

Irish Foreign Affairs

Volume 9, Number 4

December 2016

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

Contents

Editorial: Democracy and Fascism p. 2

Democracy and Bombing *Pat Walsh* p. 7

Thoughts on Lord Esher (Part Five) *Pat Walsh* p. 12

International Brigades Not There For Regime Change! *Manus O’Riordan* p. 14

Football and War in Yugoslavia *John Martin* p. 15

Ireland in the Crimean Front 1853-55 *Pat Muldowney* p. 18

Sean O’Casey and the 1956 Hungarian Uprising *Manus O’Riordan* p. 21

Documents

Statement by President Michael D. Higgins on the death of Fidel Castro
25 November 2016 p. 26

Syrian delegation to Ireland and the role of EU sanctions
in killing women & children p. 27

Domenico Losurdo

The Germans: A *Sonderweg* of an Irredeemable Nation? Part 4 p. 28

In Homage to that Fool Fidel — Poem by Silvio Rodríguez p. 32

A Quarterly Review published by the *Irish Political Review Group*, Dublin

Editorial

Fascism and Democracy

Democracy was made the issue in the US Presidential Election by President Obama—*“Democracy is on the ballot sheet”*—in his barnstorming speech in support of Clinton on November 3rd.

Democracy lost. If the forces of democracy do not somehow manage to set aside the result of the voting, the Free World will be ruled by Fascism next year.

And, when Obama failed to save democracy in the form of Clinton, his concern was that there should be a peaceful transition, within established constitutional forms, from Democracy to Fascism!

Ihlan Omar, a member of the Minnesota House of Representatives, and the first Somali woman to become a US legislator, said that she felt *“betrayed by our America”*. Interviewed on the British Channel 4, she said she had expected people to vote for love, unity in diversity, and all the things that made America great, but they voted instead for hatred, division and despair: *“And the fact that the American people are now going to have for a Head of State someone who is Fascist is a little disheartening”* (Nov. 18).

Asked what she meant by Fascist she replied:

“Someone who believes that America is made only for particular people, who doesn’t understand that it is the diversity in this country that made it great, that this is a country that was built by immigrants, that your new neighbours who are immigrants are not that much different from your grandfather and great-grandfather who were immigrants themselves.”

And it was because the United States was built in this way that it was *“one of the greatest countries in the world”*.

An awkward question arises here. How could it be that those who made America great were able to throw open its borders to unlimited quantities of immigrants? Where did all the empty spaces come from?

And the people who made America—they were not just anybody; they were a very special people. They were people dedicated to carrying out the will of the Biblical God in the world. They were White Anglo-Saxon Protestants. They were Jihadis of the Lord, in flight from the temporising Protestantism of the State-engineered Reformation in England. And when they crossed the ocean they did to the peoples they found on the other side what Joshua did to the peoples of Palestine when he crossed the Jordan.

President Obama has told the world plainly that the United States is not just a miscellaneous collection of migrants who happened to wander in. It is a special place which holds a unique position in the world, both factually and morally. It is *“the only indispensable nation”*—an assertion which can only mean that all other nations are dispensable and may be discarded if they do not do what the US requires of them.

It is the *“exceptional”* nation, meaning that it is not bound by the system of laws, or pseudo-laws, which it drew up in consultation with Communist Russia in 1945.

In 1945 there were two exceptional states in the United Nations: the USA and the USSR. Nominally there were also three others: the British Empire, the French Empire and Chiang Kai-shek’s Kuomintang regime in China, but these did not have the substance to maintain the Exceptionalism as thoroughly as the USA and the USSR did, and they were in visible decline.

The Cold War was a conflict over the issue of which of the two powerful states, whose absolute sovereignty was acknowledged by the United Nations constitutionally, would subvert the material power of the other and become dominant over it physically, and therefore morally.

Both World Wars of the 20th century were brought about by the British Empire with the object of increasing its power in the world. The net outcome of those two wars—or one long war with a pause in the middle—was not only a drastic loss of power by Britain, but a reduction of the number of Powers in the world from six in 1914 to two in 1945. And the world could not settle down in a comparatively orderly system of only two Super-Powers. Two Super-Powers was one too many. A multi-polar world was a possibility but not a bi-polar world. Geopolitical bipolarity lends itself too easily to the ingrained cosmic bipolarity of Good and Evil in the English Puritan culture of the United States.

The distinction between Good and Evil in this conflict was presented in transcendental terms but it functioned in existential terms. It was in its conduct a conflict between Us and Them. We were the Free World and they were a world in which the populace was subjugated by a criminal conspiracy of despots who had tapped into a source of power beyond the human. But we, of the Free World, were free to take under our wing forces of all kinds and make them components of our cosmic freedom.

We were the Free World because we outlasted our colleague of the war against Hitler, who bore most of the cost of defeating him, and our deadly rival from the moment Hitler was defeated. Freedom is an attribute of the victor. The United States justified its claim to represent the only true Freedom in the world by bringing about the collapse of its rival, who it dared not make war on directly, but wore out by means of proxy wars and an associated arms race. In 1990 America stood alone as master of the world.

“We have within our grasp an extraordinary possibility that few generations have enjoyed, to build a new international system in accordance with our own values and ideals, as old patterns and certainties crumble around us.” This claim, issued as the Bush administration was defining the nation’s strategy for the post-Cold War era, captured the spirit of American statecraft as the era progressed. Contradictions and ambiguities aside, the American resurgence had given the country unique leverage in the global arena, at a time when that arena itself seemed uniquely malleable. (Hal Brand, *Making The Unipolar Moment*. Cornell University Press, 2016, p348).

This was 1991. It might be described as Washington’s *Lloyd George moment*. Lloyd George, an energetic upstart from

the lower-middle classes, having become head of the British Empire by means of talented opportunism, in the midst of the World War launched by Britain, saw the world in 1917 as being in a condition of flux:

“The whole state of society is more or less molten and you can stamp upon that molten mass almost anything as long as you do it with firmness and determination” (quoted from Jon-Werner Müller, *Contesting Democracy*, Yale 2011).

But, when the War ended in 1918, the apparent supremacy of the British Imperial will was little more than a delusion. The great conquests made by Britain in the course of the War proved to be too much for its constitution to digest. Its power of government did not increase with its territories. It sought to govern its new territories in the Middle East by a combination of nationalist confidence trickery and terror, instead of by regular Imperial government based on regularly-applied military power. Its oldest conquest asserted its independence by voting within two months of the end of the World War, and displayed a will to fight in support of its vote. And the Jewel In The Crown, India, shrugged off the moral influence of the administrative massacres of 1859 (by which the so-called ‘Indian Mutiny’ was put down) and subjection had to be reinforced by another administrative massacre at Amritsar.

British supremacy in 1919 was conditional on United States toleration of it. It was financially in hock to the USA. Washington had financed its war effort from 1915 onwards, and it was American fighting ability that won the War for it in 1918. And it was Irish Famine influence in American politics that obliged Whitehall to box clever in Ireland in 1919-22, instead of putting the boot in.

Britain’s refusal to negotiate a settlement of the war it had launched in Germany in 1915 or 1916, when it became clear that, despite the great supremacy in men and armaments of the Entente which it had arranged, it would be unable to win outright, accelerated the emergence of the USA as a World Power. America came into the War to safeguard its loans to Britain, and because its interest could not permit there to be a clear winner in the Great War brought about by Britain, and it became a World Power by doing so.

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

Editor: Philip O’Connor
ISSN 2009-132X

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

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

Britain, therefore, was not alone in the world in 1919, with freedom to make the world do its bidding—and, insofar as that had been its substantial war-aim, it had not won the War. It subordinated France to its foreign policy and prohibited it from establishing its secure border with Germany. But it only negated Washington’s influence on the European settlement of 1919 because Washington decided that the time was not yet ripe to take Europe in hand.

Washington became “*isolationist*” for the time being—meaning that it allowed Britain to determine the post-War arrangement of Europe. But Washington knew, and Whitehall knew, where dominance lay. Although Washington decided not to act in Europe, that was a choice by the Power which had effective freedom of action. And, whenever Washington asserted its will thereafter, Whitehall conceded. The crucial concession was made at the Naval Conference of 1922, at which Britain gave up its policy of having a Navy greater than any two other Navies combined. And it agreed under pressure not to renew its alliance with Japan, by which it had secured its Asian Empire.

In the 1920s and 1930s Britain was the World Super-Power—under Washington supervision. And it did not act as it would have acted if it had won its Great War with its own resources and through its own efforts.

In 1991 Washington actually was in the position in the world that Lloyd George thought Britain would be in when Germany surrendered. It had no equal in the world. Its great rival of almost half a century had collapsed and was in disarray. Europe, including Britain, was largely its post-1945 creation. China had restored itself as a state but was not a player in world affairs. In the realm of World Powers, the USA stood alone. It was free on a scale that no other state had ever been.

Where did it all go wrong?

The problem seems to have to do with “*freedom*”, which in general terms does not express a definite idea. In practical terms it usually means an absence of constraint. In that sense constraint is the medium in which it operates, and which gives it definite meaning. The Irish were not free to govern themselves in 1918. They wanted to govern themselves. They voted for a party to govern them in place of the British Government. The British Government and the society on which it was based wanted to continue governing and set about destroying the Government which the Irish had elected for themselves. But the British were not free to exert the full force of their power against the Irish in 1919-21, as they had been on previous occasions, because of Irish influence in the USA. Neither side was free to do as it pleased. Freedom in that sense means the ability to do something that somebody else wants to prevent you from doing. And it is not possible to levitate very far from that sense without serious loss of meaning.

What did the United States want to do with the world in 1991 that some other Power was preventing it from doing?

The difficulty with the unprecedented freedom achieved by the USA in 1991 was that its will to act was disoriented and stupefied by the absence of a medium of constraint that would give it specific purpose. It was Free; but it was merely Free. It was pure and simply free. It had freedom without constraint, and therefore without realisable purpose.

It was not enough for it to be itself, ample though it was in itself. Its “*manifest destiny*”, as defined for it in the *American Magazine* by John L. Sullivan in 1842, was the extension of the state to the Pacific. By 1850 the Pacific was the western border of the state. By 1900 the entire territory, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, had been won by internal conquest, genocide,

and colonisation. But, instead of settling down as half of a Continent which exerted authority over the other half through the Monroe Doctrine, the Continental State conceived of itself, through the mind of Admiral Mahon, as an island. It became an island off the global block of territory stretching from Spain to the Pacific coast of Russia. And it began to feel the need to dominate the Global mainland that England had felt with regard to the West European fringe of it. And it set about the project by continuing its expansion westward, across the Pacific, with a view to taking the East from behind.

American power achieved world dominance with the collapse of the Soviet system in 1990. The purpose of American policy since 1945 was to hold in check the power which the Soviet Union had gained by defeating Nazi Germany, with a view to destroying it. What was to be its purpose in the world when it found itself alone, without a rival, after the Soviet collapse?

In global terms the USA became an absolute dictator, acting in a medium of complete freedom.

Dictatorship as a necessary political form in human affairs—since traditional authority was de-legitimised by the French Revolution and that de-legitimation was universalised by the League of Nations—has never been given the attention by historians that it deserves. The universalist ideology of democracy rules it out of order as a subject of thought. The problem of orientation encountered by dictators has therefore been given no thought at all. And that a powerful democracy should become a collective dictator of the world has been made ideologically inconceivable.

Dictatorship has been a regularly recurring feature of political history during the era of the League of Nations and the United Nations. Apologists for what we call 'democracy' explain this away by reference to the otherwise obsolete concept of 'evil', which now takes the form of power-hungry individuals who somehow prevent the normal democratic arrangement of public life from happening.

But, while our concept of democracy is taken to be what happens normally if the course of nature is not obstructed by evil men, the fact that there are so few democratic states in the world leads to the idea that Democracy is a fragile structure, always ready to collapse into Fascism if a leader with incorrect ideas comes to office.

The one idea is as unrealistic as the other. The most power-hungry individual, however talented, is powerless to alter the nature of the state where it has the character of a historically-evolved democracy. It was not at all to Churchill's credit that he did not become a Fascist dictator. It was not a matter of choice for him. The form of democracy in which he acted had evolved piecemeal over many generations under the supervision of a collectivist ruling class and it was not within the power of even the most energetic and talented individual to set it aside and be a dictator.

Churchill admired the Fascist Dictators who brought order out of the chaos into which Britain's Great War and Destructive Peace had thrown Europe. He particularly admired the founder of Fascism, the Dictator Mussolini, and when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer went to Rome to praise him. And he said that, if England had lost the Great War and the Victors had done to it what was done to Germany, he hoped that a leader of the calibre of Hitler would have arisen in England to restore it to greatness. And he also said that, in the early 1920s, the Parliamentary system could not bear the stresses of Capitalist versus Socialist

politics if the Labour Party developed in earnest as a Socialist class party. He was prepared for all contingencies and, if Parliamentary democracy had broken down under pressure of a politics of class antagonism, he was willing, and thought he was able, to step into the breach and hold things together as Mussolini and Hitler did.

But the situation did not ripen for him to achieve his destiny as a Fascist saviour of Britain and its Empire. He was therefore obliged to achieve a lesser destiny as the leader of democratic Britain in an unwinnable anti-Fascist War—unwinnable by Britain, which only launched the War—that lost it its Empire and brought Communism to power in half of Europe.

The politics of democratic Britain—which was formally democratised only at the end of the Great War—is conducted in a rhetoric of class war. The Tory Party—the historic opponent of the free capitalist development sponsored by the Liberal Party—plays the part of heartless capitalist ogre, while the Labour Party plays the part of socialist spearhead of a revolutionary working class yearning for class war. 99.9 per cent of what is said in this mock battle in Parliament is discounted before the words reach the other side of the Chamber. But the role-playing works. And it works even when, as at present, and even more so in the 1970s, it is the Tories who try to enhance the role of the workers in the economy by getting them representation on Boards of Directors of companies, while the Labour Party—supported by most Trade Unions—insists that they should remain simply a class exploited by Capitalism.

But, if the mock class-war of Parliamentary rhetoric was expressive of the actual state of affairs in society, the system would not be functional.

One source of modern dictatorships is the imposition by Britain of its Parliamentary form of party antagonism on Imperial possessions on which it conferred nominal independence. Where the party antagonism was superimposed on real antagonisms, and the rhetoric expressed the reality of things, Parliaments didn't work. Authoritative leaders emerged and suppressed party conflict as a source of disruption. They did not prevent party conflict in Parliament from producing orderly Government. They acted dictatorially because party conflict was an actual source of disorder.

This state of affairs is unacceptable to the ideology of Parliamentary democracy, which therefore denies that it even exists.

The two stable democracies functioning by party conflict during the past century have been Britain and the USA. In Britain the form of Parliamentary government by parties was preserved during the economic crisis of the 1930s by suppressing the substance of it. In 1931 actual party conflict was suspended on the initiative of the Labour Government and a system of all-party government was inaugurated. This system of National Government continued until 1945. Through the continuing influence of the formally superseded ruling class, one of the major effects of Fascism was brought about under a veneer of Parliamentary democracy. Party conflict was abolished even though it wasn't banned. The Labour, Tory and Liberal leaderships made it their common purpose to prevent the economic crisis from generating antagonistic politics. A rump of the Labour Party was left free to contest elections, but it could make little headway against the authoritative party leadership in the National Government.

That resource, which was available in Britain, whose democracy had been introduced by the historic ruling class and remained under its influence, was not available in the new

states, without historic precedents, that were conjured into being by the Versailles Conference, and it was not available in later decades in the new states hastily thrown up by the Empire when it became unable to maintain direct Imperial rule.

In Britain and France democracy was a new form of government that was developed in old societies which had lived for centuries under other forms of rule, and had evolved at their own speed under their own impulses without any supervisory Power interfering with them, telling them what they must do, and threatening to invade them if they did it wrong.

The USA, by contrast, was an entirely new society. It was a society of immigrants, as Ilhan Omar says. But the immigrants did not integrate into the old society. They exterminated it and they started afresh in the spaces they had cleared.

The genocidal foundation of the new state was laid in the course of about three centuries of continuous conflict. Conquest and Genocide were the constant medium of its development. Because of this, the immigration did not reproduce the social conditions of its countries of origin. The growth of social antagonism was averted by expansion into ethnically-cleansed regions. Pioneering took the place of the social radicalism of England. What we know as America was made possible by an ever-expanding *Lebensraum* drive over three centuries. The essential American freedom was the freedom of territorial expansion into areas that were cleared of population.

The clearing was, on the whole, done democratically, in the sense that it was done by the immigrant population itself, assisted and authorised by the Government, with the apparatus of orderly government always lagging behind the expansion of its populace.

Immigration was colonisation, and it remained so long after an independent State structure was built on it. The call to “*the huddled masses*” of Europe, which were “*yearning to be free*”, to come and find refuge in the Land of the Free was a call to ambitious spirits, whose energy was being stifled by the clogged social circumstances of an old civilisation, to come to America and be colonists.

Don Akenson, Conor Cruise O’Brien’s biographer and idolater, set out to dispel the notion of the Irish as one of the insulted and injured peoples of the world by depicting them as aggressive colonists in America. And so they were. It was the energetic and ambitious Irish who got out of British-ruled Ireland and took part in the construction of the United States—first the Protestant colonists of Ulster and then the Catholic Irish, *en masse*, under the stimulus of the phenomenon known as the Irish Famine/Holocaust. It required energy and means to escape from the Famine. Those who lacked both succumbed to it. Many more hundreds of thousands died at home under British rule in 1846-50 than escaped to become genocidal colonists in America.

Does it tell us anything about the character of Irish society that, when it was reduced to a shattered condition by British rule, those who managed to escape to America became genocidal colonists there? That they became in effect British, while resenting Britain for what it did to Ireland? That they did to others in America what Britain had done to them in Ireland?

The culture of the immigrant/colonial conquest of America was the most energetic and purposeful political culture of the 19th century. It grew from the separating out, and comprehensive development of, a select stratum of English Reformationism—the Biblicalist stratum.

The Bible and the silver dollar made America, with the silver dollar gaining precedence over the Bible, without in any way

damaging the spirit inspired by Deuteronomy and the Book of Joshua. And the ambitious fragments of the shattered Irish society that escaped to America kept their distance from the Bible—thus making America multi-cultural?—but fitted in with the host culture in other respects, and becoming active components of it.

Hollywood glorified the Genocide on which the United States was founded, and John Ford was one of the great chroniclers of it. The glorification continued all through the war with Nazi Germany and for more than a generation after it—and it has never been disowned.

A young Ulster Protestant clergyman, David Bailie Warden, joined the United Irishmen in 1798, escaped to the United States, became an active American citizen, and wrote a history in which black slavery was condemned and the progress of the Genocide of the native population was reported as if it was the clearing of a wild forest. The slavery, set in motion by England, was a disgrace but the Genocide was a beacon to the world.

High-minded books were published by mainstream publishers well into the 20th century, contrasting the Protestant purity of the North American colonisation, and its consequent *progressiveness*, with the untidiness and backwardness of race-mixing indulged in by colonists in Catholic South America.

The author of one of these books attended a hearing at a Eugenics Court in Germany in 1940, and did not find it alien.

US involvement in the British war against Germany in December 1941—which by that time had become in substance a war between Communism and Fascism—came about as a by-product of its determination to destroy the Japanese Empire. Hitler pedantically declared war on the United States when the Japanese/American War began, because he was in formal alliance with Japan. (Japan did not reciprocate by declaring war on Russia.)

