

Irish Foreign Affairs

Volume 13, Number 1

March 2020

“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: Trump Draws Back from War with Iran – Twice p. 2
- Britain versus Russia: Battle for the Caucasus 1918-20 (Part Five) *Pat Walsh* p. 9
- The Khojaly Massacre of 26 February 1992 *Pat Walsh* p. 12
- The GDR and I – An Indirect Family Relationship *Manus O Riordan* p. 15
- The 1945 Stalin/Churchill/Truman Discussion of Spain–An Introduction by
Manus O Riordan p. 17

Documents

- The Holodomor Story p. 19
- Lawrence of Arabia on ‘The Syrian Question’ p. 24

Trump Draws Back from War with Iran – Twice

On 14 July 2015, the US signed a nuclear agreement with Iran, known as the [Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action](#) (JCPOA). The other four permanent members of the Security Council – China, France, Russia and the UK – plus Germany, were also party to the agreement.

Iran: one of the original signatories to the NPT

Iran was one of the original signatories to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the internationally accepted rules-based system governing nuclear activity by states. It signed the NPT as a ‘non-nuclear-weapon’ state on 1 July 1968 and, by so doing, undertook not to develop nuclear weapons. It hasn’t done so. As required by the NPT, Iran’s nuclear facilities are and always have been under IAEA supervision. The IAEA has never detected any diversion of nuclear material from these nuclear facilities for possible military use.

Iran’s leaders have repeatedly denied that they have any ambitions to develop nuclear weapons. What is more, in a speech to nuclear scientists on 22 February 2012, Iran’s Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, declared the possession of such weapons a “grave sin”. There was nothing new in this statement: in 2005, he issued a fatwa – a religious edict – saying that “the production, stockpiling, and use of nuclear weapons are forbidden under Islam and that the Islamic Republic of Iran shall never acquire these weapons”.

Of course, this is not an absolute constraint on Iran developing nuclear weapons, but it’s unlikely that the religious authorities in Iran would modify this principle unless Iran was perceived to be under an existential threat, most plausibly, after having been attacked by the US and/or Israel.

George Bush “angry”

In November 2007, US intelligence issued a National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), *Iran: Nuclear Intentions and Capabilities*. In it, the 16 US intelligence services expressed the consensus view that Iran hadn’t got an active nuclear weapons programme at that time.

According to his memoir, *Decision Points*, President George Bush was “angry” when he learnt of this assessment by his intelligence services – he was angry because:

“The NIE didn’t just undermine diplomacy. It also tied my hands on the military side.... after the NIE, how could I possibly explain using the military to destroy the nuclear facilities of a country the intelligence community said had no active nuclear weapons program?”

The President should have been pleased that Iran was not developing nuclear weapons. Instead, he was angry that the

evidence from his own intelligence services that Iran was not developing nuclear weapons would undermine the US-led campaign to maintain international pressure on Iran and remove any justification for US military action against Iran.

The US had then and has now an interest in saying that a nuclear-armed Iran is imminent. And the same is true of Israel.

An ‘inalienable right’ to uranium enrichment

In return for surrendering their right to develop nuclear weapons, the NPT grants ‘non-nuclear-weapon’ states like Iran the right to develop nuclear facilities for peaceful purposes. Article IV(1) of the Treaty makes this clear:

“Nothing in this Treaty shall be interpreted as affecting the inalienable right of all the Parties to the Treaty to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination and in conformity with Articles I and II of this Treaty.”

So, on the face of things, the NPT gives all ‘non-nuclear-weapon’ states what it calls an ‘inalienable right’ to uranium enrichment on their own soil so long as they conform to Article II, that is, so long as enrichment is not for weapons manufacture. Argentina, Brazil, Germany, Japan and the Netherlands are all in the same position as Iran. They are all ‘non-nuclear-weapon’ state parties to the NPT. And all of them have uranium enrichment facilities without being accused of breaching the NPT.

John Kerry was Chairman of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee from 2009 to 2013, when he became President Obama’s Secretary of State and led for the US in the JCPOA negotiations. He [told](#) the Financial Times on 10 June 2009 that Iran had “a right to peaceful nuclear power and to enrichment in that purpose” and he went on to describe the Bush administration’s “no enrichment” approach to negotiations as “bombastic diplomacy” that “wasted energy” and “hardened the lines”.

