

Irish Foreign Affairs

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

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Editorial

Back to Fundamentals

When a Russian passenger airliner was bombed out of the Arabian skies by Islamic State, the fearless and tasteless *Charlie Hebdo* made sick jokes about it.

But, when a much smaller number of people were killed in Paris by Islamic State a few weeks later, *Charlie Hebdo* went Jingo.

There is something particularly repulsive about the nationalist sentimentality of French rationalist internationalists

The French Revolution proclaimed Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, and declared that the Rights of Man should rule the world—that is, the rights of Man as an abstraction, Man in general, Man without national attributes. But it was all bogus. The rights of man proved to be the Rights of Frenchmen.

Laurence Sterne made a Sentimental Journey to the Continent and remarked that “*they do these things better in France*”, or words to that effect. But that was before the Revolution.

England, through the pen of Edmund Burke, repudiated the French Revolution and the Rights of Man. Burke declared the Rights of Englishmen. He did not believe in “*Man*”—and his disbelief in the existence of Man as a political animal without national distinctions has yet to be refuted by events.

Burke proclaimed the Right of Englishmen in a world that was largely inhabited by others. The only general political right he acknowledged for all and sundry was the right to be governed. It was not to be expected that the Others could govern themselves as well as Englishmen did. But it was necessary that they should be governed, and they should be let get on with it as long as they were not causing a disturbance in the world, and as long as England did not need to interfere with them for its own development.

France acts at variance with what it supposes to be its principles when it tries to act Imperialistically as England acts, and it cannot act as England acts because England acts in accordance with its exceptionalist and exclusivist principles.

Burke gave eloquent, philosophical, expression to English particularism—to the English *Sonderweg*. But he did not invent it. It was the active principle of English life long before him. It was already there in the theocratic Republic of Oliver Cromwell and his Secretary of State, John Milton the poet. It seems to have begun with the gentry spawned by Henry the Eighth’s Revolution of Destruction—the political event called the English Reformation. Those gentry, created and cut loose by the half finished Revolution/Reformation, became a distinctive social element in English political life during the reign of Elizabeth. They wondered what the world was all about. And they discovered the Roman Empire and shaped their imaginations to it.

Another element in the disrupted society went Biblicalist under Elizabeth. It came to power in 1641, conceiving of itself as a direct agent of God in the world.

Cromwell, who was himself a strong Biblicalist, and imagined that God was telling him what to do, found himself

in the 1650s caught in an attitude of indecision between those two products of the Reformation, Jerusalem and Rome. The populace, deprived of the familiar political scenery of the Monarchy, were not settling down. The gentry urged him to restore the Monarchy with himself as King. The Biblicalists let him know that he would not live long if he did so. They were intent on establishing the Fifth Monarchy as a theocracy ruled directly by God.

They had a majority in Parliament and they voted to replace the Common Law with the Mosaic law. The Common Law was seen as being necessary to the gentry. Cromwell saved the gentry by dispersing Parliament—of which he was the *Protector*. He died a few years later, leaving his son as ineffectual dictator of an incoherent Parliament. Poor old Milton was in despair. He could not understand how something that was so simple to do had all gone so badly wrong.

When General Monck put the ‘Commonwealth’ out of its misery by acting behind the back of Parliament and bringing the son of the executed King home from France, and letting him execute the executioners of his father, Milton escaped into turgid theological fantasy about Heaven and Hell.

Thirty ears later James II introduced freedom of religion, and he was overthrown by a combination of the gentry and the Protestant fundamentalists. An accommodation between the two was then worked out, under which the gentry governed the state as a ruling class, with a nominal Monarch, while the Biblicalists had the free run of what might be called civil society, in which the slave trade played a great part.

That arrangement lasted until 1832, when Jerusalem was finally admitted to the corridors of power in the new Roman Empire. And both strands made for the unquestioned *exceptionalism* of the English state.

The British Empire was made by the sceptical ruling gentry, supported by the theocratic Protestant passion of the populace. Active anti-Catholicism, which was sustainable on a base of either philosophical scepticism or fundamentalist Biblical belief, was the religious bond between them. The building of a world Empire required the disabling of strong European states. These states, fortunately, were Catholic in culture and religion, so gentry liberalism and middle class bigotry ran happily together with regard to Europe.

“*Balance of Power*” was the English strategy for disabling Europe and leaving England a free hand in the rest of the world. The meaning of the Balance was that the strongest European states should be balanced against each other by judicious English intervention. None of them was allowed to establish the kind of dominance in Europe that England established over Scotland and Ireland.

And England itself was not part of the balance. Its purpose in keeping European states balanced against each other was to free itself for the establishment of unbalanced English power in the world at large. This was made explicit in its naval policy. The Royal Navy had to be kept stronger than the combined Navies of any likely combination of political enemies. Britannia must

rule the waves. It achieved Naval dominance from the Seven Years' War in the mid-18th century and maintained it until the Second World War.

The ruling class of gentry knew how and when to make war advantageously and how and when to make peace advantageously as the fruit of war. At least that was the case for about two centuries and a quarter—until 1914, when it launched a World War deliberately, but rashly, and fought it as a moral crusade to the destruction of the enemy states, instead of feeling its way to an advantageous peace, as it had always done in the past. This appears to have been due to the great increase in the political influence of the Biblicalist middle class and respectable working class, who had been admitted to the corridors of power in a series of electoral reforms, beginning with that of 1832.

The 1914 War was fought wildly and recklessly to the point of destruction of the enemy states (Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Turkey), and one of Britain's major allies, Russia. Italy was drawn into the War by lavish British promises of Austrian territory, but was destabilized in the moment of victory by refusal to let it occupy what had been promised.

The War was not won by the Alliance with which Britain started it. It was a victory snatched from the probability of defeat in 1918 by the intervention of the United States, which displayed in battle a fighting quality equal to that of the Germans.

The European War was a distraction for the United States. The enemy it had had in mind for a generation was Japan. In the 1850s it had sent warships to Japan, forcing it out of its centuries-long isolation, and then a generation later it had begun to regard invigorated capitalist Japan as its next enemy. But, by 1916, it had made an immense economic investment in the British war effort, supplying it with arms and lending it the money to buy the arms. If Britain lost the War, the American investment in it would have been lost. So America went to war in Europe and preserved Britain as its debtor state. But that made it the ally of Japan—or at least the ally of the ally of Japan.

In 1919 the USA chose not to exert its power for the purpose of compelling Europe to make a settlement in accordance with the principles it asserted when going to war. German interests appealed to it as the state which had won the War to take responsibility for organizing the peace, but it chose to let the dependent European victors, Britain, France and Italy, determine the peace settlement.

This allowed Britain to be the world Superpower for a further generation. It dominated its European Allies of the War in the peacemaking. It prevented France, which had borne the main human cost of the War on the *Entente* side, from establishing the secure Border with Germany that it wanted. It vetoed the French attempt to end Prussian influence on Germany by breaking up the German state of 1871 and establishing Rhineland and Bavarian states—a policy which had been implicit in Britain's own war propaganda. And it vetoed the promised incorporation of the Dalmatian coast into the Italian state.

Britain had scarcely escaped defeat at the hands of Germany (on which it had declared war) than it began to play Balance-of-Power politics against France. If France had got what it wanted from the peacemaking, it would have been established as the hegemonic Power in Europe, and would therefore have become Britain's enemy once more, as it had been before the unification of Germany. Britain did not wait for this to actually happen. It acted pre-emptively against it.

Britain was apparently back in business as the world Superpower. Its Empire had been increased substantially by the War and, while it set up the League of Nations to keep the idealists happy, it put it very much in second place to the Empire in the handling of world affairs.

So it was *Full Steam Ahead!* once more. But the Empire had been holed below the water.

It had previously fought wars on credit, and had prospered both from the credit and from judicious peace-making. But the credit had never before taken the form of a massive loan from another state on which it had become dependent militarily as well as financially.

The euphoria lasted a very short time. The US gave it time to pay its money debts, but it quickly insisted that it break its alliance with Japan, or else the US would engage in a Naval race with it. It backed down, decided not to renew its profitable Treaty with Japan, and thereby marked Japan down as a probable enemy.

Modern Crusading, as a major force in the directing of world affairs, began in 1914 when Britain entered the European War and boosted it into a World War whose declared purpose was to destroy the source of Evil in the world and inaugurate Perpetual Peace.

The World War of 1914-19 was Britain's first middle class war. The Boer War, which had ended twelve years earlier, had been fought in the old-fashioned way by aristocratic officers with restless lower-class elements as infantry. But it also saw the start of direct middle class engagement in war, with the raising of a middle class regiment by the City of London.

The 1914 War took on a middle class character right from the start.

War on Germany had been on the agenda for about ten years. It began with the setting up of the Committee of Imperial Defence by Tory Arthur Balfour, soon after his policy of

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replacing landlordism with peasant proprietorship in Ireland had been set in motion.

Balfour twice asked the CID to investigate the possibility of a German invasion of Britain. The Committee twice reported that a German invasion was impossible in practice. It described the quantity of shipping that would be needed to convey a German Army to the British coast, said that Britain would have knowledge of the assembly of such shipping as soon as it began, and was certain that the Royal Navy would destroy any invasion force at sea long before it got near the British coast.

About 30 years ago I applied in the State Paper Room of the old British Museum for a report of a speech by Balfour on the *Freedom Of The Seas*—which he rejected outright—and was given instead, either accidentally or because someone behind the scenes thought that I should see them, a folder of the typed minutes of CID for that period. Balfour's attempt to raise a scare about British vulnerability to German invasion was dismissed as groundless by the CID.

But Balfour's concern, of course, was not about the danger of a German invasion. He had decided that it was necessary for Britain to make war on Germany, and therefore he suggested that Germany had the intention and the ability to invade Britain.

I was unable to get copies of those Minutes. Photographs by phone did not exist then. Many years later, after the British Museum Library was moved to the British Library, I tried to get another look at them, but could not locate them.

As I was reading them, it occurred to me that Erskine Childers' novel, *The Riddle Of The Sands*, was an attempt to refute those CID Reports by imagining a way in which a German invasion force could be assembled secretly. Childers was a well-connected insider in British ruling circles. He had been active in raising the City regiment for the Boer War. He had written a volume of the *Times History* of that war, and had defended the Concentration Camp policy by which the Boers were brought to admit defeat. Then he became a Liberal Imperial advocate of Irish Home Rule within the Empire. He ran guns for the Irish Volunteers in the Summer of 1914, in response to the arming of the Ulster Volunteers. The guns were hardly landed when he was off to fight the Germans for four years. During those years he appears to have sickened of the Empire.

He became a very effective propagandist of the Irish Republican Government elected at the end of the War, editing its *Irish Bulletin* under British military occupation. When the British Government succeeded in splitting that Republican Government and manipulating it into war against itself, its Irish allies—Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith—bore a venomous hatred against Childers and their successors executed him on a trumped-up charge.

When an Empire goes astray, as the British Empire did in 1914-19, bizarre things happen.

British planning for War on Germany began after the Liberal Party won the 1906 Election, and after the old-fashioned Gladstonian leader, Campbell Bannerman, retired in 1908, handing over the leadership to H.H. Asquith, R.B. Haldane, and Lord Grey—who had come out as active Imperialists during the Boer War.

When the opportunity for war presented itself in July-August 1914, there was a British Expeditionary Force ready to be carried to a pre-arranged place in the line in France at a couple of days' notice.

But it seems that the kind of war Britain fought in 1914 was not the kind of war it had planned for, and that the cause of the deviation from the plan was the antagonism into which British ruling circles had fallen on the issue of Irish Home Rule.

The Government was without a War Minister at the critical moment, because of the Curragh Mutiny. The officers at the Curragh, some of whom had been central to the secret military preparations being made with France for war on Germany, told the Government in March 1914 that they would not let the Army be used to impose a Home Rule Act on Ulster against the resistance of the Unionist Volunteers. The War Minister, Seeley, negotiated with the mutineers, and pacified them with a guarantee that they would not be required to act against an Ulster resistance. This was necessary because there were bigger things at issue than Irish Home Rule. The Army had to be kept loyal, even at the price of appeasing disloyalty on a domestic issue, because you never knew the moment when it might be needed for the Big War.

But the guarantee given by the War Minister to the Curragh Mutineers, necessary though it was, was also a clear breach of Government policy on the Home Rule issue.

The party-conflict in Britain in 1914, Liberal versus Unionist, had reached a degree of antagonism not seen since the Whig *coup* exactly 200 years earlier. The Unionist Party, equal in size to the Liberal Party, had organized outside of Parliament to prevent the implementation of an Irish Home Rule Act carried through by a Liberal Party that was only the Government because it had the backbench support of the Irish Party—a party which refused in principle to take part in the Constitutional government of the state.

The back-bench members of the Liberal Party and the members of the Irish Party had grown close during the two-year conflict over Home Rule, and both were predisposed against Balance of Power war in Europe.

When War Minister Seeley resigned after conciliating the Curragh Mutineers, the Prime Minister did not replace him but became his own War Minister. The war planning of the CID, under instruction by the inner group of the Liberal Government, was being done behind the back of the Liberal Party membership. A trusted Imperialist, but one with good Liberal credentials, was needed for the War Office. It seems that such a man was not easy to find.

The weeks between the Curragh Mutiny and the Declaration of War were a busy time for the Prime Minister/War Minister. In order to remain in Government, he had to maintain apparent progress towards Irish Home Rule while at the same time warding off the civil war that was lurking in the Home Rule issue.

On July 26th a crowd that was carrying the Volunteer guns landed by Childers at Howth into central Dublin was shot into by the British Army and three were killed, while over thirty were injured. What the consequences might have been if the Great War had not descended on the situation is anybody's guess.

The first definite military move towards war in Europe was the Russian mobilization the day before the Bachelors Walk shooting. Other mobilizations followed predictably. During these days Britain played the part of ineffectual peacemaker. For political reasons it had to delay entry into the war until the German Army crossed the Belgian frontier.

It was well known that Germany, caught within the Franco-Russian alliance, had a plan to outflank the French defences by a march through Belgium. What Britain should do if that happened was discussed in the British press before it happened. The opinion of the Liberal papers was that it would not be sufficient reason for Britain to enter the war. The Liberal Government had to find a way of sweeping aside this opinion,

and a German march through Belgium was all that was in prospect.

The “*violation of Belgium*” was necessary to the British Government as a cause of war. It would declare war because Belgium had been “*violated*”. But, in order that Belgium should be “*violated*”, the German Government could not be allowed to suspect that this was the British state of mind. The “*violation of Belgium*”, which was to be presented as a wanton outrage against “*international law*”, must be allowed to happen. And, in order that it should happen, the German Government must be deceived about British intentions. And it was deceived.

The British war was then launched as a great moral crusade—a moral crusade facilitated by moral duplicity.

Britain drew Italy into the War in 1915, against the opinion of both the Socialist Party and the Vatican, by appeal to right wing nationalist irredentism, and with the assistance of a renegade from Socialism, Mussolini. Italy was promised large chunks of Austrian territory for joining the *Entente*—and some of the promises were actually kept.

At the end of the War the Italian Prime Minister, attending the Versailles Conference, observed with astonishment that the British seemed to believe their own moralistic War propaganda—

“When our countries were engaged in the struggle, and we were at grips with a dangerous enemy, it was our duty to keep up the *morale* of our people and to paint our adversaries in the darkest colours, laying on their shoulders all the blame and responsibility of the War. But after the great world conflict, now that Imperial Germany has fallen, it would be absurd to maintain that the responsibility of the War is solely and wholly attributable to Germany...” (Franco Nitti *Peaceless Europe*, 1921, p33).

But that was what Britain did.

*

The combination of disinterested concern with high moral principle, which is always the British posture, with pragmatism in action, which is always the British mode, disconcerts lesser nations. John Bruton, the former Irish Taoiseach and a strong Anglophile, became aware of it when he became a senior figure in the politics of the EU and he doesn't know what to make of it.

In 1919 Britain acted in the way described by Nitti. It acted out of a disinterested concern for the application of the destructive morality that was implicit in its war propaganda, and it made a mess of Europe. Then it reverted to pragmatic action within the mess, subverting the Settlement it had insisted on, though never calling it into question and advocating a revision of it.

The purpose of the Versailles Settlement was to disable Germany. But the disabling of Germany went with the enhancement of France. Britain did not want French power restored so it began to connive at German breaches of Versailles conditions in the mid-1920s. Then in the 1930s it engaged in an open collaboration with Hitler which restored Germany to the status of a major European Power. And then, having broken up Czechoslovakia for Hitler, it declared war on him over the comparatively trivial issue of the transfer of the German city of Danzig to the detached segment of the German state in East Prussia.

It declared war on Germany again but it did not wage war against it. It offered a Treaty to Poland which it never had the intention of honouring. Poland was left to fight alone in

the opening battle of Britain's second World War of the half-century. With Poland out of the way, Britain tried to make war on Russia in alliance with Finland, but failed. When Germany responded, in May 1940, to the Anglo-French declarations of war on it, Britain withdrew its Army from France after a few weeks, and left the French to fight alone.

When France, deserted by its Ally, which had led it into war against Germany, and occupied by the German Army, made a settlement with Germany which provided for the maintenance of a French Government in part of the country with Germans occupying the rest pending a settlement with Britain, the British cried “*Betrayal!*” and made war on France

From June 1940 to June 1941 Britain “*fought alone*”. That's what the mythology says. But it did very little fighting. It did not have the will to fight the war it declared. Its desertion of France in June 1940—“*Dunkirk*”—was met with a great collective sigh of relief at home that there would not be another Somme.

With the Royal Navy still ruling the waves in June 1940, Britain did not need to call off the War it had declared in September 1939. Neither did it need to fight it. It could just keep the War going with very little cost to itself—but at great cost to others.

A British victory in the war it had declared was out of the question after the ‘betrayal’ of France in June 1940. But there was also little prospect of a British defeat, either by invasions of the homeland or loss of the Empire—which it continued to oppress and exploit. So Britain maintained its declaration of war, engaging in some bombing exchanges with Germany.

Its war policy was to spread the War by interventions which led to defensive German occupations.

Intervention in the Italian/Greek War of 1940-41 led to German intervention in support of the Italians, and to the German occupation of Serbia and Greece, and to the establishment of a jubilant Croat state under German auspices.

The USA was appealed to, but its mind was on Japan. It bided its time, knowing that it had the ascendancy over Britain. Again it sold armaments and lent it the money to pay for them. But it was immune to British moral propaganda.

The great aim of the policy of spreading the War was a German/Russian War. If that had not been in prospect, the policy would have been futile, and would no doubt have been discontinued. Churchill's great achievement was to maintain a war situation in Europe, while doing very little fighting, until the German/Russian War came about.

Other peoples had suffered from the British policy of spreading the War, and suffering was to be magnified a thousandfold by the success of the policy, but the British maxim was, *The worse, the better*.

Churchill did not start the War. He would not have been allowed to. He was too much of a warmonger on principle, and had too little relish for moral humbug. All he did was to maintain Chamberlain's declaration of war during the year after Dunkirk, doing so from a position of relative security.

For that modest achievement, he has been puffed up to the status of a Great Man on whose actions History turned. We read, for example, in the *Cork Examiner*, in a review of a biography of Frederick the Great, that “*In the 'great man' pantheon of European history, Frederick... stands alongside Napoleon, Hitler, Stalin, and Churchill*” (Prof. G. Roberts of UCC, 29.8.15).

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The War passed out of Britain's hands when it betrayed France, and vilified it, in June 1940.

The French democracy made a provisional settlement with Germany, pending a withdrawal of the British declaration of war. General de Gaulle defected from the French Army in order to project a myth from which France was to be re-invented and was impatiently tolerated by Britain as he created the Free French Army in exile. The Free French had no hope of taking control of France from the German occupation and the Vichy democracy, but neither had the Imperialist British who despised De Gaulle. The game of war had passed into other hands. The British, who "*stood alone*", and the Free French, maintained a token involvement in the War while creating myths for the post-War era. The War ended with the defeat of Germany only because it became in substance a war between Germany and Russia.

Britain and the Free French had a presence in the post-War settlement of Europe only because the USA decided that the moment had come to exert its will in Europe. If the US had given priority to the war with Japan, which it had provoked with ultimatums with which Japan could not comply, what became known as 'the West' would probably not have existed. It was US involvement that enabled Britain and the Free French to be in France and Western Germany when the Russians arrived in Berlin.

The Cold War between the British and French, who had started the war with Germany but had failed to fight it with purpose and energy, and Russia, which defeated Germany, began simultaneously with the defeat of Germany.

Churchill, the hero as well as the creator of the post-War myth of the War, sometimes stood back from the mythology in order to make a blunt statement of facts—being in that respect less Churchillian than the Churchillians. He reasserted after the War that the basic enemy of all that he stood for was Communist Russia. And his *History* of the War contains strong hints that it was foreign policy bungling by the Empire between 1919 and 1939 that led to a second Anglo/German War, instead of war with Russia.

He had wanted to make war on Russia in alliance with Germany in 1919, instead of humiliating Germany to Russia's advantage. Then he had praised Fascism as the force which had saved capitalist civilization from Communism—and he never apologized for it. (The Churchillians avert their minds from it.)

It was sheer bungling by the Empire that brought about the absurd alliance of British civilization with its fundamental enemy against an enemy which, properly handled, would have been an ally. Then, when the accidental Fascist enemy was defeated by the fundamental enemy who had become an ally, Churchill would have made war on this obnoxious ally if he had had the means of doing so—which by this time was the nuclear bomb—and the necessary freedom of action, meaning independence of the USA. He had neither

Fascism had quickly become the general political system of Europe west of the Soviet Union, following Britain's irresponsible declaration of a war which it did not have the will to fight in earnest. Resistance to Fascism in Europe was slight. Europe could not, or would not, have freed itself from Fascism—which was a compromise between capitalism and socialism.

Europe was freed from Fascism by Communism, even in the part that the Communist advance did not reach—the power of the German Army having been met with the greater power of

the Red Army in Russia and being driven back systematically before the USA shepherded the British and Free French back on the Continent.

To the minor extent that some Power other than Russia played a significant part in defeating Germany, that Power was the United States. Its intervention in the War brought about what came to be called Free Europe. And Free Europe did not include those parts of Europe which lay within the sphere of the Power that had resisted Nazi Germany and destroyed it.

Free Europe was capitalist Europe. But Free Europe had not freed itself, and it was not capitalistically vigorous.

The post-1945 Capitalism of Free Europe, and of Britain, was created by the United States, which still asserts proprietorial rights over it.

As far as the reconstruction of Europe after 1945 had an internal source, it lay in the movement of Christian Democracy, based on Catholic social policy, which had not collapsed into Nazism, as German Protestantism did, but which was not *laissez-faire* capitalist either. It eased the transition from fascism to liberal democracy restrained by a "*social market*", and it constructed the political alliance of France, Germany, Italy and Benelux which evolved into the European Union.

The post-War alliance had the economic object of making a protectionist Europe self-reliant, and the political object of ensuring that Britain could never again play balance-of-power games with the states of Europe. For a generation Western Europe held to these objects. During that generation it was led by politicians who had experienced the inter-War handling of Europe by Britain. Then, in the 1970s, Britain was admitted to the alliance—and, naturally, it set about subverting both of those objects. And it has succeeded to an extent that seemed very unlikely only 25 years ago, with the result that Europe no longer has any idea of what it is.