Nazi Germany had the ambition to do in the East of Europe what the United States had done in the West. The United States did not remake itself internally for the purpose of making war on Nazi Germany. It remained a racist state, and it did not repent its accomplished Genocide.

There is a scene in a famous Western film made during the War, in which John Wayne kills some Indians who were trying to defend their territory and is commended for it: “*We need more men like you to deal with these savages*”.

Nazi Germany saw the Communist East as a kind of savagery which had mastered some of the arts of civilisation only for the purpose of destroying civilisation as a whole. It was a view that was also widely held outside Nazi Germany. It was the view of Winston Churchill, who saw Fascism as a political operation by which bourgeois civilisation defended itself from Communist subversion by breaking certain of its conventions. This view was comprehensively covered over from 1941 to 1945, when the semblance of a British victory in the war it had launched was entirely dependent on victory by Communist Russia. The British propaganda made itself a vehicle for Bolshevik propaganda in those years. From 1945 to 1990 there was a partial return to the earlier view of Communism as a criminal conspiracy against civilisation, but it had to be asserted discreetly because of the foothold that Bolshevism had got within bourgeois society during the years of the alliance. But, when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1990, the Nazi view of Communism became the standard view of bourgeois civilisation—though it was, of course, not said to be the Nazi view, and the fact that there had been extensive bourgeois-democratic support for Fascism in the 1920s and 1930s, as a means of countering Bolshevism and saving bourgeois civilisation in Europe, was not mentioned.

Nor is the fact mentioned that, when bourgeois-democratic Europe was restored in 1945-6, it was done by means of extensive ethnic cleansing authorised by the United Nations, and by substantial acts of genocide.

These were things that were visible from the viewpoint of Neutral Ireland, whose Neutrality was its first substantial act of foreign policy. But they were things that post-War Ireland preferred to forget that it had seen. (Its academic life began to be hegemonised by Oxbridge towards the end of the War by means of a British Intelligence agent who was put in command of History at UCD immediately after the War, T. Desmond Williams.)

Europe began to live in a false memory of itself as it began to be reconstructed into what became the European Union. Memory was superseded by an existentialist act of forgetting and pretending. But *existentialism* does not work. The world is not begun afresh by means of a mere act of will, a superficial act of will. The world that is misrepresented by false memory persists. It reproduces itself though it is denied polite expression. The cultivated false memory does not become the spontaneous form of consciousness. It becomes at best a kind of polite false consciousness—the kind of thing that sustained the Alliance Party in Northern Ireland as a fringe party for a while.

For the kind of new European consciousness advocated by EU ideologists to take root, new populations would be needed—in the drastic Anglo-Saxon mode applied in North America. But that is not possible just now. Leaving aside what was done to Yugoslavia in the 1990s, the populations of Europe remain much as the United Nations ethnic cleansing of 1945-6 left them. They have stabilised within their imposed borders and, left to themselves, their tendency has been to regress into their old national forms rather than to progress into the increasingly vacuous scheme of Internationality. This is what is being seen from within the cosmopolitan bubble as a resurgence of Fascism.

Fascism, in its time, was not a policy to be put into effect by a party that won an election within an established order of state. It was a bourgeois alternative to the multi-party bourgeois democracy that was proving to be dysfunctional after the elemental disruption of Europe by Britain's Great War. It was an alternative state that slotted itself into the place of the brittle democratic states whose multi-party conflict was, in the absence of national consensus, tending to generate civil war on a class basis. It has no relevance to the current condition of Europe or the USA.

Trump's foreign policy innovation is, if it has any bearing on Fascism, a turn away from it. Fascism was directed against Communism. The Communist State in Russia broke up a quarter of a century ago. Russia became a capitalist state which elected its Governments. But US policy was to break up Russia—not allow it to be a State at all. For a period, under Yeltsin, it did not function as a national state. Yeltsin shelled the Parliament, cheered on by the Free World. But the Russians have long been the great State-forming people east of Germany. A functional Russian State has been restored, which tends to Russian national interests, economic and political. Russia is no longer a place that Western capital can do what it pleases with, as it was under Yeltsin. For that reason, though it has elected government in a multi-party system, the liberal elite of the West sees it as a revival of Stalinism. Cold War has been declared on it, and Obama-Clinton were pushing it to the brink of hot war in Syria.

Trump's election policy on it was to treat Russia as part of the capitalist world when tended to its national interests, just as the United States does. If he implements this policy, pursuit of the delusion of a Unipolar World will be set aside for the time being. □

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

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

Websites associated with [atholbooks.org](http://www.atholbooks.org):

<http://www.david-morrison.org.uk>
<http://www.british-values.com>
<http://drpatwalsh.com>
<https://lefroggydotcom.wordpress.com>
<http://heideggerreview.org>
<http://atholstreetpeople.org>

Democracy and Bombing

By Pat Walsh

The Russians have been bombing Aleppo in pursuance of military objectives connected with the prime object of politics, the safety of the state (as Lord Hankey called it). That is hardly something that is unprecedented in warfare over the last century. But in the US and UK the consequences of that bombing are placed on the TV screens in a way that mirrors the absence of all such images of the bombing of the Western democracies and their allies.

James Petras has recently written in the Unz Review an article entitled [‘The Politics of Bombing’](#):

“The US and EU are the world’s foremost practitioners of ‘wholesale bombing’. They engage in serial attacks against multiple countries without declaring war or introducing their own citizen ground troops. They specialize in indiscriminate attacks on civilian populations – unarmed women, children, elders and non-combatant males. In other words, for the ‘wholesale bombers’, unleashing terror on societies is an everyday event.

“The US and EU practice ‘total war’ from the skies, not sparing a single sphere of everyday, civilian life. They bomb neighborhoods, markets, vital infrastructure, factories, schools and health facilities. The result of their daily, ‘ordinary’ bombing is the total erasure of the very structures necessary for civilized existence, leading to mass dispossession and the forced migration of millions in search of safety.

“It is not surprising that the refugees seek safety in the countries that have destroyed their means of normal existence. The wholesale bombers of the US-EU do not bomb their own cities and citizens – and so millions of the dispossessed are desperate to get in. Wholesale bomb policies have emerged because prolonged ground wars in the targeted countries evoke strong domestic opposition from their citizens unwilling to accept casualties among US and EU soldiers. Wholesale bombing draws less domestic opposition because the bombers suffer few losses.

“At the same time, while mass aerial bombing reduces the political risks of casualties at home, it expands and deepens violent hostility abroad. The mass flight of refugees to US-EU population centers allows the entry of violent combatants who will bring their own version of the total war strategies to the homes of their invaders.”

The concept of strategic area bombing (or ‘terror bombing’) which the RAF adopted in Britain’s Second World War on the Germans, and which it used *par excellence* in the Dresden massacre in February 1945, originated in the new form of warfare developed by England in 1917/8 and first implemented against German and Ottoman civilians.

Sir Charles Webster and Dr. Noble Frankland noted in their book, *The Strategic Air Offensive against Germany* (Vol. 1, p.

42) issued by H.M. Stationery Office, London, in 1961, that: “*Sir Hugh Trenchard, Chief of the Air Staff from 1919 to 1929, had a decisive influence on the future of the R.A.F.*” They explained that the essence of Trenchard’s policy was that “*future wars would be won by producing such moral effect on the enemy civilian population that its government would have to sue for peace. The advantage of destroying military installations and factories was recognised but he maintained that it was easier to overcome the will to resist among the workers than to destroy the means to resist*” (p. 86).

According to his biographer, Lord Hugh Trenchard, the ‘father’ of the Royal Air Force, called for “*fighting the Germans in Germany*” from as early as June 1916 (Andrew Boyle, Trenchard, p.295). This was something the British Army was incapable of due to the defensive effectiveness of the Germans.

Trenchard’s main accomplice in the development of terror bombing was the Glasgow industrialist at Lloyd George’s Ministry of Munitions, William Weir. Weir’s “*ambition was to build bombers by the hundred to carry the war into Germany.*” (p.202) In the Spring of 1917 Weir put forward the idea of a long-range bombing campaign against Germany. Lord Weir was appointed Air Minister to the Lloyd George government in 1918.

During 1917 Trenchard implored the War Cabinet to let him “*attack the industrial centres of Germany*” (p.295). He declared himself unimpressed with any sporadic bombing the German air force had done over England and “*the few occasions French machines raided the Rhineland cities, it was always emphasised that such attacks were in the nature of reprisals. Trenchard was against retaliation; his sole concern was to cripple Germany by means of a sustained air offensive.*” (p.296)

Trenchard argued for a new form of aerial warfare - not the miserable, retaliatory sorties/raids of the German and French machines but a strategic campaign of terror and devastation of civilian areas. He authoritatively described the role that strategic bombers should play in war in a study prepared for the Allied Supreme War Council in 1918. He specified two main objectives for his proposed force of strategic bombers - to destroy the enemy both morally and materially. In order to achieve this end, he argued for the need to attack enemy industrial centres where striking at the centres of production could do vital damage. This entailed precision bombing. But he also argued for achieving the maximum effect on the morale of the enemy by striking at what he saw as the most vulnerable part of the German population - the working class. This entailed saturation area bombing.

According to his biographer Lord Trenchard had a major effect on the developing United States Air Force and its philosophy of war from the skies. Apparently Trenchard

“conceived and shaped, under the stress of war, the embryo of the future US Strategic Bombing Command; fed by British machines, nursed by British technicians, its first members were enrolled and initiated in Trenchard’s exacting school... He was thinking in terms of the future, of the destruction which would rain down on the industrial vitals of Germany the following Spring...” (p.297)

But the chief of the Allied military command, Foch, denied Trenchard the resources for his strategic air offensive in 1917/8, and his desired large, long-range bomber fleet. So Trenchard decided to spread terror to the general German population:

“Lacking the resources to concentrate attacks on one target at a time, Trenchard so spread his raids that no city within range could feel entirely safe. The bombers might cause little destruction; what counted was their impact on the spirit of the German people. The cumulative effect on morale would far exceed the actual toll of damage inflicted, providing the bombing went on, day and night, with few interruptions...” (p.304)

This was the blueprint for things to come when the RAF and USAF used sustained bombing over days to systematically pulverise German civilian centres and their occupants in the Second World War on Germany. Trenchard imagined it in 1917 and had planned it for 1918-19.

In June 1918 over 70 tons of bombs were dropped on German cities by Trenchard’s machines. In July 85 tons were dropped on Cologne, Coblenz, Mainz, Stuttgart and Saarbrücken. From August to November 75 of Trenchard’s long-range bombers were lost out of his fleet of 120 machines. But despite the enormous losses of his airmen Trenchard was encouraged by letters captured from German soldiers from their relatives in the Rhineland cities which *“evoked the terror sown in the Rhineland and Saarland cities, a terror which indirectly affected husbands, sons and brothers in uniform as well.”* (p.311)

Istanbul was also subjected to air raids. Between March and October 1918, a dozen air raids were made on the Ottoman capital. All air raids were night time attacks, maximising the chances of civilian casualties. Hundreds of people were killed, many of them Christians, in the indiscriminate attacks. The bombs did not discriminate between Turk, Jew, Greek or Armenian.

The Ottoman *Harbiye Nezareti*, (Ministry of War) communicated a request to the *“Government of England”* from *Hariciye Nezareti*, (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) stating that

“İstanbul is a city which enjoys a number of very valuable hospitals, whereas it has no military institutions of significant importance. Continuous air attacks on İstanbul are nothing but a violation of legal norms vis-à-vis civilians. In the event that these attacks will not cease, the Government of Turkey will be obliged to transfer all enemy aliens to internment camps regardless of their age and gender. This is due to the increasing tension among the public facing these air attacks and in the event that a public retaliation against the resident subjects of the governments of Allies shall take place, the difficulty posed by the possible prevention of this should be duly taken into account of by the Government.”(*Harbiye Nezareti* to *Hariciye Nezareti*, August 28, 1918, File No: 7310/8959, [BOA HR.SYS 2456/27-3], Department of Ottoman Archives, Prime Ministry of the Republic of Turkey. I am grateful to Turan Cetiner for this information).

But the British ignored the request and the air raids continued and intensified. The threat embedded in the message of the Ottoman Ministry of War was not carried out.

Lord Trenchard’s biographer makes it clear that civilian casualties were of no concern of his:

“It was still only the experimental overture to a dreadful revolution in warfare. No squeamishness for the fate of civilians distracted Trenchard’s mind. His sole purpose was to weaken the enemy’s will to resist. It was for moralists and lawyers to argue whether a munitions’ plant and the workers’ houses about it should be struck off the list of legitimate war targets; it was for statesmen to act on their verdict... Trenchard consoled himself that his bombs were not aimed indiscriminately at civilians but at factories which supplied the armies and so prolonged the slaughter on the battlefield. He prided himself on strictly professional thinking unclouded by vindictiveness or mawkish sentimentality.

“Weir was less pernickety than Trenchard. ‘I would very much like if you could start a really big fire in one of the German towns,’ he wrote in September, suggesting that incendiary bombs could be used to spectacular advantage in older built-up districts where there were few ‘good, permanent, modern buildings.’ And again: ‘If I were you, I would not be too exacting as regards accuracy in bombing railway stations in the middle of towns. The German is susceptible to bloodiness, and I would not mind a few accidents due to inaccuracy.

“I do not think you need be anxious about our degree of accuracy when bombing stations in the middle of towns. The accuracy is n Pat Walsh ot great at present, and all the pilots drop their eggs well into the middle of the town generally.” (p.312)

This represented an innovative blurring of the traditional difference between combatant and civilian in which civilian lives were treated in the same way as those of combatants. And it prepared the way for ‘accidents’ or ‘collateral damage’ as it is called today, so that aerial terrorism waged by states could be practised on women and children without any moral remorse. In the years that followed, British air war strategists almost completely abandoned the idea or pretense of precision bombing in favour of the strategy of anti-civilian bombing.

Carroll Quigley, the American geopolitics professor, in his 1348 page book *‘Tragedy And Hope - A History Of The World In Our Time’* concludes that strategic bombing was not, as the *Irish Times* concluded a number of years ago in a review of Frederick Taylor’s book, in the case of Dresden, a *“masterstroke”* that *“went horribly right,”* but actually a great failure in military terms:

“ the strategic bombing of Germany was mishandled from the beginning until almost the end of the war. Correctly, such strategic bombing should have been based on careful analysis of the German war economy to pick out the one or two critical items which were essential to the war effort. These items were probably ball bearings, aviation fuels, and chemicals, all of them essential and all of them concentrated. After the war German general Gotthard Heinrici said that the war would have ended the year earlier if the allied bombing had been concentrated on ammonia plants. Whether this is correct or not, the fact remains that strategic bombing was largely a failure, and was so from poor choice of targets and from long intervals between repeated attacks. Relentless daily bombardment, with heavy fighter escort, day after day, in spite of losses, with absolute refusal to be distracted to area or city bombing

because of losses or shifting ideas might have made a weighty contribution to the defeat of Germany and shortened the war substantially. As it was, the contribution by strategic bombing to the defeat of Germany was relatively incidental, in spite of the terrible losses suffered in the effort.

“Indiscriminate bombing of urban areas... was justified with the wholly mistaken arguments that civilian morale was a German weak point and that the destruction of workers housing would break this morale. The evidence shows that the German war effort was not weakened in any way by lowering of civilian morale, in spite of the horrors heaped upon it... the British effort to break German civilian morale by area night bombing was an almost complete failure. In fact, one of the inspiring and amazing events of the war was the unflinching spirit under unbearable attack shown by ordinary working people in industrial cities.” (pp.800-2.)

But was the extermination of the German working class a purely military matter? Perhaps it was a kind of racial cleansing motivated by the Social Darwinism in England that had seen the Naval Blockade of 1914-19 as an instrument designed to “degenerate the German racial stock” (as one Imperialist publication put it in the infamous article, *The Huns of 1940*) by destroying infants and producing sub-normal human specimens from the wombs of starving German women. The Royal Navy had not degenerated the German racial stock sufficiently in 1918-9 to disable the Hun by 1940, so a large proportion of the German masses needed to be eradicated by the Royal Air Force when the opportunity presented itself from 1942-45, before the Russians won the War. Perhaps that was what it was all about - casual Genocide.

Attacking German workers, destroying their morale, and also hopefully provoking them to revolt against their leaders was a widely held notion among the British military circles prior to the Great War – only then it was planned that the Royal Navy would do it through sea blockade. Trenchard took the Naval blockade strategy that England had planned against Germany from 1903, had used against the civilian population between 1914 and 1919, and applied it to air warfare, for the next war on Germany.

Lord Trenchard’s belief in the awesome power of strategic area bombing was elaborately substantiated by the Italian Air Force general and military philosopher, Giulio Douhet, who encapsulated strategic bombing into a coherent theory of air power in his book, *The Command Of The Air*, published in 1921.

Douhet contended that the decision in future wars

“must depend upon smashing the material and moral resources of a people caught up in a frightful cataclysm which haunts them everywhere without cease until the final collapse of all social organisation... the decisive blows will be directed at civilians, that element of the country at war least able to sustain them.” (p.54, English edition of 1943)

Douhet warned that Europe would have to reconsider its rules of warfare and institute a reversal of taken for granted historical principles of honour. A new principle of warfare was required:

“ this general principle of war...seems inhuman to us because of the traditional notion which must be changed. Everyone says, and is convinced of it, that war is no longer a clash between armies, but is a clash between nations, between whole

populations. During the last war this clash took the form of a long process of attrition between armies, and that seemed natural and logical. Because of its direct action, the air arm pits populations directly against populations, and does away with the intervening armour which kept them apart during the past war. Now it is actually populations and nations which come to blows and seize each other’s throats.

“This fact sharpens that peculiar traditional notion which makes people weep to hear of a few women and children killed in an air raid, and leaves them unmoved to hear of thousands of soldiers killed in action. All human lives are equally valuable; but because tradition holds that the soldier is fated to die in battle, his death does not upset them much, despite the fact that the soldier, a robust young man, should be considered to have the maximum individual value in the general economy of humanity...”

“Any distinction between belligerent and non-belligerent is no longer admissible today either in fact or theory.

“War is won by crushing the resistance of the enemy; and this can be done more easily, faster, more economically, and with less bloodshed by directly attacking the resistance at its weakest point. The more rapid and terrifying the arms are, the faster they will reach the vital centres and the more deeply they will affect moral resistance.” (p.158/9).

The first two British wars of the twentieth century - the conquest of South Africa and the Great War on Germany – changed the nature of war in Europe and the world, from limited wars with limited objectives fought with mercenary troops to unlimited wars of economic attrition with unlimited objectives fought with national armies. This had far-reaching consequences. The distinction between combatants and non-combatants and between belligerents and neutrals became blurred and ultimately indistinguishable.

International law, which had grown up in the period of the limited dynasty wars, made a great deal of such distinctions. Previously, non-combatants had extensive rights which sought to protect their ways of life as much as possible during periods of warfare and neutrals had similar rights. In return, there were strict duties on noncombatants to remain non-participants in the fighting. All these distinctions broke down in 1914-1915, with the result that there were wholesale violations of existing international law and conventions of honour.

These violations were more extensive on the part of the Entente side than on the German/Austria-Hungarian side. That is a fact distorted by anti-German atrocity propagandists in the British press. But the British recognised it and understood the weakness of the Germans in possessing a sense of military honour that would disable them from competing with England in the eradication of civilians.