US tried to force Iran to cease enrichment

Nevertheless, for a decade prior to the signing of the JCPOA in 2015, the Bush and Obama administrations tried, with the backing of the EU, to force Iran to cease uranium enrichment. If the US/EU had gotten their way, Iran would have been the only state in the world which was banned from having uranium enrichment facilities on its own soil.

As part of this enforcement campaign, from January 2012 onwards the Obama administration unilaterally imposed severe economic sanctions on Iran which sought to prevent it from engaging in international trade, especially the export of oil. These sanctions owed their existence to legislation passed by

the US Congress in December 2011 at the behest of the Israeli lobby in the US, legislation which was accepted by President Obama. The EU joined in, unilaterally banning imports of Iranian oil from June 2012 onwards.

These US/EU sanctions halved Iran's revenue from oil to \$5 billion annually and caused Iran's GDP to fall by about 6% in 2012 (see BBC [The impact of Iran sanctions](#)). In October 2012 during his re-election campaign against Mitt Romney, President Obama [boasted](#) Trump-like that he had "crippled" Iran's economy.

However, despite applying this extraordinary economic pressure, the US/EU failed to force Iran to cease enrichment. On the contrary, whereas in 2005 there were no centrifuges enriching uranium in Iran, by 2015 around 19,000 centrifuges were installed and about 10,000 of them were in operation.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)

In early 2013 or thereabouts, the Obama administration did a U-turn and abandoned its attempt to force Iran to cease uranium enrichment on its own soil. That's why the US negotiations with Iran about its nuclear activities, which began secretly in Oman in March 2013, ended successfully in Vienna on 14 July 2015 with agreement on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Without that reversal of policy, there would have been no deal, because retaining enrichment facilities on its own soil has always been Iran's bottom line and it was prepared to endure years of wholly unjustified sanctions in order to defend that bottom line.

The JCPOA is an extraordinarily wide-ranging and complex agreement (see, for example, [JCPOA Key Requirements, Arms Control Association](#)).

Aside from no longer demanding that Iran cease uranium enrichment, the deal required the lifting of all nuclear-related sanctions against Iran, those imposed unilaterally by the US and

EU in 2012 plus the earlier rather mild UN sanctions. It even went beyond ending sanctions into the area of trade promotion: in Section 29, the US and the EU are required to "refrain from any policy specifically intended to directly and adversely affect the normalisation of trade and economic relations with Iran" and in Section 33 the EU commits to "agree on steps to ensure Iran's access in areas of trade, technology, finance and energy" and "consider the use of available instruments such as export credits to facilitate trade, project financing and investment in Iran". In Section 22, the US agreed to "allow for the sale of commercial passenger aircraft and related parts and services to Iran".

However, the US sought to constrain Iran's nuclear programme in other ways. In particular, it insisted that the JCPOA imposed very severe, albeit time-limited, restrictions on Iran's uranium enrichment capabilities and its enriched uranium stockpile and on many other aspects of its nuclear programme.

On the former, for example:

1. For the next 10 years, the number of uranium enrichment centrifuges installed is limited to about 6,000 (that is, 13,000 had to be de-installed);

2. For the next 15 years, the level of enrichment is capped at 3.67% uranium-235, the level appropriate for power generation reactors;

3. For the next 15 years, the stockpile of enriched uranium is capped at 300kgs of 3.67% uranium-235, a 98% reduction in its stockpile prior to the JCPOA (to achieve this, Iran has had to sell the excess, or ship it abroad for storage, or dilute it to natural uranium levels).

There was no justification for imposing these extraordinary restrictions on Iran's civil nuclear programme: as a 'non-nuclear-weapon' party to the NPT, Iran is forbidden to acquire nuclear weapons, but the NPT places no limits on civil nuclear activity, providing it is under IAEA supervision. No other party to the NPT has had limitations placed on its civil nuclear programme.

Iran agreed reluctantly to the JCPOA to get rid of crippling sanctions by the US/EU and in the hope that after the US-imposed restrictions had expired they would have a civil nuclear programme of their own choosing, which is their right under the NPT.

JCPOA endorsed by the Security Council

On 20 July 2015, the JCPOA was endorsed unanimously by the Security Council in Resolution [2231](#) and thereby became an international agreement, to which all UN member states had a duty to adhere.