Western Europe united while Britain was recovering from the consequences of its 2nd World War of the half-century. A united Europe is incompatible with British interest, therefore Britain has been working tenaciously at dissolving it.

Observation of Britain's methods at close quarters in Europe shocked the Anglophile, John Bruton, whose Anglophilia followed from a baseless idealism. What shocks him is that Britain retains its own sense of destiny and works full time on it.

What other state in Europe now has a sense of destiny? Ireland once had it but has lost it. And likewise with the EU. And Ireland, knowing no better, helped Britain to dissolve the European sense of destiny.

In a state without a sense of destiny, politics can only be a hand-to-mouth affair. But European politics under British handling seems to be reaching a point at which hand-to-mouthism will no longer be possible.

If Britain feels it has done enough damage to the EU from within and decides to leave it, Ireland will have to decide whether it has reverted to the status of West Britain or still has a will of its own lying fallow.

As to Britain, it is incapable of being European.

England is a State, not a people. The people have, for centuries, been continuously re-shaped to serve the purposes of the State.

About 300 years ago Daniel Defoe (the Whig politician who wrote *Robinson Crusoe*) published a satirical poem called *The True Born Englishman*. The great secret about the true-born

Englishman was that he was a European mongrel. Defoe was the loyal follower of a Dutch King. A few years later the true-born English had a German King. And it was a Donegal Gael, John Toland, who went to Germany for the Whigs to find a King for them.

The influence of the English State, like that of the Capitalism which it brought into being, acts as a solvent on values.

The Reformation enacted by the English State was essentially a solvent of values. It was in that respect utterly unlike the Luther Reformation, which asserted values and preserved them.

The English Reformation lay behind the American Revolution, which in turn lay behind the French Revolution. Edmund Burke opposed the French Revolution on the ground that its influence was destructive. He did not care to trace the English influences on the French, or the destructive influence of the English Reformation on England itself. These would have been dangerous lines of thought for somebody who was not only born in Ireland but was almost an Irishman. The furthest he could go was to comment favourably on Robert Walpole, the first Prime Minister, who tried to calm things down after two centuries of destructive revolutionism.

But Walpole's son, Horace, who is dimly remembered as a Gothic novelist, was less inhibited, and, in his correspondence about the French Revolution, he comments:

“What hundreds of thousands of lives did the Reformation cost? And was it general at last? What feeling man would have been Luther if he could have foreseen the blood he should occasion to be spilt? For Calvin, he was a monster...” (30 April 1791).

That may have been the truth of the matter for the Continent. But for Ireland, an island beyond an island, what was monstrous was the eclectic mix of Luther, Calvin and Rome in the English Reformation State, which did not repudiate the principle of Papacy when detaching itself from Europe but reasserted it in extreme form when it proclaimed itself to be an Empire and forged a totalitarian unity of Church and State such as Europe has never known, and set out on its centuries-long campaign to destroy Irish life.

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The world is being driven back to fundamentals by the way it has been conducted by the USA, Britain, and Anglicised Europe since they won the Cold War. Foreign policy has all but ceased to be a matter of making choices within a widely-accepted consensus about basic things.

The turning-point is identifiable. It happened when the Calvinist underlay in the British State took command of the conduct of the war that had been prepared by the ruling class, which for two centuries had been fighting wars to improve Britain's position in the conflicts of interest which arise naturally in the world, and fought it as a total war of Good against Evil.

Reasonable conduct in pursuit of advantage became impossible when the spectre of Evil was raised, and there was a reversion to Calvinist, or Zwinglian, absolutes in a political culture which had prided itself since the early 18th century on having left such things behind it.

“*Mobs can destroy a government for a time, but it requires the greatest talents and the greatest firmness—nay, and time too, to recompose and establish one*”. England used to know that. Or its ruling class, when it had one, knew it. Even Horace Walpole knew it. And even the despised Rousseau knew it—

despised by the Irish Establishment in its Eoghan Harris era, in imitation of English fashion: see his conservative advice to the Poles. But now England acts with France in destroying states and raising mobs to take the place of states. And it professes moral outrage when the consequences of its destructive actions re-act back on itself. □

Advertisement

What is a Nation?

By Ernest Renan and Joseph Stalin

Introduction drawing out the implications for the Two Nations Theory and other matters, by Brendan Clifford.

A new pamphlet by Athol Books, 2015

A nation is a historically evolved mixture of things: race, religion, language, economic interest, geographical factors, dynastic influence. All of these things, or some of them, are blended, in various proportions, through historical events, to produce the sense of communal affinity between very large numbers of people that is called *nationality*.

The blend is the nation. Its reality is in the blend. It is not reducible to any one of its components, though one or other of the components may be particularly emphasised in particular phases of national development.

Ireland is a nation; so is Northern Ireland: when NI became systematically less British in its political life, it did not lose the collective sense of itself as a distinct social body with a will to survive, even in conflict with Britain.

This is why in 1969 Brendan Clifford described the two nations as two Irish nations. At the time he published the two nations analysis of the Northern situation, together with extracts from the two classic works on nationality from opposite sides of the European political spectrum (Renan and Stalin) to show what he meant by a nation,

This pamphlet reproduces these extracts, with a new introduction and an epilogue by Brendan Clifford discussing the relationship between class and nation, war in an imagined world, invented nations, the nation as historic territory, Charles O'Connor, and sectarianism among other matters.

Connolly, Casement, Childers and the War: A Response to Gerry Docherty

by Manus O’Riordan

The programme for the Desmond Greaves School last September advertised that the topic of “Inter-Imperialist rivalry and World War 1: Britain’s role” would be addressed by “Speaker: Gerry Docherty, author of ‘Hidden History: the secret origins of the First World War’ (with Jim Macgregor); Respondent: Dr Tommy Graham, historian, Editor and founder of ‘History Ireland’ magazine”. The programme had already gone to print, however, before Tommy Graham informed the organisers that he was not in a position to do this; so I was requested to be a last minute substitute as the respondent.

I opened by welcoming the fact that, within Britain itself, Docherty was challenging the received British narrative on the 1914-18 Imperialist War which, with the supine acquiescence of the Fine Gael/Labour Government and the Fianna Fáil Opposition, was now being pushed as the “appropriate” narrative for us in Ireland to follow. There was a wealth of detail, the extent of which I was previously unaware, on the intensity of a common Anglo-Russian long term strategy for war. And Docherty, both in the book and in his address to the Greaves School, had thoroughly enlightened me to the extent to which Belgium, far from being the innocent “neutral”, had been a co-conspirator with Britain in its war plans.

CONNOLLY - A GLARING OMISSION

Docherty stated that six years ago he had not heard of Alfred Milner, and wondered, perhaps, if we had. Well, yes, those of us in the hall, perhaps a small minority, who were familiar with the publications of Athol Books, and particularly with “The Great Fraud of 1914-18” by Pat Walsh, which was published in March 2014 following a series of articles in “Irish Foreign Affairs”, were certainly very well informed about the role of Alfred Milner and the secret Committee of Imperial Defence. More importantly, however, was a glaring omission from “Hidden History”. There was not a single mention of James Connolly, be it good, bad or indifferent. Docherty responded that he would have to acquaint himself with Connolly’s writings, while every other person in the hall was well aware of the fact that, whether they agreed with his particular standpoint or not, various editions of Connolly’s selected writings that have been published down the years from 1940 to date, had included Connolly’s seminal article “The War Upon The German Nation” (first published in the “Irish Worker” on August 29, 1914). Connolly had forcefully argued therein:

“I wish to try and trace the real origin of this war upon the German nation, for despite all the truculent shouts of a venal press and conscienceless politicians, this war is not a war upon German militarism, but upon the industrial activity of the German nation... Despite the long hold that England has upon industry, despite her pre-emption of the market, despite the influence of her far-flung empire, German competition became more and more a menace to England’s industrial supremacy; more and more German goods took the place of English. Some few years ago the cry of ‘Protection’ was raised in England in

the hopes that English trade would be thus saved by a heavy customs duty against imported commodities. But it was soon realised that as England was chiefly an exporting country a tax upon imported goods would not save her industrial supremacy. From the moment that realisation entered into the minds of the British capitalist we may date the inception of this war. It was determined that since Germany could not be beaten in fair competition industrially, it must be beaten unfairly by organising a military and naval conspiracy against her. British methods and British capitalism might be inferior to German methods and German capitalism; German scientists aided by German workers might be superior to British workers and tardy British science, but the British fleet was still superior to the German in point of numbers and weight of artillery. Hence it was felt that if the German nation could be ringed round with armed foes upon its every frontier until the British fleet could strike at its ocean-going commerce, then German competition would be crushed and the supremacy of England in commerce ensured for another generation. The conception meant calling up the forces of barbaric powers to crush and hinder the development of the peaceful powers of industry. It was a conception worthy of fiends, but what do you expect? You surely do not expect the roses of honour and civilisation to grow on the thorn tree of capitalist competition – and that tree planted in the soil of a British ruling class... Yes, this war is the war of a pirate upon the German nation. And up from the blood-soaked graves of the Belgian frontiers the spirits of murdered Irish soldiers of England call to Heaven for vengeance upon the Parliamentary tricksters who seduced them into the armies of the oppressor of their country.”

But when we move from what is excluded to what is included in the “Hidden History” narrative regarding Ireland, we also run into problems. The Docherty/Macgregor thesis that Britain had a Plan B to make war on Germany by having the enemy let its guard down in the false belief that civil war was about to break out over Ireland is particularly misleading. Docherty asked his Greaves School audience: “To what extent was Ireland a cause of the First World War?” He answered, in respect of the Home Rule crisis: “The fear of civil war was always a threat, but no more than that.” He went on to argue: “Ireland played a major part in the strategic deception used by the Secret Elite through the British Foreign Office to deceive Germany into believing that Britain was incapable of declaring war because she stood on the brink of a civil war that would impact on the whole nation.” But Britain WAS on such a brink! The “fear of civil war” was no mere feint or deception of Germany. The ever-so-careful Irish academic Michael Laffan acknowledged the validity of the 1915 private assessment of British Prime Minister Asquith:

“The Lords’ defiance of the Liberal government precipitated a general election that enabled home rulers to hold the balance of power in parliament, and it also brought about the loss of the Lords’ power of veto. This allowed the introduction of a new Home Rule Bill in 1912, which in turn led to the Ulster unionists’ armed defiance. When the Liberal government offered concessions to the unionists it seemed that their extreme measures had been vindicated. Most Irish nationalists were dismayed by the apparently successful actions of Edward Carson and the Ulster Volunteers, and some of them felt

inclined or obliged to copy the Ulster example; they formed the rival Irish Volunteers. Following the creation of these two paramilitary forces, much of Irish society became militarised; young men marched, drilled and prepared for conflict. A rebellion or even a civil war was widely expected, but the First World War erupted just before the crisis could be resolved. From the British point of view, a grave external threat replaced a grave internal threat. The following year the prime minister, H.H. Asquith, wrote that the outbreak of the war could be seen as the greatest stroke of luck in his lucky career.” (“History Ireland”, Winter 2004).

CASEMENT DISTORTED AND CHILDERS CONDEMNED

“Hidden History” also embarked on a conspiracy theory too far in respect of the Irish Volunteers’ Howth gun-running of July 1914. If that book has sinned against Connolly by omission, it sinned against Casement by distortion. In my response to Docherty I took issue with the book’s one and only reference to Casement, concerning his association with Childers in the planning of that gun-running:

“Although not named by Carroll Quigley as a member of the Secret Elite (NB - MO’R), Childers was exceedingly close to many at its heart... Early in May 1914, Childers and a group of friends met at the plush Mayfair home of Alice Stopford Green... Others at the meeting included Sir Roger Casement... Like Stopford Green and Childers, they all belonged to a privileged class... Dublin-born Sir Roger Casement was at that time a distinguished British Foreign Office diplomat, though his later (? - MO’R) involvement in Irish politics cost him his life... Erskine Childers, an agent of the Secret Elite who had earlier infiltrated the nationalist movement and won their trust, proceeded to arm them. He led a group of upper-class Protestant friends with close links to the British Establishment and Secret Elite funded the purchase of weapons and ammunition from Germany, and delivered them to the South in their yachts. The scene was set for civil war should the Secret Elite need it to provide the *casus belli*. In addition, the entire venture provided a convenient distraction and smokescreen behind which preparations for war were rapidly progressed.” (pp 314-5 and 318-9).

The portrayal of Casement as being involved in a British Imperialist plot to deceive Germany is beyond caricature. I pointed out to Docherty that Casement was not the belated convert to the revolutionary nationalist cause suggested in his book and that, moreover, far from being involved in any plot AGAINST Germany in May 1914, he was at that stage forging an Irish revolutionary alliance WITH Germany. This is made clear from two Athol Books publications, both with introductions by Brendan Clifford, Part One of Casement’s 1914 book, “The Crime Against Europe”, in September 2002, and a reprint of the full book in April 2003. No less powerful an exposure of Britain’s war upon the German nation than Connolly’s writings, when Casement’s book was first published in the USA in September 1914, he informed his readers that “the following articles were written at intervals between August 1911 and December 1913”. In my Greaves School response to Docherty, I drew attention to that quote, firmly proving that, for a number of years before the War, the pro-German Casement had been actively involved in opposing Britain’s war plans.

WHAT ARE WE TO MAKE OF CHILDERS?

But what of Childers? Childers can indeed be rightly indicted for his contribution to the cultural conditioning and propaganda build-up for Britain’s war on Germany, through his 1903 novel, “The Riddle of the Sands”. But Docherty and Macgregor withheld from Childers even that small crumb

they threw towards Casement’s good name, that the post-War Childers’ “later involvement in Irish politics cost him his life”. The authors also failed to note the fact that in early 1914 the pre-War Irish Volunteers was itself an uneasy coalition between Republican separatists and Liberal Imperialist Home Rulers. Childers the pro-Home Rule propagandist openly remained a Liberal Imperialist. There was no need for Childers to infiltrate the Volunteers as “an agent of the Secret Elite”. In June 1914 an ultimatum, openly expressed in the press, gave the Liberal Imperialist Home Rule leader, John Redmond, a majority on the Volunteers Executive. Moreover, Redmond’s openly declared “vision” was that Home Rule would enable Ireland as a Dominion to play a fuller role in, and on behalf of, the British Empire.

But what are we to make of Childers, the post-War Republican? In his article “The Riddle of Erskine Childers - Was He a British Agent?” (“Irish Foreign Affairs”, September 2015), Pat Muldowney has already very effectively challenged the Docherty/Macgregor thesis in that regard: “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.” I will therefore limit myself to commenting on the post World War One Childers perspectives on that particular War. There were in fact three such perspectives: that of Erskine Childers himself; that of his widow Molly Childers; and that of his son Erskine Childers, the future Fianna Fáil Government Minister and Tánaiste, and, finally, President of Ireland. We do, indeed, have a Childers problem here, but it pertains to the son, not the father. In his Foreword for a 1972 edition of “The Riddle of the Sands”, the son wrote:

“When my father wrote the novel no one seriously believed that in eleven years the British people would be engaged in a desperate conflict with Germany and her allies; few people realised that all the major British naval bases were facing the French coast, and of course no one then, as in the Napoleonic wars, believed that any Continental state would attempt an invasion of Britain. A number of historians have written that the publication of ‘The Riddle’ - the sales were very voluminous - undoubtedly played a considerable role, which my father could not have foreseen, in ensuring greater protection for the eastern coast... As an Anglo-Irishman - Irish on his mother’s side - he was appalled at the failure of the British Government to recognise Ireland’s right to full independence. Yet I think he served in the Great War in the R.N.A.S. and was decorated for his part in leading the first naval air raid in history, not only because he believed in the rights of small nations but because he believed in the right of the British people to preserve their land from invasion and rule by the German empire.”

Wow! So, in 1914-18 the British people were waging a war of national liberation against the German Reich! The future President of Ireland (1973-74) signed that endorsement of Britain’s Great War in his full Ministerial capacity in the following manner: “ERSKINE HAMILTON CHILDERS, Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister), Minister of Health, Ireland, 1971.”

What was that Irish Government Minister’s frame of mind in writing such a Foreword? We can find part of the answer on pages 682-3 of Angela Clifford’s 2009 book, “The Arms Conspiracy Trial, Ireland, 1970: The Prosecution of Charles Haughey, Captain Kelly and Others”. Drawing on recently released State Archives, she quoted from a hitherto secret, confidential report on their acquittal to the British Government from the UK Ambassador to Ireland, Sir John Peck. Sir John’s report, dated 10 November 1970, revealed the following allegation made by Childers for British Government consumption: “The Deputy Prime Minister told me that to his certain knowledge Mr. Jones

(Haughey's associate, Gerry Jones - MO'R) had tracked down and 'got in touch with' *all twelve* of the jurors." Angela Clifford appropriately gave this report the sub-heading of "Childers: Embassy Confidant".

The 1972 edition of "The Riddle" also reproduced the April 1931 foreword for that year's edition, written by the author's widow Molly Childers. She wrote of how "the book remains the cherished companion of those who love the sea". But what she wrote of the book's role in the build-up for the First World War was completely at variance with the 1971 pro-Great War sentiments of her son. Molly Childers acknowledged that in his book "Erskine Childers advocated preparedness for war as being the best preventive of war", but she continued:

"During the years that followed, he fundamentally altered this opinion. His profound study of military history, of politics and, later, of the causes of the Great War, convinced him that preparedness induced war. It was not only that to the vast numbers of people, engaged in fostered war services and armament industries, war meant the exercise of their professions and trades and the advancement of their interests; preparedness also led to international armament rivalries, and bred in the minds of the nations concerned fears, antagonisms, and ambitions, that were destructive to peace."

THE CASE FOR CHILDERS - IN HIS OWN WORDS

In stark contrast with his son's portrayal of Britain's War as a 'war for small nations', Childers himself explicitly affirmed, when put on trial for his life by the Free State Treatyite Government, that he had been compelled to come to the bitter conclusion that the war he had worked for, and fought in, on Britain's behalf, had been nothing of the sort. During Ireland's Treaty War, Childers was to be captured by Free Staters on November 10, 1922. In a speech on the following day, the British bulldog, in the person of Winston Churchill, bayed for Childers' blood: "I have seen with satisfaction that the mischief making, murderous renegade, Erskine Childers, has been captured. No man has done more harm or shown more general malice, or endeavoured to bring a greater curse upon the common people of Ireland than this strange being, actuated by a deadly and malignant hatred for the land of his birth. Such as he is may all who hate us be." (This, and the following quotations from Childers himself, are taken from Michael McInerney, "The Riddle of Erskine Childers", 1971).

Childers was brought before a secret military court on November 17, charged with the capital offence of bearing arms, the "arms" in question being, ironically, a revolver given to Childers for his own protection by none other than the Treaty's 'Big Fellow' himself, Michael Collins, during their shared War of Independence. Childers was sentenced to death. Two days later, he smuggled out a statement that commented on Churchill's demand for his death:

"Another indirect factor in the case is the speech of Mr. Churchill a few days before my trial calling me 'a mischievous and murderous renegade' ('Irish Times', November 12th). To speak thus of an untried man when your words carry round the world is grossly indecent, and would be a gross contempt of Court, if I were being tried, literally, as a 'renegade' in England, for 'murder'. But Mr. Churchill speaks more than as an Englishman. He has personal charge of carrying out the Treaty for his Government, and has been in constant and intimate association for that purpose with the Provisional Government

and especially, among others, with Mr. O'Higgins. That such veiled appeal for execution, with the abominable slanders attached to it, would influence the mind of any Minister, or, indeed, any Irishman, I do not believe, and make no suggestion to that effect. I think better of my bitterest opponents. But I do suggest that for Mr. Churchill's speech, taken with the Parliamentary debate, to be followed by my execution, would create a situation not for the advancement of Ireland."

Erskine Childers had placed too much faith in Kevin O'Higgins. Childers was executed on November 24. It should be stated of O'Higgins that in this particular case he was not taking his marching orders from Churchill. His own personal bloodlust for the death of Childers was at least as intense. But if we are to make sense of both the life and death of Childers, we need to take note of his statement at his trial on November 17, wherein he said the following:

"As a young man I had been a Unionist and Imperialist, but experience of the South African War, in which I served as a volunteer ... changed the whole current of my life and made me a Liberal and a Nationalist. I wrote and spoke much for Home Rule in the years 1910-1914, and in 1911 published the 'Framework of Home Rule', advocating and elaborating a Dominion Settlement... But I set no limit to the national march. The keynote of the book was that Ireland should have what the Irish people wanted. As there was no Republican movement at the time and Sinn Fein was very weak, I naturally worked on Home Rule lines, though of the widest scope. The book, of course, was of no avail at the time. Even the petty Liberal Bill of 1912 was shipwrecked owing to the surrender of Asquith to Carson. In warm sympathy with the Irish Volunteers, I joined a small committee formed in May, 1914, to supply them with arms, and myself, with my wife and one or two friends, ran a cargo of guns into Howth in July."

"Then came the European War. Like thousands of Irish Nationalists, I was misled by the idea of a 'war for small nations', and joined the British Naval Air Service, afterwards amalgamated with the Royal Air Force, leaving it at the end of the war with the rank of Major. The bulk of my work consisted of active service flying in sea-planes as an observer and intelligence officer - that is, using camera, wireless, and machine-gun, in the North Sea, Dardanelles, Egypt, and the Belgian Coast. I was also for an interval of a year navigating officer and intelligence officer in a Squadron of small 40-foot torpedo-carrying hydroplanes on the Belgian Coast... On this substratum of fact has been built the abominable legend that I was a secret service spy, an intelligence officer in that sense, and that it was in some such capacity that I have done my political work in Ireland. I should add that for some months in 1917-1918 I was employed on the Secretariat of the Irish Convention, working specially for the group advocating a Dominion scheme... The collapse of the whole convention and the attempt to enforce conscription convinced me that Home Rule was dead and that a revolution was inevitable and necessary, and I only waited till the end of the war when I should have faithfully fulfilled my contract with the British to join in the movement myself."

"With the formal establishment of the Republic of 1919, it became necessary for people like myself, of mixed birth, to choose our citizenship once and for all. I chose that of the Irish Republic, like hundreds of other ex-soldiers. On my release from the British Army (all connection with it being severed).

I threw myself into the work for the Republican movement... Much of my work was connected with Propaganda, and in February, 1921, when Desmond FitzGerald was arrested, I was appointed in his place by the President (de Valera). In May I was elected a Deputy for Wicklow and Kildare. After the Truce I went to London with the party which accompanied the President in his first interviews with Lloyd George. I attended most of the subsequent Cabinet meetings on the Peace question, and in September I was appointed by the Cabinet and Dail as principal Secretary of the Delegation to London for the negotiations of October-December, and as the principal adviser on Defence questions."

"I took a strong line from the first against the British Dominion scheme, and in so doing came for the first time in three years into conflict with Republican colleagues and comrades... For myself I had passed through the Dominion phase years before, discarded it and sworn allegiance to the established Republic. The slow growth of moral and intellectual conviction had brought me to where I stood, and it was and is impossible and unthinkable to go back. I was bound by honour, conscience and principle to oppose the Treaty by speech, writing and action, both in peace, and when it came to the disastrous point, in war.