The Germans still maintained the older traditions of the professional army, and their geographical and strategic position, with limited manpower and economic resources, made it to their advantage to maintain the distinctions between combatant and non-combatant and between belligerent and neutral. By maintaining the distinction of former conflicts they would have had to fight just the enemy army and not the enemy civilian population, and, once the former was defeated, would have had little to fear from the latter, which could have been controlled

by a minimum of troops. If they could have maintained a distinction between belligerent and neutral, it would have been impossible to blockade Germany, since basic supplies could have been imported through neutral countries.

The German plan of War - a defensive form of offence - called for a short, decisive war against the enemy armed forces, and they never expected nor desired a total economic mobilisation or even a total military mobilisation, since these might disrupt the existing social and political structure in Germany which was a very successful socialised economy. For these reasons, Germany made no plans for industrial or economic mobilisation, for a long war, or for withstanding a blockade, and hoped to mobilise a smaller proportion of its manpower than its immediate enemies to defend herself.

But 'German atrocities' in Belgium - where Belgian civilians were encouraged to blur the distinction between combatant and non-combatant by indulging in behind the lines terrorist attacks on German supply lines - were used by the British to justify their own planned violations of international law. As early as August 1914, the Royal navy was treating food as contraband and interfering with neutral shipments of it to Europe. In November 1914, Britain declared the whole sea from Scotland to Iceland a 'war-zone', covered it with fields of mines, and ordered ships going to the Baltic, Scandinavia, or to the Low Countries to go by way of the English Channel, where they were stopped, searched, and much of their cargo seized, even when these cargoes could not be declared contraband under existing international law. In reprisal the Germans on February 18, 1915, declared the English Channel a 'war-zone,' announced that their submarines would sink shipping in that area, and ordered shipping for the Baltic area to use the route north of Scotland.

And it was further declared by Liberal England and Redmondite Ireland that there could be no neutrals in the fight between Civilisation/Democracy and Barbarism/Prussianism. And so more and more of neutral Europe were sucked in to the conflict as Britain extended the war into a world conflict.

Italy was one of those countries that had been neutral at the start of the Great War but had been encouraged by British demonstrations of force in the Mediterranean and Dardanelles into seeing where its future interests lay and joining with the Entente. And Italian officers, Douhet was one such - along with his compatriot Mussolini - were impressed by this show of force and reorientation of Italian strategic thinking.

It was the Italians who first used bombing in warfare, to my knowledge, in the assault on the Ottoman territories in present day Libya in 1908. And of course, the bombers have returned to Libya recently to destroy a functional state, create ground for Jihadists and unleash a flood of migrants on the European mainland that the government of Libya had previously prevented.

Between 1918 and 1939 Douhet's ideas on air warfare and Hugh Trenchard's proposals were readily accepted and implemented by the British government which began to regard area bombing as a necessary part of warfare, no matter how immoral it was regarded by others - including even Hitler.

Douhet's theory received support from the commander-in-chief of the USAAF, General Billy Mitchell. Trenchard, Douhet and Mitchell unanimously predicted that future wars could be won by airpower alone, and that terror attacks on cities by independent air forces with high explosive, incendiary

bombs and gas, could destroy a nation's will to resist. The view that "*the bomber would always get through*" to the enemy country, no matter what happened, was expressed by Stanley Baldwin, the British Prime Minister. It provided a boost to the air theorists' arguments that the bomber would win wars for whichever country that possessed them.

Carroll Quigley noted the link between the ideas of Trenchard/Douhet and the 1930s policy of appeasement:

"Acceptance of Douhetism by civilian leaders in France and England was one of the key factors in appeasement and especially in the Munich surrender of September 1938... the Chamberlain government reflected these ideas and prepared the way to Munich by issuing 35 million gas masks to city dwellers... in spite of the erroneous ideas of Chamberlain, Baldwin, Churchill, and the rest, the war opened and continued for months with no city bombing at all, for the simple reason that the Germans had no intentions, no plans, and no equipment for strategic bombing. The British, who had the intentions but still lacked the plans and equipment, also held back." (Tragedy And Hope - A History Of The World In Our Time, pp. 799-800.)

This is the relationship between the policy of "appeasement" and terror bombing - a means by which the British believed they could win wars by terrorising the enemy's civilian populations into submission and avoiding suffering military casualties on the scale of the Great War.

I am sure readers can see the relevance of this for today.

Appeasement is a dirty word these days. Bombing is very much the order of the day, from the White House to Westminster.

A spokesman for the BBC on Radio 4, when criticised for its minimal coverage of the recent massacre of 80 Syrian soldiers by US/UK bombing, which destabilised the Russian/US ceasefire plan, said that the BBC is not neutral. It is always on the side of "*Democracy against authoritarian dictatorships*". Presumably this not only means that the BBC is always on the British side against those whom the British State marks out as an enemy, it also means that if Democracy slaughters civilians whilst governments which do not conform to the democratic standards set by the State which is secure in its island, defend themselves, the aggressors are always right, since they represent Democracy! So Democracy is with the Angels no matter how despicably it behaves in the world and the rest are the Devils. And accidents, as Hugh Trenchard said, will happen!

It should be understood that England, prior to the Great War, had always fought its wars using others - the Irish, mercenaries and foreign countries. The intention of the Liberal Imperialist coterie in 1914 was to fight the Great War in a similar fashion - albeit with a 100,000 strong expedition force to aid France and Russia's encirclement of Germany. But the Great War did not turn out as planned. It was not over by Christmas because Germany was able to resist the armies of France and Russia, and England had to commit much more of her population to the war to crush her. A negotiated peace was impossible since the fight had been declared to be one of Good against Evil and there was no settling or Pact to be had with the Devil. Conscription had to be introduced in England and it took years to break down the German defences at a very high cost - this time borne by the English middle class as well.

The English Middle Class War and the high level of respectable casualties (as opposed to Irish “*scum of the earth*” as Wellington called his men) had a serious effect on the British will to wage this kind of war again. And it was determined that it should be avoided, if at all possible. This was one part to the Appeasement policy of the 1930’s (the other part was the hope that Hitler could be encouraged to attack the Soviet Union to finish off the main enemy of Britain, or at least bleed each other dry). So what went hand in hand with the Appeasement policy was the terror bombing policy - a means to wage war against an enemy civilian population without committing large numbers of English manhood to the fields that had taken so much of its blood in the Great War. And so the British World War was a pathetic thing. After some fighting for about a month in France the British Army scuttled off from Dunkirk to shelter on its island for the next 4 years until the US had joined the World War and the Russians had begun advancing on Berlin.

Fifty million died in Britain’s Second World War on Germany and less than half a million of them were British! That statistic just about sums up the contribution of England to the fighting against Hitler. The British War largely consisted of terrorist/commando raids, prisoner of war escapes, defence of its trade by the Royal Navy and bombing.

Know-alls from Dublin have lately condemned the Provisional IRA for its “*ungentlemanly warfare*”. Where did this army learn about warfare as young boys but from the saturation of British war movies and the “*ungentlemanly warfare*” depicted on their TV screens.

Carroll Quigley makes the following comments on the British Appeasers and advocates of Douhet’s theories:

“The military advocates of such air bombardment concentrated their attention on what was called strategic bombing, that is, on the construction of long-range bombing planes for use against industrial targets and other civilian objectives and on very fast fighter planes for defence against such bombers. They generally belittled the effectiveness of anti-aircraft artillery and were generally warm advocates of an air force separately organised and commanded and not under direct control of army or naval commanders. These advocates were very influential in Britain and in the United States.

“The upholders of strategic bombing received little encouragement in Germany, in Russia, or even in France, because of the dominant position held by traditional army officers in all three of these countries. In France, all kinds of air power was generally neglected, while in the other two country strategic bombing against civilian objectives was completely subordinated in favour of tactical bombing of military objectives immediately on the fighting front. Such tactical bombing demanded planes of a more flexible character, with shorter range than strategic bombers and less speed than defensive fighters, and under the close control of the local commanders of the ground forces so that their bombing efforts could be directed, like a kind of mobile and long range artillery, at those points of resistance, of supply, or of reserves which would help the ground offensive most effectively. Such dive-bombers or Stukas played a major role in the early German victories of 1939 to 41. Here, again, this superiority was based on quality and method of usage and not on numbers.” (Tragedy And Hope - A History Of The World In Our Time, p.665.)

The English, who based their plans for war on Germany on the destruction of German cities and the killing of their inhabitants, believed that Germany had similar plans for London. And they repeated the view that “*the bomber will always get through*” so that they could convince the general public that facilitating Hitler - in the hope he would go east against Soviet Russia - was a sound idea.

But the British worry about bombing was entirely self-induced. It was manufactured entirely by Trenchard and the RAF who signalled it would devastate German cities and their civilian populations given half a chance. If that was the case who could expect Mr. Hitler, a volatile chap, to turn the other cheek?

But whilst the British banked on aerial bombing of civilian populations to save its soldiers from trench warfare the Germans developed, within the confines of the Versailles restrictions on its military forces, the theory of fast mobile warfare supported from the skies – *Blitzkrieg*. And Hitler had no intention of attacking British cities until Churchill brought on the blitz by dropping bombs on Berlin in a series of provocative raids aimed at diverting Hitler from military targets. The Germans had not, unlike the British, constructed a long-range bomber fleet of 4-engined machines designed to slaughter civilians. The Luftwaffe was built to support military objections in conjunction with the German Army.

Britain was ill equipped to deal with the German *Blitzkrieg* strategy. It had decided a land war could not be won without years of costly static land warfare. And its War Office and military planners had decided the way to avoid the killing of Great War proportions was to directly attack the enemy at his weakest point, its civilians, so that such a conflict could be shortened and British military casualties would be fewer as a result.

If warfare could be made humane in any way the German method was humane warfare. At the opening of conflict in 1939/40 Nazi Germany decided that if it were forced into a new European War it would fight a fast, decisive conflict, whilst democratic, Appeasing England would rely on terrorism from the air and sea. The German Army, even under Nazi direction, practiced *Blitzkrieg* using air power in support of distinct military objectives. And they achieved what they could not do in 4 years in 1914-8 by routing the Anglo-French armies in 4 weeks - with fantastically minimal casualties on both sides.

The traditional aim of European armies was to destroy the enemy combatants’ will to fight through the physical destruction of those on the enemy side who could defend themselves. And that is how the Nazis fought the Anglo-French forces. It was the Democracies who aimed to slaughter civilians by the million.

If war is defined as a conflict between two bodies equipped to fight and terrorism is military action against people who are not equipped to fight, it must be conceded that Britain was the pioneer of terrorism in the 20th century and the British State was the original state sponsor of terrorism. And Uncle Sam has learnt well from his Anglo-Saxon cousin, Bomber Bull, from whom he received his torch – to go about the world, bombing in the name of Democracy. □

Thoughts on Lord Esher (Part Five)

By Pat Walsh

Lord Esher saw the entry of the U.S. into the War as a double-edged sword for England. By 1916 the Great War Britain had launched was incapable of being won without the U.S. but Esher realised there was a pay back for President Wilson's assistance. Wilson's idealism would, for Esher, mess up the Peace and de-stabilise the making of a settlement necessary for stability. Esher thought that should be done through separate negotiations between the Powers concerned and not through a Congress of ideals that was bound to disappoint. On the day after the unexpected victory and Armistice he wrote:

"Yes the ending is wonderful. I pray that the 'leaders' of the Allied peoples will not get 'swelled head' and lay the seeds of future wars. With France and Italy satisfied we might have peace for a generation, provided we do not attempt to crush the soul of eighty millions of German people." (Letter to Rev. C.D. Williamson, 12.11.18)

The aristocracy had known how to make peace to the advantage of England following the wars it had waged. But in 1918/19 all that changed through the peace making of the democracy. France was not satisfied with the Peace as Britain, playing the Balance of Power game against it, prevented the establishment of a secure Rhine frontier with Germany. Italy was denied the Dalmatian coast it had been promised to lure it into the War. And the Versailles Treaty, together with the Naval Blockade, continued for 6 months after the Armistice in order to impose it, crushed the German soul.

A couple of weeks before the Armistice the Imperial War Cabinet discussed whether to press the War on into Germany or make a peace settlement at the point of battle, outside German territory. The basic issue on which this question turned was which would achieve better terms for England? Lloyd George suggested that the Germans be taught a lesson by an Allied invasion that would secure greater compliance. Balfour, Bonar Law and Lord Curzon disagreed.

General Smuts argued that in destroying Germany Britain would destroy Europe itself and

"As Europe went down, so America would rise. In time the United States of America would dictate to the world in naval, military, diplomatic and financial matters. In that he saw no good."

Lord Reading agreed:

"As regards America, he took exactly the same view as General Smuts. Every month the war continued increased the power of the United States, which was gradually mobilising an enormous strength. At present it was in the main America and the British Empire that were dominating the situation, and we were in a position to hold our own. There were, however, influences in the United States which were getting the idea that America could dictate the conditions. Hence, by continuing the

War it might become more difficult for us to hold our own." (Cab 23/14, 26.10.18)

By this time Britain owed the U.S. around 1,000 million pounds and had transferred 500 million in securities and 400 million in bullion to pay for its Great War. (Cab 23/9, 25.2.19)

The Imperial War Cabinet thus agreed to suspend military operations on the Western Front that were increasing U.S. power every day and instead use the Royal Navy, under the auspices of an Armistice, to gain the individual terms they required from Germany.

During the Armistice, the Royal Navy did its blockading work to secure Germany's surrender to the Peace Treaty. It is forgotten today that the Armistice signed on 11th November 1918, was for 36 days only, "with option to extend". It came up for renewal on December 12th and was renewed for another month. When it came up for renewal in January 1919, as the Peace Conference met, one of its first acts was to demand from Germany further concessions. This meant the handing over of the entire German merchant fleet to the Allies and 58,000 pieces of its best agricultural machinery, with spare parts, whilst the Royal Navy filtered the food supply into Germany to ensure compliance.

At the point of the Armistice, famine conditions were prevalent in many parts of Germany. More than 3,500 people were dying each day of hunger and malnutrition. In the eight months from the signing of the Armistice to the lifting of the Royal Navy blockade, after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, the records indicate that an additional 250,000 deaths occurred among civilians, above the normal pre-war death rate in Germany and Austria. Forty per cent of these deaths occurred in November 1918 alone, as the British intensified the blockade immediately after the Armistice. Deaths were particularly severe among women and children. Women in childbirth perished at a massive rate and infant mortality soared.

It seems that some had the thought of conquering Germany after it had been worn down by the Armistice Blockade. But, after 7 months of this Churchill urged "enough" on the following grounds:

"In my opinion it is of profound importance to reach a settlement with the present German Government, and to reach it as speedily as possible. Although the Allied armies can advance rapidly into Germany, we shall only find ourselves involved in greater difficulties with every step of our forward movement. Large masses of the German population will come upon our hands and we shall have to feed them and make them work. We shall be involved in an infinite series of political and social questions of the most painful complexity, and the rigorous enforcement of the renewed blockade would aggravate these difficulties... Our military strength is dwindling every day, not only through demobilisation but through the growing impatience of all ranks

to return home. The formidable pre-occupations which are arising in the East, where British interests are so pre-eminently engaged, must be taken into consideration before a policy which commits us to a long occupation of Germany if force is resorted to... I consider that we shall commit a political error of the first order if we are drawn into the heart of Germany in these conditions. We may easily be caught, as Napoleon was in Spain, and gripped in a position from which there is no retreat and where our strength will steadily be consumed. Meanwhile, what is going to happen in India, in Egypt, the Middle East, and in Turkey?... Our strength is ebbing every day, and although the excitement of a swift advance on Berlin might pull all ranks together for the moment, all the difficulties which I now envisage will recur with greatly increased force the moment the forward movement ceases. On every ground, therefore, I strongly urge settling up with the Germans now. Now is the time and it may be the only time, to reap the fruits of victory... Settle now while we have the power, or lose perhaps forever the power of settlement on the basis of a military victory.” (Lloyd George Papers, F/8/3/55, 20.6.19)

This was seen as the optimum moment for a British peace and the Versailles Treaty was signed a week later. The decks were cleared to deal with the Turks.

Lord Esher was not sad to see the failure of President Wilson’s fine phrases at Versailles. Things could now return to normality:

“Your news about Wilson and Paris is most interesting. How foolish old Buddha was to try walking up and down the Boulevards. The Paris Conference has at any rate succeeded in this: that a future war upon an even bigger scale becomes inevitable. It is something to have dispelled all doubt upon this point. It is not precisely what Wilson set out to do.” (Letter to his wife, 16.6.19)

During the Armistice the League of Nations was set up by the victors’ congress at Versailles, at which Britain was most prominent and influential. Lord Esher conducted an interesting correspondence with Lord Hankey. The two men had worked together in the Committee of Imperial Defence to plan the war against Germany and now the war had been won Hankey was being offered the job of first Secretary General of the League of Nations. Hankey sought Esher’s advice, as well as that of Lord Curzon, about whether this would be a good idea. It looked a good career move, but did it suit the State Hankey served?

Lord Curzon, the Foreign Secretary, advised Hankey:

“I am very doubtful whether the League of Nations is going to be the great and potent and world-pacifying instrument that its creators desire, and further I shrink from any decision that would turn you into an international official instead of one of the most valued and influential servants of your own country... Should you become the first Secy. General of the League of Nations, I quite grant that you are more than likely to make a success of it than any living man. But you will be away at Geneva. You will be serving a multitude of masters. The League will suffer many and great disappointments. It may even fail of much of its objects... On the other hand, if you remain in England you will be mainly responsible for turning the War Cabinet into a Peace Cabinet, for constituting the Imperial Cabinet of the future, and for moulding the future constitution

of the British Empire. There are great, imminent problems that cannot be shirked... These solutions will be a signpost in the history of the Empire and the progress of the world.” (Stephen Roskill, Hankey; Man of Secrets, vol.2, pp. 65-6)

The future of the world was going to be British Imperial rather than League of Nations. The future progress of the world was going to be decided in London and not in Geneva.

Hankey flirted with the idea that the League could be conducted on the lines of the CID and submitted a sketch plan of how it would work. But Esher quickly told him that the analogy was entirely false. The CID had a straightforward function, to make preparations for war whereas the League was nebulous in its objectives.

Esher told Hankey that “You must get your perspective right”. The Secretary-General of the League would be “cut off from the mainsprings of its life and power” and “I am certain if were you to hold that office you would be a wasted force for England.”

Esher humoured Hankey in his temptation to take the position of Secretary General but he advised him to reject it, to direct things at home:

“The League of Nations, should it survive, must be a plant of slow growth... You have planted a seed in Paris that will bear fruit one of these days, but it is not worthwhile for so accomplished a craftsman as you are to tend its growth through the coming years. It can be entrusted to less accomplished hands.” (February 18, 1919)

Lord Esher also told Hankey:

“You will perhaps think that I take too insular a view of the relative value to the world of Imperial England and a League of Nations. I detest vulgar swagger about Empire and hate the game of grab for slices of the world’s surface. But I am more convinced after this war than I was before of the collective importance to the world of the British Commonwealth and of the essential uses of collective English genius for the development of mankind. Therefore I am certain that even in the League of Nations, whenever executive action is required, the leverage will be in the hands of the Prime Minister of our country, who represents its aspirations and energies at the given moment.”

On December 7th Esher sent another letter to Hankey saying:

“Do not let us bother about a League of Nations... We can get a League of Empire... And the Imperial... idea, which contains within it the germ of the international idea, has got to develop or else we are back in 1914, and the bloody lesson of the last five years has been taught us in vain.”