Resolution 2231 also charged the IAEA with the task of monitoring Iran's compliance with the JCPOA. To enable it to fulfil that task, the agreement itself prescribed that Iran be subjected to the most comprehensive inspection and verification regime that has ever been operated by the IAEA.

On 16 January 2016, the IAEA certified that Iran had taken the steps necessary to restrict its nuclear programme and put in place appropriate arrangements for increased monitoring of

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

the programme. This triggered the lifting of US, EU and UN sanctions.

From then on, the IAEA issued quarterly reports on Iran's compliance with the JCPOA. Its tenth such report on 9 May 2018, like all its predecessors, confirmed Iran's compliance, the IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano [stating](#):

"Iran is subject to the world's most robust nuclear verification regime under the JCPOA, which is a significant verification gain. As of today, the IAEA can confirm that the nuclear-related commitments are being implemented by Iran."

The US violates Security Council Resolution 2231

The day before, on 8 May 2018, President Trump had [announced](#) that the US intended to violate Security Council Resolution 2231.

Annex II B of the JCPOA states:

"The United States commits to cease the application of, and to seek such legislative action as may be appropriate to terminate, or modify to effectuate the termination of, all nuclear-related sanctions as specified in Sections 4.1-4.9 below ... " (p43 of Resolution 2231)

On 8 May 2018, the President signed a presidential memorandum showing that the US intended to breach that commitment and "begin reinstating U.S. nuclear sanctions on the Iranian regime". It stressed that the US "will be instituting the highest level of economic sanction".

Reinstating sanctions against Iran is a clear violation of Resolution 2231 and a very significant one at that, which has almost led to military conflict between the US and Iran. Yet it is highly unlikely that you will have read that the US is violating Security Council Resolution 2231 by reinstating sanctions, since the mainstream media constantly refer to this outrageous act as "withdrawal from the nuclear deal".

There's a much better chance that you will have read that Iran is violating Resolution 2231. Iran is regularly accused of developing ballistic missiles in violation of 2231, which "calls upon" Iran not to "undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons". If that is true (which Iran rejects), it's a much less serious violation of 2231 than that of the US, which has had very serious consequences for the Middle East.

US reinstatement of sanctions

First and foremost, the US reinstatement of sanctions has had very serious consequences for Iran, where it has created widespread human misery. According to the BBC, [Six charts that show how hard US sanctions have hit Iran, 9 December 2019](#)

1. As a result of the sanctions, Iran's gross domestic product (GDP) contracted an estimated 4.8% in the 2018 and is forecast

to shrink another 9.5% in 2019, according to the International Monetary Fund.

2. The Statistical Centre of Iran reported that the Consumer Price Index (CPI) 12-month rate of inflation for households stood at 42% in late October 2019. Food and beverage prices were up by 61% year-on-year and the price of tobacco was up by 80%.

3. As regards oil production, OPEC data suggest that at the start of 2018, Iran's crude oil production reached 3.8 million barrels per day (bpd) of which about 2.3 million bpd were being exported. However, by October 2019, Iran's crude oil production had fallen to 2.1 million bpd on average, of which only 260,000 bpd on average was being exported.

Human Rights Watch published a report, ['Maximum Pressure': US Economic Sanctions Harm Iranians' Right to Health](#), on 29 October 2019. It documents how broad restrictions on financial transactions, coupled with aggressive rhetoric from United States officials, have drastically constrained the ability of Iranian entities to finance humanitarian imports, including vital medicines and medical equipment.

Pompeo's ultimatum

On 21 May 2018, shortly after President Trump announced that the US was going to reinstate sanctions, his Secretary of State Mike Pompeo [issued](#) an ultimatum to Iran making 12 demands that it must satisfy before sanctions are lifted:

"First, Iran must declare to the IAEA a full account of the prior military dimensions of its nuclear program, and permanently and verifiably abandon such work in perpetuity.

"Second, Iran must stop enrichment and never pursue plutonium reprocessing. This includes closing its heavy water reactor.

"Third, Iran must also provide the IAEA with unqualified access to all sites throughout the entire country.

"Iran must end its proliferation of ballistic missiles and halt further launching or development of nuclear-capable missile systems.

"Iran must release all U.S. citizens, as well as citizens of our partners and allies, each of them detained on spurious charges.