For we hold that a Nation has no right to surrender its declared and established Independence and that even a minority has a right to resist that surrender in arms... I have fought and worked for a sacred principle, the loyalty of the Nation to its declared Independence and repudiation of any voluntary surrender to conquest and inclusion in the British Empire... May God hasten the day of reunion amongst us all under the honoured flag of the Republic."

In my response to Gerry Docherty, I quoted from this statement of Childers in order to counter the character assassination that has bedevilled his name for what is now almost a century. As a Greaves School respondent, I limited my critique of "Hidden History" to issues of Irish history, in particular, its "sins" against those three great Cs of the Irish Revolution, one of omission in the case of Connolly, distortion in the case of Casement, and character assassination in the case of Childers. Yet there is a more fundamental problem with "Hidden History" that also needs to be discussed. □

(To be continued)

The text of Gerry Docherty's lecture is to be found p. 29

Thoughts on Lord Esher (Part One)

By Pat Walsh

There were 3 outstanding people of consequence within the British State at the time of the Great War. There was the statesman, Arthur Balfour. There was the doer at the heart of the State, Maurice Hankey. And there was Regy Brett, Lord Esher, who thought for Britain and acted as an independent lubricant between its various parts.

Lord Esher is a mysterious figure often hidden from view. His 4 volumes of Letters and Journals, serialised by the Times in 1934, proudly list the offices of State and other influential positions he refused over the decades:

"1886 Offered Editorship of Daily News (Refused)...

"1900 Offered Under-Secretaryship of War (Refused)... Offered Governorship of Cape Colony (Refused)

"1903 Offered Secretaryship of State for War (Refused)...

"1908 Offered Viceroyship of India (Refused)

Two of the portfolios he refused were that of Arthur Balfour's War Minister and Herbert Asquith's Viceroy of India. But Esher's refusals enabled him to think freely and advise freely. And the most important people in the State, including Monarchs, Prime Ministers, Chancellors, War Ministers, Admirals of the Fleet, Field Marshalls and Generals both asked for and took his advice.

By maintaining an independence from formal responsibility Regy Brett maintained a freedom that politicians lacked, the freedom to think about things from the point of view of the interests of the State and its long-term strategic objectives free from the hindrances of popularity in the democratic age. Lord Esher could also continue to think about war as an old fashioned Whig aristocrat, unburdened by the propaganda that

the middle-class saturated England with. He could see clearly what the Great War was actually about, why it was being waged and how it should be concluded. His journals show his despair at the interference of the millenarian spirit that gripped the nation after the middle classes took ownership of the war.

On the opening page of Volume 3 of The Journals and Letters of Lord Esher there is a quote by Beaconsfield (Benjamin Disraeli):

"The most powerful men are not public men. The public man is responsible, and a responsible man is a slave. It is private life that governs the world."

That is how it would have been before the "Great War for democracy" complicated things for the class that built the Empire and previously waged its wars with the lumpen element of England and the Irish cannon-fodder. The Oligarchy that made the Empire had to adjust to the War that had been proclaimed to be about democracy and which encouraged beliefs in the masses that proved burdensome for those who had conducted things in private. And the Great War also encouraged a feeling that these private deliberations had somewhat contributed to the holocaust. So the old ruling class had to manage this democracy brought into being by its war that had not gone to plan but had still placed Britain in a great position of dominance through its winning.

And guess what? Britain was never the same again.

Just as Lord Hankey did for England, Lord Esher, his friend and colleague within the Committee of Imperial Defence, thought for her. And it was Esher who recognised Hankey's abilities and brought him into his Committee of Imperial Defence. Esher was not afraid to speak of Hankey as "the

German razor” – something similar in function to Occam’s razor – at the heart of the State.

Sleepwalkers?

The most widely praised book of the centenary of the Great War is Christopher Clark’s ‘Sleepwalkers’. The gist of it, as the title suggests, is that the Great War was sleepwalked into.

Not in England it wasn’t. It was planned and meticulously organised for about a decade.

There is ample evidence to prove this from the writings and records of both Maurice Hankey and Lord Esher – two men who were at the centre of its planning. If someone had suggested to them that Britain had sleepwalked, unprepared for the Great War, they would have taken great offence from such an unwarranted allegation of dereliction of Imperial duty.

In a letter to his wife on February 26th 1923 Lord Esher wrote:

“I am looking up all my papers on the preparation for the Great War. This began in 1905-1906. By 1908 we had made great strides. I have documentary evidence of this.”

Below, from Lord Esher’s Journal, October 4th 1911, is an entry in which he, as a Permanent Member of the Committee of Imperial Defence, is telling the Prime Minister, Asquith, how his State intends to fight the Great War:

“The Prime Minister came to my room this morning to discuss the Admiralty... Then we talked about the General Staff scheme of landing an army in France. The Prime Minister is opposed to this plan. He will not hear of the despatch of more than four Divisions. He has told Haldane so.

“But, I reminded him that the mere fact of the War Office plan having been worked out in detail with the French General Staff (which is the case) has certainly committed us to fight, whether the cabinet likes it or not, and that the combined plan of the two General Staffs holds the field. It is certainly an extraordinary thing that our officers should have been permitted to arrange all the details, trains, landing, concentration etc., when the Cabinet have never been consulted.

“I asked the Prime Minister if he thought that it would be possible to have an English force concentrated in France within seven days of the outbreak of the war, in view of the fact that the Cabinet (the majority of them) have never heard of the plan. He thinks it impossible!... Altogether the Prime Minister showed that he had thought a good deal of these problems.”

I should mention that both Asquith and Esher seem to have been initially against the War Minister, Haldane’s plan to supply 120,000 men to the French left at the start of the War on Germany, something which had been promised to the French by General Henry Wilson and others in the military conversations which took place after the Entente Cordiale in 1904.

There was a view in England that Britain should fight its Great War against Germany as it had done its great war against Republican France a century previous. Allies in Europe (France and Russia) should do the fighting on land while the Royal Navy contributed to the war effort by sea. This was the traditional form of warfare waged by England in its Balance of Power wars on the continent. It was primarily a maritime power, with a small non-conscript army, and if things went wrong it could safely withdraw to its island, behind its undefeatable navy. And if that left its allies in the lurch, then tough! It could maintain a war with its navy until more allies could be procured and something turned up in the future (as happened in 1940).

Esher preferred to retain some of the continental army Haldane had built up from 1906 for war on Germany, with the territorial forces to replenish it, for amphibious landings in conjunction with the Royal Navy and not have it wasted with the French forces. And it seems Asquith was of a similar mind.

They were both of a mind that a war had to be fought. It was just a question of how? Esher was reminding the Prime Minister that plans made are difficult to depart from when the moment comes.

Of course, the cat had to be let out of the bag at some stage by those who had known about the military conversations and the military that accompanied them. The Cabinet had to be told because after all, Britain was a democracy!

Asquith needn’t have worried. It all went to plan in July/August 1914. The Cabinet was told and only a couple of ministers resigned. The Liberal Party and the country then followed and the Great War on Germany that had been planned for a decade was on.

The Committee of Imperial Defence

Lord Esher had much to do with the formation of the Committee of Imperial Defence, the body which organised the planning of the Great War on Germany. It seems to have been on Esher’s suggestion that the Prime Minister, Balfour, actually established it.

In September 1903 the Prime Minister offered Esher the position of War Minister, which he declined. There is a series of correspondence from this time between Esher and Balfour in which the Prime Minister is being advised how to reform the war fighting machinery of the State by Esher, in the aftermath of the Boer War shock. Out of this comes the idea of the Committee of Imperial Defence. Credit for the idea is given to Balfour but it is clear that it is through discussing things with Esher that the idea comes.

Esher is definitely the founder of the CID Secretariat and he afterwards exercised a position of general surveillance over the War Office, being provided with confidential information by the Prime Minister and Sir George Clarke, the first Secretary to the CID, before Maurice Hankey. The Esher Committee, a sub-committee of the CID was also set up by Balfour, recommended “a Defence Committee under the Prime Minister.” Lord Esher joined the CID officially in October 1905.

Balfour made the CID into a regular department of the British State with a permanent Secretariat composed of Army and Navy representatives. The initial idea behind this was to protect it against future Liberal Ministers who might wish to divert it from its work or run it down. But Balfour need not have worried on this score because the Liberal Imperialists, Haldane and Grey, were given the key Ministries of War and Foreign Affairs in the new Cabinet by Campbell-Bannerman when the government changed hands in 1905/6.

Something which has not been commented upon, perhaps because British historians have assumed it to be in the nature of things that England needed to fight Germany, is that this idea seems to have taken root in the period when the government of the State was being handed over from Balfour to the Liberals. All the evidence suggests that there is suddenly an understanding within the British State that England needs to fight a Great War on the continent against Germany and needs to get organised to do so.

Balfour resigned as Prime Minister in December 1905 but the protracted General Election and formation of the new

government, which took up the early months of 1906, allowed the State to begin organising itself for this project without political interference. Lord Esher seems to have been the main driving force in this, as the CID continued to meet, and he was also involved in the political manoeuvrings that put the right men, who were in favour of the project, in the right offices, to see it through.

Although Balfour founded the CID, it was the Liberal Imperialists who actually developed it and gave substance to the ending of the traditional English alliance with Prussia. When the CID was established it took it that Britain's main rival in Europe was France and it had to be redirected to view Germany as the enemy. However, Balfour, in addressing Lord Roberts' desire for conscription, lets slip the fact that such thinking had begun by 20th November 1904 when he told Roberts: "I am... quite ready to admit that our army is wholly insufficient in point of numbers to carry on a great continental war, unaided by Continental forces..."

It is worth recording that although Esher was strongly associated with the Liberal Imperialists, particularly Asquith and Haldane, he felt that they had enough Gladstonian Liberalism in them to disable them when it came to fighting a Great War. Others, with more vigour, were needed to take on such a task.

The Balance of Power

The Committee of Imperial Defence began to entertain the idea of the employment of the British Army with the former French enemy within a year of the 1904 Anglo-French Entente. The French logically interpreted the agreement as the opening of the door to a military understanding aimed at fighting a war against Germany. Lord Esher had this to say in a letter to "M.V.B" (his son, Maurice) on 4th September 1906 after Lord French had conducted joint military manoeuvres in France:

"The entente is getting on. Not before it is required either. There is no doubt that within measurable distance there looms a titanic struggle between Germany and Europe for mastery. The years 1793-1815 will be repeated, only Germany, not France will be trying for European domination. She has 70,000,000 of people and is determined to have commercial pre-eminence... France contains 40,000,000 of people. England about the same. So even combined, the struggle is by no means a certainty..."

"In 1814 Holland and Belgium were nearly added to Prussia as a defensive measure against the ambition of France. Luckily Castlereagh and the Duke of Wellington held out against this. Fancy if they had been overcome by the fears and arguments of Metternich! Now, a century later, these countries, instead of being a buffer against France, are fulfilling that function against a far more dangerous power. The great fear is that war may come before we are ready; this is precisely what happened to Prussia in 1806, and the Germans, having had that bitter experience themselves, may well wish to inflict it upon us.

"It will take five years yet to get our people screwed up to compulsory service. Perhaps longer..."

That is the Balance of Power Policy which England used since 1688 to keep the continent of Europe at odds with itself. It was always presented as a question of domination but really what right had England to say how Europe sorted itself? It really was about cutting the strongest European power down to size in case Europe became stable and capable of development free from war.

In the Balance of Power England could make a limited commitment to war on the continent of decisive importance by making an intervention in support of the second strongest Power or group of Powers against the strongest Power, hampering the strongest Power and making the second Power or group of Powers temporarily the strongest. Then the process could start all over again, ad infinitum.

By following its Balance of Power policy, Britain was able to play a decisive role on the continent; keeping Europe divided and embroiled in war, and achieve dominance with a limited commitment of its own resources, leaving a considerable energy available for expanding trade and Empire overseas. And Britain's unique advantage of having security through its control of the sea was one of the main factors which allowed Britain its stability to develop a parliamentary system, civil liberties, and its great economic wealth.

It did this with marvellous skill for two centuries, from 1688 to 1914.

While Europe was occupied with the Balance of Power the British ruling circle obtained its wealth, first through piracy as the world's foremost "rogue state," and then through the operation of an industrial slaving system which it organised as a virtual monopoly through the Navigation Acts. By 1834 a vast system of profit had been established in which 46,000 English citizens were slave owners and had to be compensated to the tune of 17 billion pounds when their 800,000 assets were discontinued (or made to work 45 hours a week free for their former masters for 4 years to ease the transition). By then British ships had transported more than 3.5 million Africans to the Americas.

The Problem of Germany

In 1906 Lord Esher, like others around him, saw the necessity of waging a Balance of Power war again – only against Germany this time and began the planning of it within the Committee of Imperial Defence. He wrote to "M.V.B" on September 8th:

"L'Allemagne c'est l'Ennemi – and there is no doubt on the subject. They mean to have a powerful fleet, and commercially, to beat us out of the field, before ten years are over our heads."

Back in 1875, when Germany first became a worry to England, after defeating the French aggression in 1870 and unifying itself in the process, Esher had confided to Lady Brett (May 10th):

"In the interests of Europe and mankind I would prefer a revolution in Germany to a war, for in the ultimate pre-eminence of Teutonic races I have firm belief, and were Germany crippled 'twould be but to rise again, and freedom and peace be deferred perhaps a century beyond the time at which they may be hoped for.

"... England should be ready always to defend the weak and unambitious people, who do not seek to be the 'cock' countries. But it is ridiculous to suppose that France is weak, and were she to beat Germany, would be every bit as ready to bluster as her neighbour is now, and much more likely to act up to her threats, to judge from former

experiences... Germany will not go to war unless she is forced to it by the spirit of revenge in the French people; for she has nothing to gain and everything to lose by war.”

Germany, it seems, became worth a world war (or two) because it reminded England too much of itself.

The letters of Lord Esher in 1906 reveal his thoughts about the problems faced as he began to prepare England for the Great War that he and his colleagues in the Committee of Imperial Defence felt would have to be waged on Germany. They reveal that the Great War was seen as inevitable, because Germany would be forced to develop as England had done and that would create an unavoidable collision. Geopolitical and economic

imperatives were thought to be backed up by the Social Darwinist notions of “ethnographic” evolution. The Anglo-Saxons were seen as the highest racial type and the fact that Germany was a more youthful and vigorous race of Anglo-Saxons made them the most dangerous race of all, in the English mind.

It was just a matter of time before conflict would come unless England was prepared to cede a share of the world economy to the rising Anglo-Saxons. And that was unthinkable. A world war on the lines of that fought against France a century before was a much more thinkable option. And the new enemies – Germany and Turkey – had already been identified. □

American Pharmaceutical Companies in Ireland.

By Feergus O Raghallaigh

US drugs giant Pfizer has sealed a deal to buy Botox-maker Allergan for \$160bn (£106bn) in what is the biggest pharmaceuticals deal in history. The takeover could allow Pfizer to escape relatively high US corporate tax rates by moving its headquarters to Allergan’s headquarters in Dublin. The merged firm will be the world’s biggest drug maker by sales.

It’s a tax dodge between two American companies, one of which is for tax reasons ‘Irish’ and the other - for tax reasons - has chosen to be ‘Irish’ and both have decided this would be good for them and their shareholders regardless of America. They own Viagra and Botox by the way. The technique is known as ‘inversion’.

It is important however not to adopt the jargon invented to disguise this manoeuvre— ‘inversion’, Pfizer ‘inverted into Ireland’—which only serves to hide simple tax evasion. A Financial Times analyst called the deal ‘pure financial engineering’: the combined company will make a ‘multi-billion saving’ in tax [non]payment.

Allergan is an American company as indeed are most of the companies dealt with in this article. They all (or most of them) also have operations in Ireland - use Ireland as a location for manufacturing but also critically tax management (US and global liabilities). Late last year Allergan (which owns Botox) was subject to an unwanted bid from Valeant, a Canadian-domiciled US pharma company that has teamed up with the hedge fund-cum-asset stripper Pershing Square. In a defensive move Allergan agreed a takeover offer from Actavis plc, an Irish-domiciled American pharma company. Actavis is notable for being one of the first US corporates to use the technique of inversion (or tax evasion). This is the technique whereby a takeover or merger leads to a change of tax domicile to its advantage for one party. Thus in 2013 Actavis took over Warner Chilcot, an American company that had already for tax reasons domiciled in Ireland as a result of being taken over by Galen, a Northern Ireland company tax domiciled in Dublin and originally a drug distributor and wholesaler in Britain and Ireland.

American companies with international operations have for long appreciated the usefulness of Ireland as a conduit through

which global incomes can be channeled and offshored thus reducing or eliminating entirely their US tax liabilities (or indeed in some instances reducing all of their tax liabilities to zero). Historically the path to this tax management was to locate a manufacturing investment in Ireland and then structure a maze of subsidiary companies around the world with global incomes, liabilities and costs (including the accounting for intellectual property) routed through the Irish operation to avail of the US/Irish double taxation treaties, avoid the high US corporate taxes and facilitate profit repatriation to the Caribbean.

In recent years however accountants and tax managers (and not only American) have come to appreciate headquarter domicile shifting or jumping based on Ireland and again the maze of tax treaties the Irish have over the years negotiated with various countries. Thus for example a few years ago some big-name British companies shifted their registered headquarters to Dublin as part of a strategy (in the end successful) to press British governments to introduce new tax loopholes to enable them to further reduce their UK tax bills and liabilities. One of the more notable British examples of domicile jumping is WPP, the global advertising and market research company. In 2008 it re-domiciled from Britain to Dublin and then in 2013 returned to London. There were a number of UK companies that also adopted the WPP approach - which was in response to some changes to tax rules introduced by a then Labour government. Osborne has introduced a series of changes that have assuaged UK-based capitalism and so the corporates have mostly dribbled back though some do remain domiciled abroad (the pharma firm Shire remains domiciled in Ireland while Boots which is now really American-owned is based in Switzerland, another favourite domicile of tax planners).

About a year ago Allergan was being stalked by Valeant. The latter is a Canadian-based US pharma company that has in a short space of time grown to be a major global force in the business. It owns Bausch and Lomb among others. The Valeant business model plays directly to the pursuits of financial markets - rapid and high returns on debt-driven takeover bets placed. Post-takeover, costs are typically rapidly and significantly reduced with a special emphasis on slashing wages and employment - witness the fall out at Bausch and Lomb’s Waterford factory

after its take over. Product prices are also hiked, typically by enormous percentages and the more so the more vital the drug (for example in cancer treatment) or if it might have some value in an area such as cosmetic (e.g. Botox and contact lenses). The final element in the Valeant model is to downplay completely R&D and product development. It is considered high risk and better left to others who then can be picked off as their products are proven. This is the model offering presented to financial markets (typically to the likes of pension fund managers and hedge funds) and is the basis of the partnership with the Pershing Square hedge operated by Bill Ackman. What Valeant saw in Allergan was in a word, Botox. When successful the model offers very high returns delivered quickly over the short-term horizon that prevails with fund managers.

In recent weeks the Valeant formula has begun to unravel. It has become apparent that there was another side to the company's business model - shady accounting policies and in its US home market distribution practices bordering on the illegal, particularly in relation to how it has done business in California and also in its conduct of business with people with federally funded health insurance - a substantial increased population as a result of the Obamacare initiative.

Allergan is now to be taken over by Pfizer with the latter in the process shifting its HQ address to Ireland - doing an 'Allergan' one might say. Pfizer owns Viagra among other things and is long-established in Ireland for tax purposes. It is one of the handful of companies that through its activities massively inflate Irish export figures and indeed also GDP. Pfizer's sheer size and its related importance (including historic) to the American corporate landscape makes its proposed adoption of domicile jumping (already politically a hot potato anyway) hugely controversial including on the presidential contest trail with all candidates opposing the tax domicile aspect to the deal. The tax move cannot be tackled without a change in the law actually - and the managements of both companies have assumed such a move is very possible. Such a law change would disrupt the deal and in the normal course either party would face enormous (deal breaking) financial costs if one or other of them walked at this stage. Pfizer obviously is the most likely candidate to walk, Allergan is already Irish-domiciled, the whole point of the proposed amalgamation. However the terms of the deal include a clause that provides for vastly reduced deal breaker costs should it be scuppered by legal change. In other words the two companies attach a sufficiently high probability to US tax law being changed to include cost mitigation in the case of non-completion.

The managements and directors of modern corporates have conflicting loyalties in a sense. There is the business of managing the business as such (making motor cars, drugs, computers or whatever). This today is in reality of negligible importance. There is the responsibility to the shareholder, today in effect to the financial markets, and that responsibility is of enormous, indeed overwhelming importance in the process of capital accumulation. And third there is the scope through deal-making and financial manipulation and engineering for great personal enrichment by senior executives and directors and particularly also, financial advisors (e.g. the major accountancy firms and the investment banks). So to all intents and purposes it is the financial side of things that prevails pretty much totally and for capital accumulative and personal wealth reasons. This is so with corporate capitalism everywhere in fact although it is most pronounced - by a long shot - in the Ameranglian, capital markets model.

Companies like Pfizer and also Allergan but also companies such as Abbott and Apple and so on including Google, do employ lots of people - usually young, graduates and sometimes in a lot of cases non-Irish (coming from elsewhere in the EU mostly but sometimes even from further afield). They also do pay well - they do recognise the worth of a PhD in a Quality Control or Quality Assurance role in a sensitive facility or in a lab or writing code.

They also do provide an important stream of business (and fee income) to Irish professional firms (legal, accountancy, engineering consultancy and so on). This is not insignificant for the old established/professional stratum in Irish society. There are of course knock-on effects from this (and the graduate employment aspect mentioned above).

The macroeconomic effects - on exports and GDP and growth rates - and business profiling of the economy do lift the country above where it would be otherwise (a low-growth, relatively low income per head primary producer much like New Zealand).

Then there is the apparent and actual openness and modernity and cosmopolitan character of the country, to an extent a veneer but also to a degree real as evidenced by the adoption of the individualist-liberal outlook and its political effects (e.g. the same sex marriage issue and related matters and including the increasing Anglophilia of the bourgeois establishment). The phenomenon has come to define the country and most especially the Dublin professional classes. □

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Refugees: Worst Crisis Since Second World War?

About a week or ten days ago I needed to go into Wellington CBD, happily as I knew that the City Library had a pop-up book sale selling off for next to nothing books they'd chosen to withdraw (all non-fiction). They do this every so often, which is great. One of my purchases was a volume, *Adenauer's Memoirs, 1945 – 1953*. The man had not a scrap of literary talent I must say. On the other hand it is facts and information and primary sources and so on. Despite its literary and stylistic shortfalls it makes for me interesting reading – not least in the current context and the refugee question in particular.

The stock schlock of so-called journalism on the current situation incants every sufficiently often a line along the lines of “the biggest refugee crisis since the end of the Second World War” etc., etc.

If one is listening to or reading this kind of guff while at the same time reading Adenauer describing the situation in Germany between 1945 and let us say 1949 well, let's say one gives up on what now passes as journalism.

Adenauer devotes at one point (p.63) some space to the situation in Schleswig Holstein (perhaps because of the extreme situation there, I don't know):

“The expellees and refugees streaming into our country were being sent to the British zone in particularly large numbers. The province of Schleswig-Holstein, which originally had a population of 1.3 million inhabitants, had received 1.2 million refugees by the middle of 1946 and more than a hundred thousand were announced for the next few months. Refugees came to number nearly one hundred per cent of the original population. The majority of these refugees were in poor health and capable of no more work than the local population ... Nonetheless the Allies decided during the summer of 1946 one hundred and seventy thousand people who had been evacuated to South Germany from the British zone during the war were to be forcibly repatriated to the British zone and this at a moment when conditions made their reception quite impossible. We succeeded in getting this decision rescinded.”