The answer to Hankey’s question, as the correspondence shows, revolved around whether the League of Nations would amount to anything. Or, to put it more accurately, would Britain allow it to amount to anything. If Britain thought it would amount to something and a new era was dawning then Hankey was the man for the job. He would give it real power and

influence as it would be clear that Britain, the most powerful Empire in the world, was backing it with its greatest asset.

However, Curzon and Esher told Hankey to forget it. Esher urged Hankey to return to the Defence Committee and prepare his War Book for the next world conflict that would inevitably come after Versailles. That is where he would be most needed by his country and the Empire he served.

As a result Hankey turned down the job, which went instead to Lord Drummond, a less influential figure. From then on Britain used the League as its instrument, when required, and ignored it when it wished.

The draft constitution of the League, presented to the Conference by President Wilson, bore considerable resemblance to the Conference itself. The Executive Council, which retained all power, was controlled by the Five Allied Powers and the other delegates were left with little to do but to plead their cases, if they were allowed in at all. When Wilson's proposal of Mandates – as opposed to the establishment of Protectorates, or formal annexations - was made the *Times* took the new idea in its stride saying that “the principle which it embodies, after all, is nothing more than the principle on which our own Imperial system is based.” (29.1.19)

When Wilson conceded that the League of Nations would have no powers of interference over the trustees/mandated powers, the British were vindicated – Mandates were just a word inserted upon the establishment of Protectorates.

Here is an extract from one of the last letters Lord Esher sent to Hankey. This is a very important one – because to read it is to understand the British State's attitude to its Great War and the world.

In 1919 the world was in chaos because of the Great War Britain had fought against Germany and Ottoman Turkey, that had been waged recklessly and irresponsibly. The mess came about because of the fraudulent way Liberal England fought its war. Because the original plan put together by Esher and the CID to defeat Germany did not come off England widened and extended the war in order to win it. It took in more and more of the world, through moral blackmail, promises and treaties that were broken and peoples who were double crossed and cheated. And the U.S. participation complicated things again by injecting into it a new moralism just when the old one had been discredited by the Bolshevik exposure of the secret treaties. This came into conflict with Imperial power politics and had a very bad effect when all was revealed as a Great Fraud.

So here is Lord Esher's estimation of it all, from November 29th 1919, in a letter written to Hankey. This is the British State speaking in private and honestly about how its Great War was a great disillusion, even to itself – to all but the wisest and knowing. It was a Great Fraud perpetuated on the world. But cheer up, boys! The war had been a victory and the world was won - for now:

“Promises and performance: or the great disillusion. What a theme for Burke or Swift! Even a far humbler pen would be tempted to leave on record the fact that contemporaries of our eminent statesmen were not dupes of the Peace Conference, as nearly everyone but Byron and a few of the shrewder spirits were of Vienna and Metternich.

“A war to end all wars! Open Diplomacy! No Secret Treaties! A League of Nations! Self-determination! What has happened to all these fine phrases that not one of them has been translated into the faintest semblance of actuality. From the ashes of the holocaust of youths scattered over France and Flanders, Russia and Mesopotamia – the best blood and sinew of our race – others must hereafter arise destined to that same old Moloch of aimless war.

“But why gibe or complain? We have – that is to say the comfortable survivors – absorbed every German colony, we have annexed Northern Africa, we have realised Rhodes' mighty dream, we have created or are about to create a subject Arab Empire, we may yet become the overlords of the Holy (!) City. This is a noble record and the boys who gave their lives on sea and land and in the air have not died in vain. The Archbishops and Bishops give glory to God...

“Let us settle down and we will have a Cabinet of twenty-three, and a Defence Committee, and a War Book, as in the good old days...” □

International Brigades Not There For Regime Change!

Reply to the Address by the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins, to the International Brigade Memorial Trust, by Manus O'Riordan, IBMT Ireland Secretary, 15 October 2016.

A Uachtaráin, a chara, Mr. President, compañero Presidente!

We are inspired by your address today. You have kept the honour of Ireland's flag flying high, as you always have done, because, in your passing references to Bob Doyle, it was you who personally launched Bob's memoirs here in Liberty Hall in 2009. So, you have been continually associated with us, as you have been continually associated with causes of international solidarity, including your defence of the democratically elected government of Nicaragua.

Let us be clear. There was never an International Brigade formed to overthrow General Franco. The International Brigades were not there for regime change! They were there for regime defence: the defence of the elected government of the Spanish Republic. But in the zeal for regime change that now permeates the world, we are, in fact, in a cycle of many wars. And we know the stand that you have taken for peace. We know that in the cycle of a quarter of a century that has developed out of “Operation Desert Storm” and the first Iraq war, we also know the stand that Sabina (wife of the President – MO'R) took! And I am pleased that she is present with you here today, because I remember that when she was debating “Operation Desert Storm”, and the horrors of that war, and the photographs of dead soldiers in the desert, there was an “armchair general” columnist (Eoghan Harris - MO'R) who debated with Sabina on radio, and said: “*I had a good war, Sabina!*”

Now, nobody who fought in the International Brigades talked of having had a good war. They talked about fighting the Good Fight! Reference was made by the President to Frank Edwards who, in “*Even the Olives Are Bleeding*”, said that his experience of war gave him an abiding hatred of war. That is
(Continued p. 25)

Football and War in Yugoslavia

By John Martin

**Review: *Le Dernier Pénalty* by Gigi Riva
Published by Seuil, 2016.**

This book revolves around a 1990 World Cup quarter final football match. But not the match that every Irish person of a certain age will remember. Not the one in which Salvatore Schillaci, the balding Sicilian, with the passionate eyes and a face that looked older than his years fired into an open goal after Packie Bonner had stumbled while parrying a shot from Donadoni. The Italy v Ireland match of 1990 that absorbed the passions of this nation does not even rate a mention! And nor should it! There were no consequences more substantial than the end of a party.

But the same could not be said of another quarter-final match of that World Cup or at least that is the tentative thesis of this book. The match was between Yugoslavia and Maradona's Argentina. It ended in a nil all draw after extra time and Argentina won on penalties. The last Yugoslav penalty was missed by a Bosnian Muslim called Faruk Hadzibegic.

The book opens by describing a journey Faruk makes back to the land that was once called Yugoslavia, more than a quarter of a century after he missed that fateful penalty. When he arrives in Belgrade the customs official sighs when the passport is presented to him: "If only you had not missed that penalty, the destiny of our country could have been different".

Faruk then crosses the border to Croatia where he is greeted with the exact same comment. Eventually, he arrives in his home town of Sarajevo where a boy asks him could he take a "selfie". The ex footballer feels that he is on safe ground since the boy could not have been born in 1990. But after thanking Faruk, he says that the picture is not for him, but his father who always says: "if only you had not missed that penalty....".

The author notices that there is no rancour or bitterness in the comments. He thinks people have more sympathy for the frailty of a Hector than the hardness of Achilles. Or perhaps they see Faruk as having been the bearer of a destiny rather than its determinant.

But could it be true? Could a football match have determined the destiny of Yugoslavia? The author, who is Italian, recalls an event from his own country's history. In July 1948 a right wing student called Antonio Pallante attempted to assassinate the leader of the Communist Party Palmiro Togliatti. Bullets hit his neck and back but Togliatti survived. The outrage caused by the act brought Italy to the brink of civil war until the nation was distracted by the heroics of an Italian cyclist, Gino Bartali, who closed a twenty-minute gap on the French rider Louison Bobet to win the Tour de France. And so, insurrection was averted... or so it is popularly believed. It is forgotten that a more significant event was Togliatti rising from his hospital bed to denounce talk of an armed uprising as "adventurism".

Could the same be said of Yugoslavia: sport might be a metaphor for great political events but it has no influence

on them? Nevertheless, sport and in particular football was intertwined with Yugoslav politics.

Faruk appears to have been one of the few Yugoslavs who was oblivious to politics. His football career ran in a parallel line to political events. He remembers the sheer joy he experienced as a child when his beloved FK Sarejavo won the Yugoslav championship for the first time, beating a team from Kosovo in their last match. That was in the 1966/67 season. It is understandable that a nine year old did not consider the disastrous implications of Tito's purging of Alexander Rankovic in the same period. The latter favoured a more centralised State. Tito followed this by allowing nationalist movements to organise in Croatia and Slovenia. Had the great man gone soft!

The young Faruk was more interested in his career as a footballer. In 1985 Sarejavo won the Yugoslav championship for the second time. This time Faruk was a player. His prowess as an attacking full back was noticed by foreign football clubs. The Communist regime allowed footballers to ply their trade abroad once they reached the age of 27 and Faruk was allowed pursue a successful career in the Spanish and French leagues. From time to time some of his French and Spanish colleagues remarked on the developing turmoil in his native country, but he always felt that it would blow over and a compromise would be reached. The author suggests that Yugoslavia was a beautiful woman who concealed her flaws from Faruk. But perhaps it is more true to say that he was completely absorbed by his lucrative career.

He had every opportunity to take an interest since he came in contact with one of the leading players in the war.

In the 1980s the communist regime wondered why its national football team was not more successful. Over the years the country had produced some fantastic players that had played for the most prestigious teams in Europe. Also its football coaches were in demand all over the world. So, if it was not lack of athleticism or technical knowledge what was the problem? This reviewer suspects the problem was of a political nature. Perhaps the regime knew this, but it nevertheless decided to seek a psychological solution. Considerable resources were mobilised to train psychologists to remedy the mental frailties of their footballers. However, the message the psychologists imparted had a strong political component.

One such psychologist deployed to the Sarejavo club was Radovan Karadzic. He urged the players to transcend ethnic and religious divisions so as to work for the good of the team. It seems the players didn't take him too seriously. He was a Serb, who was born in a village in Montenegro. They thought he was a naïve mountain man (a *culchie*?). The author comments that this was an element in the war. Serbs saw themselves as representing rural values against the cosmopolitanism and corruption of the cities. The other ethnic groups looked down on them.

Karadzic seems to have been besotted with football. While he was on the run from *the International Criminal Tribunal for*

the former Yugoslavia he still made time to see his favourite Serb footballers, Sinisa Mihajlovic and Dejan Stankovic play in the Italian league.

In spite of his contact with Karadzic, Faruk was barely aware of the political turmoil that was about to tear the country apart. However, it was obvious to the rest of the population. Tito died on 4th of May 1980. The news was announced over the public address system in the 41st minute of a match between Hajduk Split and Red Star Belgrade. The captain of the Hajduk Split team Zlatko Vujovic was overcome with emotion and burst into tears. The fifty thousand crowd and the two opposing teams erupted into a well known song with the inspirational lyrics: "Comrade Tito we all swear to you that we will never deviate from your way". But the abiding memory of that night was the eerie silence that followed. There was fear and foreboding in that stadium at the thought of a Yugoslavia without Tito.

The Croatian football club Hajduk Split was the team that Marshall Tito supported. It has often been remarked that that team never won anything after he died. Somehow the referees never again seemed so kind! Ten years after his death Hajduk Split was host to another memorable occasion. On 26th of September, 1990 the home team was trailing Partizan Belgrade by two goals when the Hajduk Split supporters invaded the pitch attacking the Belgrade players and supporters with iron bars. Most significantly, they then proceeded to burn the national flag of Yugoslavia.

By 1990 the storm clouds had gathered. The last Congress of the League of Communists took place in January 1990 when the Croatian and Slovenian delegations walked out. In May 1990 a football match, which had no sporting significance, took place in the Croatian city of Zagreb. Regardless of the result of that match the local team Dynamo Zagreb would finish second in the championship and the visitors, Red Star Belgrade were already champions.

About 3,000 supporters of Red Star travelled to the match. They were led by Zeljko Raznatovic, who later became known to the world as "Arkan", the leader of a Serbian paramilitary force during the war. Also, present that day was Franjo Tudjman, who was to become the first President of the newly independent Croatia. Violence erupted between the two sets of supporters. The police intervened ... in order to attack the Zagreb supporters!

To the outside observer it might seem surprising that the police would abandon all pretence of impartiality to attack the home supporters. But it must be remembered that Red Star Belgrade was the football club of the Yugoslav State police. The police – even in Croatia – was controlled and largely manned by Serbians, who were all members of the communist party.

Most of the players left the field but the young captain of Dynamo Zagreb decided to "have a go". Zvonimir Boban, who was later to win a champions league medal with AC Milan, kicked one of the policemen in the head. At his subsequent disciplinary hearing the police produced a doctored video tape suggesting Boban's action was unprovoked. The original "unedited" video tape was broadcast on German television giving a different perspective. This reviewer finds it interesting that the Germans were taking such a close interest in Yugoslav football. Subsequent statements from Boban suggest that he was not motivated purely by self defence. The book quotes him as follows: "As a public figure I was prepared to risk my life and career to bring glory to the Croatian cause".

It appears that there are many Croatians who consider the outbreak of war in 1991 as being "football by other means". At the entrance to Dynamo Zagreb's stadium there is a plaque dedicated "to the supporters of this team, who on this ground began the war against Serbia on the 13th of May 1990" (the date of the Zagreb-Red Star Belgrade match).

The political evolution of Franjo Tudjman is an example of the close connection between politics and football. The future Croatian President fought with Tito's Partisans during the Second World War. He was known for his orthodox Marxist Leninism and rose to the rank of Major General in the Yugoslav army. In the mid 1960s he became the President of Partizan Belgrade football club. It was noted earlier that Red Star Belgrade was the football club of the Yugoslav police. Well, Partizan Belgrade was the Yugoslav Army's football club.

His changing political allegiances kept in step with his football allegiances. When he ceased to be a communist around the late 1960s he became a fanatical Dynamo Zagreb supporter. On becoming President following Croatian independence one of his first acts was to decree that the club would drop the word "Dynamo" from its name on the grounds that it sounded too socialist. But football fans are notoriously conservative. Even the most die-hard of nationalists could never think of Zagreb as being anything other than "dynamic". After Tudjman died in 1999 the natural order was restored and its original name was re-instated.

Meanwhile, back in 1990 Yugoslavia's preparations for the World Cup were not going well. Boban was suspended for 4 months for kicking the policeman (and starting the war). This made him ineligible for the World Cup. FIFA suspended another star player, Mehmed Bazdarevic, for spitting on a referee in an international match in November 1989. This player, who had been voted player of the year in the French league, was banned from international football for a year. There were also a number of injuries, most notably to their greatest player, Dragan Stojkovic, who had recurring problems with his knees. The Yugoslav manager, a Bosnian Croat called Ivica Osim, said he would still play him even if he had to put an armchair in the middle of the pitch!

On the 3rd of June Yugoslavia played a friendly against the Netherlands. The match was played, in of all places, the home ground of Dynamo Zagreb. To the astonishment of the Dutch, the home team was booed by the local supporters and the away team was cheered. Yugoslavia lost two nil.

Morale was not good by the time the team arrived in Italy for the World Cup. In its first match it played against West Germany: a match between a country that was about to be unified against one that was on the verge of dissolution. The author meditates on the relationship between the two countries. Nazi Germany bombed Belgrade in 1941 and occupied it until the end of 1944. The defeat of the Nazis by the Red Army and the Partisans was experienced as a liberation by the Serbs, but as a defeat by the Croats. It appears that while Croatia was given autonomy in Yugoslavia, the Serbs thought it prudent to maintain control of the Police and Army.

Germany was the first to recognise Croatian Independence and when it happened in 1991 the Croats felt that they could be themselves, which was not always a pretty sight. This was reflected in football matches where there have been numerous expressions of fascist sentiment. The most recent example was

the display of a swastika on a pitch during a match between Croatia and Italy in 2015 at the Hajduk Split ground.

The West Germans thrashed the Yugoslavs 4 to 1 in their first match of the 1990 world cup. The Yugoslavia team was eviscerated in the country's media. There were dark comments about "fifth columns" and ethnic prejudice in the team selection. Although the manager conceded that his tactics were wrong the hostility he experienced was such that he refused to speak to the Yugoslav media in Serbo Croat. From then on all press conferences and interviews on Yugoslav State television would be held in French!

In the second match the team easily beat a good Columbian team 1 nil and then swept aside the United Arab Emirates. Having finished second in the group Yugoslavia qualified for the next round beating Spain with two fantastic goals from Stojkovic. The team was beginning to find its form. The author notes that even though the game was played in a stadium only 250 km from the Yugoslav border the Spanish fans heavily outnumbered the Yugoslavs.

The next match was the quarter final against Argentina, which was played in Florence, which the author notes was the home town of Niccolo Machiavelli. He also tells us that Henry Kissinger was at the game. In the 31st minute a Yugoslav defender was sent off following a harmless tackle on Diego Maradona. Maradona writhed in agony on the ground only to make a miraculous recovery once the red card had been shown. We don't know how Kissinger reacted but the author assures us that Machiavelli would have smiled.

In the heat of Florence the challenge faced by the 10 man Yugoslavia team seemed almost insurmountable. However, they held out for the remaining 59 minutes of normal time and the 30 minutes of extra time. For long periods of the match they were the better team, but could not score.

Before the penalty shoot out the mercurial Yugoslav manager made a bizarre announcement to his players. He said that he had done everything he could, but it was now up to them. A penalty shoot out has nothing to do with technique or tactics, their fate was in the lap of the Gods. The author notes that there are some Managers who look at penalty shoot-outs through the gaps in their fingers; a tiny minority retire to the stand. But Ivica Osim was not a man for half measures. He left the stadium entirely!

After the teams had taken three penalties each the score was 2 all. Bizarrely, Stojkovic and Maradona, the two star players for each team had missed their penalties. The next player from Argentina missed his penalty, which gave the advantage to Yugoslavia. Faruk Hadzibegic stepped up to take the fourth penalty when the referee intervened. He insisted incorrectly that Faruk was down to take the last penalty. Accordingly, the Yugoslav player due to take the last penalty was told to take the fourth one. He rushed up to the penalty spot like a man trying to catch the last train and not surprisingly missed. The next Argentine player scored his penalty making it 3 to 2. The destiny of the country was now thrust on the shoulders of the apolitical Faruk with the result we all know.

The Yugoslavs were robbed! But could the country have gone on to win the World Cup? In this reviewer's opinion the answer to that question is a definite Yes. The year after that World Cup Red Star Belgrade, consisting mostly of Serbs, won the European Club championship beating Olympique Marseille

in a tedious final after a penalty shootout. But it should be remembered that Marseille which was then owned by the billionaire Bernard Tapie had players from all over the world, including the gifted Serb Dragan Stojkovic who could only play 20 minutes of the match because of yet another injury.

Red Star Belgrade went on to beat the South American champions 3-0 to become "world club champions". The victory was all the more sweet because the Manager of the South Americans was a Croat!

Yugoslavia was banned from taking her place in the European Championship of 1992 as part of the UN sanctions against the country. She was replaced by Denmark who finished behind Yugoslavia in the qualifying group and went on to win the European championship that year.

Yugoslav teams could not enter the 1994 World Cup, but both Croatia and Serbia (including Montenegro) qualified for the 1998 tournament. Croatia reached the semi final losing narrowly to the eventual winners France.

So, not only could Yugoslavia have won the World Cup in 1990, a strong case could be made that the lead up to the war as well as the war itself scotched a golden era of Yugoslav football.

But could the direction of causation have been reversed? Could a victory in the 1990 World Cup have somehow averted the war? Could the resulting outbreak of joy from Ljubljana to Skopje and from Zagreb to Belgrade in a country that loves its football - "not wisely but too well" - have dissolved ethnic tensions?