"Iran must end support to Middle East terrorist groups, including Lebanese Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

"Iran must respect the sovereignty of the Iraqi Government and permit the disarming, demobilization, and reintegration of Shia militias.

"Iran must also end its military support for the Houthi militia and work towards a peaceful political settlement in Yemen.

"Iran must withdraw all forces under Iranian command throughout the entirety of Syria.

“Iran, too, must end support for the Taliban and other terrorists in Afghanistan and the region, and cease harboring senior al-Qaida leaders.

“Iran, too, must end the IRG Quds Force’s support for terrorists and militant partners around the world.

“And too, Iran must end its threatening behavior against its neighbors – many of whom are U.S. allies. This certainly includes its threats to destroy Israel, and its firing of missiles into Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. It also includes threats to international shipping ... and destructive cyberattacks.

“That list is pretty long, but if you take a look at it, these are 12 very basic requirements. The length of the list is simply a scope of the malign behavior of Iran. We didn’t create the list, they did.”

Pat Buchanan remarked that Pompeo’s speech “read like the terms of some conquering Caesar dictating to some defeated tribe in Gaul, though we had yet to fight and win the war, usually a precondition for dictating terms”.

Pompeo was kind enough to say that “once this is achieved” (that is, once Iran has fulfilled all 12 demands) the US is prepared “to end the principal components of every one of our sanctions” (which presumably doesn’t mean all sanctions), “to re-establish full diplomatic and commercial relationships” and even “to permit Iran to have advanced technology”.

Predictably, Iran’s response to Pompeo’s demands was to disregard them.

E3 ineffectual

Iran continued to abide by the terms of the JCPOA even though the US intended to violate them and it looked to Germany, France and the UK (aka the E3) for political support and for help in countering US sanctions – but it has looked in vain.

Theoretically, France and Germany and the UK are still in favour of maintaining the JCPOA. But the three of them have provided the US with an excuse for violating it by continuously echoing the US complaints that it doesn’t cover the full range of Iran’s alleged sins and therefore needs to be modified.

They have done nothing to help Iran trade with the outside world, meekly accepting the damage to their own trade with Iran as a result of US sanctions.

True, over a year ago, on 31 January 2019, the foreign ministers of France, Germany and the UK announced the creation of INSTEX, the Instrument for Supporting Trade Exchanges, to facilitate the exchange of goods between Iran and the EU without the direct transfer of money.

Originally, it was pitched as a means of getting around US sanctions, but now it’s going to be used for trade in humanitarian goods - pharmaceutical, medical and food products only –

which are exempt from US sanctions, but difficult for Iran to acquire from abroad because banks are reluctant to have any dealings with Iran. Plans to facilitate the trade of oil and gas via INSTEX have been abandoned lest such unfriendly sanctions busting annoy the US.

However, no goods have thus far been exchanged through INSTEX over a year after its creation was announced (see [EU-Iran Instex trade channel remains pipe dream](#), DW, 31 January 2020).

Iran adopts a more aggressive stance

A year or so after the US reinstatement of sanctions, with the three European states proving to be of no help, the prospects for Iran looked bleak: US sanctions were hurting and there was no obvious way out. So, Iran decided to adopt a more aggressive stance.

On 8 June 2019, it announced that it would no longer be bound by the JCPOA’s limits on heavy water and low-enriched uranium, while emphasising that the steps it proposed to take were easily reversible if the other parties to the JCPOA came into compliance.

Earlier, on 12 May, [four commercial ships](#) (3 oil tankers, 2 registered in Saudi Arabia and 1 in Norway, and an Emirati registered bunkering ship) were damaged off the coast of the UAE in the Gulf of Oman. There were no casualties. On 13 June, [two more oil tankers](#) were attacked in the Gulf of Oman. Again, there were no casualties. The US and most of its allies blamed Iran for all these incidents, but no action was taken against Iran. The UAE stood out by refusing to blame anybody. Iran denied responsibility.

Whoever delivered it, it appeared to be a message to the world from Iran saying that, as long as it is barred from exporting oil, it would be unwise to assume that other states would be able to export their oil unhindered from the Gulf.

On 20 June, Iran shot down an unarmed (and unmanned) US military [surveillance drone](#), which Iran said had entered Iranian airspace but the US said was over international waters. The drone was a [RQ-4A Global Hawk](#) reputedly the largest used by the US military and costing \$176 million. US military retaliation against Iranian radar and missile sites was planned but, according to President Trump, he called it off at the last minute, having been told that it was likely to kill 150 people. He did so against the wishes of his chief advisers John Bolton and Mike Pompeo.