Letter to the London Review of Books (unpublished)

David Bell writes in his article about Léon Blum (A State Jew 5 November 2015): ‘authoritarian and ultra-Catholic forces that came close to overthrowing it [the French Republic] on more than one occasion (before finally doing so in 1940 with the help of the Wehrmacht)’.

Who does David Bell have in mind as ‘authoritarian and ultra-Catholic forces’ in 1940? France had suffered a military disaster of gigantic proportions which had to be coped with when the enemy was already dictating terms. 569 parliamentarians voted to give Pétain full powers on 10th July 1940 at a meeting of both houses, in an atmosphere of catastrophe. They were the same 1936 house, minus the communists, that had formed the Popular Front led by Léon Blum. (Blum was one of the 80 who voted against giving Pétain full powers.) Pétain, followed by Laval, governed with a motley group of 3rd Republic politicians, generally supported by the population, but in the absence of any organised party support; nobody in politics liked them much; Pétain was an old fashioned rural France

There is also the general backdrop as it relates to food (and lack thereof) and diet (and its deficiencies). In 1946 he writes (p.58):

“The population was entitled to barely more than a thousand calories daily and it is impossible to do any real work on that amount. The consequences of a further reduction of this ration are obvious. The Administration of Food and Agriculture was hoping to increase the ration to 1,540 calories a day, although the minimum requirement for human nutrition is a daily ration of 2,500 calories. Hopes for an improvement in the food situation in 1947 did not materialize.”

He goes on to describe the situation for the elderly and children, the incidence of TB and oedema, the evidence of widespread malnutrition among school children and so on.

There is more, a lot more – and to be fair he also does acknowledge how awful was the situation then in Europe generally.

My point I suppose is first, that the current situation is not at all comparable to the awfulness of 1945 – 1949, neither in its scale nor in its general context. Second, the narrative line (‘biggest thing since the war’) is a very handy script that takes attention from the fundamental factors currently at work (Syria is the result of conscious American and EU foreign policy – war-making – as are equally, the African population movements). Third, the consensus story-line plays to the predominant model of journalism, the human interest story and the related phenomenon of orchestrated charitable effort.

There is an awful lot more – about other things – in the Adenauer book, not the least being how he played it in relation to the Americans and the British, what his vision for Germany (and western Europe) was and so on. My point here is simple: how utterly glib is the current narrative and the elements in it, and how awfully lazy - and deliberately twisting of the popular perception and culture and discourse.

Feargus O Raghallaigh

enthusiast, Laval had no policy except survival. Pétain was not a devout Catholic, Laval was anticlerical. They did not repeal anti-clerical legislation, they did not place crosses back on school walls. Anti-republican, i.e. royalist, ultra-Catholics, had no influence in the country and none at Vichy.

There is enough to say about Vichy without repeating old clichés unsupported by historical evidence. Catherine Winch

From the review of the book ‘A state Jew’ we can infer that Blum was treated as a Very Important Person in his imprisonment. At the start we read: ‘During the war Blum was imprisoned, first in France, then at Buchenwald and Dachau.’ Then towards the end of the piece we read that the author ‘carefully notes what Blum read in captivity during the war: Cicero, Shakespeare and Goethe, but also Rousseau, Musset, Mme de La Fayette, La Rochefoucauld, Gide, Stendhal, Flaubert, Molière, Racine and Choderlos de Laclos.’ It is the case that in Buchenwald Blum was given a house, where his wife to be and his valet joined him, and he was provided with books. In 1945 the Germans took him and other high ranking prisoners to the safety of South Tyrol where they met the American army.

James Bryce – A Fatal Philanthropist

By Pat Walsh

The September 2015 issue of *History Ireland* has a sympathetic article by Angus Mitchell, author of the recent 1916 book on Roger Casement, called ‘James Bryce and the Politics of Inhumanity.’ However, the career of Lord Bryce would be better summed up in George Curzon’s memorable phrase of “fatal philanthropy”.

To understand this we need to revisit something that George Curzon (later Lord) said as Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in the course of defending traditional British policy with regard to the defending of the Ottoman Empire, on behalf of Lord Salisbury’s Government:

“We were not prepared at any moment to go to war for the sake of Armenia. We were not prepared to plunge Europe into a Continental war for the sake of Armenia. We were not prepared to jeopardise the interests of this country and I will go further and say the interests of the Armenians themselves, in pursuit of... what might, in the last resort, have turned out to be a perilous, if not a fatal philanthropy. [Loud Cheers.]” (Hansard, House of Commons 3 March 1896)

James Bryce both personified what Curzon called “fatal philanthropy” and did much to realise such a thing in reality, in relation to the Armenians.

Firstly, something should be said about the importance of James Bryce of Belfast. Bryce was a tremendously gifted all-rounder: a Historian, jurist, and statesman. He was Regius Professor of civil law at Oxford University, 1870-1893. In his political career he was elected as a Liberal MP in 1880 and from 1885 to 1907, Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs; Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1892); and President of the Board of Trade (1894–95). He became Chief Secretary for Ireland (1905-6), British Ambassador to the United States (1907–13) and the President of British Academy (1913-17) during the Great War. He was also involved in the establishment of the League of Nations, and served at the International Court at The Hague.

He was author of a large amount of publications including *The Holy Roman Empire* (1864), *Transcaucasia and Ararat* (1877), *The American Commonwealth* (1888), *Modern Democracy* (1921) and many other works, including a large output of pamphlets during the Great War.

Bryce’s background is instructive regarding the formation of his “fatal philanthropy”. Bryce was born in Belfast 1838, the son of the Headmaster of the Royal Academy. He was from an Ulster/Scottish Protestant (Presbyterian) family. Like many others from his social and religious background he went to University in Glasgow. He was a Liberal in politics, coming from an Ulster Covenanting Radical tradition, and unusually for a Protestant, an Irish Home Ruler. In British politics he was a Gladstonian Liberal with a Christian moralistic view of world. Bryce was also a noted mountain climber, and it is said, the first European to climb Mount Ararat in 1876. There he believed he found evidence of the remains of Noah’s Ark.

The key to understanding Bryce’s desire to provide his services to the Imperial State as a propagandist lies in his attitude to war. Bryce, as a good Liberal, initially opposed the Great War and felt he had to justify his subsequent support for it. To do this, he presented Britain’s Great War as being about something it was not in order to justify his own support for it. So he joined the moral campaign against England’s enemies and produced propaganda describing the war in fundamentalist Christian terms as a great struggle of good over evil in which there were no grounds for staying out of the conflict. In such a conflict propaganda was essential to fight the good fight and triumph over evil.

To fully understand Bryce we need to note what happened to British Liberalism at the start of the Great War. Bryce, like most other Liberals had initially opposed the Great War. However, Liberalism suffered a great moral collapse in the face of Sir Edward Grey’s revelations of the secret arrangements and contingencies he had made for war on the eve of the conflict. The Liberals were faced with the dilemma of “my country right or wrong!” in the face of the Liberal Imperialist fait accompli of waging a war, with or without their Liberal base, because the Asquith Government had already secured the support of the Unionist front benches for the war it planned.

In entering the European war the Liberals helped Britain state its aims in the grandest universalistic terms that were idealistic in the extreme. These aims were not only idealistic and unachievable but they were also fraudulent. The objective was to show to the world that Britain was fighting a good war against an evil that had to be vanquished. The war was proclaimed as being for “civilisation against the Barbarian”, for “democracy” against “Prussianism”. And it was also supposedly a “war for small nations” for “poor little Belgium” when it was really a war to cut down a rising commercial competitor in the long-standing tradition of the British Balance of Power policy.

Bryce presented the Great War as a new type of war. In the great amount of war propaganda Bryce produced in favour of it he described England’s participation in the War as self-less, wholly honourable and moral - to rid the world of the great evils of the Prussian German and then the Ottoman Turk.

Bryce’s general war propaganda was designed to impress neutral nations into the conflict so that the War could be extended across the earth by Britain. This was because the Allies proved incapable of winning it without widening it and Liberals like Bryce were reluctant to support military Conscription in England, even for such a moral war. So they concentrated their efforts on encouraging others to do England’s fighting, and conquering for it.

In such a moral conflict propaganda was essential and the Blue Book and propaganda about the Armenians should be viewed within this context.

Bryce was entirely suited to producing war propaganda against the Ottomans and unsuited to revealing the objective truth and context of the matter. Almost everything in Bryce’s

background endeared him to the Armenian cause. In his 'Transcaucasia and Ararat', written during the 1877 Russian/Ottoman war, Bryce made clear he desired the expulsion of the Ottomans from eastern Anatolia. He described the Turks as lazy and lacking intelligence and the Ottomans as a dying government. Conversely, he suggested that the Armenians were the most industrious and clever race in the region – the highest form of civilisation there.

However, tellingly, Bryce noted that the Armenians were a scattered people surrounded by a great Muslim majority. He described them as lacking in national spirit but felt affronted as a Christian that the Armenians should be ruled by their inferiors within humankind. He made clear his desire that England take this special Christian people in hand and lead them to nationhood.

Bryce suggested that the problem for the Armenians was that international pressure had not been maintained on the Ottoman Government and that the civilised Christian Armenians were stuck under uncivilised Moslem rule. He was loath to criticise his own government for this inaction, although it was evident that Britain, in its traditional policy of checking Russian expansion, was the main culprit in this. However, British Liberals like Bryce always saw their own Empire as the highest form of civilisation and progress in the world.

Roger Casement's view that James Bryce acted as a war propagandist "prostituting an honourable name to dishonourable ends" can hardly be disputed.

Roger Casement took the principles of small nations on which the war was supposedly being fought by Britain in earnest. But Casement was found to be a traitor whilst the Armenians and others who went into insurrection were lauded as patriots in England by people like Bryce.

Comparison between Bryce's attitude and actions between Ireland and Armenia are interesting and expose the hypocrisy at the heart of Bryce and British Liberalism.

With regard to Ireland: Bryce had been Chief Secretary for Ireland, championing Home Rule, but when in office he failed to provide the country with even autonomy. It took a hung parliament for the Liberal government to produce a Bill for Irish Home Rule in 1912 and that was never implemented.

On the island of Ireland 80% of the people desired some form of independence from Britain. The Colonial element of 20% who wanted to stay part of the UK was concentrated largely locally in the north-east corner of the island. The Liberals failed in government (1906-15) to provide Ireland even with a regional parliament within the UK and Bryce defended this denial afterwards, when a clear democratic basis obviously existed for it. Such a policy could have been carried through peacefully in the bulk of the island by Britain if it had had the courage of its Liberal convictions.

However, with regard to the Armenians, Bryce said that they should be a nation even though he himself admitted there was no demographic basis for such a development. In the area the Armenians sought for a state nowhere did they constitute a majority. They represented less than 20% of the population in the "Magna Armenia" they claimed at the Peace Conference. Bryce aimed to create a nation when he knew the

Armenians were a scattered people, lacking a democratic basis for nationhood. Only through great ethnic cleansing of the majority population, and what is now called "genocide" could an Armenian state of any size be constituted and maintained within Ottoman territory.

British Liberals like Bryce bear great responsibility for the catastrophe suffered by the Armenians because they encouraged notions of unrealisable nationalism among the revolutionaries; they encouraged Armenians to believe England would assist them; and they produced propaganda which provoked great antagonism between Turk, Kurd and Armenian.

In the aftermath of its Great War the British Empire engaged in nation-building in the conquered Ottoman territories – as opposed to the planned standard Imperial absorption. It had proclaimed a "war for small nations" at the outset, whilst maintaining its traditional blind-spot to the island on its west, of course. The entry of the U.S. into the War enabling England to finish what it had started and was failing to finish, had turned what might have been mere propaganda into needs must. But Armenia was spared this nation-building and it was applied to Iraq, despite the fact that there was no Iraqi nation – only Shia, Sunni, Kurd and Turkmen.

Akaby Nassibian concedes that Armenia, the nation, depended upon British Imperialism and was not a going concern without it. But Britain encouraged and then let down the Armenians:

"Britain remained committed, up to 1914, to the integrity of the Ottoman dominions in Asia. Thus Britain's interest in Armenian territory far outweighed her concern for the Armenian people... The war radically changed the direction of Britain's interest in Armenia. As she was opposed to Turkey, she did not care about Ottoman integrity any longer. She was prepared to satisfy the territorial desiderata of her allies, Russia and France, over Armenia. Moreover, having secured by arms and agreements the certainty of her predominance over the Persian Gulf, she lost almost all interest in Armenian territory. The war, however, brought a drastic increase of interest in the Armenian people. Britain had to use all her material and moral forces to win the war. So she used the Armenian holocausts of 1915 to discredit her enemies... in order to wean American sympathy from the Central Powers, to show to her Moslem subjects the nature of the Turkish government they were being urged to fight, and in order to stimulate the war effort at home by indicating that the conflict was against cruelty, oppression and injustice. Britain also made use of Armenian manpower... to reinforce that disintegrating front after 1917 (when the Russian line collapsed. PW). But in order to stimulate the Armenians Britain had to 'pledge' herself to the liberation of Armenia, an expression that was also used to counter the charges of the pacifists at home that the war was being fought for greed. What was 'imperialistic' in wishing to see Armenia freed from Turkey, Balfour asked. At the end of the war, then, Britain was in the position of having made, in Harold Nicholson's words, the provision of a 'National Home' for the Armenians, one of the most 'loudly advertised' of her war aims. The British government itself had contributed to building up public opinion which expected, and demanded, the liberation of Armenia... More inauspiciously, interest in, and sympathy with, the Armenian people was not matched by a corresponding interest in their territory... She tried several expedients - for example, passing the responsibility for helping Armenia to other powers - all which in the end failed. Moreover, the public

statements and the Treaty of Sevres given to vindicate these statements, again aroused hopes among the Armenians... and laid Armenia yet again open to the hostility of Turkey and now also to that of the other Caucasian states. The Treaty of Sevres, unaccompanied by real help, exposed Armenia to reprisals and in the end proved to be her doom.” (Britain and the Armenian Question, 1915-1923, pp.267-8)

An Armenian state was an impossibility it seems without Imperialist greed for territory and could not be based on the sentiment of Bryce and the Liberals:

“... weakness of policy or illusion would not have prevailed if only Britain had had interests in Armenia. But she did not. Thus Armenia was the only one not liberated from the list of Ottoman territories, ‘Arabia, Armenia, Mesopotamia, Syria and Palestine,’ which the British cabinet had agreed and Lloyd George had announced, would be ‘impossible to restore to Turkey’. Britain’s interests in the Armenian people were not matched by a corresponding interest in their territory, which she was determined should not fall under Russian influence... As to Armenia itself, it seems it realised the hard way, when abandoned by the Entente and Britain, that ‘its own chance of existence was to adapt itself to the wishes and policies of the peoples by whom it was surrounded on all sides’.(p.271. The last quote is from the Northcote papers)

If Armenia could not exist without the guns of the British Empire and the British encouraged it to believe it could exist and then deprived it of the guns on which its existence depended, this surely means that the prime responsibility for the catastrophe rests in Westminster.

There is no reason to believe that the construction and maintenance of Armenia as a nation by British Imperialism would have been any more successful than the creation of Iraq and it is pretty certain it would have been less so and even more destructive. Iraq did actually achieve national substance, and then it was broken up into chaos into what it is now.

And recently in Syria the rebels were encouraged by the US/UK/French destruction of the Libyan State into going into insurrection against the government. Where are its people now? Dead or fleeing to Turkey and Europe.

The reference to a ‘National State’ for the Armenians suggests that the Armenians had one last problem with the British. After all Balfour determined in the case of the Jews that a nation should be established on a historic territory rather than by the opinion of the people who lived there. In 1917 Britain designated Palestine to be the historic territory of the Jews and began building up the Jewish numbers, through immigration, to make sure a future Zionist state could be established. It repressed the resistance of the inhabitants to the Jewish migration and preparation for a Zionist State by policing and terror.

It was a question of Imperial power and not a question of justice. A great injustice was done to the Palestinians. If an Armenian state had been established on the same precedent who’s to say a second injustice of the same kind would not persist in the same way. That is food for thought for those who support the Palestinians and the Armenian case.

Bryce and Arnold Toynbee were the moralistic wing of the British Imperial State. They were not its substance. Their role was to encourage others to fight in a war that was not in reality what it was pretended to be. The War was really a Balance of Power war to destroy a commercial competitor and accumulate territory for the Empire at the expense of the Ottomans and the Moslem world. The Armenians only mattered as cannon-fodder and useful propaganda material. The Armenians found this out at their cost and paid a terrible price for the great fraud perpetuated against them (as did others around the world) for what Curzon had called, in 1896, the “fatal philanthropy” of British Liberalism.

Unfortunately it hasn’t gone away, you know. □

Map of Syria
Compare with map of Syria at its creation in 1922 (p. 23)



Bombing IS in Syria will increase the threat from IS to Britain

By David Morrison

** David Cameron told the House of Commons on 26 November 2015 that, according to the British intelligence services, the UK is “already in the top tier of countries that ISIL is targeting”. Though David Cameron didn’t say so, this elevated status is due to the fact that the UK is already bombing IS in Iraq. If his overriding concern was to reduce the threat to Britain and British citizens abroad from IS, then he would be proposing that the UK cease bombing IS in Iraq. Instead, he is proposing to extend the bombing to Syria, which will inevitably increase the threat to Britain and British citizens abroad from IS.*

** France has been bombing IS in Iraq since September 2014 and started bombing IS in Syria in September 2015. David Cameron is advocating that Britain follows France’s example and bomb IS in Syria, as well as in Iraq, on the grounds that it will make Britain safer from IS. It isn’t obvious that this extension of bombing operations to Syria has made France safer from IS.*

** David Cameron told the House of Commons on 26 November 2015 that, according to the British intelligence services, there are 70,000 Syrian “moderate” rebels that are ready, willing and able to fight ISIS. This begs the question: why did the Obama administration set aside half a billion dollars in June 2014 to train thousands of “moderate” rebels to retake Syrian territory from IS? The administration could have avoided setting up this training programme, which ended up in spectacular failure having trained 54 men in total, of whom only four or five ended up fighting IS.*

David Cameron is about to put a motion before the House of Commons seeking authorisation for British bombing of IS in Syria as well as Iraq. In the wake of the IS atrocities in Paris on 13 November 2015, he now believes that he can persuade a majority of MPs to vote for this step.

He asked for and got parliamentary approval for airstrikes against IS in Iraq on 25 September 2014. At that time, he wanted Britain to bomb IS in Syria as well, as the US and others had begun to do, but he wasn’t confident of getting parliamentary approval for it. As he told the House of Commons then:

“We support the action that the United States and five Arab states have taken in Syria, and I believe that there is a strong case for us to do more in Syria, but I did not want to bring a motion to the House today on which there was not consensus.”

After the IS inspired killing of 38 tourists (30 of them British) on a beach in Tunisia on 26 June 2015, he contemplated seeking parliamentary approval for extending bombing to Syria, but having tested the water thought better of it. But the IS outrage in Paris has given him an opportunity to bounce the House of Commons into approving it.

To prevent IS atrocities in Britain

His central argument for taking this step, which he set out in the House of Commons on 26 November 2015, is that it is essential to prevent IS carrying out atrocities in Britain:

“Every day we fail to act is a day when ISIL can grow stronger and more plots can be undertaken. That is why all the advice I have received—the military advice, the diplomatic advice and the security advice—all says, yes, that the risks of inaction are greater.”

It is as if he is unaware of the recent experience of France, which has been bombing IS in Iraq since September 2014 and started bombing IS in Syria in September 2015. It isn’t obvious that this extension of bombing operations has made France safer from IS.

Defence Secretary Michael Fallon told BBC’s Andrew Marr Show on 29 November 2015:

“There are always risks in war but there is a greater risk from not doing something about Isil and leaving our streets vulnerable to the kind of slaughter we saw in Paris.” [1]

So, in order to prevent our streets being visited by the kind of slaughter we saw in Paris, the Defence Secretary proposes that Britain follow in France’s footsteps on the grounds that it will make Britain safer from IS. This would be laughable if people’s lives weren’t at stake.

Paris attacked by IS

There isn’t the slightest doubt that IS carried out the atrocities in Paris because they were under attack from French planes in Iraq and Syria. When the US-led coalition against IS was formed in September 2014, IS issued threats against “the citizens of the countries that joined the coalition against the Islamic state”, saying: “You will pay the price as you are afraid of travelling to any land. You will not feel safe even in your bedrooms.” [2] In claiming the atrocities in Paris, IS stated:

“Let France and those who walk in its path know that they will remain on the top of the list of targets of the Islamic State, ... as long as they lead the convoy of the Crusader campaign, ... and are proud of fighting Islam in France and striking the Muslims in the land of the Caliphate with their planes.” [3]

Without the action by France against IS in Iraq and Syria, it is very unlikely that 130 people would have been slaughtered by IS in Paris on 13 November. And without the Russian military intervention in Syria in support of President Assad, the

224 passengers of the Russian airliner brought down over the Sinai desert would have got home to Russia safely.

IS has a proven ability to carry out its threats with murderous effect.

British citizens attacked by IS

The IS threat to Britain and to British citizens abroad will be increased by Britain extending its bombing to Syria. The simple truth is that IS will seek to respond by killing Britons, wherever they can find them. Of course, they may not be successful: in Britain itself the police and security services may be able to thwart any attack – David Cameron told the House of Commons that “security services have disrupted no fewer than seven terrorist plots to attack the UK, every one of which was either linked to ISIL or inspired by its propaganda”. But it is much more difficult to protect British citizens abroad from attack by IS.

British citizens abroad have already suffered at the hands of IS, when 38 tourists (30 of them British) were killed on a beach at Sousse in Tunisia on 26 June 2015. Earlier, in March 2015, 22 people (20 of them foreign tourists) were killed in an IS inspired attack on the Bardo National Museum in Tunis.

(Seifeddine Rezgui, the individual responsible for the Sousse attack, was trained in Libya. That would not have occurred had President Gaddafi been in power in Libya. President Sarkozy was the prime mover in his overthrow, which has brought chaos to Libya and helped to destabilise large parts of North Africa. But the overthrow would not have happened without the enthusiastic support of David Cameron.

The Tunisian Prime Minister, Habib Essid, told *The Independent* on 5 August 2015 that “the UK is partly to blame for creating the violent chaos that allowed the extreme Islamist movement to flourish in neighbouring Libya” [4]. That cannot be denied.

British military action against President Gaddafi was endorsed by the House of Commons by 557 votes to 13 on 21 March 2011, albeit after British military action had already started. Jeremy Corbyn was one of the 13 who voted against. MPs should bear that in mind when it comes to voting to extend British bombing of IS to Syria.)

Blowback

Almost without exception, British politicians who were responsible for the military interventions in the Muslim world in the 21st century (and those who support more today) have refused to acknowledge that there has been blowback, that past interventions have increased the threat to Britons at home and abroad from al-Qaida related organisations – and British civilians have died as a result. They ask us to believe that it was just bad luck Britain became a target for al-Qaida linked terrorism and Sweden did not. In some quarters, it is regarded as close to treason to say that, as a result of British participation in the invasion of Iraq, there was an upsurge in al-Qaida linked plots in Britain, including one which led to the deaths of 52 people and injuries to over 700 others in London on 7 July 2005.

