perhaps cheese - not widely consumed. To make butter, the cream is separated from the milk with a centrifuge, and the heavier skim milk could be taken back, in the churns, to feed animals including calves taken away from the dairy cows in order to be reared and fattened into beef. (In absence of centrifuge machine or “separator”, the milk can be rested allowing (less dense) cream to rise to the top, in order to be skimmed off manually.) The cream must be allowed to mature for a period of days at appropriate temperature before it is turned into butter, involving another centrifugal operation, by agitation in a butter churn. A density measuring device shows when the cream is “ripe”, or ready for buttermaking.

My mother’s job was buttermaker and my father met her at the local creamery. □

“REFIT: A TTIP Without TTIP!”

- A July 2015 report from the European Economic and Social Committee, by Manus O’Riordan, Member for Ireland, EESC Workers’ Group.

In my May 2015 report I covered the controversy between the EESC Employers’ Group and the rest of the EESC concerning TTIP – the proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. At an extraordinary meeting of the EESC Workers’ Group convened on June 24, the Czech trade unionist Zdenek Malek declared: “REFIT is a TTIP without TTIP!” TTIP we now know, but what on earth is REFIT? The European Commission seeks to present it as something for the good of us all:

“What is REFIT? REFIT is the European Commission’s Regulatory Fitness and Performance programme. Action is taken to make EU law simpler and to reduce regulatory costs, thus contributing to a clear, stable and predictable regulatory framework supporting growth and jobs. To do this successfully, REFIT requires a joint effort between the European Commission, the European Council, the European Parliament, Member States and stakeholders. Every level of government should be involved to ensure that the benefits are realised at least cost for citizens and business. The Commission welcomes input, data and evidence to its Regulatory Fitness Agenda: ‘Have your say!’

“Lighten the load - Have your say! The Commission would like to hear your views on how to make EU laws more effective and efficient via an online contact form. Your suggestions will be examined by the Commission and may be used to identify actions for simplification and burden reduction within the REFIT programme.”

Yes, you are right to be suspicious!

At the opening of our meeting on June 24, the President of the Workers’ Group, Greek trade unionist George Dassis—who will become President of the EESC as a whole in October—stated that what the European Commission is setting about is not “better regulation”, but no regulation at all! Moreover, the text presented by Commission Vice-President Frans Timmermans (a former Dutch Labour Party Government Minister) would even go as far as penalising those Member States that do attempt to regulate. That was why the incoming Workers’ Group President, German trade unionist Gabrielle Bischoff, had proposed an EESC own-initiative Opinion on the cost of NOT regulating.

The keynote intervention at our meeting was by Veronica Nilsson, Confederal Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation, who spoke on the theme of “EC’s Better regulation – challenges for European trade unions!” She pointed out how there was already a momentum behind de-regulation; that important regulations that had been moved were now being withdrawn, such as better protection during pregnancy, and health and safety provision for hairdressers. Further deregulation lay behind the Commission’s “Lighten the load” website, promising to follow up complaints of “too much regulation”, and establishing a “REFIT scoreboard”. The

Commission was complaining of too many amendments from Parliament in respect of an enforcement directive on the posting of workers. The Commission was calling for so-called “impact assessments” on proposals coming from either the European Council or Parliament, to determine “whether EU action is needed” at all, and that any such action should “not go beyond what was necessary”. Social Dialogue with representative bodies was to be superseded by “Public Consultations” at large – a one-sided communication where the Commission itself would set the loaded “questions” for such “consultation”. The same Veronica Nilsson had authored the ETUC Declaration on “Better Regulation”, which forms the second appendix to this report.

The meeting then heard from a number of MEPs. The German Christian Democrat Elmar Brock thought “impact assessment” a good idea, but the Belgian Socialist Marc Tarabella strongly disagreed, pointing out how legal texts were now rarely coming before Parliament because of such “impact assessment”. But the proof of the pudding was in the eating: the rail tracks underneath the very building of the European Parliament itself were being cleaned by illegally subcontracted Rumanian workers.

Philippe Lamberts, Vice-President of the European Parliament’s Greens, deplored the fact so many of the Socialist Group were prepared to drift along with the Commission agenda. He regarded the Timmermans document as an act of war, and no prisoners should be taken. How could there be compromise when any regulation was presented as a burden? But perhaps the most inspiring presence at the meeting was that of the SYRIZA MEP Kostadinka Kuneva, who spoke of the detrimental effect of deregulation on the Greek cleaning workers she has both represented and lead. And how she has paid for it! For, during a 2008 cleaning workers’ dispute in Athens, she had been the victim of a most horrific sulphuric acid attack. See www.youtube.com/watch?v=8UJl3aKcizo and www.equaltimes.org/konstantina-kuneva-the-cleaner#.VZ2QbflVhBc for more on this courageous workers’ leader.

In the subsequent debate, John Corey, my fellow Irish member of the Workers’ Group, said the speakers had given real life to the subject under discussion. They were, indeed, being confronted by tricks of language. Who wouldn’t want “better regulation”, one might ask. Yet the term was now being debased in the same way as the word “reforms”, which, by definition, should mean changes for the better. Similarly now with “impact assessment”. EU legislation and regulation made sense, and progress on equality in Ireland would not have taken place without it. But now the acquired rights directive protection for workers was under threat, through being “reviewed”.

The Czech member of the Workers’ Group, Zdenek Malek, did indeed sum it up well when he said that REFIT was like a TTIP without TTIP! The conclusions adopted by the Workers’ Group as a whole are attached as the first appendix.

First Appendix

EESC WORKERS' GROUP ON "BETTER REGULATION"

At its meeting on June 24, 2015, the EESC Workers' Group adopted the following statement:

Workers want a good European legislation

On May 19th, 2015 the European Commission published the package "Better Regulation", reflecting its desire to ensure better, easier and more effective regulation in the European Union. The three EU Institutions – the Council, the Parliament and the Commission - will present a list of proposals to be submitted to "review, simplification and improvement". This operation is primarily aimed at boosting competitiveness in the internal market and support small and medium enterprises. A review of the program will take place every year.

In the coming weeks, the EESC will adopt an opinion on the entire package, having recalled on several occasions that it should be respected as a consultative body of the Union, as provided in the Treaties. Until now the EESC, through its reports and opinions, evaluates the social and economic situation and proposes legislative initiatives.

In response to the Commission request, the EESC will strengthen this area of activity that falls within the purview of its institutional powers.

The Workers' Group of the European Economic and Social Committee, during its extraordinary meeting on 24 June 2015, held a dialogue with representatives of all major political parties in the European Parliament.

Although the Group shares the objective of "good legislation", which has also been expressed on several occasions, it raised doubts and expressed serious concern about the analysis of the texts proposed by the Commission.

According to art. 151 of the Treaty «The Union and the Member States... shall have as their objectives the promotion of employment, improved living and working conditions, so as to make possible their harmonisation while the improvement is being maintained, proper social protection...»

The Commission intends to submit to an impact assessment all initiatives likely to have a significant economic, social or environmental impact. The EESC Workers' Group considers that no impact assessment could be totally neutral or purely technical. Conversely, the risk of political manipulation is very strong.

Significantly, the impact assessments of the Commission actually do not prevent the maintenance of austerity policies, of economic governance and of structural reforms that have been the cause of a profound social regression. In addition, public consultations on the internet have never been a truly democratic instrument nor truly representative of civil society and those social organisations most deeply established at national, regional or local level.

Impact assessments, internet platforms, "independent" groups of experts strengthen perhaps the technocratic procedure but can in no way substitute either the legislative function of Parliament, democratically elected, or that of the consultative bodies of the Union: the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions.