It is impossible to say, but it just so happens that Yugoslavia did achieve sporting success in Basketball in 1990. In that year's world championship Yugoslavia with a team evenly distributed between Serbs and Croats beat the millionaire basket players of the USA in the semi final 99 to 91 and then slaughtered the Soviet Union in the final 92 to 75. But winning the Basketball world championship was not enough to redeem Yugoslavia. A case could be made that football is different. Basketball is "show biz" with a score every few seconds whereas football is a game with long periods of tedium and tension punctuated with rare moments of ecstasy. It is much more like life and therefore its impact is far greater.

The idea that a football match could have saved Yugoslavia is a beautiful dream, but that's all it is: a dream. Nevertheless, what *is* real is the wish that the recent history of Yugoslavia could have been different. It appears from this book that there is a widespread belief within Yugoslavia that the rise of nationalism, fomented from outside the country, only brought war, poverty, corruption and criminality.

The author also thinks that people have a need to cope with dramatic events in human terms. In about the 12th century BC Greece fought a war against Troy for control of the commercially lucrative Bosphorus Straits and Dardanelles. But we prefer the fairytale of Homer: Paris eloped with the beautiful Helen, who abandoned her husband and sought refuge in Troy. The Greeks organised an expedition to punish the city, which sheltered the unfaithful one. And the trickery of Ulysees brought victory after a ten year siege.

We know it's not true, but we can't help believing it. Troy was destroyed by a *femme fatale* and Yugoslavia... by a fatal penalty! □

Forgotten: Our First Great War Ireland in the Crimean Front 1853-55

By Pat Muldowney

The Great War of 1914-18 has been relentlessly pushed as “Our War”---Ireland’s contribution to modern industrial slaughter. Especially as we went AWOL from the 1939-45 follow-up war.

So why the neglect of our Forgotten War of 1853-55? There are monuments galore to this war all over Ireland, but the whole affair is so completely “Forgotten” that nobody knows the significance of our numerous decorative cannon stamped with the double-headed eagle insignia of Tsar Nicholas I.

Maybe our many Balaklava memorials are thought to refer to menacing modern paramilitaries, so we should just keep quiet about them and pretend not to notice them. Now that we live in changed political circumstances, have we fallen so low that we are afraid to remember and celebrate the 28 Victoria Crosses won by our very own gallant heroes who made the supreme sacrifice at places like Alma and Inkerman and the Redan? Remember them?

It was not all about Florence Nightingale and the Valley of the Shadow of Death. It was, in effect, a World War, with battlefronts in the Baltic, the Danube Valley, the Caucasus, the White Sea, and the Pacific coast of Siberia. The fact that the war as a whole is called after one part of it---the Black Sea front---may partly explain why we have such a narrow view of it. That, along with militaristic British television history entertainment.

“In the parishes of Whitegate, Aghada and Farsid in County Cork in Ireland, where the British army recruited heavily, almost one third of the male population died in the Crimean War.” (David Murphy, Ireland and the Crimean War (2002).)

Ireland contributed about a third of the manpower of the British army. Pro rata, this was a much heavier commitment than 1914-18; and unlike 1914-18 there was no effective political challenge or protest in Ireland. According to Murphy’s account, in the United States former Young Irelanders/future Fenians Thomas Clarke Luby, John Mitchel, Michael Doheny and John O’Mahony approached the Russian Ambassador to ask for a supply of arms to attempt a rebellion in Ireland. They also countered British attempts to recruit in the USA, in breach of American neutrality.

According to a History Ireland article by David Murphy (available online) a huge feast for 4000 Irish survivors of the war, along with 1000 of their immediate relatives, was held in a bonded warehouse at Customs House Docks in Dublin in 1856. So everyone was happy, everyone was proud. What has happened to our Remembrance lobby since that time? Where did it all go wrong?

Russia in Crimea. Russian military expansionism. Russia “defending Christians” against belligerent Middle East Muslims, whether in the Danube Basin or Armenia or Aleppo. This all

sounds suspiciously contemporary. The warfronts mentioned above mark the north, south, east and west borders of the Russian Empire, not unlike NATO encirclement today.

So maybe there is some merit in taking another look at one of Our Forgotten Wars. Who or what caused it? Russia has done quite a bit of invading of its own. But not usually against the west, except in defence or retaliation. In an era when religious belief was still strong, why was the Christian west aligned with its ancient Muslim adversary in Europe, against Christian Russia?

Who were the good guys and the bad guys in 1853-55? Who actually won? What were the consequences, if any? What is it with western conflict with Russia? Where does all that come from? What did it have to do with Ireland in the 1850s? There’s not much use in relying on British television war history for any of this.

The roots go back to the Roman Empire. What is legitimate authority, and where does it come from? A band of young fighting men on a hillside can appoint a leader by shouting loudly for their preferred axe-swinger, and by smashing the skull of any competitor. Religious belief became the basis of the legitimate exercise of power in accordance with law. Uniformity of religious belief was the basis of consent to law and legitimate authority. Obedience to law eventually came to depend on written records.

As such, the Roman Empire, even after it fell, constituted a model for government, law, administration, and “legitimate power”. After adopting the “universal” Christian religion it divided into western and eastern components, until non-Christian Germanic peoples triggered the collapse of the western part, leaving the eastern or Byzantine component as holder of legitimacy in the form of Roman inheritance.

There were a number of senior Christian bishoprics or patriarchates, including in Jerusalem where this religion originated. In a very tricky and contended ceremony (“Who conferred what on whom? Who had the Right?”) the Christian Bishop of Rome colluded with Frankish (north west German, and now Christian) king Charlemagne to recreate the long-defunct western Roman Emperorship. This continued in the form of the Holy Roman Empire until it was defeated and abolished by Napoleon---although the Habsburg element of it continued until the defeat of Austria-Hungary in 1918.

A religious split, or schism, developed between the Roman Empire based in Constantinople and the new-fangled Holy Roman Empire in the west. This reflected the political contest for supremacy between the continuing Roman authority in Byzantium and the chronically troubled papal-imperial alliance of Rome and Aachen. More fundamentally, the religious difference meant that each of these systems was now

illegitimate in the eyes of the other. (The political effects of a similar religious split in the sixteenth century were mitigated by a decision of the political leaders on both sides to marginalise, in the Treaty of Westphalia, the supernatural or divine aspect of political authority.)

In the post-schism centuries western crusading aggression was directed against Muslim power in the Holy Lands, but did little to help Byzantium, rather the reverse. Just like Rome in the fifth century, Byzantium was defeated by a new non-Christian power in the fifteenth century, after being thoroughly weakened by crusader meddling and treachery.

The mantle of Byzantium was taken up by emerging Russia to the north, which had adopted Orthodox Christianity when Prince Vladimir of Kiev took baptism in Crimea. Just like the Germanic tribes in the west, this move to imposition of a universal system of belief was done for reasons of political stability and consent of his subjects to his power. One God, one King, no problem. "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's", etc.

The other centres of emerging Russian power, in Moscow, and in Novgorod adjoining the Baltic, followed this choice of universal religious belief. They had emerged under Scandinavian or Viking overlordship, and the relationship with Sweden, itself a great western power, remained problematic; likewise Poland. Russia ultimately conquered Sweden's Baltic territories; also Poland-Lithuania.

A weakening Byzantium would, at the end of its tether, have submitted to the west in order to preserve itself; but this was rejected by the new Russian powers, who had reason to be cautious about western incursion. In addition to the eastern crusades, northern crusaders such as the Holy Roman Empire's Teutonic Knights had ploughed a bloody swathe through the Slavic populations of the Baltic coast, until stopped by Russia. The line about Hamlet's father King Claudius---'*So frown'd he once, when, in an angry parle, he smote the sledded Polack on the ice*'---sounds a bit like a garbled historical reference to Alexander Nevsky's 1242 defeat of the Teutonic Knights on frozen Lake Peipus; the Battle of the Eis (or Ice), which for Russia is like Brian Boru and the Battle of Clontarf.

For the Orthodox Slavs of north or south, alliance with the west was not an obvious choice. In 1389 Orthodox Serbia was defeated by the Ottomans in the Battle of Kosovo Field, the founding event of Serb nationality. Yet seven years later, when the Christian west launched one of its final Crusades against Islam, Christian Serbia fought alongside Muslim Turks against Hungary, France and the Holy Roman Empire (Germany-Italy) in the 1396 Battle of Nicopolis, in which the west was defeated.

In the Great Power stakes, France, England and Spain succeeded in establishing a central authority or statehood for themselves (unlike the Holy Roman Empire and Poland, both of which lost out on grounds of splintered political agency; in a sense the latter countries were too democratic too soon). A bit later, Russia and Prussia likewise established effective central power. In Russia's case, the Prussian-born Catherine the Great extended Russian power to the east, west and south, and by the nineteenth century the Black Sea littoral from the Caucasus through Crimea to the Danube was largely controlled by Russia.

In almost continuous warfare, Russia gained territory and/or influence in formerly Muslim and Ottoman-controlled lands, including in the Orthodox parts of the Danube Basin and the Balkans. Earlier, the Catholic west had rolled back the Turks from Vienna and Budapest.

Russia came close to capturing Istanbul/Constantinople. But when Egypt (under Muhammed Ali---a name to remember!---an Albanian born in Greece, the "father of modern Egypt") sought to overthrow Istanbul, Russia came to its rescue. In effect, Turkey in decline was not intended by Russia to fall into the clutches of anybody else but Russia itself. The war-mongering Tsar Nicholas I was relentless in pursuing his designs on the Muslim Caucasus on the East Coast of the Black Sea, the Orthodox Lower Danube area of its west coast, and even on Constantinople itself.

But Russia was not the only power with designs on Turkey. Inter-Christian sectarian squabbling in Jerusalem and the Holy Places (think "human rights violations") was the excuse for Britain and France to intervene on Turkey's behalf against Russia in 1853. (This latest round of the continuing Russian-Ottoman conflict had actually started earlier.)

In reality, Britain feared that Russia had designs on its Indian Empire and wanted to stop it in its tracks. After the defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte, the Emperor Napoleon III wanted to re-establish France as a major power. Also, according to Orlando Figes' book *Crimea* (2010), Napoleon III wanted to ingratiate himself with French Catholics by going to war supposedly to protect the Catholic interest in Jerusalem against Orthodox inroads.

So it was just another Crusade, after all. There is no way to spin this sordid saga as a war of good against evil, a war for democracy, for small nations etc etc. This may be a reason why Irish Anglophile extremists have not resurrected "Our" Crimean War for the purposes of Remembrance and glorification. Or maybe the explanation is even simpler. Britain's own Remembrance zealots seem to prefer to draw a veil over nineteenth century warfare---opium wars, repression of India, civilian concentration camps, genocide etc etc. Their Irish camp followers have no ideas or initiative of their own, so they just imitate their masters.

The Crimean War itself saw the tail end of the warfare of the Napoleonic era, and the beginning of more modern, innovative kinds of killing: heavy artillery barrages, trenches, steamships, railways, telegraph communications, mass manipulation of public opinion and so on. Dublin-born war correspondent William Howard Russell played a part in involving the British public in the day to day course of the war. Not forgetting Florence Nightingale and the Charge of the Light Brigade.

An Armistice was called when the Russian fort of Sevastopol in Crimea fell after a long siege. The French Army outshone all the other forces in military professionalism. The Russian serf army resisted doggedly and took heavy casualties. The Russian military medical corps made dramatic advances in anaesthesia, surgery and triage. France was most keen to end hostilities. Britain wanted to continue the war---after all, France was doing the heavy lifting---in order to see off Russia once and for all. Just like today.

The autocratic Tsar Nicholas had to be heavily leaned on by his officers and ministers to finally make a peace. Mentally and spiritually destroyed by the wreckage of his life's ambition in Crimea, Nicholas died and was succeeded by Tsar Alexander II who sought to reverse the course taken by his father, liberating the serfs and instituting numerous other reforms until his assassination in 1881.

Crimea was a pivotal point in Russian history. Tolstoy enlisted in it and began his career as author and spiritual guru by writing of his Crimean experience. Ukrainian separatism was boosted by the war. Seeing no prospect of being able to defend far-distant Alaska against Britain/Canada, Alexander II sold it to neutral USA. Russian warfare in the Caucasus continued under Alexander.

Which side actually won? Nineteenth century Turkey can hardly be called a winner. A "New Ottoman" movement started, precursors of the Young Turks. But western infiltration advanced to new levels. And on the Russian side, Orthodox Christian and Slav nationalist movements made further inroads in the Balkans and Lower Danube.

Russia lost the Crimean War. But it was a defeat on points, not a knockout. Russia's power in the strategic Black Sea was tamed. Sevastopol was taken with much bloodshed, but was returned to Russia in the Paris Peace Treaty. On the other hand, the fort of Kars on Turkey's Caucasus border was captured by Russia, but likewise returned in the Treaty.

The net loss to Russia was Bessarabian territory on the border of modern Ukraine, in the volatile region where Ottoman clashed with Russian/Slav, and where the war started. This was given to Moldavia, under Ottoman control.

This was the most momentous outcome of the war, because of the role played by neutral Austria which had imperial interests in that region. Crimea is the bridge between the Napoleonic Wars and the Great War of 1914-18. Napoleon Bonaparte sought to establish nation-states in Europe. In alliance with Austria, Russia rolled him back from Moscow to Paris. A resistance faction in Prussia aligned itself with Russia; and the North German Confederation, precursor to modern Germany, was formed from the rubble of the Holy Roman Empire which had been wound up by Napoleon. Curiously the latter persisted in the form of the Holy Alliance between Austria and Russia--or between the Kaiser and the Tsar.

Even more curiously, the Holy Alliance was predicated on the issue of Legitimate Authority. Though not seen as such, the Holy Alliance temporarily ended the Great Schism of the Eastern and Western "Roman Empires", and the historic differences between the two over what constituted Legitimate Authority.

In the face of the revolutionary democratic ideas launched by the French Revolution and propagated worldwide by Napoleon, Kaiser and Tsar agreed that they themselves embodied Legitimate Authority, and their alliance controlled Europe until mid-century. Putting his money where his mouth was, in 1848 Tsar Nicholas sent a huge army to put down the Hungarian revolution, thus saving the Austrian Empire. But a mere five years later Austria remained neutral when Britain and France (and Sardinia-Piedmont, the precursor of modern Italy) came to the aid of Muslim Turkey against Christian Russia in

Crimea. This was the Austrian "stab-in-the-back" on which Russia brooded.

Even though a version of the Holy Alliance was recreated by Bismarck, in the form of the League of Three Emperors, this served Prussia/Germany more than it did Austria. Prior to that, Russia did not lift a finger to help Austria as Italy broke free, and later when Prussia defeated Austria in the war of 1866 which produced the Second Reich and modern Germany. Russia was at the root of Austria's Balkan-Serbian problems which kicked off the Great War and the final dissolution of the Austrian/Holy Roman Empire.

Before Crimea, France was dissatisfied with the subordinate position assigned to it by the 1815 Congress of Vienna. After Crimea, France was joined by a Russia dissatisfied with having its wings clipped in the Treaty of Paris. Their new friendship persisted over the ensuing decades and culminated in the Great War. The final defence against the Great War was breached when the League of Three Emperors (Germany, Russia, Austria) was dissolved by post-Bismarckian German mismanagement.

All things considered, the Russian remnant of the ancient Roman Empire continues to play a significant role.

What about Ireland's response to Crimea? David Murphy's book quotes ballads of the period:

*The batteries of Sevastopol, the world did surprise,
And it was hard to take it, the enemy were so wise,
But Paddy's sons, with British guns, their valour did display,
Together with the men of France, thank God they gained the day.*

Two years later (1857) the "Indian Mutiny" started:

*Now India's on fire, your aid is required
At John Bull's desire go lay down your life,
As you did at Alma, Inkerman and the Redan,
Which caused many an orphan and wife to mourn.
March off to the slaughter without any falter,
If you fall in the struggle, no more is about you,
Don't talk of Erin, her sad habitation,
But win all the laurels for England you can.* □

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

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

Sean O'Casey and the 1956 Hungarian Uprising

by Manus O'Riordan

Dr David Krause was the editor of the monumental four volume set of *The Letters of Sean O'Casey 1955-58*, and in his introduction for the year 1956 in Volume III (1989) he wrote:

"It was Communist politics ... that prompted O'Casey to tell a Dublin woman in late November 1956 that the Soviet army's invasion that crushed the Hungarian Rising was a tragic necessity. The woman's husband, an Irish Communist, agreed with O'Casey, but she was a Catholic who saw the invasion as an outrageous act of Russian tyranny... This difficult year closed with several tragic ironies for O'Casey. His young son Niall (21), home (on December 14) for the Christmas holiday from London University, agreed with the Dublin woman's view of Russian tyranny in Hungary. This led to a painful father-and-son confrontation, which was fortunately resolved by an emotional reconciliation and agreement to disagree... On the 29th of December Niall died of leukemia." (pp 236-7).

Three of Krause's volumes contain letters from Sean O'Casey (1880-1964) to both of my parents, Michael O'Riordan (1917-2006), the then General Secretary of the Irish Workers' League (and of its successors, the Irish Workers' Party and the Communist Party of Ireland), and Kay Keohane O'Riordan (1910-1991). These letters had been given on loan to Krause to copy for his project, and I remember him visiting our home in the early 1960s for this purpose. It is a pity that he made little effort to understand my mother, when the opportunity was open for him to do so in direct conversation with her. She most certainly was not "a Dublin woman", even if she had set up our family home there from 1947. She was, in fact, a proud West Cork woman. And it was a misrepresentation of the differences between my parents regarding the 1956 Hungarian Uprising, to portray them as being between a Communist husband and a Catholic wife, as if my mother were some sort of Cardinal Mindzenty partisan. It was in fact a dispute between two Communists, with my father championing the CPSU's Khrushchev, while my mother defended the Hungarian Uprising's Communist Premier, Imre Nagy.

True, my mother was also a practising Catholic by religion, as was her sister and my own godmother, Máire Keohane Sheehan (1909-1975), Secretary of the Cork Branch of the IWL/IWP/CPI. Indeed, it was as much an expression of political hostility to the "Red" in their midst, as of their own piety, that near neighbours of my aunt on Cork's Boreenmanna Road chose to name their house "Mindzenty"! My father honestly described my mother's world view in his funeral oration for her in December 1991, as one who disputed both with Catholics who questioned her right to be a Communist and with Communists who questioned her right to be a Catholic. My mother went from church to church across Dublin city, being denied the sacrament of confession as soon as she would unashamedly inform the priest in the confession box that she was an IWL member, until she at last found a Carmelite confessor in Whitefriars' Street who would accept her on her own terms, and it was from that church, rather than her Harrington Street parish church, that her funeral took place.

Wenowalsohavedocumentaryevidenceofmymother'scommitted

solidarity with the USSR prior to Khrushchev's crushing of the 1956 Hungarian Uprising, that is very far removed from the detached, Catholic, non-Communist image of her conveyed by Krause. In his just-published book, *Irish-Soviet Diplomatic and Friendship Relations 1917-1991*, Michael Quinn writes:

"That the Irish-USSR Society (established in Dublin in 1945) managed to operate in the social permafrost formed by the pincer movement of bitter domestic anti-communism and international Cold War rhetoric is testament to the remarkable talents and stoicism of its members - chiefly its women. Helena Early, Daisy McMackin, Anne Peache, Dora Sabin, Kay O'Riordan, and the prolific Secretary, Hilda Allberry, combined to sustain for a decade a productive programme of activities and friendship with the Soviet Union that defied all the odds stacked against them... The cooperative spirit among the members for their cause can also be seen from the contribution of Kay O'Riordan, née Keohane. Originally from Clonakilty, West Cork, she and her Cork city husband Michael had moved to Dublin in 1947... While Michael took up the role of General Secretary with the IWL, it was Kay, described by Michael himself as '*both a convinced Christian and a convinced Communist*', who was active in the Society. Her contribution included the despatch to the Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries in Moscow of: '*A set of gramophone records of traditional Irish music including such items as 'Fair Una', 'Little Red Sally', 'Eileen Aroon', 'The Cause of my Sorrow' sung in Gaelic (Irish). A translation of these songs, and a brief article on our folk music was also sent to them*.'" (pp 196 and 295). (Quinn was quoting from a report by the Irish-USSR Society's Organising Secretary, dated 3 July 1952. The original Irish language titles of the songs sent to Moscow by my mother in 1952 were: "Úna Bhán", "Sail Óg Rua", "Eibhlin a Rúin" and "'Sé Fáth Mo Bhuartha".)