Yet unimpeachable evidence to that effect was given to the Chilcot inquiry by Baroness Eliza Manningham-Buller, the

head of MI5 at the time. Asked “to what extent did the conflict in Iraq exacerbate the overall threat that your Service and your fellow services were having to deal with from international terrorism?” in the years after the conflict began in 2003. She replied: “Substantially” and went on to say that there was hard evidence for this, for instance “numerical evidence of the number of plots, the number of leads, the number of people identified, and the correlation of that to Iraq and statements of people as to why they were involved, the discussions between them as to what they were doing”.

(See my article *Al-Qaeda, ISIS, and the wider fallout from the Iraq invasion* [5])

Sir John Sawers misleads

However, since both political parties have been responsible for these interventions, neither wishes to challenge the other on the issue and, as a result, it rarely crops up in political discussion. An exception to this occurred on the BBC Today programme on 26 November 2015, when the former head of MI6, Sir John Sawers, was interviewed by Sarah Montague. She said to him:

“One of the lessons from Iraq is that as a result of being involved there we became more of a target. Is there a certain inevitability about this, but you think it is a price that has to be paid?”

The honest answer is YES: that’s the price that Britons have to pay for Britain continuing to have aspirations to be a major power with an insatiable appetite for intervening in the world. But he couldn’t say that, a couple of hours before David Cameron was due to make a case for further intervention. So he said:

“Well no, I don’t think, ahhhhh. You can argue what the link was between the Iraq campaign and eh and eh the terrorist threat.”

There he deliberately misled the Today audience – he is well aware that the link is well-established between the invasion of Iraq and the terrorist threat to Britain, and has been described in detail to the Chilcot inquiry by the head of MI5 at the time. But he couldn’t say that lest listeners infer that what David Cameron was proposing might also increase the terrorist threat to Britain.

He ended his answer by saying that “the threat is high now and I don’t think it will be heightened simply because we’re taking part in the international coalition”.

Will the threat not be heightened? 130 people were slaughtered by IS in Paris on 13 November after France extended its bombing against IS to Syria, as Britain is proposing to do. After Russia joined the international coalition against IS, 224 passengers in a Russian airliner were killed when IS brought it down.

Britain already in the top tier

In his House of Commons presentation, David Cameron made a half-hearted attempt to address the question Sarah Montague raised with Sawers earlier that day. He said:

“Some have asked specifically whether taking action could make the UK more of a target for ISIL attacks, so let me tell the House that the judgment of the director general of the Security Service and the chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee is that the UK is already in the top tier of countries that ISIL is targeting, so I am clear that the only way to deal with that reality is to address the threat we face, and to do so now.”

So, the UK is “already in the top tier of countries that ISIL is targeting”, according to the British intelligence services. This elevated status is due to the fact that the UK is already bombing IS in Iraq. Needless to say, David Cameron didn’t draw attention to this, lest MPs come to the obvious conclusion that the way to reduce the threat to Britain and British citizens abroad from IS is to cease bombing IS in Iraq. Unfortunately, that simple and cost effective alternative is ruled out by Britain’s aspirations to be a major power in the world. Being like Sweden is not an option for Britain.

Instead, David Cameron says he is clear that “the only way to deal with that reality [of being in the top tier] is to address the threat we face”, the action being to bomb IS in Syria as well. This will inevitably make IS even more determined to strike Britain or British citizens abroad – and the proposed British contribution to bombing IS in Syria couldn’t possibly reduce their capability to strike in Britain or elsewhere.

Matt Hancock echoes George Bush

On 26 November 2015, Cabinet Office Minister Matt Hancock said on BBC Question Time:

“The real choice is not whether or not to take on ISIL. It is whether we take on ISIL now in their heartlands in Syria, where they are plotting these attacks, or whether we wait and take them on later on the streets of Britain. I think we must not wait.”

(This is a chilling echo of President Bush’s message to the American people when he launched “shock and awe” on Iraq in March 2003, on the false promise of eliminating al-Qaeda, which didn’t exist in Iraq at the time but came into existence as a result of the invasion, and in the fullness of time led to IS).

Hancock is not alone in giving the impression that IS has a controlling “headquarters” in Syria – Raqqa is often mentioned – where it does all its plotting and, if only this “headquarters” were destroyed, the threat to Britain would diminish, if not vanish altogether. Assuming for one moment that there is an element of truth in this proposition, why does this “headquarters” still exist after more than 12 months of bombing by the US and others and how could a small British addition to the present array of airpower succeed where the US and others with far greater airpower have failed?

In fact, the notion that IS has a “headquarters” in Raqqa, without which its functioning, including mounting terrorist attacks on Britain, would be seriously impaired, is nonsense. On the contrary, it is conceivable that IS would retain the ability to mount terrorist attacks in Britain and elsewhere, even if it were driven out of all the territory it currently controls in Syria and Iraq.

Making Britain safer from IS attack requires the reduction of the resources – individuals, weapons and bomb making material

– available to IS in Britain for terrorist purposes. Of course, those resources may be reduced by police action internally and at the borders, but the idea that extending bombing of IS from Iraq into Syria could have any impact at all on those resources is a fantasy. Yet that is what David Cameron seems to be saying.

British bombing in Syria, not significant

Indeed, it is difficult to see how the proposed military action by Britain in Syria would have any significant impact on IS in Syria, let alone on its resources in Britain. To the best of my knowledge, what is being proposed is that the aircraft and drones which are currently used for surveillance and bombing missions in Iraq and surveillance missions in Syria are going to be permitted to carry out bombing missions in Syria as well.

The current missions are being carried out by a squadron of 8 Tornado fighter bombers based in Akrotiri in Cyprus (only 2 of which are in the air at any time) and 10 Reaper drones based in Kuwait. The squadron had originally been due to be disbanded in March 2015 but its life has been extended twice, first to March 2016 and now to March 2017 [6]. In December 2014, BBC Newsnight reported that “due to their age and long use” the Tornados require “long hours of work by ground crews, particularly on the engines” and that “on many days, just two or three of the Tornados are available for missions over Iraq” [7]. That was a year ago.

In September 2014, Britain joined the US and France in action against IS in Iraq (and they were later joined by Belgium, the Netherlands, Australia and Canada). Britain’s contribution has been small: measured in terms of airstrikes, out of a total of 5578 Britain was responsible for 381 (7%) and the US for 4026 (71%), as of 26 November 2015, according to airwars.org.

In Syria, the US began operations against IS in September 2014, initially aided by Saudi Arabia, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Qatar. Canada followed in April 2015 and Australia and France in September 2015, but the vast bulk of the airstrikes have been carried out by the US. Since Paris was attacked on 13 November, France has greatly increased its airstrikes against IS in Syria and since early October, Russia has been giving air support to the Syrian government, attacking a range of rebel groups including IS.

The plain fact is that if Britain extends its bombing to Syria, without increasing the resources being made available, its contribution will be small.

70,000 “moderate” rebels?

Even the most enthusiastic advocate of Britain bombing in Syria recognise that IS cannot be defeated militarily without effective ground forces. A vital question posed to David Cameron by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Commons was: “Which ground forces will take, hold, and administer territories captured from ISIL in Syria?”

His surprising answer in the House of Commons on 26 November 2015 was:

“... we believe that there are around 70,000 Syrian opposition fighters, principally of the Free Syrian Army, who do not

belong to extremist groups, and with whom we can co-ordinate attacks on ISIL.”

He gave no further detail about who these “moderate” rebels are and where they are located in Syria.

Julian Lewis, the Conservative Chair of the Defence Select Committee, who should know about these things, told the House of Commons

“... the suggestion that there are 70,000 non-Islamist, moderate, credible ground forces is a revelation to me and, I suspect, to most other Members in this House.”

Patrick Cockburn, whose knowledge of the situation in Iraq and Syria today is unparalleled, gave evidence to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee in 8 September 2015. Asked about the anti-Assad forces, he said:

“... the armed opposition in Syria is dominated by Islamic State, which now holds more than half the country, and al-Qaeda type movements such as the official representative of al-Qaeda, Jabhat al-Nusra, or Ahrar al-Sham and the others are now dominant in the armed opposition, and there are not too many others. The Free Syrian Army and others that people used to talk about are very weak these days.” [8]

If David Cameron’s figure is to be believed, there are 70,000 Syrian “moderate” rebels that are ready, willing and able to fight IS. This begs the question: why did the Obama administration set aside half a billion dollars in June 2014 to

train thousands of “moderate” rebels to retake Syrian territory from IS? The administration could have avoided setting up this training programme, which ended up in spectacular failure having trained 54 men in total, of whom only four or five ended up fighting IS, according to the head of US Central Command in evidence to the US Armed Services Committee [9].

David Morrison
30 November 2015

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Helmut Schmidt, 1918-2015: an Irish perspective

Philip O'Connor

As the press of the world poured out its tributes to Helmut Schmidt following his recent death at the age of 97, it is interesting to reflect on how this influential and era-shaping German Chancellor, who had been in that role for just eight years (1974-1982), viewed the world. A social democrat and German patriot to his marrow, he engaged with philosophy as a component of politics. And he engaged with Ireland with a surprisingly warm curiosity, as an island nation of as yet unfulfilled potential becoming an enthusiastic part of the Europe he was determinedly building with his only real allies, the French.

But first the formal events of his political career ...

The former German soldier as quintessential Social Democrat

Schmidt's past as a *Wehrmacht* officer is of interest, though rarely mentioned in the otherwise fulsome obituaries that have appeared on him.

He was born in the tumultuous final year of the First World War and the 1918 Revolution in Germany. He grew up in the tough working class district of Barmbek in Hamburg where both his parents were teachers. Barmbek was a strong base of the Communist Party, and was one of the areas of the city where the populace participated wholeheartedly in the armed communist uprising of 1923. Schmidt retained a vivid memory of growing up in that district of the Red City, home town and constituency base of the famous KPD leader, Ernst Thälmann.

Like most of his generation, Schmidt was conscripted in the late 1930s into the army and, given his secondary education, appointed a junior officer. He often admitted later that he had had "illusions" about National Socialism, though never shared its racial doctrines. As a 17-year old school-boy he had been expelled for "cheek" from the "Marine Hitler Youth" into which his school rowing club had been incorporated. It is hardly known in the West that organisations such as the Hitler Youth were largely composed of pre-existing youth organisations forcefully incorporated in this way. After Labour Corps Service he commanded a Flak battery with a Panzer Division on the Eastern Front in 1941-42 and was then posted to Berlin as a gun instructor with the Air Ministry. He was sent to attend the trials of Resistance leaders before the "People's Court" in 1944 in a clerical capacity but, appalled by the behaviour of the Nazi judges, secured his discharge from that role and spent the last year of the war again as a Flak battery commander on the Eastern and then the Western Fronts. He was summoned by a military court in early 1945 for disparaging remarks he had made about Hermann Göring, though in the military chaos of the time managed to avoid a trial. He ended the war in a British PoW camp in Ostende.

It was while a PoW that Schmidt joined in political discussion circles organized by fellow prisoners and decided to join the re-founded SPD, which he did at some stage following

his release in August 1945. He later maintained that it was the "awfulness and shit" of war and the "horrors" of the regime that attracted him to politics and the project of rebuilding a democratic Germany. Like many of his generation, he put himself through college, studying economics and politics. He made a name for himself in the student organisation of the SPD (which was largely composed of ex-soldiers at the time) and later as an economist in the post-war administration of Hamburg, rebuilding the ruined city. Elected a city Senator and then a Member of Parliament, he came to national prominence through his organizing role in the relief efforts that followed the devastating North Sea floods of 1962. He caused something of a political crisis by dragooning military forces into the rescue effort without consulting NATO.

He rose through the party at Federal level, being particularly close to the powerful grouping of local *Land*-based politicians rather than the Federal party officials, and became leader of the SPD Parliamentary Group in the Bundestag and Chairman of the Party. Following twenty years of opposition, along with Brandt and the former communist leader, Herbert Wehner, Schmidt helped steer the SPD against enormous internal opposition into a transitional "Grand Coalition" with the Christian Democrats in 1966. This was followed in 1969 by the first post-war SPD-led government in which Brandt appointed him first Minister for Defence and, from 1972, Minister for Finance. Following Brandt's resignation in 1974 in the wake of a DDR spying scandal, Schmidt was elected Federal Chancellor going on, despite the economic crisis, to be re-elected in the Federal Elections of 1976, and remained Chancellor until the fall of this government in 1982 with the exit, yet again, of the Liberal Party ministers.

Schmidt's past as a soldier and commitment to defence played a large role in his popularity among a generation who had experienced a similar life. This marked him out among SPD national-level leaders, many of whom had spent the Nazi years in jail or in emigration and had never quite been able to win the trust of the electorate, except at local city or *Land* level where pragmatic politicians set the tone. Between 1945 and 1965 the SPD at national level had pursued a course of relentless opposition to what was described as the "restoration" of old elites in the economy and power, and to Adenauer's allegedly "Black" (i.e. Catholic) "dictatorship". But the triumvirate of Brandt-Wehner-Schmidt took a fresh direction, and personified a convergence for the first time of three important strands in the German working class; Brandt the illegitimate son of a Lübeck cleaning woman, former anti-Nazi resistance fighter and émigré, Wehner the fiery working class ex-KPD leader from Saxony (and also former émigré who spent much of the war in a Swedish prison) and Schmidt, the former *Wehrmacht* officer and self-educated economic strategist.

Schmidt's years as *Bundeskanzler* were bedeviled by the economic consequences of the two oil crises of 1973-74 and 1979-80, and the Baader Meinhof campaign of bombing and

kidnapping. But the governments that included the SPD from 1966 to 1982 introduced an astounding range of reforms across the educational and industrial sectors, including establishing a successful system of comprehensive schools, modernizing and systematizing the ancient German apprenticeship system, liberalizing and greatly expanding the welfare system, introducing civil rights reforms to benefit the position of women, significantly broadening worker co-determination at plant level and on company boards and strengthening trade union power in the economy. The epoch making Co-Determination Law of 1976, which has stood the test of time despite numerous attempts to undermine it, is one of the Schmidt government's lasting achievements.

According to the SPD-leaning Berlin newspaper, *Der Tagespiegel*, when Schmidt was cited for the "Grand Cross of the Order of Merit", West Germany's highest civil decoration, he politely turned it down on the basis of a Hanseatic tradition that frowned on gongs "for merely doing one's duty". In another nice touch, an interview he gave to the intimidatingly clever if puritanical *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* five years ago about his personal beliefs (he was an agnostic of Lutheran extraction) was titled "Not even a God can save us". This was no defeatist look-back on a life in politics but, on the contrary, a statement that it is human will and action that counts, and he hoped he had done a bit of that. The title of the interview was also a philosophical in-joke, referencing the famous interview the philosopher Martin Heidegger gave *Der Spiegel* in the 1960s, though not published until after his death in 1976, which had been titled "Only a God can save us."

Schmidt had a rich personal life, loyal throughout to his wife Hannelore Glaser, known as "Loki", who he married in 1942 and who predeceased him by five years. He loved reading, philosophy and music, and was known as a gifted piano player. He was also – like Loki – a chain smoker until his death, and famously refused to participate on German television (or once on a CNN panel interview) unless he could smoke during it. He also had a special dispensation at the Hamburg Philharmonic to sit in the front row and smoke throughout the performances. When he appeared in 1990 with three friends, all famous pianists, together with the Hamburg Philharmonic Orchestra, as one of the harpsichordists in a new Deutsche Grammophon recording of Bach's *Concerto in A Minor for four harpsichords*, no one was surprised.

Schmidt and Popper

In the 1970s, Schmidt liked to express his great admiration for, as well as personal friendship with, Karl Popper, one of several Viennese born crafters of political theory at wartime and post-war Oxford University. This made for great copy. Here at last – was the message – was not only a modernly handsome but also culturally sophisticated German leader, one of whom Germans could be truly proud, and one who mixed casually and easily with the doyens of the Anglosphere world ruling elite. The Popper link also sent a soothing political message. As cover for a German government intent on expanding West Germany's highly constrained foreign policy and sovereignty, the post-Adenauer German leadership would, it insinuated, remain in the Atlanticist frame of reference. This calmed the horses, particularly those initially alarmed at the new-found self-confidence of the West German colony, notably the ex-German American geo-strategist, Henry Kissinger.

But in fact Schmidt's thinking and political activism was something of an antithesis to the conservatively brooding Popper. The Oxford inventor of "critical rationalism" (author of *The Open Society and its Enemies* and *Conjectures and Refutations*) viewed the essence of political craft as a defensive activity in which political leaders must engage to minimize the damage mass democracy must inflict on the "liberal" order. For the political philosopher Popper, democracy was full of dangers, particularly the proneness and gullibility of the masses to the inducements of "totalitarian" idealists.

But for Schmidt politics (including diplomacy) was an art to be exercised pragmatically for transformative purposes, precisely the type of experimentalism Popper warned against.

On Europe and Russia

Unlike his lukewarm liberal supporters at *Der Spiegel*, Schmidt openly admired and encouraged French leadership of Europe and believed that a French-led Europe should have a relationship with America based on European strength. When he met with French leaders he spoke with them in impeccable French. But for all his Hanseatic finesse, he was a man who had risen from a humble background and had forged his politics in the crucible of recent German history. He had a worldview that was very far from either the Anglophilism of Popper or the arrogance of American Atlanticist power projection. He was more attuned to the thinking of Bismarck, forever seeking both to deepen European interdependence and integration while searching for a basis for cooperation with Soviet Russia as the key to Europe's long term security and prosperity.

Following the end of the Cold War, and by then nearly a decade retired from political office, he continued to exercise considerable influence over German politics, reflected not least in the continuation by his successor Helmut Kohl during the 1980s of both his European and Russia-friendly strategies. As sometime editor and longtime regular columnist of *Die Zeit* he later chastised the western powers for their dangerous hubris in isolating and humiliating Russia. He also argued that states generated from the great cultures of the world, such as China, Iran or Russia, though also those emerging in Africa, should not be engaged with solely on the basis of the new-found "human rights" agenda of the West. These culturally evolved states, he argued, often had justified political and defence reasons for how they acted and, in the case of Russia, these interests should be respected and not subordinated to the bellicose paranoia of such as the NATO shielded Balts or Poles.

Defence and Détente

Despite, or because of, his views on European security, around 1981 Schmidt doggedly insisted on the need to proceed with the placing of American cruise missiles in West Germany to counter the SS20/21 systems the Soviets had just installed behind the frontier in East Germany. This was to be the partial cause of the end of his government, as an extraordinary and substantial peace movement mobilized in opposition to his defence policy. That government was already fatally weakened anyway by the obvious intention of the junior liberal party to defect. But Schmidt's logic on the missile question was thoroughly European: it was only from a position of determined strength – something the Russians, like the Americans of that time, respected – that Germany and Europe could gear its *Ostpolitik* up several notches to a full scale *rapprochement* with

the Soviet Union, as is indeed what subsequently happened under Kohl. But the confrontation with the Peace Movement was to be his undoing in the eyes of many.

Schmidt and the Nation

Schmidt knew he belonged to a nation, and that “post-nationalist” states did not exist. He would be highly amused – if he only knew – by the fantasies on this issue entertained by current Irish revisionists and neo-Redmondites.

He was unambiguous about German nationality. The loss of the war (and, by implication, the “job” that was done on Germany as a consequence) meant that Germany would remain dependent for the foreseeable future for its military defence on America. But for him that foreseeable future was something he aimed to reach. A modern army no matter how sophisticated that is forbidden nuclear weapons is as relevant in the world as a highly equipped hospital banned from using antibiotics. The outcome of the war meant that Germany could not have an army in this sense, and that it was something only either the US or Europe could provide. It was ultimately up to Europe to integrate politically and to generate its own defence. Some leaders of the Peace Movement, including by this stage even prominent social democrats like Erhard Eppler and, to a lesser extent, Willy Brandt, had begun to go along with the line of “two German nations” developed by the GDR leadership. In this view of things, there was a “capitalist” West German nation, and a “socialist” East German nation, the divergent socio-economic systems accounting for the diverging nationalities. It was by embracing this concept as a new and permanent reality that a fruitful and peaceful cooperation could develop between East and West. Thus went the argument.

Schmidt would have none of this, rejecting it in 1982 with a view of the German “national question” not at all unlike that spelt out by Stalin exactly thirty years previously. Indeed, as early as 1968, at the dawn of the *Ostpolitik* era, when Schmidt was asked in an interview by the Catholic journal *Hochland* whether the Federal Republic (i.e. West Germany) should not seek to generate a sense of national identity around its existing state rather than the abstraction of *Gesamtdeutschland* (All-Germany), he responded:

“We must remind ourselves over and over again that our shared responsibility for the political fate of our compatriots in the GDR is an absolute imperative for us, as it arises from the fact that the Germans in the GDR, almost wholly on their own, and indeed on our behalf too, have had to pay in disproportionate measure for the war jointly lost by all Germans ... It is essential and legitimate to continually strengthen the identification of citizens with the state in the Federal Republic. But it would be a rape of our national history, and one fraught with great risks, to seek to reduce our national consciousness to this territorially delimited state identification. This is why I utterly oppose the proposed *idyll* of a West German nation.”

This was a view he was again to stress during the Peace Movement crisis of 1981-82, when he rejected the notion of a false “west German patriotism” (*bundesdeutscher Patriotismus*) as any basis for a long term peaceful evolution on the continent. This is a thought that Irish neo-Redmondites might usefully ponder in the context of our own relationship with borders and the evolving Peace Process today.

In the late 1970s John Minahane launched a blistering attack in the *Irish Communist* (published by the British and Irish Communist Organisation) on the very un-Stalinist national fantasies being peddled by the Communist Party of Ireland in relation to Ireland and Germany at the time. While the CPI was dutifully promoting the new Muscovite fantasy of the “Two German Nations” (where there was obviously only one), it was simultaneously promoting the myth of the “Single Irish Nation” (with a misguided northern unionist offshoot) where there were very obviously two! And in neither case had the creation of states and borders had any defining effect in relation to the nations concerned. Indeed was not the essential problem in the North precisely that the statelet imposed by British genius for running by the dominant local nationality the only possible and presumably intended outcome of a permanent process of policing and periodically crushing of the subject nationality? The *Irish Communist* around 1978 also published an article by Manus O’Riordan dealing in depth with Stalin’s views on the German national question and his aborted initiative of 1952 offering German re-unification in return for an Austrian-style militarily neutral unified German state. Recent revelations from the Soviet archives support Manus’s assumption at the time that that initiative had been meant wholly in earnest. How different subsequent European history might have been had that development not been thwarted at Western Allied insistence!

The German and Irish national questions were the theme of a public meeting I held in Trade Union House in Münster in 1981, where I was living at the time, at the height of the Northern Hunger Strikes and the German Peace Movement, but unfortunately I was met by a wall both of uncomprehending “west German patriots” of the Peace Movement and a few visiting One-Irish-Nationists. How history has moved on with German re-unification and the Irish Peace Process!