Furthermore, the proposal to submit for evaluation agreements between European social partners, mainly on the actual representation of stakeholders, is a clear violation of the Treaty.

Representatives of European Trade Unions have always fought for a stronger and united Europe, asking to minimise the weight of bureaucratic rules in its implementation. But it is precisely in these difficult years from an economic and social point of view that citizens and workers in Europe need common rules that guarantee people's rights, their protection and well-being, rules that should not be sacrificed in favour of economic and financial interests. Conversely, a weakened and "simplified" European legislation may concede the free market a form of self-regulation that will aggravate the difficulties of the majority of citizens, exacerbating discrimination and social inequalities.

Representatives of Trade Unions, Members of the EESC Workers' Group therefore commit to be particularly vigilant in the work of detailed analysis of the documents 'Better Regulation' to which they will devote full attention in the coming weeks, together with the other two EESC Groups, all democratic parties of the European Parliament, the European Trade Union Confederation and other civil society organisations.

It is paradoxical that although the European Commission claims it wants to simplify and improve legislation and fight against bureaucracy and costs, it suggests mechanisms that are likely to lead exactly to the opposite of the aims pursued.

Second Appendix

European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) Declaration on 'Better Regulation'

Adopted at the ETUC Executive Committee on 17-18 June 2015

The 'Better Regulation' package^[1] published the 19/05/2015 by the European Commission is supposed to ensure better, simpler, less burdensome EU regulation.

The ETUC supports this aim. We want good regulation to protect workers, which is simple to apply and enforce. Legislation should avoid unnecessary bureaucracy and cost. EU legislation can also be more effective if it replaces national legislation in the 28 member states.

In reality, the 'Better Regulation' package puts the supposed needs of business above all others; turns minimum standards into maximum standards; puts a value on impact assessments that they do not have; brings a longer, costlier and more

bureaucratic procedure that will risk delaying social progress; makes it more difficult for elected EU institutions to change European Commission proposals and could undermine the principle that EU law applies equally to all. In short, it adds red tape, slows down progressive change and de-democratises Europe. These unwelcome changes are also contained in the new Inter-institutional Agreement^[2].

Social partner agreements

The ETUC insists that the Commission better regulation agenda must respect the autonomy of the social partners and their role as legislators as set out in the treaties. The ETUC is therefore concerned that the Commission states that social partner agreements intended to be Directives^[3] must first undergo impact assessments focussing in particular on the representativeness of the signatories, the legality of the agreement and a subsidiary and proportionality check.

The ETUC does not consider that these three elements constitute an impact assessment. They are already part of the current process. Going beyond this, by submitting an agreement between trade unions and employers to impact assessment, is not acceptable.

The ETUC rejects the claim that the Commission has the right (under Article 155 paragraph 2 TFEU) to decide whether or not to present to the Council a social partner agreement if the signatories request it.

Putting business above all others

The European Commission appears to view legislation as having to benefit Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and avoid placing a 'regulatory burden' on them.

The ETUC opposes the choice of one sector of society, business, as the primary beneficiary of 'better regulation'. The ETUC believes legislation should have a societal benefit, and that the needs of businesses do not come above those of workers or, for example, the environment.

The ETUC believes that proposing a "lighter regime" for SMEs and an "outright exemption for micro-businesses" leads to unfair competition, and undermines the basic principle of EU legislation applying equally to all. It should be noted that 85% of all employment is in SMEs. Workers must enjoy the same protection regardless of the size of the company.

No evidence is provided to show that any potential cost-savings for business would be invested in innovation and the workforce.

Improving minimum standards

The ETUC objects to the Commission asking member states, as a rule, to not go beyond what is 'necessary' when they implement EU legislation. By doing this, the Commission is turning what are often 'minimum standards' into 'maximum standards' which is an infringement of the treaties. The Commission should rather insist on member states' right to improve standards. This is especially important in the social field to ensure social progress.

The ETUC is particularly concerned that the Refit programme has led to a Health and Safety strategy that contains no legislative proposals, and has delayed much needed improvements to existing health and safety legislation.

Impact assessment

The ETUC does not accept that impact assessments are necessarily a neutral technical instrument. Instead they are frequently used as a political tool, not only by delaying legislation, but also by making recommendations based on a model biased towards economic interests on the short term and dismissive of, or even blind to potential long-term benefits.

A long, costly and bureaucratic legislative procedure

Instead of making EU legislation more effective, the ETUC considers 'better regulation' to be erecting several new barriers to the legislative procedure: introducing a major increase in impact assessments and public consultations, establishing a "Regulatory Scrutiny Board" that will have to issue a positive opinion before any new initiative can be taken and a "REFIT stakeholder platform", and proposing 'independent' panels for impact assessments in each EU institution. The ETUC does not agree that one EU institution should be able to impose impact assessment upon another institution. As to the REFIT stakeholder platform, the ETUC calls for a balanced representation of different interest groups so as to avoid another Stoiber group.

The ETUC believes that citizens' disillusionment with the European project is reinforced by the lack of new social legislative proposals, and this new system further limits the possibility of social progress of the EU. The ETUC warns that this risks further discontent with the EU.

A more democratic Europe?

The European Commission asks the European Parliament and Council to carry out an impact assessment if they significantly change Commission proposals during the legislative procedure. The ETUC considers this to be a blatant attempt to make it more difficult for the EU's democratically elected institutions to change Commission proposals.

The ETUC condemns this 'power-grab' by the European Commission, and notes that it is contrary to President's Juncker's commitment to a more democratic Europe.

Transparency?

The ETUC notes that the European Commission's commitment to assessing impact did not apply to the 'Better regulation' package, and that its stated commitment to transparency and consultation did not extend to discussing its 'better regulation' package with the European Parliament.

Links

^[1] Better Regulation Package published on 19/05/2015 by the European Commission

http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/index_en.htm

^[2] Interinstitutional agreement is an agreement between the three Institutions about better coordination during the legislative procedure

^[3] http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/guidelines/docs/br_toolbox_en.pdf

□

A Review by John Martin

This novel is set in the year 2022 in France. The main character and narrator is François, a literature professor in his early forties whose speciality is the work of Joris Karl Huysmans.

Huysmans was a nineteenth century writer associated with the decadent movement, who converted to Catholicism at the end of his life. The narrator's intellectual journey follows similar lines. After the considerable intellectual effort of his thesis, which he wrote in his twenties, he settles down to a life of pleasure with occasional contributions to various academic journals. As he grows older and becomes less successful with women he has recourse to pornography and prostitutes. Houellebecq/the narrator doesn't spare the reader the gory details, although some of his observations are quite amusing, if somewhat eccentric.

But no amount of literary conceits can hide the sheer emptiness and futility of the narrator's life. However, social and political events are about to disturb his sad existence. He notices an increasing Arab presence in his university. The outgoing head of the university who was a specialist in gender studies is to be replaced by a convert to Islam. The university is also becoming more dependent on finance from the Middle East.

On the streets there are unreported violent incidents involving Nationalists and Muslims. The country is in the midst of a Presidential Election campaign, which will lead to a political earthquake. Opinion polls show the *Front National* led by Marine le Pen at 32%; the Socialist Party at 23%; and a new party (founded in 2017) called the Muslim brotherhood (*la Fraternité musulmane*) at 21%. The traditional right has dropped to 14%. By polling day the Muslim brotherhood has passed the socialists, making it the second largest party in the State.

This presents a piquant problem for the Socialists in advance of the second round of elections. The only way they can prevent Le Pen from becoming President is in alliance with the Brotherhood. However, their negotiating hand is weak. If there is an agreement, the outcome will be a Muslim President since the Socialist Party is the minority partner.