Like my father, I myself have been a convinced atheist since 1969. But during my teens, I also might have been described as a Christian Communist, having been raised as a Catholic by my Christian Communist mother. This was not without its amusing elements during my infancy, when it was customary to soften the blow of family bereavement by telling a child that Grandad or Granny "has gone to Heaven". And so it was that one day in early March 1953, when I was not yet four years of age, as the editor of the IWL bulletin, *The Irish Workers' Voice*, called to our home, I took it upon myself to break the news to him that "*Joe Stalin has gone to Heaven*"! But there were less amusing features when, during both the 1951 and 1954 General Elections, the Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid, decreed that a letter be read out at all Masses in the constituency where my father was an IWL candidate, dictating that it would be a mortal sin to vote for him. And, while our own parish was not in that constituency, as my mother brought me to Mass in 1954 we had to pass billboards on the church railings loudly proclaiming the then lead headline of the *Catholic Standard* newspaper: "**Don't Vote for the Red O'Riordan!**"

In the 1951 General Election, my father stood as the candidate of the IWL, of which he was General Secretary. His election agent was Sean Nolan, IWL Chairman, and manager

of its bookshop, "New Books". In response to a request from Sean Nolan, the following reply was sent by Sean O'Casey on May 21, 1951:

"A message from me! D'ye want to destroy the man? A message from me would be as good as a message from Mars. Michael O'Riordan is his own message. He has all the decent and daring qualifications to represent the people; therefore he'll find it damned hard to win a way for them. There must be a lot of fine fellows in the Union Branch that made him their Vice-chairman. If he's good enough, for that, he's better for the Dail. He looks a sturdy lad, &, of course, all those who fought for Republican Spain were sturdy lads. He has nothing to sell but his soul, and he isn't likely to do that; though he'll be told he'll lose it by holding on to it. There's a host of souls in the market place now, and all of them regulated and well-dressed by the Bishops."

"Well, I hope Michael will win; or at least, get so many workers' votes to encourage him on the hard way of fighting for them. In lieu of a message, I enclose a subscription to the funds. With good wishes to the mother and child, & to you, & all the Old Guard of 'Jim Larkin's Union'."

But, of course, notwithstanding O'Casey's own protestations, this was, indeed, "a message", and Nolan went on to publish quotations from it in an election handbill, entitled "Sean O'Casey and the Elections".

Archbishop McQuaid's "mortal sin" *diktat* had its effect. In contrast with the 3,180 votes he had received in the 1946 Cork By-Election (coming in ahead of his former IRA commander Tom Barry), the 1951 General Election saw my father secure a mere 295 votes in Dublin South-West. This prompted Brendan Behan, who had bravely signed my father's nomination papers, to roar across the street at him after the election count: "Hey Mick, how many 'mortalers' did you get?" Yet, given the prevailing vicious atmosphere, every single one of those 295 "mortalers" had been a courageous soul. What prompted them? In the case of Jimmy Martin, it was probably a combination of solidarity with a fellow CIE transport employee and a stubborn resistance to any *diktats* from on high. In his 2008 memoirs, his son, former Moscow-based correspondent Seamus Martin, recalled:

"Canon Troy's mission in life was to save Ballyfermot from communism... In one particular election, Michael O'Riordan stood as a candidate for the Irish Workers' League, the name under which Irish communists then stood. Canon Troy announced from the pulpit that anyone who voted for 'Red O'Riordan' would go 'straight to hell'. To my ten-year-old mind the admonition was taken literally. If you voted for O'Riordan you would literally go straight to hell and you wouldn't even have to die first. It was a great cause of worry, therefore, when my father told me he was going to vote for O'Riordan... To hear that Dad was going to vote for O'Riordan and therefore would go straight to hell as soon as he marked his ballot paper gave me some sleepless nights. But when the dreaded descent to the abyss did not take place, my belief in the hereafter took a bit of a shaking." (*Good Times and Bad: From the Coombe to the Kremlin, A Memoir*, pp 20-21).

Martin's book had been launched by his brother Diarmuid, a successor to McQuaid as the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. So, at the launch, I availed of the opportunity to mischievously thank Archbishop Martin for his father's vote!

Unlike Krause, O'Casey's biographer, Christopher Murray, made every effort to achieve clarity regarding my mother's political stance. In *Sean O'Casey, Writer at Work: A Biography* (2004), Murray's narrative ran:

"1956 was also the year of the Hungarian Revolution and the Suez crisis. Both issues exercised Niall O'Casey... Accounts of the uprising in Budapest in mid-October, especially on the 23rd, were confusing. Was it a counter-revolution or the real thing? Students in Budapest were making demands for civil rights and for political reforms but were also expressing anti-Russian sentiments; Stalin's statue was toppled, leaving only a pair of bronze boots; the disgraced Imre Nagy was rehabilitated as prime minister. Was all this good or bad? For the son of an avowed communist it was impossible to say. But when the Soviet tanks moved onto the Budapest streets on 25 October it was becoming clear that the communists were the bad guys. The end of the single-party system was announced (by Nagy – MO'R) on the 30th; Cardinal Mindzenty was triumphantly released from house arrest on the same day; Nagy declared Hungary's neutrality and withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact set up in 1955. How to interpret these events ... was difficult in itself: Mindzenty, to select but one figure, was a hero to Roman Catholics but an opportunist and dangerous enemy to communists such as O'Casey. But when the Soviet troops crushed the revolution without mercy on 4 November, forcing Nagy into hiding and leading to his replacement as prime minister by Janos Kadar, nobody in London seemed to be able to make head or tail of what was going on. For many on the left, the (Communist Party of Great Britain's) *Daily Worker* was now a huge disappointment. Following the hard line of the Communist Party it insisted that a dangerous counter-revolution had been successfully dealt with... On 25 October the *Daily Worker* in an editorial had tried to argue that the workers rallied round the party and government in Budapest to smash '*this attempt to put the clock back*'. On 26 October it cited Nagy as declaring that counter-revolutionaries and anarchists were responsible for the Revolution... The headline in the *Daily Worker* for 5 November, after the Red Army started a reign of terror in Budapest, read 'New Hungarian Anti-Fascist Government in Action', welcoming the defeat of the so-called counter-revolutionaries..."

"Niall drove down to Torquay ... to talk over the Hungarian question... What left its mark was the row with Sean... They had discussed the Hungarian situation already, perhaps on the telephone, and Niall had sent a letter about the *Daily Worker* and the plethora of resignations among the staff, adding: '*The attitude of the executive over Hungary on many matters has been quite untenable... This isn't Communism at all. The double-think reminds me of Captain Waterhouse.*' [Waterhouse was one of the initiators of the English colonisation of Australia – MO'R]. Now with all the fervour of his youth he tried to shake O'Casey's rigid belief in Stalinism... There were many young men like Niall for whom the official line was no longer any good... It was youth confronting the authority of age... It was friend against friend in the *Daily Worker*, the gospel of the working classes. '*It is now clear*', said one of the staff who resigned on 3 November, '*that what took place in Hungary was a national uprising against an infamous police dictatorship*'. (In December 1956 Peter Fryer, a *Daily Worker* reporter whose dispatches from Hungary were suppressed, published them as *Hungarian Tragedy*, and was expelled from the British CP.) But it was not quite clear to O'Casey or to any of the old guard for whom the 1917 Revolution was a lifetime pledge of Russia's integrity... What O'Casey believed, and what he probably

relayed to Niall, he wrote to another thrown into confusion, Kay O’Riordan, wife of the Irish communist Michael O’Riordan:

‘I’m afraid that I agree with Michael. To me, there isn’t a shadow of a doubt that those who hate, and always hated, Communism (Socialism, if you like) tried to seize hold of the popular discontent in Hungary, and use it to overthrow all signs of Socialism there, and set up the old regime of landlord, clerical and lay, and fascist boss, so that in the future Hungary might be changed from a socialist country into an armed camp and arsenal for a possible attack on the USSR, if ever the glorious chance came.’”

“All of this loyalty meant there was no room for the doubts Niall felt... Psychologically it was not possible for O’Casey now to line up with the intellectual bosses and decry Russia; on the contrary, the apostasy of others steeled him in his political beliefs. To return to the scene in O’Casey’s room, some time towards the end of November 1956. The argument was to haunt him and he polished it afterwards until it came out right. He stuck to his guns and told Niall what he had told Kay O’Riordan, that Kadar and the Red Army *‘did what was terribly necessary to save Socialism for the Hungarian people’*. He spoke very gently, Niall, who could not accept his father’s argument, very vehemently. When they could not agree, and Sean could see how distressed Niall was, he rose from his seat and went to him. *‘I put my arm around him and pressed him warmly to my side, saying, “You must cling to your own opinions, and not be influenced by mine” ... and, bending down, kissed his bushy head of hair as he smiled up at me.’* Eileen (Sean’s wife) remembered a more tense atmosphere outside of Sean’s room: *‘We would sit in absolute silence round the table at meals’*, as Sean *‘grew strangely stubborn and hard’*. Some two weeks later ... Niall returned home for the Christmas vacation... On the evening of the 29th ... Niall died. Cause of death was recorded as acute lymphoblastic leukaemia. His age was given as twenty-one; he was just two weeks away from his twenty-second birthday.” (pp 375-380).

Niall O’Casey’s opposition to the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian Uprising was no more Catholic than my mother’s. Yet her correspondence with Sean O’Casey himself over several years had initially been prompted by the comfort she had found in the spirituality of the wording of his letter of support for my father’s candidacy in the 1951 General Election. O’Casey was a Communist, but never a Party member. Moreover he was never an Atheist, and there was a shared Christianity in both his own and my mother’s philosophy of life. And the kindnesses he showed my mother were of the Christian Communist kind. She was not, however, oblivious to some of the blind spots in O’Casey’s religious position. One of the letters she had loaned to Krause, dated 19 February 1954 and reproduced in Volume II of *The Letters of Sean O’Casey* (1980), she explained to me had been his rejection of her charge of a Protestant bias in how he depicted Catholics and made Protestants the most heroic characters in his plays *The Plough and the Stars* and *Red Roses For Me*.

Aware that the correspondence received by O’Casey had been bequeathed by his daughter Shivaun to the National Library of Ireland, I thought that an appropriate manner to mark the 60th anniversary of the Hungarian Uprising would be to reproduce both my mother’s letter and O’Casey’s response. The O’Riordan file in the NLI O’Casey papers contains four letters from my mother and four from my father, including one from him on Hungary, of which I had previously been unaware.

But while the file also contains a carbon copy of O’Casey’s reply to my mother, of which I have the original, it neither contains her own letter, nor, indeed, her earlier letter regarding Protestant bias.

In my father’s letter, below, he referred to Brendan Behan declaring his solidarity with the IWL in the face of a “student mob” attack. Under the heading of “Dublin Students’ Protests”, the *Irish Times* of November 9, 1956, carried a report of the attempted sacking of the IWL bookshop, “New Books”, by students - from Trinity College in the main - including the Anglo-Russian Count Nikolai Tolstoy, who carried a picture of the last Tsar of Russia. (Tolstoy is the author of *Victims of Yalta* and *Stalin’s Secret War*.) Under a photograph of “Mariana Sagorsky, a White Russian refugee, now a student at T.C.D.”, the paper reported:

“Disturbances broke out in Dublin yesterday after a students’ protest march against Russia’s actions in Hungary. Damage was caused to some shops in Pearse Street, and a man was taken to hospital suffering from head injuries... The march went from St. Stephen’s Green to Parnell Square and the students returned to the United States Embassy’s offices in Merrion Square where they handed in a petition calling on America to take decisive measures, and force if necessary, to bring about the salvation of Hungary. Then a large number of students armed with sticks, stones and other missiles, returned to Pearse Street, where they attacked the booksellers premises, ‘New Books’. The students smashed the windows. The doors of the shop were locked and the demonstrators called repeatedly: ‘Come out’... Some students attempted to take books from the gaping windows of the shop and were stopped by the police... In the riots, damage was done to the windows of the Scientific Research Corporation, next door to ‘New Books’. Professor John Doyle, chairman of the Corporation, said that when the students attacked, a member of his staff placed a statue and a copy of an Irish Catholic newspaper in the window.”

Regarding my father’s reference to Hungarian refugees, a less than accurate recall, under the heading of “Less than céad míle fáilte for the Hungarian refugees”, was published by the *Irish Independent* on January 13, 2007:

“Ask anyone old enough to have been around in 1956 and they can reel off the names of President (*sic*) Imre Nagy and Cardinal Mindszenty (*sic*). It was the time when Soviet tanks were used to crush the Hungarian Uprising, when peaceful demonstrations led to strong-arm tactics by Hungary’s secret police. As 170,000 refugees flooded into neighbouring Austria and Yugoslavia, refugee camps were soon overwhelmed and Ireland, under Taoiseach de Valera [not true; the Taoiseach in question was Fine Gael’s John A. Costello – MO’R], promised asylum to 1,000 Hungarians... With customary generosity, the Irish held fundraisers and a large crowd welcomed the new arrivals, landing at Shannon on an Aer Lingus Viscount in mid-winter, to be housed in army billets in Knockalisheen Camp outside Limerick under the auspices of the Red Cross. But what happened next makes uncomfortable reading. Hoping for jobs and a new life in the West, the refugees were unaware that Ireland was haemorrhaging more than 40,000 of its own economic migrants a year at the time. Ireland really had no asylum to offer. The disgruntled Hungarians felt trapped (many had believed they would be going on to the USA) and were soon complaining - some even risked returning home - until eventually they went on hunger strike, which the Irish saw as ungrateful... Of the expected 1,000 refugees, only 520 ever

came, as the Irish Government couldn't provide another camp. Eventually it was Archbishop John Charles McQuaid who had the clout to help them travel on to America."

But see <http://www.limerickcity.ie/media/Media.4140.en.pdf> for "Hungarians in Limerick, 1956-1958" by Des Ryan, *The Old Limerick Journal*, Summer 2001 - a far more seriously detailed and comprehensive account.

The Incomplete O'Casey Correspondence on Hungary

[1] Letter from Kay O'Riordan to Sean O'Casey, November 1956: missing.

[2] Full letter from Sean O'Casey to Kay O'Riordan, November 27, 1956:

My dear Kay,

Thanks for your two letters and enclosed clippings. Very interesting, and very true. I didn't write before this because I amnt able to write so long or so often now - getting on to 77 is just a little tiring; but, never to mind - the heart's young yet. I'm afraid that I agree with Michael. To me, there isn't a shadow of a doubt that those who hate, and always hated, Communism (Socialism, if you like) tried to seize hold of the popular discontent in Hungary, and use it to overthrow all signs of Socialism there, and set up the old regime of landlord, clerical and lay, and fascist boss, so that in the future Hungary might be changed from a socialist country into an armed camp and arsenal for a possible attack on the USSR, if ever the glorious chance came. If you read all accounts, written by biased reporters, you can see that it tried to go too far; that bitter revenge was meted out to any communist captured - no holy protests against this! It is ridiculous to think that the revolt was one of the whole people, and the people's army. If it had been, it couldn't have been crushed in a few days - even with the help of Soviet tank and Soviet soldier. When in Easter Week, with a hostile people, and the might of Britain against them, a few hundred badly-armed lads held back the British power for a week. How much longer would they have held out if they had had a well-armed force say of 10,000, backed by a united people?

No; after a few days, the workers saw what was happening, so did the Hungarian soldiers, and they drew back - a lot of them puzzled, not knowing what to do, till a strong party government, headed by Kardar (*sic*), did what was terribly necessary to save Socialism for the Hungarian People, with the aid of the Red Army. That is how I see it, and saw it, though members of the family saw it differently. But I have had too long an experience of the workers' Revolutionary Movement to be deceived. Even here, I saw it in 1926, when the mercenary labor leaders sold the workers in the General Strike - the Nagys of the Eng. Labor Movement. As Shaw has said, 'It cannot be too widely known that Socialism is not loving-kindness, or compassion, or pity, or philanthropy; it is a struggle by the workers and enlightened minds for a way of life that will give the people control and ownership of the means of life - the instruments of production and distribution to be used for the common good.'

That is what Socialism is, and it isn't the Muggerridges, the Crankshaws, the Attlees, or the Orwells who are going to save it, and make it the life of the people, but you and I and all the others who are constricted physically, mentally, and spiritually, by the system of Capitalism, loving rent, profit, and interest,

above men, women, and children ; and even - in spite of what clerics say - above God. So to save Soc. in Hun. the Hungarian workers and people called upon the Red Army to give them a hand in the essential task of preventing ten years of Socialism to be swallowed away by the enemies of everything that has been done, and is doing (*sic*), to bring Socialism into active vitality and work the world over.

As for what is called "the moral aspect", let those who hate socialism, who hate with their outer and inner guts all that the USSR has done, who have surrounded the USSR with implacable hatred and animosity, who have tried, time and time again, to destroy her, and whose latest effort was shown by this revolt in Hungary; a revolt - when it seemed, because the thought was father to the big wish, that it would succeed, caused the pean (*sic*) of delight which rang out in every British newspaper and British platform, thinking that this was the beginning of the end of the USSR. It didn't last long, and they are already sinking into silence. Even Muggerridge last night spent an evening talking to three Anglican clerics - one a well-known cricketer, the second an ex-Guards' officer, the third an ex-naval officer - about the best way of bringing the Eng. people (the workers of course) back to God! The four of them scholars from Cambridge or Oxford, with hardly a word to say or any original way to say what they tried to say; with Mugg. suggesting that the Eng. People were "Pagans"; ignorant that a baptised soul cannot be a pagan, and that every baptised soul is made a child of God, a member of Christ, an inheritor of the K. of heaven. Well, well, here I am writing a thesis!

I understand your point about the children; but children in our own country and in this have been suffering torture, not for a few days, but for years and years in our prisons of schools; and are still there, deprived of a hot meal daily in our country (tho they get it here), while the mouthers run round yelling out against the bad deeds of the USSR and the Communists. Well, my dear, you must use your own judgement to form your own opinions about all the things that happen, and far be it from me to try to change them.

I send you a little token to get a little something for the two children (I think they are two - can't find your earlier letter), and my blessing. Good wishes to Michael and to you.

As ever,

Sean

In any note or letter you may write, please, Kay, don't mention a word of thanks - I hate these expressions.

Workers of All Lands, Unite!

[3] Full letter to Sean O'Casey from Michael O'Rordan, December 15, 1956:

Dear Sean,

It was good to read your views on Hungary. I read them out to our friends here at an important discussion and we all agreed.