Economics and Politics

Germany and France delighted none too secretly in the temporary collapse of the US Dollar as the world reserve currency and *ersatz* gold standard in 1971 as a consequence of the US imperialist misadventure in South East Asia. In response, at the height of its domestic and international prestige, the socialist-liberal government of Willy Brandt revived the dormant EEC project (promised in the Treaty of Rome though never activated) of a European common monetary union independent of the dollar. The EEC’s Werner Report of 1970 set out an ambitious plan for ever closer monetary integration leading to a common European currency. This was the plan which was later to be implemented almost to the letter. But, conveniently for opponents of the European project at the time, this process came to a temporary halt in 1973 when a GDR spy was unmasked in the German Chancellor’s office, weakening and destabilizing the Brandt government. But the process was resumed with a vengeance when Schmidt took over in 1974 and especially after he was re-elected Chancellor following fresh elections in 1976.

Schmidt was no believer in economic determinism. As the main driver of the European Monetary System (EMS) from 1976 that paved the way for the Euro, he disregarded the eternal hostile whining of the *Bundesbank* to ensure that a solidly Franco-German *political* framework stood behind European Monetary Union rather than the dry *Ordoliberal* monetary doctrines of Frankfurt. This often very public confrontation between politics and monetarists is a battle that has to be

perennially fought by innovative post-war German leaders, as Merkel found when successfully driving the recovery of the Euro in 2011-12, again in a unique alignment with France.

Schmidt's conviction on the primacy of politics in economic and diplomatic affairs was expressed again in his interventions during the recent global financial crisis. There was no "Euro crisis", he relentlessly argued, but "a crisis of European politics". Europe had attached too little importance to building credible procedural rules and had not integrated politically as a Union sufficient to meet the needs of the common currency. In a comment directed at the Merkel government he criticized short term thinking and urged the "Big Idea":

"What is needed is a more developed sense of economic judgement on the part of the German political class than currently exists."

He was delighted at the subsequent Merkel-Sarkozy initiative at Deauville that finally broke the impasse with the proposed Fiscal Treaty. Schmidt, however, would have wished a higher priority given to EU employment policy as part of that Euro monetary framework.

The Haughey-Schmidt Alliance

The Irish aspect of Schmidt's career has attracted little attention in the derivative Irish media. But it was during the EMS period of the late 1970s that he became a great friend of Ireland at the European table, impressed as he was by the determined strategising of the Irish representatives on the EMS group. The Irish delegation consistently evaded repeated attempts by the British to lure them into a united front to weaken EMS on the basis of an alleged common interest in the pound and other common economic interests. The Irish delegates – with an independence of mind woefully lacking in today's Dublin establishment panic at the prospect of Brexit – were subject to a clear and simple mandate from the Fianna Fáil Government in Dublin: they were to support and facilitate every Franco-German initiative on Monetary Union and, should a divide occur, to vote with the Germans and French. This has lately been revealed quite unambiguously in the history of EMS by Harold James published in 2012 (*Making the European Monetary Union*), based on the minutes of the meetings of the European Community's Committee of Central Bank Governors up to 1992. Indeed the Irish representatives often innovated with resolutions and proposals to nudge along the Franco-German line.

Schmidt's first visit to Ireland came during the high spending days of what has been called Ireland's brief "Keynesian interlude" (William Roche), that 1977-79 period overseen by the then jaded and very parochial Jack Lynch. But it was not with Lynch but rather with his popular Health Minister, and soon to be successor, Charles J. Haughey, that Schmidt struck up a warm and mutually respectful relationship, as both men led their countries – one the economic powerhouse but still political outcast of Europe, the other a struggling underdeveloped new-comer to the European table – into the stormy waters of post-Keynesian economic "adjustment".

The Haughey-Schmidt interaction was the start of a long, constructive and fruitful Irish-German alliance at EU level, reaching its high point in the initiative by Haughey at the European Summit in Dublin in 1990 that forced the EU

Council of Ministers to assent and commit to the peaceful reunification of Germany. This political alliance was to endure until the "Boston not Berlin" ideologues of the PDs came to power in Dublin in 1997, let in by Irish Labour's new-found doctrine of the moral incompatibility of Fianna Fáil with power and hence of Labour repeating the very successful coalition it had shared with that party in 1992-94. This was despite the then Fianna Fáil leader, Bertie Ahern's, publicly stated preference for a renewed FF-Labour Government.

As a consequence of this ideological turn by Labour, from 1997 onwards, Ireland under PD influence unfortunately disengaged step by step at the European level from its previously carefully nurtured alliance with both France and Germany. Finally, all awash with the hubris of its Celtic Tiger wealth, the "Irish model" was to come crashing down with the recent hymns of praise to it from the organs of Anglo-Saxon globalism still ringing in its ears.

A meeting of minds

In an extraordinary paper composed shortly before his death in 2007, Haughey recalled how it was from long private discussions with Chancellor Schmidt in 1981-82 – a high point of Ireland's crisis of economic underdevelopment – that he developed his strategy for a system of "social partnership". This mutually dependent alliance of state, employers and unions, as in Germany, would be the lever to unlock the economic potential in Ireland to overcome its chronic underdevelopment and its mentality of dependency (the paper is available on www.charlesjhaughey.ie). That meeting with Schmidt – and despite Haughey being out of power for four years before he could start to implement it in 1987 – was in essence the birth moment of the really productive decade-and-a-half of the Celtic Tiger.

Whether the two men also discussed nations and nationalities unfortunately we do not know. But, given Haughey's statement in 1980 on the "failed political entity" that was Northern Ireland, and Schmidt's comments on the two German states and the German nation quoted above, the similarity in their separate views on the endurance of nations and the transient nature of ill-fitting states is certainly remarkable.

These were not the only areas of convergence in the thinking of Schmidt and Haughey. While on a visit to Saudi Arabia in April 1981, Schmidt made a remark on the Israel-Palestine conflict to the effect that Palestinians also had national rights and that Israel, given its treatment of the Palestinians, was in no position to criticize a German leader for saying so. Israel's treatment of the Palestinians, according to Schmidt:

"just won't do. ... A German living in a divided nation and laying moral claim to a right of self-determination for the German people cannot accept [Israel's treatment of the Palestinians]. Given our own position, we must also recognize the moral right of the Palestinian people to their claim for self-determination."

At the same time as Schmidt made this comment, in Dublin the Haughey Government was radically overhauling Irish policy on the Middle East. In November 1979 Minister Brian Lenihan snr. revealed to the Dáil – to a visible stir among diplomats present, according to *The Irish Times* – that the Government

“maintained contact with the PLO and other Palestinian organisations in connection with the provision of a permanent homeland for the Palestinian people.”

Ireland formed part of the EEC “Troika” at the time, together with France and Italy, and on an Irish initiative the Troika had brought the Council of Ministers to recognize the PLO as a legitimate representative organisation and to finally support the Palestinian “right of self-determination”. Ireland’s Foreign Minister, Michael O’Kennedy, emphasized that “Ireland’s commitment goes further”. That “further” commitment was announced by Lenihan in the famous “*Bahrain Declaration*” of 10 February 1980 when Ireland became the first EEC country to commit to the “establishment of an independent State in Palestine”. In June 1980 the EEC, in its “*Venice Declaration*” for the first time endorsed Palestinian national rights and established the policy of a two-state solution within the 1967 borders, its line to the present day, however little they have done to realize it.

Of course both Ireland and Germany were involved in deepening links to the Arab world at the time for economic reasons. But the Irish position had long precedence in Fianna Fáil foreign policy, from DeValera at the League of Nations in the 1930s down to Frank Aiken’s position on the question at the time of the 1967 war (see my *Palestine in Irish Politics: A History*, Sadaka, Dublin, 2011, available on www.sadaka.ie).

In Germany’s case, Schmidt was adamant that Israel could have no veto on German foreign policy, a lesson which Angela Merkel today might usefully re-learn. While flying home from Riyadh, Schmidt reportedly “told his advisers that war guilt could not continue to affect Germany’s foreign relations” (*New York Times*, 5 May 1981).

Needless to say, the Zionist reaction to both Schmidt and Haughey was vicious and fast, and in both cases probably contributed to the two men losing power in 1982. Israeli Prime Minister Begin rounded on Schmidt, denouncing him as “unprincipled, avaricious, heartless, and lacking in human feeling”, and stating that he had “willingly served in the German armies that murdered millions” (*New York Times*, 5 May 1981). Begin also attacked Haughey, denouncing the *Bahrain Declaration* as a “hostile act” by Ireland against Israel that was tantamount to acceptance of the PLO’s “right to destroy the Jewish State” (*The Irish Times*, 20.02.1980). Haughey was also accused by leading Labour politicians in the Dáil of supporting terrorism and acting in the Middle East purely to further “private commercial interests close to Fianna Fáil.” The main Zionist in Ireland, Conor Cruise O’Brien, launched a relentless campaign in his *Irish Times* column against Haughey, coining the famous phrase “GUBU” in the process from the words of surprise uttered by Haughey on a truly bizarre happening at the Attorney General’s home (“grotesque, unbelievable, bizarre and unprecedented”). Haughey went on to nearly four years in opposition during a period of desperately deteriorating economic conditions and an escalating crisis in the North. He was to return in 1987 with a recipe in response to both, and to succeed.

Helmut Schmidt was the prime architect of Germany as the model social democratic state of Europe in the 1970s-80s. He oversaw a great expansion of the welfare state and of the system of industrial democracy, which continue to define that country’s socio-economic structure. But he was no “post national” social democrat, something which many who espouse

social democracy in Ireland have bizarrely come to believe is part of the package, or even its defining part. He retained a firm belief in the durability of nations and the transience of ill-fitting states imposed on them. He also tried to steer Germany out of the straight jacket of foreign policy subservience which was the legacy of defeat in the world war and, like Adenauer, saw both the military and economic framework for that to be a strongly integrated Europe that could resist American bullying. Right up to the time of his death, he also saw a truly sovereign Europe’s future as dependent on a rapprochement with Russia and railed against the West’s disastrous treatment of that country after 1991. He was also a friend of Ireland in the EU, impressed by its officials in the EMS process and at the leadership of Haughey in the 1980s. The Irish dimension of Schmidt’s European role has hardly earned a mention in the – mostly imported – obituaries that have appeared in Irish journals over the last month. □

Advertisement

The Armenian Insurrection And The Great War Including two pamphlets by “Armen Garo”

By Pat Walsh

Belfast Historical & Educational Society 2015

The Great Calamity that engulfed the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire in 1915 has been narrowed down to a single question: Was the Young Turk Government in Istanbul guilty of Genocide? But the tragedy of the deaths of great numbers of Armenians, Turks and Kurds is inexplicable if confined solely to this. And this focus leaves out important historical questions around the issues of instigation and betrayal that should be raised around these events. So a context is required to explain what really happened to produce such a disaster.

That context is the Great War and the Armenian Insurrection. The Armenian Insurrection is described by a leading figure in it, the Dashnak revolutionary Dr. Pasdermadjian (Armen Garo), in writings long since forgotten. These put a very different complexion on the events of 1915. They describe a great moment of decision when the very existence of a people was gambled in the struggle for a Great Armenia, carved out of Ottoman territories in which the Armenians constituted a small minority.

His two pamphlets reprinted here reveal that the 1914 Ottoman offer of an autonomous Armenian State was rejected by Armenians when what they thought was a better offer came from America, Britain and France. The price was that they fight the Ottomans. They gambled and lost, bringing disaster on the Armenian people.

Also included is a commentary by Pat Walsh on the origin and development of ‘the Armenian Question’ and its culmination and final resolution in the catastrophic events in Anatolia brought about by the Great War. This reveals the instrumental part played by the Liberal Anglosphere in foisting dangerous notions of historic destiny on the Armenians and then a fraudulent war that encouraged them to destruction. When remembering the Armenian Great Calamity, what should be sought is not only the truth, but the whole truth.

Lecture on “Inter-imperialist rivalry and World War 1: Britain ’s role”

by **Gerry Docherty**, author of *Hidden History: the secret origins of the First World War* (with **Jim Macgregor**) at the **27th Desmond Greaves Annual Weekend School, Dublin, 13 September 2015.**

The trouble is that many people think that they know about the true causes of the First World War. After all, they ‘did’ it for their exams. Let me recall. I was advised to find four reasons: German Imperial ambition, the Naval Race, the system of alliances and the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. Add a conclusion and expect a good pass. Thus myths are established and the truth perishes because we are likely to accept that as fact for the rest of our lives.

We have to put aside the vagueness and anonymity which has been deliberately woven around the causes of the First World War and focus specifically on how a small group of very influential and powerful men led Britain and its Empire into war with one objective - to crush the main rival to Anglo-Saxon predominance over the known world, Germany. That was the one country whose economic and industrial growth and success was fast overshadowing Britain across the globe. Markets were being lost. New German designs were better. Their salesmanship was terrific. They even had the gall to produce sales brochures in native languages.

War against Germany was planned over a period of 15-20 years and successfully accomplished. But myths are perpetuated. We didn’t sleepwalk into war; it wasn’t a sudden binding point of honour; it wasn’t someone else’s fault. The declaration of war in 1914 was a carefully orchestrated decision taken by a small select cabal once all the necessary conditions were in place. The British Empire, including as it did, Scotland and Ireland, was literally bounced into war. Ambushed might be a better term.

We are lied to by Governments and those who have written the official histories which have been accepted and taught in our schools and universities. It was a matter of strategy, not an accident. Evidence has been removed, incriminating documents burned, minutes, reports and specific orders have been shredded. Today, I seek to challenge these lies, misconceptions and obfuscations about the real causes of that awful war.

The American historian Professor Carroll Quigley wrote a seminal work *The Anglo American Establishment* in 1949, though it remained unpublished until 1981. It should be read, not so much as a historical narrative, but as a warning with signposts containing the names of the culprits whose zeal and determination brought about the apocalyptic war of 1914-1918 though Quigley’s disclosures went much further than the end of the war.

Quigley’s work has helped us identify the men behind the scenes, those who boasted that they would rather command real power than have the trappings of office. Some call them the money-power, the men behind the scenes or the hidden force. We have tried to identify them by name and have dubbed them, The Secret Elite. Follow with me, their impact on Britain’s dynamic change of direction from the earliest days of the twentieth century and you will begin to understand what

Quigley is talking about. I find the generic term which might be applied to them, “British Imperialists”, somewhat lame. It covers too many sins. I want to know who caused what and why?

Quigley pointed to the Triple penetration that this cabal had achieved in British society; of Politics, the Press, and the Writing of History. Jim Macgregor and I have added Finance and Industry to that list.

In 1891, Cecil Rhodes, William Stead and Reginald Brett (Lord Esher) met to agree what they called a Secret Society whose aim was to take over control of British foreign policy, renew the Anglo-Saxon bond between Britain and the USA and spread all that they considered good in English ruling-class traditions and values to expand the British Empire in a world they believed they were destined to control. Two vitally important figures were added to the group, namely Lord Natty Rothschild and Alfred Milner. Milner was the key to the successful direction of strategy. His background, and the common base for most of this elite, was Oxford University, the philosophy of John Ruskin, membership of All Souls College in Oxford and the privileged London clubs, ‘Grillions’ and ‘The Club’. Milner described himself with pride as a ‘British Race-Patriot.’ Six years ago I had never heard of Alfred Milner. Perhaps you have?

Jim Macgregor, my co-author, and I now believe him to be the most important, influential, able and effective imperialist in modern British History. The man who caused the Boer War and worked ceaselessly to bring about the First World War. But why had we never heard his name? How can our assertion hold true? After all his name does not appear in mainstream histories of the First World War. The only conclusion we can come to is that his influence has been carefully airbrushed from contemporary accounts. Consider please, how central he was to the critical changes in British Imperial history.

In examining the impact of Alfred Milner and the select group which operated behind the scenes directing British politics we should examine the following points:

Point 1: a group of exceptionally powerful men recognised the need to radically shake British Foreign Policy and manoeuvre the Empire into war to crush the old order in Europe ... specifically, Germany. The new cry in their secret senate was ‘*Germania delenda est.*’ They believed that either the British ‘way’ would triumph over Germany, or the Empire would be overrun by its major competitor.

Point 2: The Boer War was the wake-up call. Mighty Britain was all but humbled by veldt farmers. The British army proved unfit for purpose. Certainly there was international glee at its ill-preparedness and incompetence. In Ireland, the Home Rule party was openly opposed to the enforced conquest of the

Boer Republics. In Britain, loud opposition was mounted by important Liberals in Parliament and the press. David Lloyd George was one such MP who was committed to peace. Alfred Milner was a man of steel. In the face of great criticism about the war his advice was to 'Disregard the Screamers'. Milner had been sent to South Africa to reorganise the government after the embarrassment of the Jameson Raid and Cecil Rhodes' involvement with the failed coup. He did not flinch at the introduction of concentration camps and the starvation of 25,000 women and children placed in them as a military tactic.

But Milner saved the gold mines and diamond mines owned by Rhodes, his backer, by the Rothschilds, by Alfred Beit and by Sir Abe Bailey. He sanctioned the importation of Chinese coolies to work in the mines and permitted the mine-owners to use harsh corporal punishment. He set plans in place to rebuild South Africa with able administrators, but criticism of his tactics grew in Liberal circles. Milner understood what had to be done to save and expand the Empire and to safeguard and strengthen its future. He brought over from Oxford a hand-picked staff of very able young men, later called 'Milner's Kindergarten'. He was ennobled as Viscount Milner by a grateful King who admired him, and back home he took on the task of preparing the empire for war.

Point 3: British foreign policy underwent a profound and, at the time, near inexplicable change of direction at the beginning of the twentieth century. The Foreign Office abandoned the old policy of isolation. Lord Lansdowne, as Conservative foreign secretary took the decision without debate, with no reference to parliamentary procedure or collegiate cabinet discussion. 'Out of the blue' an Alliance with Japan was signed in 1902. There was genuine shock throughout the Empire. What was this about? The answer was Russia. Russian ambitions in the Far East were of great concern to the 'Imperialists'. Russia posed a long-term threat to India, to Afghanistan and Persia. If unchecked, the Russian Empire might interfere in these 'British' colonies, curve round from the east, undermine the Ottoman Empire and capture the jewel that was Constantinople. Russia had to be dealt with. And dealt with she was.

Before the Trans-Siberian Railway could be completed, Russia, as an ambitious imperial threat, was effectively neutered by Japan. In the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-5 both her military and naval power was smashed. Most importantly, the Battle of Tsushima in 1905 was an outstanding naval victory which some commentators have hailed as more important than Trafalgar. What should be pointed out is that the four major battleships, Shikishima, Kikasa, Fuji and Asahi, were built in Britain at Thames Iron Works, Vickers in Barrow and John Brown in Clydebank. The Japanese, Britain's only allies, blew the Russian navy away and destroyed her military pride. As a consequence the Czar lost his only warm-water port, and began to look longingly at Constantinople. This later would serve the British as a golden carrot to attract Russian support and friendship. There was also an immediate benefit to the Empire. British and Rothschild banks loaned money to Japan which paid for the ships that had been built in Britain before supporting Japan in its resolve to slay the Russian Bear. British shipyards reaped the dividends, British banks reaped great profits and the Japanese people paid the cost.

By 1905, Russia was no longer a serious rival to the British Empire and this changed the dynamic. Weakened, Russia was virtually friendless and vulnerable to sympathetic approach. Russia had one massive asset which was permanently denied to Britain, namely a huge army based on the continent of Europe. This became a key part of the building block for the Secret Elite's new order.

Point 4: The Liberal Landslide of 1906. With 397 Liberal members of parliament, 82 Home Rulers from Ireland and 28 Labour members, against a mere 246 Tories, this was surely a new beginning for the nation. The Liberals had been swept to power in an election which promised Peace, Reform and Retrenchment. This was the pay-back for the embarrassment and failure of the Boer War. The Anti-War party of Campbell-Bannerman and David Lloyd George promised so much. But strange happenings had preceded the election. Milner's men inside the Secret Elite, A J Balfour and Lord Lansdowne, were part of a conspiracy to implant Liberals who championed British Imperialism at the highest level of government. In matters of foreign policy there was a strange continuity. While the political arithmetic indicated a complete landslide, this did not translate into real change. The men who had criticised Milner and the Boer War were set on introducing great social reform, BUT, the men who mattered, the men previously approved and backed by the Secret Elite, namely Herbert Asquith, Richard Haldane and Sir Edward Grey, all Milner's friends and associates, pursued the Secret Elite's aims and policies. In absolute secrecy, they approved preparations already underway for a military and naval plan to bring about a successful prosecution of war against Germany.

Of course this was not referred to as an alliance but merely 'conversations'. These began with French and Belgian senior officers even before the Liberals were in office. Unknown to the Cabinet, Parliament and the Liberal Party, there was a much more important organ of power called the Committee of Imperial Defence, which controlled the direction of events that would lead to preparations for war. Allegedly formed to guide and advise the Prime Minister after the Boer War failures, it dictated the new agenda. Lord Esher, one of the original Secret Elite triumvirate, was given permanent membership, although he held no office of state, was unelected and responsible only to the King. Sir Henry Wilson, later Field Marshal and Chief of the Imperial General Staff, a serial political intriguer in Irish politics, formulated the detailed plans for a future war. For almost a decade he spent summer holidays cycling in northern France, drawing maps and diagrams of waterways, canals, roads and major geographical features. These were plans which signalled a secret alliance. Together, Britain and France agreed that in the war against Germany, British troops would be stationed along the Belgian border, shoulder to shoulder with the French army in the north. And so it came to pass.

Point 5: Salute the best Foreign Secretary the Secret Elite ever had. No, not Sir Edward Grey. He was incompetent, a failure at Oxford, linguistically inarticulate and took pride in the claim that he gained his knowledge of foreign affairs from the editorials in the Times. No, I refer to King Edward VII. By comparison, he was brilliant. Edward was fluent in French and German, had built up a network of royalties throughout Europe, and despite his mother's objections, was trusted with state secrets. His cover was genius. Behind the facade of a philandering royal, his visits to Parisian brothels, his cavorting with the wives of other men (one historian referred to him as Edward the Caresser), he was the best foreign secretary Britain never had, and we place him deep inside the highest echelons of the Secret Elite. It must have helped that he greatly disliked his nephew, Kaiser Wilhelm, the Emperor of Germany, a man whom his mother, Victoria, greatly respected. Edward VII fronted the major changes in alliances with what is known as the Entente Cordiale, the 'unnatural' Entente Cordiale, as Roger Casement pointed out, because it is not based on a cordial regard between France and Britain, but on the shared un-cordial designs on Germany.

What was it really? Not an open alliance, Oh no. Allegedly Britain had no alliances in Europe but in this grand charade stage one was to bring France on board. To that end Edward VII courted the revanchists, Delcassé and Poincaré, right-wing politicians whose driving aim was to grasp back Alsace and Lorraine the provinces lost to Germany in 1870. They were Edward's men as was Alexander Izvolsky, the Russian foreign minister who became French Ambassador in Paris.

Edward blitzed the European monarchies and showered them with baubles and other honours in Portugal, Spain, Montenegro, Italy, Belgium ... and Russia. Friendship with Russia? The unthinkable manipulated by the unknown. Edward was quietly and secretly rewriting unacknowledged alliances. Disengaging Italy from Germany-Austria was his piece de resistance. With a touch of strategic genius he visited Pope Leo XIII. To be clear, he did not make Alliances but emerged with absolute understandings. His one aim was to surround Germany-Austria with hostile neighbours. By 1910, even Britain's connections with Russia had been put on a much higher level, thanks to Edward, though the people of Britain did not realise what was happening. Russia, and the Czar's regime, were despised. The vicious treatment of its Jewish population was disgusting. British MPs of the Jewish faith, even members of the House of Lords, were banned from visiting Russia. Yet secret talks leading to a naval understanding were extended to Russia.