Although the Brotherhood is not left wing it is quite willing to concede everything to the socialists on the economy. Unlike other parties, it has no particular interest in this area of policy; its primary concerns are demography and education. In these matters the narrator notes that the socialists are not used to negotiating with a party that knows exactly what it wants on a limited range of issues. The issue of education is particularly difficult for the Socialist Party since while the working class has long since abandoned the Party the only group that has remained loyal to it has been the teaching profession.

The Brotherhood's policy is to end compulsory education after primary school. Financial support for State schools would

be dramatically reduced. As regards the family, polygamy would be recognised by law. The socialists concede on these matters! The narrator suggests that the anti-racist ideology of the party trumps its republican and secularist values!

In the broader society it is suggested that the Catholic Church is at ease with the new dispensation. The soon to be appointed President, Ben Abbas, made frequent visits to the Vatican in the period before the election campaign. While State schools will wither on the vine as financial support diminishes, the religious schools will begin to prosper. The bourgeoisie will increase financial support to Catholic schools as they see Muslim schools flourish with financial support from the Middle East.

The new President is careful to preserve religious freedom. However, French Jews do not find the new regime congenial and there is a gradual exodus to Israel. The narrator has a girlfriend who is Jewish. Her parents have already emigrated and she agonises about following them:

"I love France!... I love cheese!"

Surprisingly, even the rare delights of French cheese cannot keep her in France.

The old left/right division in French politics has vanished overnight. On one pole is the ascendant Muslim Brotherhood and the other is the *Front National*, which is cast in the unlikely role of defender of Republican values. In fact this element of the story is not implausible. As this magazine has pointed out, although Jean Marie Le Pen is Jesuit educated his world outlook is not Catholic; it is more liberal and individualistic in orientation. Unlike other right wing parties in the world, the Front National has no religious basis.

Another interesting point made in the book is that the Front National is the only national party. The Socialist Party and the traditional right want France to disappear into a federal Europe. This gives the latter another point in common with the Brotherhood. Ben Abbas is also pro Europe, but he has a different vision of Europe. He wants the centre of gravity to move towards the South. The offices of the European Commission will be in Rome. Negotiations are opened up for the EU membership of Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and Turkey. The political and religious complexion of the French Government will give it unprecedented influence in these countries.

Although the Abbas government will be sympathetic to Palestine, the tail will not wag the dog. Palestinian interests will always be subordinate to Abbas's greater project. Also, while Abbas is happy to accept middle eastern money, this will not compromise his foreign policy.

The political success of Abbas is replicated in Belgium, where the majority party is also a Muslim brotherhood type

party. The narrator notes that the Muslim religion has a unifying effect on the traditional division between the Flemish and Walloon regions. A Muslim party also achieves some success in the UK as a minority party in a governing coalition.

The accession to power of Abbas has some positive economic effects. There is a dramatic reduction in unemployment as women withdraw from the employment market. (The book does not consider the effect on national income of such a drop in employment). The women are entitled to reasonably generous welfare on condition that they do not return to the labour market. There is also a positive effect on the public finances as State spending on education is reduced as a result of a greater role for privately funded religious schools. Women are discouraged from pursuing further education after primary school, but schools are set up to improve their domestic skills. There is no compulsory education after 12 years of age. After 12 years of age there is more of an emphasis on vocational training and the imparting of artisan skills.

The new President advocates the economic policies of the English Catholic intellectuals Hilaire Belloc and G.K. Chesterton involving supporting small, family owned enterprises. Larger enterprises are prevented from bankrupting small enterprises. The principle of subsidiarity is applied to ensure that enterprise is conducted by small economic units. The European Commission is pleased that France withdraws all subsidies to large enterprises.

The narrator has had to resign from his post in the Sorbonne Paris III because he has not converted to Islam. However, both he and the university authorities begin to wonder whether the arrangement has been sensible. The narrator realises that the adaptation required by the new regime is not so dramatic, while the new regime worries about the drop in academic standards caused by the requirement that professors convert to Islam.

The narrator meets the new head of the Sorbonne Paris III who is a Belgian Catholic who has converted to Islam. When he arrives at the palatial residence of the academic supremo he meets by chance one of the latter's wives who is just fifteen. When he is ushered into a meeting with the main man he becomes aware of another wife in her forties who serves pastries and vintage wine (the French version of Islam has no injunction against alcohol). The narrator briefly speculates on the needs, which each wife must satisfy. He also wonders on whether there are more wives since he thinks Islam allows up to four.

The Belgian academic describes his intellectual journey. He was originally a conservative Catholic. He reached an epiphany when a hotel he frequented in Brussels, which he considered the epitome of *Art Nouveau* style, was allowed to close. He concluded that western civilisation would collapse, not because of any threat from outside itself, but as a result of a kind of suicide.

His Catholicism was no protection against the rise of secular humanism. He concludes that his former religion contained the seeds of its own destruction. The fatal flaw was that it recognised the divinity of Jesus Christ who was also a man. This allowed the development of secular humanism. Islam, by contrast, did not believe that Mohammed was divine. He was only a special prophet sent to the world by the Supreme Being. The Supreme Being in the Moslem religion has no human characteristics.

The Belgian agrees with Nietzsche that Christianity is a feminine religion. At Christianity's height during the medieval period the Virgin Mary was far more important than Jesus Christ. While Christ spent a lot of time with his male friends He was forgiving of the prostitute Mary Magdalene. He also protected a woman who committed adultery on the grounds that "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone."

Islam, on the other hand, is unambiguous on the matter. Woman must submit to Man and Man must submit to God. The task of adherents of Islam is to restore a patriarchal society.

Following his interview the narrator discovers articles on the internet from the Belgian academic. The Belgian believes that Islam could become a world religion. Since Western civilisation is decadent and is unable to reproduce itself it is inevitable that it will succumb to Islam. Chinese and Indian culture will be more resistant given that they are not monotheist, but if their cultures are undermined by Western values their defences against Islam will also be eroded.

Another article by the Belgian suggests that in the new civilisation the mass of the people would subsist on a low level of income, but there would be an elite with considerable wealth enabling it to preserve high art and culture. The narrator thinks that this resembles Nietzsche's aristocratic vision. He suggests that the Belgian cannot escape the philosophical heroes of his youth!

The narrator realises that in order to reclaim his lucrative job in the Sorbonne he will not have to make any dramatic adjustments to his life. Indeed, his life could be improved. He decides to convert to Islam and finds that when he resumes his teaching life continues almost as before. His good looking, veiled and shy female students are "happy to be chosen" by him and "honoured to share" his bed.

In this reviewer's opinion the scenario that Houellebecq paints for 2022 is not going to happen. Any religious political party – whether Catholic or Moslem – would find it difficult to make any kind of political breakthrough, never mind threaten to occupy the highest offices of the State. It would be setting itself up as a target for people not belonging to that religious group. According to Wikipedia 10% of the French population are of North African origin. In this reviewer's – admittedly limited - experience many French of North African origin are very attached to Republican and Secularist values.

Houellebecq's assumption that the conservative Catholic population would be happy to troop in behind an Islamic party legalising polygamy and a low age of consent is implausible to say the least. He overstates the problem of reproduction. France has the second highest birth rate in the EU after Ireland. And finally, he understates the resistance socialists, feminists and other influential tendencies would have to an erosion of secularist values.

Nevertheless, the book is an entertaining and stimulating read, not least because he has probably succeeded in offending almost every conceivable political tendency in France. Although the overall scenario is implausible the author has some interesting insights into France and raises some profound philosophical issues, which apply to all western countries. It has been a best seller in France and recently an English language version has been published.