The Press of the 'Free' World certainly distorted the picture of Budapest; the Irish papers even more so. Do you know they even 'doctored' the various Press Agency reports to make the

Soviet Union even look still more repulsive and brutal. Apart from their class reason for poisoning the minds of the Irish people, another reason for such anti-Soviet treatment was the fact the opportunities for press sensationalism here are scarce. When you can't curdle people's blood with 'sex' you can always make up for it by presenting, in the most lurid fashion, the Russians as the last word in Satanic horror and brutality.

Last week our Manus came home from school with a puzzled look on his face. "Were the Communists really bad?" he asked, because the teacher had asked everyone of them if they 'cared' to bring some money for a collection for the Hungarian children. "The Russians were sending them to a very cold place called Siberia, and they had no clothes."

However, life hits back at all propaganda. There was a great 'to-do' about taking in 1,000 Hungarian refugees here. After the 500th had arrived the whole business was stopped. They were looking for jobs here! The most backward hysterical ones here had to recognise that scarcity of jobs is one of the marked features of this western outpost of the 'Free' World. It will be interesting to see how the Hungarians get on here.

The atmosphere here of course was more hysterical, and I must say that in credit to Brendan Behan, that when the trouble broke here with the student mob, that he was one of the very few to declare himself with us. He is now emerging as quite a figure and personally I am glad, because he has not forgotten his working class origin. His play "The Quare Fellow" is now in book form so you can judge it for yourself.

We are looking forward to your 3rd Programme series of plays in March. We, i.e. Kay and I, saw your "Silver Tassie" some 8 years ago in the Gaiety here; it will be good to hear it again. Manus and Brenda were thrilled with your present. Best wishes for Christmas and may 1957 be a further year of progress for the workers the world over.

Yours fraternally,

Michael O'Riordan

[4] From an O'Casey letter to Brooks Atkinson, January 12, 1957:

My very dear Brooks & my very dear Oriana,

Thank you both from our hearts... Niall was a gallant lad, & died bravely... He had been deeply troubled by the tragedy in Hungary, & couldn't agree with me that it was a sad necessity. He vehemently opposed my view, & seeing him so earnest, I

(Continued from p. 14)

why so many Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, for instance, were also active members in Veterans for Peace. So, in this atmosphere of spiralling towards greater international conflict, it is wise to remember what the International Brigades stood for. They were called "**premature anti-fascists**", precisely because they sought to **prevent** the Second World War, by tackling the Fascist assault on a democratically elected government.

So, Mr. President, we are inspired and enhanced by your presence and your address here today. Thank you again.

embraced him, kissed him, & urged him not to bother about my view, but to hold on to his own. Curious, I embraced him, for none of us then had the faintest idea of what was waiting for him. Two weeks later, he was dead...

[5] From an O'Casey letter to Hugh MacDiarmid (Christopher M. Grieve), January 12, 1957:

My very dear Chris,

Thanks for your sympathy... We've suffered a bitter blow, and my heart is bruised. Niall was 21, a gallant lad, grand sense of humor, gay and reliable. He bid fair to be a first-class biologist. He was deeply troubled over the tragedy of Hungary, & couldn't find a reason for the Soviet action. He came from London to talk with me about it, but couldn't agree with my view that it was a sad necessity. I insisted he should have his own opinion, while I held on to mine. We shook hands and embraced, thank God, deciding that each opinion was sacred...

As ever,

Sean

[6] From "In Remembrance of Two Fools", *Irish Political Review*, July 2006 - an appreciation of my O'Riordan parents:

[See http://free-magazines.atholbooks.org/ipr/2006/IPR_July_2006.pdf for the full article.] While both of my parents were lifelong CPI members, they did have a domestic political relationship that was as robust as it was dialectical. My mother's polemics in personal correspondence with Sean O'Casey with regard to the 1956 Hungarian Rising have been drawn upon in a recent biography of the playwright in order to illustrate what the arguments on that same issue must have been like between O'Casey and his soon-to-be-deceased son Niall, but they just as much mirrored the arguments between my own parents themselves. My parents had indeed been comrades-in-struggle, but such comradeship represented a complementarity rather than an identity. □

See www.albavolunteer.org/2016/11/reply-to-the-president-of-ireland/ - or <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=vPeJ7XtfPc&feature=youtu.be> - for a video of this reply on YouTube.

See www.president.ie/en/diary/details/president-officially-opens-the-international-brigade-memorial-trust-agm for the President's own address, in full.

See <https://vimeo.com/144323465> for the 1976 documentary "Even The Olives Are Bleeding", which features Irish International Brigade volunteers Bob Doyle, Frank Edwards, Michael O'Riordan, Paddy O'Daire, Joe Monks, Alec Digges and Terry Flanagan, and Welsh International Brigade volunteer Tom Jones. □

Statement by President Michael D. Higgins on the death of Fidel Castro

26 November 2016

“I have learned with great sadness of the death of Fidel Castro, founder of modern Cuba, and its Prime Minister from 1959 to 1976, as well as its President from 1976 to 2008.

Following the revolution in 1959, Fidel Castro brought significant political and social change to his country, overcoming not just the regime of General Fulgencio Batista but also the economic isolation forced upon Cuba in the years that followed.

Having survived some 600 attempts on his life, Fidel Castro, known to his peers in Cuba as ‘El Comandante’, became one of the longest serving Heads of State in the world, guiding the country through a remarkable process of social and political change, advocating a development path that was unique and determinedly independent.

Cuba achieved 100% literacy many years ago and built up a health system that is one the most admired in the world. With economic growth rates similar to many other Latin American countries, inequality and poverty are much less pronounced in Cuba than in surrounding nations.

His Governments faced not only issues of Development but also the consequences of an embargo imposed by Cuba’s largest neighbour, the United States, which was a regular topic for discussion at the United Nations and which was criticised by a large number of countries in the international community.

The economic and social reforms introduced were at the price of a restriction of civil society, which brought its critics.

Fidel Castro was of a generation of leaders that sought offer an alternative global economic and social order. He was President of the Non Aligned Movement and a leading figure in international gatherings that sought a more equal world of trade, rejected odious debt and sought an independent path to development.

He advanced such ideas, for example, at such events as the Tri Continental Conference in 1966. And he would continue with this theme which informed his speech, for example, at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio in 1992. He was speaking of how it was possible to eliminate global hunger and of the enormous burden that international debt was placing on impoverished nations. Expected to give a lengthy speech, his very short statement ended with the phrase: ‘Let us pay the debt to humanity, not the debt to the banks.’

The restoration of diplomatic relations with the United States in 2014 and the visit of Pope Francis, and the response to it, have been ushering in a new period in Cuba’s history, one which seeks to retain the achievements of a social kind with greater freedoms in the civil society.

Fidel Castro will be remembered as a giant among global leaders whose view was not only one of freedom for his people but for all of the oppressed and excluded peoples on the planet.”



Syrian delegation to Ireland and the role of EU sanctions in killing women & children

John Wight

[A delegation from Syria including Gregory III Laham, the leader of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church and Ignatius Aphrem II of Antioch, leader of the Syriac Orthodox Church, and Dr Ahmad Badreddin Hassoun, Grand Mufti of Syria arrived in Dublin on 29th November, to speak about European sanctions.

The delegation began its tour with a visit of honour to the Trinity College Chapel for a “united prayer of peace for Syria”, with choristers, senior academics, politicians and senior members of the diplomatic corps also in attendance.

The delegation addressed the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade at the Irish parliament on December 1st.

John Wight wrote the following article in advance of the visit. 28 November 2016.]

“It is rare that the opportunity arises in the West to listen to a true account of the conflict directly from Syrian voices, which is why an upcoming event in Ireland carries extra special significance.

In early December, secular and religious voices will gather in Dublin with the objective of highlighting the inordinate suffering of the Syrian people as a consequence of the unremitting chaos and conflict that has had the country in its grip for nearly six years, responsible for a horrific loss of innocent human life, the displacement of half the population, and a threat to the existence of minority communities that are able to trace their presence in the country back over a millennia and more.

The dignitaries arriving as part of the Syrian delegation include Muslim and Christian clerics, such as His Beatitude Gregory III Laham, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, the spiritual leader of the world’s Melkite Greek Catholic Church; His Holiness Ignatius Aphrem II of Antioch, world’s spiritual leader of the Syriac Orthodox Church; and they include His Grace Dr Ahmad Badreddin Hassoun, Grand Mufti of Syria.

Meanwhile, secular voices among the delegation include Dr Ahmad al-Khaddour and Dr Bashir Mohammad. The former is a cardiothoracic surgeon and Professor of Medicine at Damascus University, while the latter is a cardiologist and native of Hama. Both are intent on raising the egregious role of EU sanctions in reducing conditions within Syrian hospitals to such a parlous state that women and children are dying every day due to the absence of basic medicines and drugs.

In order to emphasize the authority that this delegation speaks on events in Syria, it is worth noting that each has witnessed, suffered, and/or lost family members and loved ones to a conflict which, strip away the obfuscation and claims to the contrary, involves an Islamic Khmer Rouge attempting

to implement its very own Year Zero on a multi-religious, multicultural, and multi-tribal society.

The man responsible for organizing this event and bringing together such an impressive delegation to visit Ireland is Dr. Declan Hayes, a tireless activist in support of human rights in Syria and a champion of its religious minorities. Declan, whose work can be found at the [We Save Syria](#) website, has made numerous visits to the country over the course of the conflict, offering aid and solidarity to its embattled people and raising awareness of their plight back in Ireland and the UK. As a consequence there is no one who speaks with more authority on the reality of the conflict and the crisis that has engulfed the country than he does.

“Though the visit is timed to coincide with the run up to Christmas and all that entails,” he said, “the situation in Syria, as East Aleppo’s human shields show, remains very grave for all Syrians, from the youngest to the oldest. Although this visit is non-political it must be clearly stated that EU sanctions, in which Ireland are fully complicit, are killing more Syrian children than even ISIS.” He went on, “The USA, for all its Russophobia, has yet to deliver one bread roll or bandage to Aleppo, whereas the Russian Air Force continues to fly in tons of much needed food, clothing and medicines. Although Ireland cannot hope to match Russia’s humanitarian contribution, we do have the chance and the duty to be a lodestar for peace and reconciliation in Western Europe by setting an example on Syria that other independent-minded peoples can emulate.”

The Western narrative of the conflict in Syria would have us believe that something approximating to a revolution has been taking place in the country, one that enjoys popular support from ordinary Syrians. It is a narrative so grotesque, so Goebbelsian in its distortion of the truth, that it confirms the abiding mendacity of those who purport to champion democracy and human rights even as they set the world on fire.

In truth the Assad government enjoys the [support](#) of the overwhelming majority of Syrians, people who understand the difference between reform and ruin, and who refuse to stand by and allow their country to be destroyed by religious fanatics and butchers, supported by those friends of liberty the Saudi, Qatari, and Kuwaiti governments. Each of the aforementioned is of course a strong regional ally of Washington and its European partners, evidence that what passes for democracy in the West is in point of fact nothing more than organized hypocrisy.

It is in defiance of this hypocrisy that this Syrian delegation arrives in Ireland to spread the word and raise awareness of what is really taking place in their country. In so doing no one should be in any doubt that they speak for a nation and society that only by dint of uncommon tenacity and fidelity to truth has managed to survive an onslaught that has been waged against it by the forces of hell.” □

Domenico Losurdo

The Germans: A Sonderweg of a cursed nation?

Book Published by Kai Homilius Verlag, Berlin 2010

Domenico Losurdo (born 1941) is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Urbino, Italy. His books *Hegel and the Freedom of Moderns*, *Heidegger and the Ideology of War*, and *Liberalism* have been translated into English.

He was a member of the Italian Communist Party until its dissolution. He has written on Kant and Hegel, the philosophers of modernity, and Nietzsche, the critic of modernity, as well as on Marx and Stalin. He criticized in particular the notion of totalitarianism, a Cold War concept which allowed Hitler and Stalin, against the evidence, to be seen as equivalent historical figures.

[This book has only been published in German; the following is translated from the German by Angela Stone for IFA. This is the concluding chapter.]

Chapter 4 The Left and the Nation

1. Dialectic of the revolution and the national question

Is it 'right wing' and 'anti-Marxist' to insist on the national question and to proudly wave the national flag? Many leftists argue that it is so. They should remember, however, that Marx and Engels strongly supported the national movements of liberation of the Irish and the Polish nations, and supported the process of national unity in Germany and Italy. In an insightful polemic, Marx branded the contempt that Proudhon revealed regarding the movement in Poland, campaigning for national independence, as 'moronic cynicism'. Furthermore, the theme of the nation played a central role for Lenin, Mao Tsetung, Ho Chi Minh and Fidel Castro.

This is also the case for Karl Liebknecht. The hero in the battle against imperialism and militarism, who warned that 'the main enemy is in your own country' during the First World War and even on the evening before its outbreak, was wary of mocking the concept of the nation or the Fatherland. Quite the opposite: in 1913 he denounced the 'lack of national identity' and the 'complete lack of patriotism' of the military-industrial complex. The magnates of the armament industry and big business were not only pushing for a war that would be catastrophic for all, but also did not hold back from their hunt for maximum profit, in selling weapons to tsarist Russia, against whom at that moment Germany was preparing for war. Here we are dealing with a 'behaviour that borders at the very least on treason or high treason'¹.

In a similar way, Gramsci, when he addressed the representatives of the fascist special court, accused the regime of plunging the country into catastrophe, and later turning to all of the judges, he said pointedly:

'I believe, General, sir, that sooner or later all the military dictatorships will be turned upside down by the war. In this case it seems obvious to me that the proletariat stands to replace the ruling class, to take over the destiny of the country and to take the fate of the nation in their hands. [...] You will run Italy to the ground and it falls to us communists to save it.'

Later, at the seventh congress of the Communist International Georgi Dimitrov appealed passionately to the revolutionaries to 'combine their present battle with the past revolutionary

traditions of their nation', to refuse 'national nihilism' and critically reclaim 'everything that is valuable in the historical past of the nation'².

On a strictly theoretical level, it is worth taking up once more a well-known text by Lenin. A text that is a polemic against 'left radicalism' and explains 'the fundamental law of revolution':

'For a revolution it is not enough that the exploited and oppressed masses become aware of the impossibility of carrying on living in the old way and demand change. In order to have a revolution it is necessary that the exploiters not be able to live and govern in the old ways. Only then, when the 'lower classes' *do not want to* live in the old way anymore and the 'upper classes' *cannot go on* in the old way, only then can the revolution be victorious.'

Generally speaking, these passages are only quoted up to here and the conclusion is omitted: 'this truth can be expressed in other words: the revolution is impossible without a nationwide crisis (affecting both exploited and exploiters)' (LW, 31, 71).

As Lenin formed this theory he was talking about the outcome of the Russian revolution. The central meaning of the national question is apparent in the counterrevolutionary intervention of the Entente. The Bolsheviks fought against them and won by appealing to the Russian people to lead a national battle for liberation against the foreign invasion and imperial powers, which planned to turn Russia into a colony or semi-colony of the West. For this reason Aleksei Brusilov turned to Soviet Russia. This general of noble background was the only one, or one of few, who had a good record in the First World War, and he explained the reasoning behind his decision, by saying, 'my feeling of duty for the nation has often forced me not to follow my natural social tendencies.'³

But the significance of the national question can be felt independently of the intervention of the Entente. The war, the dispersed army, the disrepute and collapse of the old regime all led to another unprecedented catastrophe. All authority and every principle of legitimation of authority disappeared. It was the war of all against all. The crisis of the Russian nation was so extreme that they even seemed to lose their identity. The Bolsheviks achieved victory because they were the only party who were in a position to reconstruct the apparatus of the state and administration and to save the nation. Even their opponents sometimes admit this. An example from a liberal elected personality such as Vasily Maklakov in 1918 illustrates this: 'the new government have begun to restore the state, and are re-establishing order to fight the chaos. In this respect, the Bolsheviks are showing their energy—more than that—they are showing their undeniable talent.'⁴

Incidentally, this is a point that did not escape Gramsci's attention, who praised the Bolsheviks as 'an aristocracy of statesmen' in June 1919 and Lenin as the 'greatest statesman of Europe today'. They succeeded in bringing to an end the 'sinister abyss of poverty, barbarism and anarchy'; this was 'the solution' wrenched from 'a long and disastrous war' in order to put an end to it. This stance called forth from the anarchists a polemical response, appalled by 'this apology full of lyricism' for the state and the 'idolisation of the state' of the 'statist,

2 About the central role of Gramsci and Dimitrov in the national question, see Losurdo 2000, p.116

3 Figs 1996, p.696, 699

4 Werth 2007, p.26 and pp.51-54

¹ In Lenin, Liebknecht, *no date given* pp.159-161

authoritarian, legalistic, parliamentary socialism'. For Gramsci however there could be no doubt: 'we have a revolution in front of us, not the empty arrogance of rhetorical demagoguery, if it is embodied by a type of state, if it will be an organised system of power'⁵. And it is exactly this that the Bolsheviks understood. The dictatorship that they established in a situation of direst crisis simultaneously saved the revolution and the nation.

The ultimate collapse of a national and revolutionary event is immediately evident if the revolution breaks out in a colonial or semi-colonial country instead of in an imperialist country as it was in Tsarist Russia. China serves as an especially relevant example here. After thousands of years of being one of the most developed and most admired countries, China experienced a tragic time of not only humiliation but also territorial dismemberment and oppression resulting from colonial and imperialist aggression. This sign seen at the end of the 19th Century at the entrance of the French concession in Shanghai demonstrates this point: 'No dogs or Chinese'. This time ended in 1949 when the communists came to power, and they only succeeded in doing so by being champions of national liberation and in this way achieving hegemony.

In fact, there is a close connection between these aspects of the revolutionary struggle. It is therefore no coincidence that Lenin and Gramsci, both great theoreticians of hegemony, are also the two great theoreticians of the national question. The battle for hegemony is not an optional item of propaganda or an attempt at more refined and convincing propaganda. The terrain on which the battle for hegemony is played out and decided is the national question. A revolutionary party achieves victory only if it is in a position to solve the 'national crisis', which developed as a result of contradictions and when they are in a position to satisfy to the material and idealistic needs of the nation. To assume a nihilistic stance towards the nation means in reality to abandon the battle for hegemony and revolutionary victory.

2. The struggle for the nation versus class struggle?

So how does the class struggle fit into this? A certain kind of leftist fails to grasp that class conflict always assumes a specific and 'impure' configuration. The Communist Party Manifesto explained that the revolutionary 'process of disintegration of the ruling class' along with that of the totality of the old society leads to a change of stance by a sector of the ruling class which ends up taking the side of the party of the oppressed class. As we already know, Lenin demonstrated the prerequisite for the Russian revolution (and the revolution in general) as being the general crisis of the nation. The outbreak of the First World War, with the general mobilisation and daily experience of death that affected exploiters, or at least their sons, signalled the beginning of the crisis of 'whole nation'. Three years later the crisis was in full swing. Even the political classes of society who stood apart from bolshevism, had to convince themselves that the Bolsheviks were the only party who could bring an end to the massacre and save the country from the total downfall which threatened to split it and convert it into a semi-colony of the Entente. In fact, the Entente later intervened with armed violence in order to force Russia into the continuation of the war. For this reason, Gramsci wrote in *Ordine Nuovo* magazine of 7th June 1919 that the Bolsheviks obviously conquered power because of the way they represented the exploited but also because they expressed 'the collective consciousness of the Russian people', the consciousness of the nation.