Had the US retaliation gone ahead, Iran might have felt obliged to respond, especially if 150 Iranians were killed, which could have led to a prolonged military exchange if not all out war. Trump nipped that possibility in the bud by not retaliating at the outset. For that, we should be grateful. He hasn’t started another US war in the Middle East - yet.

That’s what he promised in the platform on which he was elected. But if he is serious about forcing Iran to submit to demands along the lines specified in Pompeo’s ultimatum then war with Iran is inevitable.

(The Iranian authorities claimed that a US P-8A manned aircraft also intruded into Iranian air space at the same time as the drone and they could have shot it down but didn't because it was manned. The US military has confirmed that a P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft was close to the drone when it was shot down, so the Iranian account may be correct. The president, himself, seemed to think so, and expressed appreciation to the Iranians for saving the lives of the 38 people on board. There's little doubt that, had the P-8A been brought down with the loss of American lives, Trump would have retaliated big time with unknowable consequences.)

Saudi Arabia: making peace with Iran?

On 14 September, two of Saudi Arabia's major oil facilities, Aramco's Abqaiq and Khurais, suffered a major attack using drones and cruise missiles (but nobody was killed). The Houthis claimed responsibility, but the US and Saudi Arabia said Iran did it. Trump said it was up to Saudi Arabia to respond, but the US might help if the Saudis paid for it. No retaliation took place.

Saudi Arabia had suffered a serious military attack and was apparently defenceless against more of the same but, instead of rushing to its aid as an ally should, the US was seemingly uninterested in punishing the party whom it said was responsible. This was a clear indication to Saudi Arabia that the US cannot be relied upon to have their back in relation to Iran while Trump is in charge. Whether that becomes a permanent feature depends on the outcome of November's presidential election. Also, Iran has been at pains to point out to Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States that if they assist the US in taking military action against Iran, for example, by allowing their territory to be used, they would be sure to suffer the wrath of Iran.

All this seems to have convinced Saudi Arabia that a better course of action would be to make peace with Iran. In the not very distant past, the Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman was outrageously belligerent towards Iran: in November 2017, he described the Supreme Leader of Iran as "the new Hitler of the Middle East", who needs to be confronted, not appeased, and earlier in 2017 he said that the kingdom (of Saudi Arabia) would make sure any future struggle between the two countries "is waged in Iran".

He was a different person when interviewed on CBS on 29 September 2019. Asked if Saudi Arabia was going to respond militarily against Iran for the attack on its oil infrastructure, he replied "I hope not" saying that "a political and peaceful solution is much better". Asked if President Trump should sit down with President Rouhani and craft a new deal, he said that's what we are all asking for.

Whether this leads to some form of a non-aggression pact between Saudi Arabia and Iran remains to be seen, but we do know that an embryonic dialogue is going on between them, with Iraq acting as a mediator. Abdul Mahdi, the former Prime Minister of Iraq, had been expecting to meet with Qasem Soleimani on the day he was assassinated. Abdul Mahdi said:

"He came to deliver me a message from Iran, responding to the message we delivered from Saudi Arabia to Iran."

Rouhani says no to meeting with Trump

Heads of state gather in New York in late September every year to speak at the UN General Assembly. Last September, President Macron tried to take advantage of this to arrange a meeting between President Trump and President Rouhani (see Macron says conditions in place for Trump, Rouhani talks, Al Jazeera, 25 September 2019).

Trump was very keen. Rouhani was not. Speaking to the General Assembly, Rouhani said:

"On behalf of my nation and state, I would like to announce that our response to any negotiation under sanctions is in the negative. ...

"If you require a positive answer, and as declared by the leader of the Islamic Revolution, the only way for talks to begin is return to commitments and compliance. ...

"A memorial photo is the last step of negotiation; not the first one."

Understandably, Iran is not going to negotiate with the US while it is violating the existing deal.