It deserves a wide readership in Anglophone countries . □

Charlie Hebdo and the Euro

By Cathy Winch

A Review of '*Qui est Charlie*'

The book "*Qui est Charlie?*" [Who is Charlie] by Emmanuel Todd has just been translated into English. Todd was librarian and is now research associate at the French National Institute for Demographic Research.

His new book caused a great scandal when it came out in France in May 2015, after the huge demonstration of 11 January of the same year, because it dared call that demonstration hysterical and hypocritical. "Millions of French people rushed into the streets to define the right to spit on the religion of the weak as the priority need of their society," Todd wrote. Newspapers devoted pages to denouncing Todd, including the Prime Minister Emmanuel Valls himself in *Le Monde*.

Lara Marlowe in the Irish Times (<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/writer-takes-dim-view-of-charlie-hebdo-protest-1.2217516>) describes a launch of the book: "The hostility of the press was palpable at a lunch with the European Press Club on Monday, where Todd described *Charlie Hebdo* as "an Islamophobic sect which spends its time sh***ing on Mohamed". There were audible gasps among journalists. "The real threat isn't Islam, which is relatively little practised," Todd said. "It's this new religion of radical secularism."

François Hollande and Valls quote the 11 January demonstration when they want to increase their popularity, as the high point of national inspiration, instigated by them, giving us all hope and moral courage to fight the good fight; the media refer to "the spirit of 11 January", when all Frenchmen came together and stood firm, united around their Republican values, to fight barbarism.

Emmanuel Todd calls it a moment of collective hysteria; he wants to 'understand how part of society was able to impose a false image of reality on the whole population'. He asks 'What kind of society made 3 or 4 million people in the streets in solidarity with a journal identified with a caricature, stigmatising a minority religion and making it France's number one problem?'

Todd is aware of the role of French foreign policy in French jihadism; in the meeting mentioned above he denounced "the idea that Islam declared war on the West, when it's the western military machine that has killed hundreds of thousands of people in the Muslim world".

But in the book '*Qui est Charlie ?*' the main reason for the Jihadism of young French people is not so much France's foreign policy, but more the absence of hope for the future, caused by the mad and criminal combination of a strong European currency with free trade. This causes increasing income inequality, as well as seemingly permanent unemployment. Free trade causes regions that produce the best and cheapest to condemn the others to hopelessness, especially among the younger generations.

This is a choice, which was originally accepted by the population: 'Voters accepted the triumph of the individual,

competition, inequality, 'aspiration', making the most of your opportunities.' Voters left behind communal values. Now 'powerful forces keep France in political and economic choices that destroy part of the population.'

These powerful forces are the old, the middle classes and ex-Catholics and they support this choice of the Euro in combination with free trade. The old because they are protected from economic hardship by generous pensions, fruit of the distributive and collective system of the previous non-liberal era. The middle classes because they still have jobs. Both the old and the middle class enjoy the cheap goods imported thanks to free trade. The case against ex-Catholics is more complicated.

Todd made the case in his 2013 book "*Le Mystère Français*"; he explained in it that the regions of France where the practice of Catholicism continued the longest are today the regions most successful in terms of education and employment. He calls that 'zombie-Catholicism', meaning Catholic attitudes that persist when active Catholic worship has ended. Historically, these regions turned away from the French Revolution, when it became anti-clerical; together with the Catholic Church they supported the restoration of the King in 1815, and the Second Empire in 1851; they took their time accepting the Republic after it was finally established in 1875.

This political history of the Catholics makes Todd unable to find anything good about traditionally Catholic regions having stronger family and social links and being capable of offering support to their population and in particular the young. He accuses them of not being Republican.

In '*Qui est Charlie?*' Todd continues this theme. According to him, Zombie-Catholics form the population in about a third of France, in the old inegalitarian regions, meaning where the eldest son inherited, rather than all children equally; their Catholic tradition leads to better school results, fewer family problems, lower unemployment, easier economic restructuring.

The causes of this success, he says, are, firstly a survival of social discipline from Church teaching: this teaching favours family stability, local cooperation, mutual aid, support networks, anti-individualist morality; Church teaching rejects the isolation of the individual, egoism, mass narcissism, and the ideological devaluation of any work not leading directly to gain; this Zombie Catholicism provides the necessary protective layers against the market.

Secondly these regions have hope, because they have recently become liberated from the influence of priests, says Todd.

Thirdly these regions accept inequality, therefore employees and workers are more docile, and the regions consequently attract employment; the formerly Catholic trade union CFDT favours intelligent dialogue between employers and workers.

Reading this makes me think that this Church teaching must be a good thing, but apparently it isn't. It can't be good, for

Todd, because it is based on a non-egalitarian tradition. Todd writes as if these Catholics formed an exclusive sect, as if their being Catholic was a privilege; he writes as if for example the CFDT was an exclusive mutual aid club from which the bulk of the population was shut out. But Todd ignores the obstacles placed in the way of the expansion of social-democratic unions like the CFDT, by for example the Communist Party, who called them corporatist lackeys of capitalism etc. The main thing is that the Church is hierarchical, which is bad, and that people who remained Catholic the longest came from non-egalitarian family systems.

Todd's family systems are of two kinds, depending on equality of inheritance; in parts of France the children inherited equally, and in other parts, the eldest only inherited. If the eldest only inherits, that makes people believe that children are not equal, therefore men are not equal, therefore peoples are not equal. Todd has studied the 'anthropology' of France following this criterion, and found that regions where the second tradition was prevalent tended not to support the Revolution (once it had become anti-clerical) and tended to remain attached to the Church longer; they are now the so-called Zombie-Catholics.

Todd writes as if equality was a straightforward idea. It is not. 'Equality' presumes a situation where there is something to share, tangible or intangible, and equality describes the manner of sharing.

'Equality or inequality of inheritance' assumes that all families had something to transmit to children. This fundamental distinction between two types of inheritance assumes the existence of property owned by the masses, which didn't happen in France until the Revolution. When land is not owned by families, and especially once people leave the land and become proletarian, there is nothing to pass on, and inheritance doesn't exist. Todd should give us maps of property owning France.

Todd talks as if equality had been set in stone by the Revolution. But what the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen set in stone is inequality, as useful to social order. Equality was only equality of rights: 'men are equal in rights, and inequality is there only to maintain the good order of society'; at the time this was written, 1789, this meant that aristocrats do not have extra rights by virtue of their aristocratic birth. The 'equality' of 1789, supposed to be the pillar of French society, is in fact meaningless today, when there are no aristocrats placed above the populace by right.

You could also argue that since, as Todd has explained, Zombie-Catholic regions give their inhabitants better access to work, therefore to food and housing, more mutual support, better education, a more stable family life. their members enjoy a more equal access to good things. And therefore there is more equality in these so-called inegalitarian regions.

This is to no avail. Todd's sympathies are with the historically 'egalitarian' regions, where the Communist Party and anti-clericalism were strongly influential. What confirms him in his preference is what happened on 11 January. When he came across a map showing the biggest demonstrations of 11 January 2015, it jumped out at him that the biggest demonstrations were in Zombie Catholic areas! Hence the book, *Qui est Charlie?* The title asks: Who marched under the slogan 'I am Charlie'? And the answer is that those who marched claiming 'I am Charlie' were these old privileged Zombie Catholics, who want to preserve the status-quo. (Todd excludes the Paris

demonstration from his reasoning, since it was the biggest but not in a Zombie-Catholic area; Paris is an exception being the capital and the scene of an international demonstration.)