What happened in the following decades is very revealing. The Soviet Union fought the Nazi aggression with the 'great patriotic war'. It was the correct answer, as the Third Reich

aimed to convert not just the proletariat but also the population as a whole of the Soviet Union into a great mass of slaves serving the master race. This criminal plan had to be resisted with the utmost unity of intended victims and the broadest unity of the Soviet nation. The Japanese empire in China pursued similar aims to Hitler's Germany. And there too the Communists appealed to the unity of the Chinese nation. In neither case did class conflict disappear. The Great Patriotic War in the Soviet Union and China's war of resistance are at the same time important expressions and significant moments of class conflict in the 20th Century. To use Mao's words, in certain situations 'national war and class struggle come together'⁶. National resistance did not conflict with internationalism in China or in the Soviet Union. On the contrary, the defeats inflicted on German and Japanese imperialism boosted the morale of the emancipation movement of the nations on a global level. And in Gramsci's words: 'internationalism' is only concrete and effective, when it succeeds in becoming 'deeply national'⁷.

The connexion between the national question on the one hand and social conflict and class struggle on the other hand does not apply only to colonies or semi-colonies under imperialist oppression; but it can also establish differently and develop in advanced capitalist countries. In Italy today, we can see a political party at work (*Lega Nord*, the Northern League) that is inclined to brand the inhabitants of southern Italy as 'lazy' and 'parasitical' and even as members of a lower race, stupefied by the sun and their proximity to Africa. How can we explain these ideological processes? On an international level, neoliberalism aims to dismantle the social state and progressive taxation, and to abolish income redistribution in favour of the poorer classes. In countries like Italy, characterised by strong regional inequalities, the neoliberal counter revolution leads to an open or covert secession of the less developed regions. Earlier, the Italian Communist Party leader Palmiro Togliatti tirelessly insisted that the 'south Italian question' (the backwardness of the south compared to the north) was also a 'national question'. In order to combat the neoliberal counterrevolution we have to fight the secessionist counter revolution in Italy, now more than ever. A left wing movement deserving of the name defends the social state and opposes racist delirium, but it must also place itself at the forefront of the battle to defend national unity.

Furthermore, some time ago the international press reported a terrible threat bearing down on Western Europe. We can see an example printed in an important Italian daily newspaper (*La Stampa*): 'the United States store between 200 and 250 nuclear warheads.' This alone presents a considerable danger. But that's not all: according to official studies from authorities in Washington, the majority of atomic weapon storage facilities in Europe are 'below the security standards' determined by the Pentagon⁸. The existence of weapons of mass destruction signifies a danger of terrible catastrophe not only for the masses but also for the German, Italian and other nations as such. The policy of submission to American imperialism that was previously brought into Europe by the ruling classes is an expression of a 'behaviour that borders at the very least on treason or high treason' - to quote Liebknecht once more.

In one last example, I wish to mention an article written by Togliatti in April 1954. Only a short time after the great victory of Dien Bien Phu, won by Vietnam's Liberation Army, the Geneva conference got under way and by then the desire of the Americans to take over from French imperialism had become clear. The former French prime minister Bidault, reported in his memoirs that on the eve of the defeat Dulles proposed to him, 'And what if we were to give you two atomic bombs?' (To

6 Mao Tsetung 1968-78, vol. 2, p.251 (5.11.1938)

7 Gramsci 1975, p.866, 1.729

8 Molinari 2008

be deployed directly against Vietnam, naturally⁹). Incidentally, the USA threatened the People's Republic of China with atomic bombs more and more openly after the Korean War.

In this case, Togliatti did not confine himself to demanding the colonial peoples' right for freedom and to condemning imperialism. He also called on Europe to come together with the struggling peoples and to distance itself from Washington; he called upon it to do so in its own interests and in the name of its revolutionary past. Europe could only be secure if it encouraged the meeting of different cultures. Otherwise it would end in 'catastrophe' even without 'an open war'¹⁰. The culture clash—to use a piece of modern speech—had left Europe not only culturally impoverished but also disordered internally and militarily. And, above all, Europe was left impoverished of its immigrant communities of Asian heritage.

This text was written over half a century ago but its clarity and foresight are still to be appreciated. Today there are many things that bode ill for European countries: the unending martyrdom of the Palestinian people; the wars against Iraq and Afghanistan and the threats of war with Iran from the USA, as well as from Israel; and the increasing wave of Islamophobia. If the European bourgeoisie follows the imperialist and colonialist policy of Washington and Tel Aviv then eventually it will encourage a climate of growing unrest and latent civil war in Germany, France and Italy. Those with Middle Eastern heritage who are living in these European countries, and in the most general sense those who come from Muslim nations, surely must be disgusted by the scandalous deeds committed against people of their heritage with whom they still maintain a cultural and religious connection. When a mature left speaks out against colonial expansion and imperialist arrogance and in favour of dialogue between cultures, it also defends a future lived in peace and the peaceful coexistence of the German, French and Italian nations.

The national discourse does not in any way contradict the class struggle but instead, according to Gramsci, it forms the basis for its development and maturation. In Gramsci's eyes 'a lack of understanding of the state' entails 'low class consciousness' and a lack of understanding of the nation also brings about the same result. Without the ability to speak to the nation and to form as big an antagonistic social bloc as possible, whereby the problem of state political power must be concretely placed, Gramsci argues that the country simply stands still in a 'mass subversiveness'. Gramsci clearly makes use of Lenin's paper 'What is to be done?' here. The result is a nation which cannot achieve a new political-social order¹¹.

3. Patriotism versus jingoism

Is there not a risk for this stance on the national question to pave the way for jingoism? In other words: is there a difference between the defence of national dignity and independence and an exalted and aggressive nationalism? In spite of superficial similarities and connotations we are dealing with two very different attitudes here. One can be applied universally, the other cannot. A nation's recognition and defence of their dignity is completely compatible with the recognition and defence of the dignity of other nations. Of course, by contrast, the category of the 'master nation' (*Herrenvolk*) or of the 'master race' cannot be applied universally. A master people can only exist if there is also a lower people, designated for serfdom. This also applies to the category of the 'chosen people'. This is a term that is treasured by Bush Jr. in particular, who proclaimed without

hesitation the following dogma: 'our nation is chosen by God and commissioned by history to be a model to the world'¹².

This view is not just held by one lone voice. Clinton added to this when he said, America 'must continue to lead the world', 'our mission is timeless'. And Bush Sr. also echoed these voices when he said, 'In America, I see the leading nation, the only one with a special role in this world'. And finally, Kissinger also backed up this view when he said: 'The leading purpose in this world is the USA and their inherent values'. It is obvious that this category of 'chosen people' is not an approach that is capable of being universalised. This categorisation of the nation as a chosen people means a nation entrusted with a unique mission which is the perpetual task of leading the world. This idea can lead to explosive conflicts. A comparison of these quotes with a statement written by Hitler should demonstrate this: 'there cannot be two chosen people. We are the people of God.' Even though we are dealing with very different ideas from different points of view, the two ideologies which we have compared here have one thing in common: they both express an idea of the nation that is so emphatic and exclusive that any universalisation is impossible. And this is precisely the centre of nationalism, chauvinism or 'hegemonism', to use the language of the Chinese leadership.

The rejection of nationalism, chauvinism or hegemony is in no way synonymous with national nihilism. To follow Hegel's lead, we could say that nations are like individuals. In a democratic world order, the demand for the defence of an individual's dignity is not in opposition to the respect for the dignity due to each individual. In an aristocratic world view, however, the significance of a privileged individual's honour assumes the humiliation or abasement of the masses of ordinary individuals. Combatting privilege in a particular society does not mean failing to recognise the worth of an individual but it is rather about asserting their universality. Similar treatments apply in the relationships between national and state entities. As Gramsci writes in the *Ordine Nuovo* newspaper, 'every state, every institution, every individual finds their fill of life and freedom' in the 'communist international'¹³.

4. The nation, socialism, and the game of analogies

Nevertheless, certain left-wing intellectuals still have not given up. In order to prove how hopelessly poisoned the category of the nation is on a political level, they cultivate a hobby that often finds great resonance with intellectuals. One could call it the game of analogies, connotations or the game of accordance. A few years ago a book by Götz Aly provoked a wide debate because it emphasised with zest the apparent left-wing language that the big wigs of the Third Reich used. They called for the 'social people's state', the 'social state' and even 'socialism' for Germany. In light of this analogy, or assonance, those who continued dispensing slogans, ran the risk of being regarded as Hitler's epigones.

In fact, the 'National Socialist German Workers' Party' was introduced as a 'socialist party' from the beginning and it is no coincidence that the party waved the red flag. However, as Aly himself admits, the 'social state' or 'socialism' of the Third Reich only applied to the 'higher race'; it was the 'socialism of good blood'. And if Alfred Rosenberg, as we know, celebrated the 'thoughts of the racial state', he did not shy away from the swastika superimposed on the red flag, but he referred much more to the example of the United States, where racial hierarchy was strongly rooted, particularly in the south, and where the Blacks were still a half slave race.

We have also seen that Hitler conceived of his conquest of Eastern Europe according to the model of the expansion of

9 Fontaine 1967, vol. 2, p.114

10 Togliatti 1973-84, vol. 5, p.849 foll.

11 Gramsci 1975, pp.326-7, 2108-9; also see Losurdo 2000, chap. 3, 5

12 cf. Losurdo 2009, chap. 10, 6

13 Gramsci 1987, p.115 foll.

the white race and, more broadly, according to the American example. This was a country where the decimation of the native population uncovered vast expanses of land. The white proletariats stopped being proletariats and were converted into landowners, and in a way, the 'social state' propagated by the *Third Reich* or the 'social state of good blood' was anticipated. What is the foundation of Nazi ideology that everything else revolves around? Is it the idea of the 'social state' and of 'socialism'? Or is it rather the 'racial state ideology' and the demands for absolute domination of 'good blood'? The good thing about the game of analogies and connotations is that it allows you to isolate a single word in order to achieve the desired result. Aly formulates his opinion clearly, saying: 'In the end phase of the Weimar republic many of the later Nazi-activists had collected communist socialist experiences'¹⁴. This shows clearly the intended accordance between socialists and communists on the one hand and Nazis on the other hand.

The 'National Socialist German Workers' Party' distinguished itself as 'national' and 'German' and so those who talk of the nation are suspected of adopting the language of the *Third Reich*. In reality, Hitler's party did not want to be the 'Germans' but rather the 'Aryans' and this meant a radical division of the German nation from the onset. The 'Rhineland bastards' (children who were born out of relationships between the soldiers of African descent and German women during the French occupation of the Rhine) were shut out and persecuted, along with the Jews, Romany gypsies, and all those who were made accountable for the 'defilement of the race' when they got involved with the lower races. The socialists, communists and anyone who proved any kind of 'foreignness' in race or 'kind', were also shut out if they were seen to promote or tolerate 'racial defilement'.

'Nation' and 'race' are by no means the same thing. The first is based on the principle of equality of citizens, and the second is based on the principle of inequality. This is something that Gobineau was certainly conscious of. The author of '*An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races*' expressed his total suspicion of the word 'Fatherland', which justified the onward march of the 'mass' and legitimised 'ethnic mixing'. Here we are dealing with a category that the French revolution rejected. Spengler, too, drew our attention to this in 1933: 'it was the principle of equality that [...] let the call of *Vive la nation* ring out'. Rosenberg condemned 'the enthusiasm for nationalism itself'. According to Rosenberg, the 'slogan of the self determination of the nations', once generalized, serves all 'inferior elements on this earth, demanding freedom for themselves'¹⁵.

But this game of analogies and connotations scorns the results of conceptual analysis and historical research. Some on the left, who decided not to denounce the nation as a reactionary and confused notion, are stricken by a downright disturbing ideological confusion. So now the ruling class can sleep soundly. Regardless of whether they are speaking of 'socialism' and 'workers' or of the 'nation', the socialists and the communists can be discredited as fellow-travellers of Hitler's party, the 'National Socialist German Workers' Party'.

It should be made known that any slogan can be brought into question with the method we have just investigated. Just think of 'democracy'. What was the name of the party in the United States that, more than any other, championed slavery and later the regime of terrorist white supremacy? It was called the 'Democratic Party!' Should we therefore consider 'democracy' to be a synonym for racism and the slavery system?

In reality, history suggests a completely different conclusion. The first to invoke 'democracy' were Robespierre and the Jacobins who abolished slavery in the French colonies. A short time later the slogan was used in the USA - particularly in the Southern states. With 'democracy' they referred to the self-government of slave owners and colonists who were exerting themselves to take away the property of land from the Indians. In general this was about a class which was free and 'democratic' without intervention from the central government, who wanted to enjoy both the occupation of the land robbed from the Indians and the exploitation of the slaves, who were set to cultivate this land. By the collapse of the *Ancien Régime* the consensus came from below and the will of the people became the single effective legitimating criterion of power. From there, an extremely ideological battle emerged between the abolitionist democracy, that aimed to abolish slavery, and that which we could call the 'democracy of good blood' or the *Herrenvolk* democracy.

Something similar took place in the 20th Century with regards to 'socialism'. After the carnage of the First World War and the spread of the economic crisis, the term 'liberalism' became 'unpopular', as Ludwig von Mises stated with bitterness in 1927¹⁶. Even the reaction was forced to resort to the terrain of socialism. This explains the rise of Nazism and the party's eventual seizure of power. In this way, a huge collision formed. On the one hand, in Soviet Russia, there is a socialism that calls for the slaves of the colonies to free their shackles, and on the other hand, in Hitler's Germany, is a 'socialism of good blood' which wants to draw on the revival and radicalisation of the colonial tradition.

Now we are finally in a position to be able to understand the ideological battle that has formed the idea of 'nation'. This idea prevails with the French revolution and references internally the *égalité* (equality) that has to rule between the free civilians, and on an international level, references the *fraternité* (fraternity) currently between the nations. It is true that imperialism later tried to exploit the idea of nation, in that they reinterpreted it in an exclusive meaning. But we are dealing with a method that is similar to what we have already encountered in relation to 'democracy' and 'socialism'. In 1935, Dimitrov was right to call upon the communist movement to free themselves from every form of 'national nihilism', with the main goal of improving the organisation of the battle against Hitler's imperialism.

Ideological and military battles have something in common. The army, finding itself in a difficult position, tries to reveal the uncover of the enemy's military advantage. And something similar happens on an ideological level. This explains the transition of certain slogans from one camp to the opposition. But only superficial observers can confuse ideological affinity with these similarities in language, which are actually an expression of antagonism. In a manner of speaking, all the keywords of political discourse are placed in the battlefield of opposing political and social camps.

This dialectic is playing out before our very eyes. The cry for 'human rights', which originated in the French revolution, still lingers in the battle song of the International. But now the economic and social rights have been annulled from the catalogue of these rights, along with the right of every nation to live in peace and equality with others, and that which has been called 'human rights imperialism' rampages. Or think of 'internationalism'. Everyone knows the important story in the background of this category but we should not ignore those in the USA who today refer to themselves as 'internationalists'. They support the theories of the sovereign right of Washington and, in the name of the expansion of democracy and universal human rights, intervene in the whole world, forcing their

14 Aky 2005, pp.11-29

15 Losurdo 1989, chap. 14, p.22 and p.24 (regarding the criticism of Gobineau, Spengler and Rosenberg on the idea of the nation)

16 Mises 1927, p.174

views upon it. Finally, let us take the idea of ‘revolution’. It was the great emancipation movements who first promoted it. That did not prevent the fascists and Nazis from glorifying their own ‘revolution’, however. Today the US-American neoconservatives express similar ideas, such as Robert Kagan, who along with others understands ‘revolution’ to mean the export of ‘democracy’ and the free market and the use of bombs.

Those who enjoy looking for analogies and connotations could of course continue this game. It is a pleasant game that sometimes leads to entertaining reversals. When a leftist proclaims their sovereign contempt for the idea of the nation and the fatherland, for example, he does not say anything too different from Gobineau. Out of this game one truth prevails: national nihilism does not in any way ensure revolutionary purity. And if we finally leave this game to one side, we can still draw on the classics of revolutionary theory as well as on historical experience to learn a much more important lesson: with national nihilism an opposition movement loses the chance to root itself socially or for the masses to develop in an authentic way, and renounces not only the revolution, but also any real and significant change for political and social relationships on an internal and international level.

Bibliography

Aly, G. Hitlers Volkstaat. Raub, Rassenkrieg und nationaler Sozialismus, Fischer, Frankfurt/M, 2005

Figes, O. A People’s Tragedy. The Russian Revolution 1891-1924. Jonathan Cape, London 1996

Fontaine, A. Histoire de la Guerre Froide, Fayard, Paris. 1967

Gramsci, A. 1975 Prison Notebooks
1987 L’Ordine Nuovo, Einaudi, Turin

Losurdo, D. 1989 Hegel und das deutsche Erbe. Philosophie und nationale Frage zwischen Revolution und Reaktion, Pahl-Rugenstein, Köln.

2000, Der Marxismus Antonio Gramscis. Von der Utopie zum “kritischen Kommunismus”, VSA, Hamburg

2007 *Kampf um die Geschichte. Der historische Revisionismus und seine Mythen*, Furet und die anderen, PapyRossa, Köln.

2009 Nietzsche, der aristokratische Rebell. Intellektuelle Biographie und kritische Bilanz, Argument/InkriT, Hamburg

Mao Tse Tung 1968-1978 Selected Works

Mises, L. von 1927 Liberalismus, Fischer, Jena

Molinari, M. Allarme atomice Usa: “Sono custodite male” La Stampa 22 June 2008

Togliatti, P. Opere, a cura di Ernesto Ragionieri, Editori Riuniti 1973-1984 □

To buy books published by Athol Books,
The Aubane Historical Society,
And The Belfast Historical and Educational Society
Go to
www.atholbooks.org

IN HOMAGE TO THAT FOOL FIDEL!

So as not to smash my icon into pieces so fine
To grant me salvation as some oddity or loner
To trade me a place on Parnassus sublime
With, as added inducement, on their altars a corner.

They come and invite me to become their prize penitent
To surrender as loser to the masterful element
They come and invite me to give up my commitment
They come and invite me to such a mountain of excrement.

Though I don’t know
What Fate may hold
I chose this road
My life to mould.
God’s divine
He may see to his own remit
This life is mine
I’ll die just as I’ve lived.

So I’ll keep on playing the loser’s game
Preferring to play on the Left, not the Right.
A Congress of the United I want to proclaim
And the “Our Son” with conviction I wish to recite.

They say it’s no longer in vogue to be mad
And people are deemed unworthy and bad
But I’ll keep on dreaming dreams of such mischief
To multiply in this life the loaves and the fishes.

Across rocks, across crags
I’ve been told I’ll be dragged
When the Revolution comes down with a crash
That my eyes they’ll gouge out
Tear the song from my throat
That my hands and my mouth they will smash.

At my birth there was born alongside and within me
A foolishness shaping the life of this fool
A foolishness daring to take on the enemy
A fool choosing to live with no price on his soul.

- by the Cuban songwriter Silvio Rodríguez, as translated from the Spanish by Manus O’Riordan.

In 1991, in the wake of the self-destruction of the USSR and the economic crisis which this created for Cuba, and in defiance of the salivating global capitalist hyenas who were also anticipating the imminent collapse of the Cuban Revolution a quarter of a century ago, Silvio Rodríguez composed *El Necio* - which translates as *The Fool*. As with the poem of the same name by Patrick Pearse, this song describes a characterisation by the enemy that was, in fact, a label proudly worn by Irish and Cuban revolutionaries alike. And the patriotic Rodríguez has always explained that his song was composed in tribute to Fidel. [MO’R].

See tribute to Fidel Castro by the President of Ireland Michael O’Higgins on page 26.