Point 6: Haldane and the Reform of the army was central to the overall preparation for war against Germany. Richard Haldane was Milner's friend and correspondent during his years in South Africa. 'Tell us what to do,' he once wrote to Milner, seeking direction. The creation of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) was attributable to Haldane. King Edward liked him personally; theirs was a real friendship. They talked in confidence together, ironically in German. Edward VII stamped the reorganisation of the British army with his approval. It was not to be a matter for political dispute or aristocratic objection. The King called a conference of every Lord Lieutenant in the country and ordained that the reorganisation would take place with his blessing. The BEF trained for one thing; not the defence of Egypt or the protection of India, but solely for a European war against Germany. The Secret Elite understood that Britain alone simply did not have sufficient men on the ground to challenge the Germans on continental Europe, but France did, and Russia did, and France and Russia had signed an alliance. Our very professional small addition, the BEF, was exclusively prepared for war in Northern France, which was the whole point of its creation. Naval domination was presumed. Germany had a vast land army. It could not be tackled by Britain in a continental war unless part of a huge combined force.

Point 7: By the turn of the twentieth century, public opinion had become an important factor in the political dynamic. The Boer War had been very unpopular at home because newspapers turned their criticism on the military failures. Changing the nation's opinion became an important strand in the Secret Elite's preparation for war. Where France had once been portrayed as the national enemy, Germany became the whipping-boy. Foremost of the press barons was Lord Northcliffe, a man vetted by Lord Esher on behalf of the Elite before he was permitted to take ownership of the Times and Daily Mail. Northcliffe's media stables wallowed in spy mania. Erskine Childers wrote one of the most important anti-German novels of the pre-war period, *The Riddle of the Sands*, a warning of a German invasion. Childers became the darling of the Right and a personal friend of Lord Roberts. Worst of all was the legendary William Le Queux, a barely literate scare-monger whose 'novels' gained ever-increasing notoriety. Northcliffe

commissioned him to write *The Invasion of 1910*, which was serialised in the Daily Mail. This scandalous anti-German story was based on an invasion of southern England, but because the population base was insufficient, Northcliffe re-routed the German invasion, accompanied with maps and drawings, to Sheffield, before marching into London. It was reprinted many times and translated into twenty-seven languages. The Germans also carried the story, though in their version, to Le Queux's disgust, Germany won the war.

Point 8: After his years in South Africa, Milner had been subject to a motion of censure in Parliament. Churchill spoke in his favour, declaring that Lord Milner had no pension, no job and no future, so parliament should leave him be. It was of course nonsense. Viscount Milner was inundated with top jobs. His friend Natty Rothschild appointed him to the Board of Rio Tinto. He was given a directorship of the Bank of Egypt. But of course. He had saved the gold and diamonds for them. Milner's main objective however was to prepare the Empire for War. He visited the Dominions, organised Imperial Conferences both for national leaders and for press representatives. His kindergarten, the young men who had formed his South African administration, came home to build Round Table groups, secret pressure groups to promote Milner's ideals in Britain, Canada, Australia and South Africa. The key concepts they promulgated included Duty, Mother Country and Heritage. Milner worked closely with his friend, Lord Roberts. Their agenda was preparation for war.

Point 9: To what extent was Ireland a cause of the First World War? It naturally suits the 'Just so happened brigade' to pretend that the critical situation in Ulster was a chance event. It was not. The fear of civil war was always a threat, but no more than that. We believe that it would have become the issue for a declaration of war had Belgian 'neutrality' not sufficed. Political arithmetic after both the elections of 1910 meant that the Liberals were dependant on outspoken anti-imperialists, the Irish Home Rule Party, to stay in power. To the Secret Elite, Irish Home Rule, which would represent the break-up of the Empire, was unthinkable. Their role in supporting Ulster both directly and indirectly, was absolute. Milner and Sir Edward Carson [Carson was A J Balfour's prodigy] were in constant cahoots. During the Curragh 'mutiny' Milner was advising Sir Henry Wilson and promising parliamentary support for all officers who resigned. He promised that their pensions would not be endangered. The end product was the resignation of John Seeley as Minister of War, which spawned an unusual situation. The Prime Minister himself took charge of the office. Why? Asquith could not let anyone take the post. There were no senior Liberals whom he could trust with the secret that, behind the scenes, Britain, France and Russia were on the point of declaring war against Germany.

Through the actions of Milner, Rudyard Kipling, Rothschild, Waldorf Astor, Lord Iveagh, and the Duke of Bedford, the Ulster Volunteer Force was funded and able to buy the guns to arm the province. At today's values, they raised over £8,000,000 secretly, and this included anonymous donations. The gun-running was grossly illegal and utterly unconstitutional. The legend of Fred Crawford's mission to buy guns and ammunition for Ulster is the stuff of folklore. If the British authorities had not sanctioned it, the guns would never have been landed, but we know now that the cheque handed to Ulster came directly from the hands of the Tory leaders at Westminster. Fred Crawford delivered the armaments to Larne and in due time was made a Commander of the British Empire for his ... well, was it treason or loyalty? Whatever, had it been necessary, the newspapers could rightly claim that the Kaiser had armed Ulster, since the guns were purchased in Hamburg.

What the Secret Elite needed was a semblance of balance which would suggest that Germany had also armed the Irish Volunteers. Step forward Erskine Childers, the same who wrote *The Riddle of the Sands* and spent ten years alarming the nation to prepare for a German invasion. Was Childers a British agent? Was his change of heart to the republican cause as complete as Paul on the road to Damascus? He would claim so. Backed by a fraction of the funds granted so willingly to the UVF, Childers procured much older weapons from the same source in Hamburg and loaded on the *Asgard* and the *Kelpie*, bravely struggled through storms and fog - the worst weather seen in the Channel for years, it was claimed - to deliver a small quantity of guns and ammunition at Howth. Checked against the Times weather reports for the Channel and the Irish Sea from 22-25 July 1914, it appears that there was some fog, but the weather conditions varied from fair with light breeze to N.W. breeze in moderate seas to moderate westerly and at worst, moderate to strong winds. This is not how this legend has been portrayed.

Ireland played a major part in the strategic deception used by the Secret Elite through the British Foreign Office to deceive Germany into believing that Britain was incapable of declaring war because she stood on the brink of a civil war that would impact on the whole nation. The Germans were banking on British neutrality in the event of a continental war. The question we have raised is, would Ireland have acted as Plan B had Germany avoided an invasion of Belgium? There is good reason to consider the probability that with both sides armed by Germany, any consequent disruption could be blamed on the 'devious' Kaiser. When Milner was High Commissioner in South Africa and seeking to goad President Kruger of the Transvaal to declare war, one of his close Balliol College friends and a member of the Secret Elite, Philip Lyttelton Gell, wrote to him and advised that if he made an issue of Germany supplying guns to the Boers, Britain would treat that as a case for war. All it would need, suggested Gell, was some gory act of bloody terrorism to accompany the allegations.

Time runs against my covering all of the important issues which accompanied the last few months of peace as the world was being manoeuvred into global conflict, but there are a few very important points to be clarified, namely the myth of Belgian neutrality, the devious mobilisations which took place behind Germany's back, and the stunning hypocrisy of Sir Edward Grey.

Point 10: Belgian Neutrality / Mobilisations / Sir Edward Grey. Belgian neutrality was a myth. A senior Belgian officer, Major General Ducarne, was originally involved in the secret conversations between Britain and France in 1906. They had discussed the allocation of Belgian interpreters, accommodation for troops and wounded soldiers. Indeed Belgium had to be kept distant from the Entente because its involvement would have destroyed the notion of neutrality. Consider too the fact that the National Bank of Belgium set plans in 1912 whereby in the event of war with Germany its gold, note-printing plates and government bonds were to be immediately shipped to the Bank of England. And they were. Be mindful that Belgium was a very wealthy country whose fortunes had been amassed on the imperial rape of the Congo, as lambasted by Roger Casement.

Mobilisations - Mobilisation meant war. If a large nation had to mobilise its army, the cost was so prohibitive that war was bound to follow. Everyone knew this. To that end, encouraged by the French President Poincaré, and in the expectation that Britain would become involved, Russia mobilised its forces

against Germany. The date of preliminary Russian mobilisation was 26 July, 1914. A full mobilisation followed on 30 July. On 1 August, France secretly mobilised but instructed troops to remain 10-25 kilometres from the border with Germany so that they wouldn't know. With Europe on the brink, Sir Edward Grey and his foreign office team lied repeatedly to Germany about its intentions. On 1 August, Germany at last declared war, the Kaiser having tried repeatedly to get the Czar to change his mind and reverse his instruction to mobilise. To all intents and purposes, Britain too had mobilised. Churchill ordered the Navy to move in secret from Spithead to Scapa Flow, its chosen battle station. Grey and Churchill rushed through a bill to take ownership of Persian oil [Anglo-Persian Oil], which was to have major long-term implications. The British Expeditionary Force was armed and prepared for one thing... war with Germany. I have to draw your attention to a blatant attempt to rewrite the story through Establishment eyes. In March 2014, the BBC transmitted a dramatic account of the lead up to war called *37 Days*. It chose to portray Edward Grey's deliberate deception of the German Ambassador as caused by a faulty telephone line, and completely blanked out the greatest lie of all, Grey's statement to Parliament on 3 August, by relegating it to a voice-over at the end. By such underhand methods, lies and myths persist.

Sir Edward Grey and that speech: Before the Secretary of State rose to make his statement to the House of Commons on 3 August 1914, the prime minister sent Richard Haldane to the War Office where he summoned a War Council and stunned the assembled generals by announcing that mobilisation would begin. Grey started by announcing that peace in Europe could not be preserved. He made frequent references to British interests, honour and obligations, but - stop there - what obligations? All the previous statements to Parliament made by Asquith's government had repeatedly denied that any secret agreements or obligations had been made by Britain. The concept of Belgian neutrality was his trump card and his greatest lie. He declared that it would be the direst crime that ever stained the pages of history if little Belgium was invaded by Germany. The direst crime in History? Had he forgotten the concentration camps in South Africa or the massacres in the Congo or Matabeleland? Sir Edward Grey predicted that after Belgium, Germany would take Holland and Denmark. Lies of course. But the most stunning moment came when he announced in that speech that 'We do not have to take the Irish Question into account'. From where did he get the notion that the 'general feeling throughout Ireland' was in favour of British policy? No-one had asked Ireland.

What happened next challenges opinion even today. John Redmond rose as the Irish Home Rule Party leader and backed Grey's assertion that Britain would be obliged to take action if Germany invaded Belgium. Asquith noted in his letters to Venetia Stanley that 'Redmond cut in effectively'. It reads like a stage direction. What was that all about? Asquith had a private meeting with Redmond that morning. The other major Irish politician at Westminster, John Dillon, 'just happened to be in Dublin', allegedly to attend the Coroner's enquiry into the shootings at Bachelor's Walk. Was he sent or invited?

Grey left Commons to send an ultimatum to Germany that was already too late. It was no more than a charade. There was a measure of outrage from some backbench Liberals and Socialists which was very vocal, but virtually ignored by the press. There was only one story, War with Germany. It was the Secret Elite's War. *Germania Delenda Est.* □

Speech of Russian President Vladimir Putin September 28, 2015

At the 70th session of the UN General Assembly, New York

Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary General,
Distinguished heads of state and government,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The 70th anniversary of the United Nations is a good occasion to both take stock of history and talk about our common future. In 1945, the countries that defeated Nazism joined their efforts to lay a solid foundation for the postwar world order. Let me remind you that key decisions on the principles defining interaction between states, as well as the decision to establish the UN, were made in our country, at the Yalta Conference of the leaders of the anti-Hitler coalition.

The Yalta system was truly born in travail. It was born at the cost of tens of millions of lives and two world wars that swept through the planet in the 20th century. Let's be fair: it helped humankind pass through turbulent, and at times dramatic, events of the last seven decades. It saved the world from large-scale upheavals.

The United Nations is unique in terms of legitimacy, representation and universality.

The United Nations is unique in terms of legitimacy, representation and universality. True, the UN has been criticized lately for being inefficient or for the fact that decision-making on fundamental issues stalls due to insurmountable differences, especially among Security Council members.

However, I'd like to point out that there have always been differences in the UN throughout the 70 years of its history, and that the veto right has been regularly used by the United States, the United Kingdom, France, China and the Soviet Union, and later Russia. It is only natural for such a diverse and representative organization. When the UN was first established, nobody expected that there would always be unanimity. The mission of the organization is to seek and reach compromises, and its strength comes from taking different views and opinions into consideration. The decisions debated within the UN are either taken in the form of resolutions or not. As diplomats say, they either pass or they don't. Any action taken by circumventing this procedure is illegitimate and constitutes a violation of the UN Charter and contemporary international law.

We all know that after the end of the Cold War the world was left with one center of dominance, and those who found themselves at the top of the pyramid were tempted to think that, since they are so powerful and exceptional, they know best what needs to be done and thus they don't need to reckon with the UN, which, instead of rubber-stamping the decisions they need, often stands in their way.

That's why they say that the UN has run its course and is now obsolete and outdated. Of course, the world changes, and the UN should also undergo natural transformation. Russia is ready to work together with its partners to develop the UN further on the basis of a broad consensus, but we consider any attempts to undermine the legitimacy of the United Nations as extremely dangerous. They may result in the collapse of the entire architecture of international relations, and then indeed there will be no rules left except for the rule of force. The world

will be dominated by selfishness rather than collective effort, by dictate rather than equality and liberty, and instead of truly independent states we will have protectorates controlled from outside.

What is the meaning of state sovereignty, the term which has been mentioned by our colleagues here? It basically means freedom, every person and every state being free to choose their future.

By the way, this brings us to the issue of the so-called legitimacy of state authorities. You shouldn't play with words and manipulate them. In international law, international affairs, every term has to be clearly defined, transparent and interpreted the same way by one and all.

We are all different, and we should respect that. Nations shouldn't be forced to all conform to the same development model that somebody has declared the only appropriate one.

We should all remember the lessons of the past. For example, we remember examples from our Soviet past, when the Soviet Union exported social experiments, pushing for changes in other countries for ideological reasons, and this often led to tragic consequences and caused degradation instead of progress.

It seems, however, that instead of learning from other people's mistakes, some prefer to repeat them and continue to export revolutions, only now these are "democratic" revolutions. Just look at the situation in the Middle East and Northern Africa already mentioned by the previous speaker. Of course, political and social problems have been piling up for a long time in this region, and people there wanted change. But what was the actual outcome? Instead of bringing about reforms, aggressive intervention rashly destroyed government institutions and the local way of life. Instead of democracy and progress, there is now violence, poverty, social disasters and total disregard for human rights, including even the right to life.

I'm urged to ask those who created this situation: do you at least realize now what you've done? But I'm afraid that this question will remain unanswered, because they have never abandoned their policy, which is based on arrogance, exceptionalism and impunity.

Power vacuum in some countries in the Middle East and Northern Africa obviously resulted in the emergence of areas of anarchy, which were quickly filled with extremists and terrorists. The so-called Islamic State has tens of thousands of militants fighting for it, including former Iraqi soldiers who were left on the street after the 2003 invasion. Many recruits come from Libya whose statehood was destroyed as a result of a gross violation of UN Security Council Resolution 1973. And now radical groups are joined by members of the so-called "moderate" Syrian opposition backed by the West. They get weapons and training, and then they defect and join the so-called Islamic State.

Power vacuum in some countries in the Middle East and Northern Africa obviously resulted in the emergence of areas of anarchy, which were quickly filled with extremists and terrorists.

In fact, the Islamic State itself did not come out of nowhere. It was initially developed as a weapon against undesirable secular regimes. Having established control over parts of Syria and Iraq, Islamic State now aggressively expands into other regions. It seeks dominance in the Muslim world and beyond. Their plans go further.

The situation is extremely dangerous. In these circumstances, it is hypocritical and irresponsible to make declarations about the threat of terrorism and at the same time turn a blind eye to the channels used to finance and support terrorists, including revenues from drug trafficking, the illegal oil trade and the arms trade.

It is equally irresponsible to manipulate extremist groups and use them to achieve your political goals, hoping that later you'll find a way to get rid of them or somehow eliminate them.

I'd like to tell those who engage in this: Gentlemen, the people you are dealing with are cruel but they are not dumb. They are as smart as you are. So, it's a big question: who's playing who here? The recent incident where the most "moderate" opposition group handed over their weapons to terrorists is a vivid example of that.

We consider that any attempts to flirt with terrorists, let alone arm them, are short-sighted and extremely dangerous.

We consider that any attempts to flirt with terrorists, let alone arm them, are short-sighted and extremely dangerous. This may make the global terrorist threat much worse, spreading it to new regions around the globe, especially since there are fighters from many different countries, including European ones, gaining combat experience with Islamic State. Unfortunately, Russia is no exception.

Now that those thugs have tasted blood, we can't allow them to return home and continue with their criminal activities. Nobody wants that, right?

Russia has consistently opposed terrorism in all its forms. Today, we provide military-technical assistance to Iraq, Syria and other regional countries fighting terrorist groups. We think it's a big mistake to refuse to cooperate with the Syrian authorities and government forces who valiantly fight terrorists on the ground.

We should finally admit that President Assad's government forces and the Kurdish militia are the only forces really fighting terrorists in Syria. Yes, we are aware of all the problems and conflicts in the region, but we definitely have to consider the actual situation on the ground.

What we propose is to join efforts to address the problems that all of us are facing, and create a genuinely broad international coalition against terrorism.

Dear colleagues, I must note that such an honest and frank approach on Russia's part has been recently used as a pretext for accusing it of its growing ambitions — as if those who say that have no ambitions at all. However, it is not about Russia's ambitions, dear colleagues, but about the recognition of the fact that we can no longer tolerate the current state of affairs in the world.

What we actually propose is to be guided by common values and common interests rather than by ambitions. Relying on international law, we must join efforts to address the problems that all of us are facing, and create a genuinely broad international coalition against terrorism. Similar to the anti-Hitler coalition, it could unite a broad range

of parties willing to stand firm against those who, just like the Nazis, sow evil and hatred of humankind. And of course, Muslim nations should play a key role in such a coalition, since Islamic State not only poses a direct threat to them, but also tarnishes one of the greatest world religions with its atrocities. The ideologues of these extremists make a mockery of Islam and subvert its true humanist values.

I would also like to address Muslim spiritual leaders: Your authority and your guidance are of great importance right now. It is essential to prevent people targeted for recruitment by extremists from making hasty decisions, and those who have already been deceived and, due to various circumstances, found themselves among terrorists, must be assisted in finding a way back to normal life, laying down arms and putting an end to fratricide.

In the days to come, Russia, as the current President of the UN Security Council, will convene a ministerial meeting to carry out a comprehensive analysis of the threats in the Middle East. First of all, we propose exploring opportunities for adopting a resolution that would serve to coordinate the efforts of all parties that oppose Islamic State and other terrorist groups. Once again, such coordination should be based upon the principles of the UN Charter.

We hope that the international community will be able to develop a comprehensive strategy of political stabilization, as well as social and economic recovery in the Middle East. Then, dear friends, there would be no need for setting up more refugee camps. Today, the flow of people forced to leave their native land has literally engulfed, first, the neighbouring countries, and then Europe. There are hundreds of thousands of them now, and before long, there might be millions. It is, essentially, a new, tragic Migration Period, and a harsh lesson for all of us, including Europe.

I believe it is of utmost importance to help restore government institutions in Libya, support the new government of Iraq, and provide comprehensive assistance to the legitimate government of Syria.

I would like to stress that refugees undoubtedly need our compassion and support. However, the only way to solve this problem for good is to restore statehood where it has been destroyed, to strengthen government institutions where they still exist, or are being re-established, to provide comprehensive military, economic and material assistance to countries in a difficult situation, and certainly to people who, despite all their ordeals, did not abandon their homes. Of course, any assistance to sovereign nations can, and should, be offered rather than imposed, in strict compliance with the UN Charter. In other words, our Organisation should support any measures that have been, or will be, taken in this regard in accordance with international law, and reject any actions that are in breach of the UN Charter. Above all, I believe it is of utmost importance to help restore government institutions in Libya, support the new government of Iraq, and provide comprehensive assistance to the legitimate government of Syria.

Dear colleagues, ensuring peace and global and regional stability remains a key task for the international community guided by the United Nations. We believe this means creating an equal and indivisible security environment that would not serve a privileged few, but everyone. Indeed, it is a challenging, complicated and time-consuming task, but there is simply no alternative.

Sadly, some of our counterparts are still dominated by their Cold War-era bloc mentality and the ambition to conquer

new geopolitical areas. First, they continued their policy of expanding NATO – one should wonder why, considering that the Warsaw Pact had ceased to exist and the Soviet Union had disintegrated.

The people of Donbas should have their rights and interests genuinely considered, and their choice respected; they should be engaged in devising the key elements of the country's political system, in line with the provisions of the Minsk agreements.

Nevertheless, NATO has kept on expanding, together with its military infrastructure. Next, the post-Soviet states were forced to face a false choice between joining the West and carrying on with the East. Sooner or later, this logic of confrontation was bound to spark off a major geopolitical crisis. And that is exactly what happened in Ukraine, where the people's widespread frustration with the government was used for instigating a coup d'état from abroad. This has triggered a civil war. We are convinced that the only way out of this dead end lies through comprehensive and diligent implementation of the Minsk agreements of February 12th, 2015. Ukraine's territorial integrity cannot be secured through the use of threats or military force, but it must be secured. The people of Donbas should have their rights and interests genuinely considered, and their choice respected; they should be engaged in devising the key elements of the country's political system, in line with the provisions of the Minsk agreements. Such steps would guarantee that Ukraine will develop as a civilized state, and a vital link in creating a common space of security and economic cooperation, both in Europe and in Eurasia.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have deliberately mentioned a common space for economic cooperation. Until quite recently, it seemed that we would learn to do without dividing lines in the area of the economy with its objective market laws, and act based on transparent and jointly formulated rules, including the WTO principles, which embrace free trade and investment and fair competition. However, unilaterally imposed sanctions circumventing the UN Charter have all but become commonplace today. They not only serve political objectives, but are also used for eliminating market competition.

I would like to note one more sign of rising economic selfishness. A number of nations have chosen to create exclusive economic associations, with their establishment being negotiated behind closed doors, secretly from those very nations' own public and business communities, as well as from the rest of the world. Other states, whose interests may be affected, have not been informed of anything, either. It seems that someone would like to impose upon us some new game rules, deliberately tailored to accommodate the interests of a privileged few, with the WTO having no say in it. This is fraught with utterly unbalancing global trade and splitting up the global economic space.

These issues affect the interests of all nations and influence the future of the entire global economy. That is why we propose discussing those issues within the framework of the United Nations, the WTO and the G20. Contrary to the policy of exclusion, Russia advocates harmonizing regional economic projects. I am referring to the so-called "integration of integrations" based on the universal and transparent rules of international trade. As an example, I would like to cite our plans to interconnect the Eurasian Economic Union with China's initiative for creating a Silk Road economic belt. We continue

to see great promise in harmonizing the integration vehicles between the Eurasian Economic Union and the European Union.