Those who were absent from these marches, and did not participate in this collective hysteria, were the working class and the population grown from immigration. They are the victims of the Charlie people's choices, viz the Euro and free trade, resulting in unemployment and segregation for the weakest in society.

The failure of the European Union after its abandonment of social democratic values (limits to free trade) is not the only cause of France's problems however; the other is the loss of religious faith. (The full title of his book is *Who is Charlie? Sociology of a Religious Crisis.*) He said in his interview with Lara Marlowe that the problems are not just economic but also moral:

"Then, the intelligent, dignified response [to the killings] would have been for French society to reflect upon itself, to admit that Kouachis and Coulibaly [the gunmen] were French and that this horror was committed by French people. They should reflect on the social system that leaves part of the population rotting, economically and morally. If we go on like this, I think [the violence] will continue."

Given his case against Zombie-Catholicism, which is a case against Catholicism, it is surprising that Todd identifies loss of religious faith as a problem. Nevertheless he does; he sees that atheism has changed: at first, it was a liberation, leaving a prison, finding freedom from the Church. Now atheism has to define itself on its own merits, not as 'freedom from' something, since the Church has all but disappeared. The end of Catholicism poses a problem for atheists, who feel the gap, the emptiness. Atheism had never before had to define itself in a world without religion; it is now shown as giving no meaning to the world and no direction or sense to human life. This non-belief and consequent freedom to behave as one likes causes political and psychological problems. The biggest problem in the immigrant ghettos round cities (the *banlieues*), according to Todd, is not Islamism, but the breakdown in behaviour, what he calls, following the sociologist Durkheim, *anomie* (lawlessness, normlessness). Todd is beginning to sound like the philosophers of the Enlightenment: religion is not good for me, but it's good for the masses. Todd concludes by saying that the *banlieues* must be protected from fundamentalist secularism, because Islam can be a source of psychological equilibrium.

I agree with Todd that today's radical or fundamentalist secularism, the so-called *laïcité*, is a modern invention, which does not have its roots in the thinking of the founding fathers of the Republic, and that Muslims in France today are asked to sacrifice much more than were the Catholics of the 1880s. Jules Ferry, minister of Education, wrote to all school teachers at the launch of the new free, compulsory, non-religious school which was going to wrench education from the Church. He wrote:

"It goes without saying that the teacher will avoid as a bad deed anything, in his language or his attitude, which might hurt the children's religious beliefs, anything that could trouble their spirit."

That 1883 letter presents the child as being part of a family he or she must love, respect and help. The teacher must teach the child to love nature and God. The Ferry directive begins:

“Secular moral teaching is different from religious teaching but does not contradict it. The teacher does not take the place of the priest or the father; he joins his efforts to theirs in order to make of each child a good and honest man.”

The present day Education Minister Najat Vallaud-Belkacem, and her predecessor Vincent Peillon, on the contrary, want to ‘tear the child away from the determinism of family and background’. Pupils are explicitly taught that they are free not to believe. Girls are not allowed to wear a headscarf, even though it is a justifiable interpretation of the religious based desire for modesty.

Laïcité is included today with ‘*liberté, égalité, fraternité*’, as the fourth fundamental value of the Republic. Todd is right to point out that the current understanding of secularism is much more extreme than the original understanding of it, and that this new interpretation is harmful to society.

The new interpretation is the fruit however of a consistent and relentless suppression of the Catholic Church, from the time of the proper foundation of the Republic in 1875, called the IIIrd Republic but in reality the first; the Church was all but eradicated, physically in its property but mainly in people’s minds. Almost everyone in France believes that religion is something that is fine as long as it is not seen or heard in public, and does not influence people’s behaviour. So religion is fine as long as it is not also a guide to how to live, in other words, religion is fine as long as it is not religion. This is the modern understanding of the so-called Republican principle of *laïcité*, a sort of fundamentalist secularism, principle which as said above was quite absent from the thinking of the founders of the IIIrd Republic.

The phoney scientific ‘anthropological’ approach, as if you could analyse a complex society as if it was a tribe, unchanging and unconnected to any other part of the world, leads Todd to absurdity. Todd is not exclusively wedded to logic and evidence as rules for writing history. He sets down principles, and is happy to illustrate them with glaringly absurd examples; for example, the following principle: ‘loss of faith leads people to look for objects of hate, as replacement for the loss of belief’. Readers of this magazine will be surprised to learn that the Irish turned against England in the 1970s to fill the metaphysical void they felt when they abandoned Catholicism. The Ukrainians likewise turned against Russia when they became non-religious. Todd says himself in *Qui est Charlie* that the saving grace of the French is that seriousness is not one of their virtues. And I am afraid he continues in this vein and his conclusion is also a mixture of reasonable and nonsensical.

His solutions are to either leave the Euro or give up free trade, give back respect to religious faith, and find an accommodation with Islam (Islam is egalitarian, according to him, so nearer to republican values than Catholicism); but he still sticks to his detestation of Christian social-democracy, even though it originally protected Europe from liberalism and free trade, and even though it can be counted on to respect religious faith. As for the accommodation with Islam, Todd wants it subject to conditions: the first one is the right to blaspheme, and this makes nonsense of his earlier stand, and another condition is absolute sex equality, of which the ban on girls wearing headscarves at school is one necessary demonstration. It looks as if Todd is using feminism as a lightning conductor to save himself from the storms some of his other comments might bring down on his head, in any case for him feminism, or his understanding of it, trumps the respect for religion. Until ‘*Qui est Charlie*’, Todd was innocuous, and even useful in supporting the official anti-Catholicism, with his notion, albeit an ambiguous one, of the Zombie Catholics. Now he has gone too far for the establishment, although not that much too far. □

The questions raised in this review and the review of ‘*Soumission*’ will be discussed in the next issue of IFA.

To buy books published by Athol Books,
The Aubane Historical Society,
And The Belfast Historical and Educational Society

Go to www.atholbooks.org (This site is best accessed using Firefox, Safari, Chrome or similar).

Associated websites:

<http://www.david-morrison.org.uk>

<http://www.british-values.com>

<http://drpatwalsh.com>

<https://lefroggydotcom.wordpress.com>

<http://heideggerreview.org>

<http://atholstreetpeople.org>

“A lot of discussion is going on about how many refugees Ireland should take - quotas, numbers, etc. My two cents? I reckon one refugee for every US soldier that passed through Shannon. Think of it as a carbon neutral balance type of thing, but for war.”

The economist Conor McCabe



Map showing places visited by Danielle Bleitrach and Marianne Dunlop, summer 2015:

Crimea, Transnistria and Moldova. Odessa, which they also visited, is on the Black Sea Coast, to the West of Crimea.

“USSR, Twenty Years After, A Trip in War-Time Ukraine”

by **Danielle Bleitrach and Marianne Dunlop**

Delga Publishing, Paris 2015. (Extract translated from the French by C. Winch)

[Danielle Bleitrach is a retired University teacher and journalist, ex member of the French Communist Party Central Committee. She is the co-author of *L'Usine et la Vie* [Factory and life] Maspero 1980, *Classe Ouvrière et Social-Démocratie* [Working Class and Social Democracy] Editions sociales 1985, *Cuba est une île* [Cuba is an island] Le temps des cerises 2004, *Cuba, Fidel, le Che ou l'Aventure du Socialisme* [Cuba, Fidel, le Che or the Adventure of Socialism] Le Temps des Cerises 2006, and *Fritz Lang et Bertolt Brecht, le Nazisme n'a jamais été éradiqué* [Fritz Lang and Bertolt Brecht, Nazism has never been eradicated] LettMotif 2015.