Trump orders killing of Qasem Soleimani

On 3 January 2020, President Trump ordered the killing of Qasem Soleimani, the head of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), who was a US ally in the fight against ISIS in Iraq. He was killed by a drone strike near Baghdad airport, along with four members of the Iran-backed Shia militia, Kata'ib Hezbollah, including its commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis. President Bush designated the Quds Force a foreign terrorist organization in 2007; President Trump designated the IRGC as a whole a "foreign terrorist organisation" on 8 April 2019.

A few days earlier, on 29 December 2019, President Trump authorised the bombing of five locations, three in Iraq and two in Syria, belonging to the Shia militia Kata'ib Hezbollah, which is part of the Popular Mobilization Forces backed by Iran. 25 members of Kata'ib Hezbollah were reportedly killed and 51 wounded. The US justified the bombing on the (questionable) grounds that Kata'ib Hezbollah was responsible for an attack on the K-1 air base, which killed an American civilian contractor and wounded four American military personnel.

These murderous actions by the US were carried out against the wishes of the Iraqi Government and were therefore gross violations of Iraq sovereignty.

The former Iraqi Prime Minister, Abdul Mahdi, was told in advance by the US Defense Secretary Mark Esper about the Kata'ib Hezbollah bombings and tried to have them stopped but Esper refused. Mahdi said he asked the US for the intelligence that Kata'ib Hezbollah were responsible for the attack on the K-1 air base but his request was refused. Mahdi said he tried to warn Kata'ib Hezbollah about the upcoming US military action.

The Iraqi Government wasn't told in advance about the killing of Qasem Soleimani and his companions.

In response to the killing of Qasem Soleimani and his companions, on 8 January 2020 Iran fired ballistic missiles at two air bases in Iraq, Ayn Al Asad and Erbil, where US and other military personnel are located. Twenty-two in all were fired, says Iran; 12 reached their target, says US. There were no serious casualties, which appears to have been Iran's intention. Later, the US military [said](#) that 110 of their troops had been diagnosed with "mild traumatic brain injury" due to blast, 77 of whom had already returned to duty.

War avoided – for now

Did these US attacks, authorised by the President, demonstrate a shift away from his stance in June 2019 when he halted planned military action against Iran in retaliation for the shooting down the US drone? That indicated a definite preference for avoiding war with Iran.

Now he has taken military action against a militia supported by Iran and, much more seriously, killed a senior military officer of the Iranian state. That certainly risked war with Iran, but thanks to Iran responding in a manner calculated not to kill Americans, war seems to have been avoided – for now.

A few hours after Iran responded, surrounded by his Chiefs of Staff, he [addressed](#) the American people:

"... no Americans were harmed in last night's attack by the Iranian regime. We suffered no casualties, all of our soldiers are safe, and only minimal damage was sustained at our military bases. Iran appears to be standing down, which is a good thing for all parties concerned and a very good thing for the world."

John Bolton's legacy

But why did he authorise the killing of Qasem Soleimani? NBC News [gave](#) a possible explanation on 13 January 2020:

"After Iran shot down a US drone in June, John Bolton, Trump's national security adviser at the time, urged Trump to retaliate by signing off on an operation to kill Soleimani, officials said. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo also wanted Trump to authorize the assassination, officials said.

"But Trump rejected the idea, saying he'd take that step only if Iran crossed his red line: killing an American. The president's message was 'that's only on the table if they hit Americans', according to a person briefed on the discussion.

Then, when an American civilian was killed on the K-1 air base on 27 December 2019, according to NBC News, Defense Secretary Mark Esper presented Trump with a series of response options, including killing Soleimani after he arrived at Baghdad airport – his travel plans were known. Esper recommended killing Soleimani, as did Pompeo, and Trump agreed.

A few hours later, his re-election campaign was boasting about killing terrorist leader Soleimani, in addition to al-Baghdadi the leader of ISIS. Perhaps, he had his re-election campaign in mind when making his choice.