Ladies and gentlemen, one more issue that shall affect the future of the entire humankind is climate change. It is in our interest to ensure that the coming UN Climate Change Conference that will take place in Paris in December this year should deliver some feasible results. As part of our national contribution, we plan to limit greenhouse gas emissions to 70–75 percent of the 1990 levels by the year 2030.

However, I suggest that we take a broader look at the issue. Admittedly, we may be able to defuse it for a while by introducing emission quotas and using other tactical measures, but we certainly will not solve it for good that way. What we need is an essentially different approach, one that would involve introducing new, groundbreaking, nature-like technologies that would not damage the environment, but rather work in harmony with it, enabling us to restore the balance between the biosphere and technology upset by human activities.

We propose convening a special forum under the auspices of the UN to comprehensively address issues related to the depletion of natural resources, habitat destruction, and climate change.

It is indeed a challenge of global proportions. And I am confident that humanity does have the necessary intellectual capacity to respond to it. We need to join our efforts, primarily engaging countries that possess strong research and development capabilities, and have made significant advances in fundamental research. We propose convening a special forum under the auspices of the UN to comprehensively address issues related to the depletion of natural resources, habitat destruction, and climate change. Russia is willing to co-sponsor such a forum.

Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues. On January 10th, 1946, the UN General Assembly convened for its first meeting in London. Chairman of the Preparatory Commission Dr. Zuleta Angel, a Colombian diplomat, opened the session by offering what I see as a very concise definition of the principles that the United Nations should be based upon, which are good will, disdain for scheming and trickery, and a spirit of cooperation. Today, his words sound like guidance for all of us.

Russia is confident of the United Nations' enormous potential, which should help us avoid a new confrontation and embrace a strategy of cooperation. Hand in hand with other nations, we will consistently work to strengthen the UN's central, coordinating role. I am convinced that by working together, we will make the world stable and safe, and provide an enabling environment for the development of all nations and peoples.

Thank you. □

The BBC Downplayed the Holocaust Beyond the End of the War

1943: BBC chief orders workers to soft-pedal Nazi persecution of Jews

The BBC downplayed the Holocaust beyond the end: Even with a reporter in Bergen-Belsen, it wouldn't air his reports until they were 'confirmed' by the printed press. By David B. Green <<http://www.haaretz.com/misc/writers/david-b-green-1.357>> | Nov. 18, 2015

On November 18, 1943, the head of the BBC warned employees not to broadcast anything that might be designed "to correct the undoubted anti-Semitic feeling which is held very largely throughout the country." He was concerned, explained Robert Foot, the director-general of the British Broadcasting Corporation, that such efforts might have the opposite effect of the one intended. Though certainly the BBC, a most trusted source of information, had a responsibility to include "the facts as they are reported from time to time of Jewish persecutions, as well as any notable achievements by Jews," Foot reasoned that any undue focus on the suffering of Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe might actually "increase rather than decrease the anti-Jewish feeling in this country."

Foot's instructions may sound convoluted, or worse, today. But at the time, they reflected a range of institutional attitudes in the United Kingdom toward Jews that ranged from the ambivalent to the downright anti-Semitic, as well as an unusually patronizing opinion of the general public. Having openly dedicated itself to playing an active role in the war effort, the BBC regularly consulted with government agencies about how to keep public morale high. Together with the Foreign Office, the BBC fretted at great length about the degree of sympathy British subjects would have for the subjects of reports about the persecution and murder of Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe. One concern was not to repeat the experience of the Great War, when British media had been ready to report stories about alleged German atrocities - that later turned out to be untrue. Reporting unchecked stories that ultimately proved inaccurate would hurt the long-term credibility of this most important of media, went the logic. According to a documentary program broadcast on BBC Radio 4 in 2011, which examined the relationship between the government and the BBC during the war years, there were officials in both institutions who either feared that the public would not believe the accusations or, even worse, that it would be unmoved by them, since the victims were Jews.

Yet, from some of the internal documents from the period that have been examined by historians, it becomes evident that at times it was the officials themselves who lacked interest in the German persecution of the Jews, even when the public was receptive to the story. On December 17, 1942, Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, speaking in the House of Commons, declared that Germany was "now carrying into effect Hitler's oft-repeated intention to exterminate the Jewish people in Europe." In this case, his speech was carried on the BBC, and later, Eden acknowledged that the main response he received from members of the public to his comments had been frustration that the government was not doing enough to help the victims of the Nazis. But aside from a period of several months in 1942 when the fate of the Jews was allotted more attention in the British press, coverage for the most part remained laconic. For one thing, Robert Foot noted at another time, every time

the BBC broadcast something seen as pro-Jewish, "the anti-Semites would demand the right to reply, which would be difficult to refuse." As late as August 1944, when there was ample evidence available of the Germans' intentions and acts, Roger Allen, an official at the Foreign Office, had a hard time accepting reports that they were using gas chambers to murder Jews, because, after all, such reports "have usually emanated from Jewish sources." In any case, he went on, "I have never really understood the advantage of the gas chamber over the simpler machine-gun, or the equally simple starvation method." In a 2011 article previewing the Radio 4 documentary, The Independent noted that even in April 1945, when BBC correspondent Richard Dimbleby famously reported, with both images and audio, from inside a liberated Bergen-Belsen, his editors back in London were unwilling to air his reports until they had been confirmed by stories in newspapers. And when they were finally used, "the broadcasts mention only in passing the Jewish identity of the victims."

Meanwhile, in 1938 and 1939, the USA refused entry to Jewish refugees:

U.S. Opinion of Jewish Refugees in 1939 Matches Racial Panic of GOP Governors Over Syrians

By Adam Johnson

November 17, 2015

A poll was published in the pages of Fortune magazine in July 1938. Fewer than 5 percent of Americans surveyed at the time believed that the United States should raise its immigration quotas or encourage political refugees fleeing fascist states in Europe - the vast majority of whom were Jewish - to voyage across the Atlantic. Two-thirds of the respondents agreed with the proposition that "we should try to keep them out."

To be sure, the United States was emerging from the Great Depression, hardly a climate in which ordinary folks would welcome immigrants and economic competition. The events of Kristallnacht - a wave of anti-Jewish pogroms in areas controlled by the Nazis - had yet to take place. And the poll's use of the term "political refugees" could have conjured in the minds of the American public images of communists, anarchists and other perceived ideological threats.

But in a poll taken in January 1939 - well after the events of Kristallnacht - two-thirds of Americans said they would not take in 10,000 German Jewish refugee children. The question was:

Should the US government permit 10,000 mostly Jewish refugee children to come in from Germany?

Most Western countries regarded the plight of Jewish refugees with skepticism or unveiled bigotry (and sympathy followed only wider knowledge of the monstrous slaughters of the Holocaust):

No matter the alarming rhetoric of Hitler's fascist state - and the growing acts of violence against Jews and others - popular

sentiment in Western Europe and the United States was largely indifferent to the plight of German Jews.

“Of all the groups in the 20th century,” write the authors of the 1999 book, “Refugees in the Age of Genocide,” “refugees from Nazism are now widely and popularly perceived as ‘genuine’, but at the time German, Austrian and Czechoslovakian Jews were treated with ambivalence and outright hostility as well as sympathy.”

It’s worth remembering this mood when thinking about the current moment, in which the United States is once more in the throes of a debate over letting in refugees. Ever since the 13th November terror attacks in Paris, the Republicans, led by their presidential candidates, have talked over the threat of jihadist infiltration from Syria - even though it now appears that every single identified assailant in the Paris siege was a European national.

The Republicans have signaled their intent to stop Syrian refugee arrivals, or at least accept only non-Muslim Syrians.

GOP presidential candidate Chris Christie of New Jersey was one of the many governors who on Monday said they would oppose settling Syrian refugees in their states; Christie insisted that he would not permit even “3-year-old orphans” entry.

Today’s 3-year-old Syrian orphan, it seems, is 1939’s German Jewish child.

Of course, there are huge historical and contextual differences between then and now. But, as Post columnist Dana Milbank notes, it’s hard to ignore the echoes of the past when faced with the “xenophobic bidding war” of the present:

“This growing cry to turn away people fleeing for their lives brings to mind the SS St. Louis, the ship of Jewish refugees turned away from Florida in 1939,” Milbank writes. “It’s perhaps the ugliest moment in a primary fight that has been sullied by bigotry from the start. It’s no exaggeration to call this un-American.”

- See more at: <http://portside.org/print/2015-11-20/what-americans-thought-jewish-refugees-eve-world-war-ii#sthash.KiDmGGXD.dpuf> □

Israel to Annex Golan Heights After ‘Billion Barrel’ Oil Find ?

By Jonathan Cook

After a massive oil find in Syria’s Golan Heights, occupied by Israel since 1967, Israel is asking President Obama to recognise its annexation of the territory, writes Jonathan Cook. To consolidate its hold, plans are afoot to quadruple Israeli settler numbers to 100,000.

Middle East Eye 15th November 2015 [extracts]

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu took advantage of a private meeting last week with Barack Obama - their first in 13 months - to raise the possibility of dismembering Syria.

According to Israeli officials, Netanyahu indicated that Washington should give its belated blessing to Israel’s illegal annexation of the Golan Heights, captured from Syria during the 1967 war.

Israel [is] anxious to gain US approval of its effective annexation of the Golan in 1981, when it passed the Golan Heights Law extending Israeli law and administration throughout the territory, in violation of international law.

Last month Afek, an Israeli subsidiary of Genie Energy, a US oil company, announced that it had found considerable reserves of oil under the Golan. Genie’s chief geologist in Israel, Yuval Bartov, said the company believed the reservoir had the “potential [emphasis added. Ed.] of billions of barrels”. International law experts say any proceeds from such a find in the Golan should revert to Syria, but Israel has so far indicated it will ignore its legal obligations.

Netanyahu appears to have long harboured an interest in tapping the Golan’s potential for oil. In 1996, in his first term as prime minister, he granted approval for drilling in the Golan by

the Israeli National Oil Company. International pressure meant the permit had to be withdrawn soon afterwards.

Today, 22,000 Syrian Druze live in five villages, alongside a similar number of Jews in 30 illegal settlements.

A 2010 investigation by *Haaretz* revealed that Israel had carried out systematic expulsions of some 130,000 Syrians in 1967 and destroyed 200 villages. The Druze alone were allowed to stay so as not to upset Israel’s own Druze citizens.

Nizar Ayoub, director of Marsad, a Druze human rights centre based in the Golan, told Middle East Eye that Israel had long taken resources from the Golan: “Israel has always treated the Golan as a territory to be exploited and plundered, from its water to farming and tourism. Israel has simply ignored its obligations under international law.”

Ayoub said Israel had taken advantage of the conflict in Syria to advance oil exploration in the Golan, but such a move was rejected by the local Druze population: “Even if Netanyahu could persuade the Americans to agree [about recognition], it is not their decision to make. The only people who can decide to change the sovereignty of the Golan are the Syrian people.

On its website, Genie’s subsidiary Afek claims that its drilling in the occupied Golan Heights will extract “Israeli oil”. The two companies include figures who have close personal ties to Netanyahu and high-level influence in Washington.

Genie’s founder, Howard Jonas, an American Jewish millionaire, made political contributions to Netanyahu’s recent campaign for the Likud

party's primaries. Its 'strategic advisory board' includes Dick Cheney, the US vice-president under George Bush and widely regarded as the architect of the American invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Media tycoon Rupert Murdoch is also an adviser. In September, Genie added Larry Summers, a senior official under Democratic Presidents Bill Clinton and Obama, and James Woolsey, a former CIA director who became a neo-conservative cheerleader for the invasion of Iraq.

The chairman of Afek, Genie's Israeli subsidiary, is Effi Eitam, a far-right former general and cabinet minister who lives in an illegal settlement in the Golan. His far-right views include demands to expel both Palestinians from the occupied territories and the large minority of Palestinian citizens from Israel.

Hala Khoury Bisharat, an international law professor at Carmel Academic College, near Haifa, said it would be hard to persuade the US to recognise Israel's illegal annexation of the Golan. "International law is clear that it is never admissible to acquire territory through war", she told MEE. "It would be very problematic for the US to do this."

She added that Israel, as an occupier, was obliged by the 1907 Hague regulations to "safeguard the capital" of the occupied party's natural resources and was not entitled to exploit any oil in the Golan for its own benefit.

The only opposition in Israel so far has come from environmental groups. They have expressed concern that extraction of the oil, especially if fracking is used, could pollute aquifers or trigger earthquakes in a seismically unstable region.



Map of the Golan Heights

A visit to Crimea, summer 2014

[Two French communists visited Crimea in summer 2014 after the reunification with Russia (March 2014). They report on what they saw, and the conversations they had, in Russian, with local people.

(Extract from “20 years after the USSR”, by Danielle Bleitrach and Marianne Dunlop, translated from the French by Cathy Winch.)]

Yalta and Yefim, the Esperanto speaker

Yalta stretches out in the Russian peace with oriental languor.

It is not yet in the throes of the tourist season, which is only just beginning, but everyone expects a poor season and is more or less resigned to it. Steps with rusty chains and chipped boards lead down to the pebble beach. The Mediterranean men in blue wander about aimlessly between odd jobs, when, once upon a time, they would have been passing the time between two fishing trips.

This holiday resort brings to mind the heroines of Pushkin and also Soviet families with their paid holidays. The vestiges of time accumulate, a bulk of odd things piling up making the city look like a flea market, a lot of dross and a few gems. The wreckage of globalization, McDonalds signs, pizza and sushi ads, don't quite manage to spoil the romantic dachas and the beautiful eighteenth century facades. Giant Walt Disney stuffed toys, props of itinerant photographers, funfair rides being got ready, cranes, strange Viking phantasmagoria on the beach, but also eternal Russia, popes in a garden where the orange trees bloom, and Lenin watching over all.

Everything has accumulated at random. “Make your nest here, it won't bother me, but keep your hands off my stuff” is the impression given.

Everyone here, even those who in their heart of hearts did not necessarily want the transfer to Russia, says about the transfer:

“It was incredibly peaceful! Local officials kept control of events throughout with the help of the kind, smiling little green men.”

Families came in groups to be photographed with the little green men.

It was done in one smart move: on February 23, the Supreme Kiev Rada, which didn't even have the necessary quorum, dismissed President Viktor Yanukovich, reformed the Constitution and gave the mandate of chief of state to Alexander Turchinov, the Parliament's president. Having taken refuge in Russia, Viktor Yanukovich, who still considers himself president, called these events a “coup d'état”. On 25 February people of the Crimean peninsula started a demonstration outside the headquarters of the local Supreme Council (Parliament) to protest against the new authorities in Kiev. On the Thursday the Supreme Council decided to hold a referendum on the enlargement of the powers of Crimea and appointed a new government headed by Sergei Aksenov.

In the afternoon, according to Yefim Zaidman, another of our interlocutors, Yalta began to be gripped by fear, when they saw provocateurs arriving from the Western regions. These were fascists intent on destroying the great Lenin monument which still has pride of place facing the sea and next to the Post Office. Spontaneously, self-defense militias formed themselves to defend the statue, and Yefim himself, a mathematician who suffered from repression in Soviet times for his Zionist

sympathies, and chairman of the local Esperanto committee, took part in night patrols ...

- Why did it have such an effect on you, that someone wanted to destroy a Lenin monument?

- Why should outsiders come here to destroy a statue that belongs to us, without asking our opinion? He's always been here!

Mischievous, our interlocutor added as an explanation: “*He made the revolution, he didn't have the time to do a lot of stupid things like Stalin, so why destroy him, without our permission?*”

This Jew, eternal dissident and Russian patriot, claims to be one of the few people whose family has always been in Yalta. He takes his turn guarding the statue of Lenin. The young of the Donbass just cannot recognize a government that mocks the sacrifices of their grandparents and does not celebrate the Victory of May 9.

Yefim Zaidman, the dissident Jew and Russian patriot, vice president of the Ukrainian Esperanto group, summed up for us the advantages in terms of flexibility for the citizen of the dual nationality status within the Soviet Union:

“I was a Zionist, today I am still for the defence of Israel, but I know that Zionism is a chauvinism, whereas I am a Russian patriot from Yalta.”

True patriotism is the one that allows you to keep the nationality inherited from the family; to be Jewish, for him, means having that type of nationality, but set within a wider citizenship that corresponds to the history of a country with its many peoples. Hence the sympathy he retains for Israel—sympathy which got him into trouble—but also his refusal to be only a Jew, refusal which goes with his passion for Esperanto, which by the way was invented by a Jew. What is certain is that Ukrainian chauvinism exasperates him and he drags us before the statue of a poetess who has no merit, according to him, other than being the author of a few particularly fanatical verses in Ukrainian. And he ridicules this provincialism, this parish muse, and her outbursts, her chauvinism and offended tones. “*They really are scraping the barrel.*” He says.

This advocate of a universal language spends his days and nights on the computer trying to explain to the Esperanto speaking world that we must save the children of the Donbass. At the time of the Six Day War, his career as a computer expert was finished, because he was a suspected Zionist. He still harbours resentment about this, but what would a Jew be without resentment, he could no longer be like the Ashkenazi who wakes up one morning in a good mood and says, “*Not to worry, it will pass*” and goes back to sleep.

If by any chance Yefim Zaidman had woken up in a good mood that morning, he had got over it. But he is incredibly tender and idealistic despite his perpetual grumbling. There are so many more important things, like Esperanto, this universal language, the merits of which Marianne is lyrical about, this ability to switch from one linguistic universe to another, to the point, she tells me, that there are Africans wishing to be published in a European language who choose Esperanto, considering themselves less betrayed that way than in translation via English or French. Is it a coincidence that it is a Jew who has created and developed this way of passing from one world to another? Ask yourself, who has best spoken about Ukraine, about Odessa—writers, filmmakers and even

this photographer whose photos of the Donbass we publish in this book—if not the Jews ... They have been able to see the proletariat as it is, and to avoid the provincial ridicules of a mediocre elite ... Babel, Dziga Vertov, Donskoy, and many others ... These are men, ferrying humanity, in its grandeur and derision, from life to paper or film.

For Yefim the main thing is the children of the Donbass, victims of bombardment, he and I are obsessed with their fear, there are many cases of children who are no longer able to speak because they are so frightened.

Yefim Zaïdam really has an impossible character, you can't have the beginning of a dialogue with him, he only does monologue. This is a man who cultivates not so much prejudice but rather paradox, to the point that I sometimes have trouble following his reasoning, despite Marianne's excellent and sensitive translation. Thus he says, in a few sentences uttered in a vehement and unhappy tone: *"Yes, Ukraine is a democratic country, too democratic!"* And he adds with a tension in his voice that betrays anger:

"Too democratic since it gave the United States the opportunity to infiltrate the country. Russians, Belarusians and Ukrainians form a single people but US agents installed in Kiev have imposed, and for a long time now, elements that are destroying this country, I mean this mad Ukrainian nationalism, founded on the glorification of Nazism."

This nightmare, his nightmare, became incarnate in a monstrous being, the oligarch Kolomoïski. The Jew who not only thinks he is Hitler but acts accordingly, and Yefim explained to me that most of Yalta's Jews dream of shooting him dead. Because of the excellence of Marianne's Esperanto, and our common origins, he confided to us: *"An oligarch is not a Jew, because he has neither country nor people, only money, and the will to kill to accumulate more money."*

"Write it all down!, He tells me, *what is happening here is incredible, unimaginable. Write it down!,* He repeats, *this could take us days and days. Your notebook is too small for all I have to reveal to you."* He thinks I am a journalist and Marianne my appointed interpreter and he wants me to explain to the whole of Europe what is happening.

His words sound strangely like an echo of those of the leader of the Communist Party of Ukraine whom we met on the premises of the Party in Simferopol. This man admitted a shared responsibility for recent events:

"We've been conned, we believed in perestroika and when we opened our eyes to what was happening, it was too late!"

He told us about the meeting of the delegation of the Communist Party of Ukraine with Chinese Communist Party leaders; they asked the Chinese: *"How did you manage to stay at the head of the Chinese state?"* "The Chinese leader told them that they had watched the mistakes made by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and the first lesson they had drawn was never to tell anyone, not even the Communist Party of Ukraine, their method of governance as communists, so that the enemy would not find out. *"To no one not even to you."* Listening to him, I smile to myself: *"Especially not to you!"*

It is strange this need to explain, to convince us, as if everything depended on these two foreign ladies of a certain age, who are clearly neither wealthy, nor on terms of familiarity with influential people.

"We couldn't have done anything else, there would have been a bloodbath if we had waited!"

The Crimea has cast off and saved its people from a terrible fate.

This break with Ukraine and the decision to take matters into their own hand, were preceded by a panic fed on rumours, people were certain that a carnage was being prepared. I had trouble at that time fathoming what fuelled this great fear. There was talk then of Maidan people coming to massacre the Russians. Even today, when people have calmed down, they argue in political terms about what was coming and how bloodshed was avoided simply by bringing forward the date of the referendum. But in that time of great fear, roughly in February, people began to guard Lenin statues, spontaneous self-defense militias were formed, and, in the absence of enemy attacks to repel, they set upon cleaning the graffiti that disfigured the monuments.

This unanimity in describing the fear of the Maidan that swept the Russian-speaking areas is astonishing. As is the satisfaction in the Crimea regarding the decision calmly taken to go for autonomy and then transfer to Russia. Most people insist:

"There was no disruption, people carried on with their occupations and gradually another political order settled in, under the protection of the nice green men."

"Journalists flocked in, seeking the sensational, but as soon the nice smiling green men were in the streets, everything was quiet and we had no worries!" is what everybody says.

They laugh at Ukrainian television, which says that people are fleeing the Crimea, that there is trouble, and they say that they get phone calls from Ukraine and Russia enquiring about their welfare. They laugh, explaining that everything is fine.

The term "Nice and smiling" also means courteous. It refers to the green uniformed armed men who took up positions just before the referendum. This has increased the rating of Putin, with the idea: *"He will protect us from disorder."* The self-defence militias guarding public buildings date from that time. Because you never know. [Note: Russia had a garrison in Sebastopol, which came out discreetly in their green uniform on the occasion of the referendum. They were nicknamed 'the little green men' and 'the courteous people'. The words 'nice and smiling' are not explicit in the Russian phrase, but the idea is contained in the diminutive version of the word for 'men'.]

So, is there unanimity? There are of course people who are not satisfied, even if they don't necessarily make themselves heard. The most critical in fact seem to be some young communists who claim:

"Putin will protect us as long as we have something he can take!"

And they add:

"Russian oligarchs are no better than Ukrainian oligarchs."

Nevertheless, they took an active part in the referendum, joining in forms part of their conception of the party, working with the people, for the people, and there was momentum for unification with Russia, so they participated in the patriotic front that formed at the time, but since then they are sceptical ...

They explain that pensions have certainly doubled but so have prices, and wages are stagnating, but there is peace and security compared to what is happening in Ukraine. And that is not negligible.

At that time, we know vaguely that a massacre took place in Odessa, but it has not penetrated our consciousness, and the genocide in the Donbass is just beginning. This fear remains for us something irrational. The most incomprehensible is this collective mania to go and guard the statues of the Soviet era. What exactly is at stake here? The impression you are under threat of invasion and the hazy idea that to resist you have to reconnect with what has protected you in the past? Has Lenin become an icon ? □