She made a trip in 2015 with Marianne Dunlop, a linguist and retired teacher, to conduct interviews with non English (and non French) speakers in the Crimea, then in Odessa, Moldavia, Transnistria and Gagauzia, with the intention of finding out about the situation in parts or ex parts of Ukraine, while keeping at the forefront of their mind the question of the fall of the Soviet Union.

Members of the Ukrainian communist Party came to France to launch the book, with members of the French CGT union. The book is in its second edition.

In the introduction, the authors quote E. Hobsbawm:

‘More history than ever is today being revised or invented by people who do not want the real past, but only a past that suits their purpose. Today is the great age of historical mythology.’

And:

[The modern way of writing history] ‘undermines [...] the belief that historians’ investigations, by means of generally accepted rules of logic and evidence, distinguish between facts and fiction, between what can be established and what cannot, what is the case and what we would like to be so.’

Readers of this magazine can agree with this analysis. Bleitrach and Dunlop’s book is a step in the direction of establishing or re-establishing the facts about Ukraine and the former Soviet Union.

(Delga Editions have published French editions of Lukacs and Losurdo among others.)

The First trip The trip to Crimea in June 2014

In fact we made two trips, each lasting about a fortnight. The first took place in early summer, in June 2014, in the Crimea, the second from mid-October until 10 November. Remember, in early June, everyone was talking about the annexation of the Crimea by Putin. The unfortunate and virtuous little Ukraine, because she had chosen democracy and the West, had suffered an amputation of its territory by its dreadful neighbour, the Muscovite bear. This is at least is how the story was told and became gospel at dinner parties, where, as everyone knows, the opinion of people who matter is formed.

Crimea, the Donbass and the two grandmothers.

We have been in the Crimea for three days already. Last night in our host family, Marianne and I discover Putin’s interview on French TV with the famous presenter Elkabbach : (we are reminded of George Marchais’ interview with the same man “*Shut up Elkabbach !*”) But Putin belongs to another political reality. A reality that our media prefer to ignore, not because he is—which nobody denies—a man of the right, the representative of the oligarchy in his country, but because he tries to be independent. To say he is a Gaullist is an analogy which goes only so far, precisely because the Russian world, or more generally the post-Soviet and Eurasian world, is so different.

1-The journey to Yalta

How to being explaining ? But in fact we do not want to explain, but only to share impressions with readers. On Wednesday, we went by trolleybus to Yalta, two and half hours away. The landscape is Mediterranean. The weather is superb, bright without being overwhelmingly hot. There are few advertising boards, but everywhere electoral boards celebrating the referendum. Every 50 meters, similar posters celebrate May 9, the Day of Victory in World War II. One half, sepia coloured, shows young joyful soldiers and the other half, in bright Technicolor, shows the same men today as medal clad veterans. With the legend: “Thank you, grandfather, for Victory! “

Two young men sitting on the seats in the same row as us, ask if we are French and why we are here. Their attitude is friendly and polite. On the flight from Moscow to Simferopol, we had also been spoken to by our fellow passenger, also a young man around twenty, a kind of genius, on his way to a geology course in Crimea.

Among these young people, we found the same need to explain the political situation, the same consciousness that we were not informed and were victims of a misunderstanding. What they express is not only curiosity, but the belief that when Europe and the Europeans know the truth, they will have no alternative but to agree with the choice Crimea made and denounce what is hatching in the Donbass: a genocide in the worst circumstances, that of civil war.

They are actually a group of four young people, on their way to work on a construction site in Yalta. We proposed to interview them and they agreed. When we get off the bus we sit down together for an hour and a half in a little bar in the bus station. Four fellows, of whom two only speak, Anatoly and Sergei, while Slavik and Alexander approve. They describe a very hard situation in the Donbass. This is where they have come from on the way to meeting their employer this afternoon. The war took them by surprise and their indignation is as great as their surprise: to be bombarded by your own country, see your schools hit by your own army and suffer the lies of Ukrainian TV, is almost inconceivable.

“It is abominable, but they will hold firm!” says Sergei. Anatoli adds, laughing, *“They’re tough guys.”* They are from Droujkovka in the Donetsk oblast. They state *“It is a small town of no strategic importance, so it’s still quiet.”* Slavjansk has water and gas, Kramatorsk the airport; at home, factories closed, so they have to look for work, as they do every summer. These four friends met at vocational school, from which they emerged turners and welders. Sergei was a policeman. Anatoli jokingly calls him a cop. All approve when Sergei says they will have nothing to do with the government of Kiev. The reason seems obvious to them: *“How could we possibly agree with people who laugh at our grandparents? They do not celebrate May 9.”*

Between the young workers from the Donbass, the gifted student on the plane, and our interlocutor met later in the afternoon, a Jewish mathematician who got into trouble in the past for his Zionism, but who presents himself as a Russian patriot, there is a common trait, the same refusal to make a clean sweep of the Soviet past, especially the Great Patriotic War.

While we were talking in the bus station café with the youths from the Donbass, the bar owner got involved, as did a little old veteran sitting there letting the hours pass hoping for a little controversy. Today we are the attraction: imagine, two foreign ladies, quite elderly, sat at table with four young workers, when the tourist season has not even started! When Sergei denounced the lies of Ukrainian TV, the owner who was listening behind the counter came near the tables, strongly approving and came up with a story of his own: recently, some Ukrainians came to tell him that Crimea was Ukrainian. *“No, we are not Ukrainians, we are in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, we gave you twenty-three years to prove yourselves, and all you did was send us oligarchs and corrupt officials, real bandits, you wanted to take away our autonomy, which is why it was legitimate for us to separate from you.”*

The veteran nods with conviction, sipping his glass of coffee. He sits there patiently, like a Russian peasant before an administration building, but he is passionately interested in the topic, as are all those whom we will meet in our journey.

Like the café owner, most of our interlocutors in Crimea welcome the fact that following the *coup d’état* of February 21, three determined individuals rose from the ranks, three paladins as Zyuganov called them— the party secretary of the Russian Federation who often makes unexpected references. They took everyone by surprise and organized a referendum in their autonomous republic. The café owner insisted on the special status of Crimea. The peninsula was moved administratively from Russia to Ukraine in 1954, without its inhabitants being consulted. Which posed no problem, since the transfer took place within the same state framework. On the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, it was assumed, again without asking anyone’s opinion, that the Crimea would remain in Ukraine, with the

recognition of its status as an autonomous republic and respect for the Constitution. And the café owner says vehemently that the regime that emerged from the Maidan coup, not content with abolishing Russian as a regional language, immediately decided to suspend the autonomy of the republic.

On February 21, 2014, there was no qualified authority (the Constitutional Court being dissolved by the new government) and the Rada endorsed the decision of the Maidan, that is to say of the Americans, without even having the necessary quorum, and appointed a new government. This new government did not by a long way represent all Ukrainians, and those from Russian-speaking areas did not recognize it. In Crimea, they took advantage of the constitutional power vacuum to claim their right to self-determination. All against a background of discontent about this twenty-year reign of oligarchs: *“Twenty-three years to prove themselves and now a catastrophe, we’ve had enough.”* Crimea resolved in its own way the contradiction of international law between the inviolability of borders and the right of peoples to self-determination. The authorities of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea considered that driving out an elected president and installing a junta in his place created a new situation in which the rights of Crimea were no longer guaranteed, and they decided to hold a referendum for the 16 March. Their action was neither legal nor illegal in so far as constitutional order was no more. In fact the real problem, they conclude, is not the choice made by Crimea, but the way the US and the EU endorsed a *coup d’état* and brought to power a junta associated with the extreme right, which began a reign of terror in all the territories in the East and the Southeast against the Russian population.

The first fact which we must try and grasp in order to understand what happened here is this panic which gripped the inhabitants of the Crimea but also those in the Russian areas of South and East Ukraine. We don’t mean those who speak Russian, almost everyone speaks Russian in Ukraine and many members of the new government or even the most excited nationalists have trouble speaking correct Ukrainian. We mean Russians, that is to say people who have dual citizenship, inherited from the complex Soviet system. There is the nationality of the Republic in which people live and work, comparable to French territorial rights (*jus soli*) on the one hand, and on the other hand, family and cultural nationality, inherited from one’s parents. Thus one can be a Russian or Belarussian Ukrainian or a Jewish, Greek, Armenian Ukrainian. Crimea alone has hundreds of nationalities. The wave of nationalism, tainted with Nazi overtones, of a Ukraine *über alles* has upset the balance between family and civic nationality and sparked a fear of an anti Russian pogrom, which actually happened in Odessa and is now happening in the attack on the Donbass. The overwhelming majority of Crimeans feel they have miraculously escaped a bloodbath, a St. Bartholomew of Russians and perhaps even of other nationalities also.

A slogan printed on a T-shirt proclaims, *“We in the Crimea, we are so smart we brought our peninsula with us when we joined Russia.”* Unfortunately if the operation was a success in the Crimea, it has not been a success in Odessa where it produced a terrible massacre in the Trade Union House, let alone in the Donbass where we are dealing with a veritable genocide. (We use here and in the following text the term “genocide” as do the Russians and even the Ukrainian authorities (see below, about Odessa, where a massacre can be qualified as genocide from 50 dead); words do not always have the same meaning from one language to another.)

Everyone here is anxious for news from the East.

The young workers of the Donbass sitting with us that day in Yalta, do they feel the same as the owner of the bar? Historically the Donbass is far from central power, a state within a state, to the point that in 1917 they wanted to constitute an autonomous Republic. It took Lenin's authority to make them accept Ukrainian rule.

Whom do they trust?

Without hesitation they respond "*Ourselves.*" After a moment's silence, Sergei says that he did not vote in the presidential elections because he did not agree with this consultation, but would have voted for the Communist candidate if he had been obliged to vote.

- *What does the Soviet Union mean to you?*

- *Peace and equality, we were all equal and that's very important.*

When we shook hands on parting, I said: "*I am a communist,*" he said: "*me too*" blushing. His white skin easily turns red at the least emotion. It is not easy to talk about one's experiences in the Donbass.

The young geology student, on the plane, told us: "*The Soviet Union was one of the most glorious periods of our history, why should we turn our backs on it? It put our country on the road to modernity, made it a great power and succeeded in defeating an abominable enemy.*" This young man, a 'fourth generation' Muscovite, is an avid student of World War II, but he will never speak of the Communists, however many hints we dropped. He admires Putin who he says has shown "*wisdom and mastery*" but he despises Medvedev. His love for history has nothing to do with any Great Russian fantasies, even if he stresses the chivalrous side of the Red Army. He shrugs when Cossacks are mentioned: "*It's folklore, a reenactment for tourists.*" However, he reminds us of the recent display for the opening of the Sochi Olympic Games, "*It was very beautiful and very deep. There were scenes of conquest and happiness in the Soviet Union then suddenly the night of the war stretched over it, a silence under a black veil. It was not possible to say more because at this international celebration were present some of the peoples who were guilty of this terrible war.*"

2. Sergei, the Communist Cop: what happened on the Maidan?

Sergei and his friends had opened their hearts to us; they left us their e-mail addresses so we could send them our articles concerning them. Yet they did not want to be photographed for fear that employers would recognize them and withdraw their offers.

When he confided in us that he had been a policeman, I quizzed him: "*Berkut?*" [1]

He shook his head negatively. Sergei is well above average in height, with a clear skin, a round nose like Gagarin, widely spaced bright blue eyes, which give him a thoughtful air; when he speaks he searches for words, in order to be precise and at the same time not offend his interlocutor. Shy, romantic, he takes everything seriously, unlike Anatoly, his friend, a smaller, brown haired young man with a tanned complexion, the Gavroche of the gang.

- *Oh! No, Sergei protests, I am not a Berkut. I would have liked to be, but it wasn't possible!*

- *But why work on a building site instead of carrying in on as a policeman?*

He launches into an explanation from which we understand that he does not want to wage war against his own people and that Pravy Sektor hangs policemen who do not obey orders.

Sergei holds up a picture on his mobile phone, showing the shoulders of a young girl lifting her hair to reveal a tattoo on the back of her neck, a phrase in French: "*The happiness of a life.*" He blushes once again, asking us to translate what it means. Marianne obliges and Anatoli says with a smile, "*That's our girls!*" Anatoli has a smirk at the corner of his lips but at times the mask hardens, and he seems to stare into a future which does not bode well, and his expression seems to say "*I won't be fooled again.*" This joker will die for a cause he laughed at a quarter of an hour before. Perhaps to follow and protect his quixotic friend ... He intervenes to specify:

- *Policemen were sacked en masse.*

There were two types of dismissals, those by the Kiev people, and those in the Republic of Donetsk, deemed "*self-proclaimed*", a generic category in this most unclear period of Ukrainian history.

Sergei turns out to be a strong supporter of the new Donbass authorities:

"It is a government trying to create something new. Corrupt people have got to be got rid of. The insurgents are people like us, very simple people, and they took up arms to defend their homes and their families; they want to establish a new order. There is too much corruption, you can't imagine it; there was an official body that was supposed to fight against drug trafficking, in fact, they were organizing the traffic and they themselves were the godfathers of the business."

Sergei idolises the Berkut. "*Competent men, above the fray, the protectors of ordinary people in distress.*" He is insistent in his desire to make us understand who seized power in the Donbass, and we cannot drag out of him a single word about outside help or the presence of foreign troops. "*These are simple people who took up arms to defend their homes, their schools, their children,*" he repeats.

- *But who have they taken up arms against?*

- *But against the Maidan, of course!*

Anatoli says in a harsh voice, no longer laughing:

- *We should have nipped the Maidan in the bud. You heard what Poroshenko said: "We must crush the Donbass, shoot first and talk afterwards. There is no alternative if we want to have done with these people."*

Gavroche is not sentimental ... he is convinced it's a fight to the death, while his friend still has dreams; the other two are silent.

Sergei continues his train of thought:

- *Let me give you a piece of advice: look at Ukrainian TV, listen to the rubbish they come out with, it's unbelievable! They bombed a kindergarten. That becomes either: "Terrorists seized a kindergarten" or "Russian aircraft disguised as Ukrainian aircraft bombed a kindergarten!"*

Then there is Pravy Sektor [2], which he hates.

Sergei says "*The Ukrainian army does not want to fight against the people of the Donbass, anymore than young policemen like him do, so Pravy Sektor does the dirty work. They are high on drugs,*" he says.

The fear that gripped the south and east of Ukraine has a name, that of ultra-nationalist movements who make explicit reference to WW2 Nazi collaborators, movements such as Pravy Sektor but also the Svoboda party and also the punitive battalions who weigh increasingly heavily in all the "democratic" that is to say, pro-Western, parties, as the situation deteriorates.

What we can confirm of Sergei's account of the refusal of the Ukrainian army to fight is that sending young people to the eastern front is becoming increasingly unpopular. Some young people, called up for short periods, are sent to the front and



The caption reads: “So, how do you like capitalism?”

Poster seen in Russia.

there is now, including in the West of the country, a movement of mothers who demand the return of their children. They are not political, they simply demand the return of their children. This weekend, according to Russian TV, the only TV people listen to here, they took action and stopped military convoys. They are particularly active among minorities in the West of the country, Romanians and the Ruthenes of Transcarpathia, who dream of being reattached to Hungary.

This state of affairs, like the massive support of the population of Crimea, is difficult to contest, but I still have trouble being completely convinced of the existence of the assault sections of the extreme right. We quiz all our interlocutors systematically on the reality of the omnipresence of Pravy Sektor. One imagines rumours, similar to the great waves of panic of the Middle Ages, that spread from village to village, of an invisible enemy. It will take the second voyage and the discovery of what really happened in Odessa for us quite to believe in the existence of these Nazi hordes.

- Have you seen these Pravy Sektor people, with your own eyes, not by hearsay? That is the question I ask my interlocutors.

Sergei saw them twice, when he went to Kiev as a young policeman, during the events of Maidan. He was the target of their Molotov cocktails. Around him his colleagues were burned. They had no weapons, only simple shields. He describes the far-right activists as junkies. These are the same people who lurk in our Donbass villages in gangs, they use “propeller” fragmentation bombs. He returns to what he saw on the Maidan, “These people were paid a hundred dollars a day, more than we earn in a month, not to mention all the drugs they wanted ...” And he sums up: for him the Maidan is these Bandera types, Nazis, and corrupt politicians who are making fortunes at the expense of the people, appointing officials who are themselves corrupt.

“They threw Molotov cocktails at us, young unarmed policemen. When they took power, they disbanded the Berkut. Except the one in the Western region who promised to serve them. The Berkut is the power of the state. They had to go. The most famous Berkut was that of Kharkov. They put a price on the head of their leader, who eventually escaped to Russia. In a demonstration, six Berkuts can isolate provocateurs, get them out of a crowd of hundreds of individuals and prevent them from causing trouble.

Have you seen the photos of men with their clothes off in Kharkov? They were

Pravy Sektor people; when they saw they were recognised and could not escape, two of them doused themselves with petrol, threatening to become living torches in the crowd. The Berkuts isolated them in no time at all, took off their clothes and used that to tie them up.”

Who fights in Slavyansk according to them? The population, responds Sergei, and his comrades agree and approve his description. “Former army soldiers, young people and even old people.

You see in the newspaper that killing is taking place, all of a sudden you can't stand it any longer and then you go to a place where you know you can join up and you find yourself on the front line. From that point on the priority is to send the women and children away, this is the most urgent, send them to Rostov or the Crimea where they will be safe.”

To Sergei, and his is the general opinion, corruption is pervasive, from the top of a failed state to the base. It means a permanent taxation of the fruits of labour together with the humiliation of the weakest, resulting in despair at daily suffered injustice; the worst is this accumulation of small humiliations. For years they have bent the shoulders, alcoholism has spread ... until the explosion, the context of fear and the unexpected resistance of apparently quiescent populations.

Some days ago, Marianne translated a text, I placed it on the blog with the link to the original. A wise guy commented: “*I don’t trust this, given its origin, the Cyrillic writing, Russia.*” In terms of indoctrination, we have nothing to envy the Russians now. Their press is a lot more diverse than ours, since the pro-Western oligarchs own some of the newspapers, and defend the Western point of view as faithfully as our own obedient press.

The government press, as well as that of the Communists, second political force in the country, are forced to argue, to fight the battle of ideas. The Russian public is often more keen on culture and debate than we are. All these factors produce a lively press, keen on giving the facts, in a very direct tone. This man posting comments on my blog did not know that. We must get used to the idea that despite our tendency to judge everything, we are ignorant of almost all the things we talk about.

Notes.

1. Berkut, (in Ukrainian: Беркут, “Golden Eagle”) are former special riot police units serving in the Ukrainian Militia under the Ministry of Interior. They were accused of perpetrating the massacres on the Maidan but other theories—which neither Kiev nor the EU seem eager to investigate, although they were corroborated by exchanges between the European Commissioner and the Latvian Prime Minister and other testimonies—attribute the murders of demonstrators and police to snipers belonging to the extreme right.

2. Pravy Sektor. It would take too long to explain Right Sector, which our readers will discover throughout this book. Let us quote what Wikipedia says: The right sector is a [far-right Ukrainian nationalist](#) political party that originated in November 2013 as a paramilitary confederation at the [Euromaidan](#) protests in [Kiev](#). The coalition became a political party on 22 March 2014.

Founding groups included extreme right-wing [Trident](#) (Tryzub), led by [Dmytro Yarosh](#) and Andriy Tarasenko; and the [Ukrainian National Assembly–Ukrainian National Self-Defense](#) (UNA–UNSO), a political/paramilitary organization. Other founding groups included the [Social-National Assembly](#) and its [Patriot of Ukraine](#) paramilitary wing, White Hammer, and Carpathian Sich. It is essentially anti-Russian. It is headed by Dmytro Yarosh. The ideas defended by Right Sector refer to the independence of the Ukrainian nation vis-à-vis Russia, the fight against people linked to the former regime of President Viktor Yanukovich, but not along economic lines. The Israeli newspaper Haaretz reported that Right Sector and Svoboda distributed recent translations of *Mein Kampf* and the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* on the Maidan, and expressed concern about the significant presence of members of both ultra-nationalist movements among the demonstrators.

The billionaire Igor Kolomoïski, a character we’ll see frequently mentioned, is close to this movement. □

[Dominique de Villepin, UN Security Council, 14 February 2003](#)

There are two options. The option of war might seem, on the face of it, to be the swifter. But let us not forget that, after the war is won, the peace must be built. And let us not delude ourselves: that will be long and difficult, because it will be necessary to preserve Iraq’s unity and to restore stability in a lasting way in a country and a region harshly affected by the intrusion of force. In the light of that perspective, there is the alternative offered by inspections, which enable us to move forward, day by day, on the path of the effective and peaceful disarmament of Iraq. In the end, is that not the surer and the swifter choice?

No one can maintain today that the path of war will be shorter than the path of inspections; no one can maintain that it would lead to a safer, more just and more stable world. For war is always the outcome of failure. Could it be our sole recourse in the face of today’s many challenges?

Therefore, let us give the United Nations inspectors the time that is necessary for their mission to succeed. But let us together be vigilant and ask Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei to report regularly to the Council. France, for its part, proposes another meeting at ministerial level, on 14 March, to assess the situation. Thus we would be able to judge the progress made and what remains to be accomplished. In that context, the use of force is not justified at this time. There is an alternative to war: disarming Iraq through inspections. Moreover, premature recourse to the military option would be fraught with risks.

The authority of our action rests today on the unity of the international community. Premature military intervention would call that unity into question, and that would remove its legitimacy and, in the long run, its effectiveness. Such intervention could have incalculable consequences for the stability of a scarred and fragile region. It would compound the sense of injustice, would aggravate tensions and would risk paving the way for other conflicts....

France has always said that we do not exclude the possibility that, one day, we might have to resort to force if the inspectors’ reports concluded that it was impossible for inspections to continue. Then the Council would have to take a decision, and its members would have to shoulder all of their responsibilities. In such a scenario, I want to recall here the questions that I stressed at our last debate, on 5 February, to which we must respond. To what degree do the nature and the extent of the threat justify immediate recourse to force? How do we ensure that the considerable risks of such an intervention can actually be kept under control?

French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin’s speech at the Security Council on 14 February 2003, giving a prescient warning about the destabilising effect of military action against Iraq (which the US/UK launched a month later). □