Qasem Soleimani's role in the defeat of ISIS

Qasem Soleimani played a very important role in the defeat of ISIS in Iraq in alliance with the US. The following snippets from his Wikipedia page give some idea of his importance:

- Soleimani had a significant role in Iran's fight against ISIL in Iraq. He was described as the "linchpin" bringing together Kurdish and Shia forces to fight ISIS, overseeing joint operations conducted by the two groups.
- Amirli was the first town to successfully withstand an ISIS invasion, and was secured thanks to an unusual partnership of Iraqi and Kurdish soldiers, Iranian-backed Shiite militias and US warplanes.
- A senior Iraqi official told the BBC that when the city of Mosul fell, the rapid reaction of Iran, rather than American bombing, was what prevented a more widespread collapse
- Soleimani played an integral role in the organisation and planning of the crucial operation to retake the city of Tikrit in Iraq from ISIS

This contribution by Qasem Soleiman has been largely written out of history by the US and its allies and therefore by the mainstream media. But, near the end of his remarks on 8 January, President Trump seemed to suggest to Iran that the US and Iran should renew their alliance against ISIS and "other shared priorities". Here's what he said:

"Tens of thousands of ISIS fighters have been killed or captured during my administration. ISIS is a natural enemy of Iran. The destruction of ISIS is good for Iran, and we should work together on this and other shared priorities."

A few days earlier he had ordered the assassination of a man who had made a major contribution to the destruction of ISIS. This is bizarre.

Iran: the major destabilizing influence in the Middle East

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo regularly asserts that Iran is "the major destabilizing influence in the Middle East". He did so in an [interview](#) on CNBC on 11 May 2019. Think about that! This is the same Mike Pompeo, who a year earlier issued a 12-point ultimatum to Iran and threatened it with economic strangulation if it didn't obey. That couldn't possibly be destabilizing, could it?

A few weeks later, in June 2019, Iran shot down a US military drone and a military response by the US was called off at the last minute. In September 2019, Saudi oil infrastructure was attacked. We don't know for sure who did it, but we do know for sure that neither would have happened if the US hadn't reinstated sanctions and issued an ultimatum against Iran, in violation of Security Council Resolution 2231 in May 2018.

To be fair to Mike Pompeo, he seems to accept that – on his way to Jeddah on 18 September 2019, he [told](#) the press travelling with him:

“I would argue that what you are seeing here is a direct result of us reversing the enormous failure of the JCPOA.”

He was speaking to journalists about the attack on Saudi oil infrastructure a few days earlier, which he seems to be saying was a direct result of reversing the JCPOA.

There have been some other examples of US destabilisation in the Middle East in recent times, notably the invasion of Iraq (with a little help from the UK) in 2003 on the false premises that (a) it possessed “weapons of mass destruction” and (b) its leader Saddam Hussein had a hand in the 9/11 attacks on the US.

The invasion and its aftermath cost the lives of perhaps a million Iraqis, certainly hundreds of thousands. The precise number will never be known. In March 2015, *Physicians for Social Responsibility* published a [review](#) of the various estimates and concluded that “the war has, directly or indirectly, killed around 1 million people in Iraq” (p15) from the invasion in March 2003 until December 2011 when US troops were

withdrawn. It wrecked the Iraqi state and transformed what was an al-Qaeda free zone into a territory in which al-Qaeda, and later ISIS, flourished.

In January 2019, the US Army published a two-volume report on the invasion and occupation of Iraq. It [concluded](#):

“At the time of this project’s completion in 2018, an emboldened and expansionist Iran appears to be the only victor.” (p639)

Other examples of US destabilising in the Middle East in recent times are Libya 2011 and Syria 2011-2020 – and then there’re the ones we don’t know about.

You can see why in a [speech](#) in Cairo on 10 January 2019, Pompeo felt able to be “very blunt and direct” and assert “America is a force for good in the Middle East”.

David Morrison
6 March 2020

Advertisements

Blockading The Germans! With an Overview of 19th Century Maritime Law The Evolution of Britain’s Strategy during the First World War, Volume 1 (Paperback)

By Eamon Dyas

Belfast Historical and Educational Society 2018

This is the first volume of a Trilogy examining overlooked aspects of the First World War and its aftermath from a European perspective. Comprehensively sourced with scholarly research, it explains how Britain used a continental blockade to force the capitulation of the Kaiser’s Germany by targeting not just military, but also civilian, imports—particularly imported food supplies, upon which Germany had become dependent since its industrial revolution.

After joining the European War of August 1914—and elevating it into a World War—Britain cast aside the two maritime codes agreed by the world’s maritime powers over the previous almost 60 years – the Declaration of Paris in 1856 and the Declaration of London in 1909.

In defiance of these internationally agreed codes, Britain aggressively expanded its blockade with the object of disrupting not only the legitimate trade between neutral countries and Germany but trade between neutral countries themselves. Britain’s policy of civilian starvation during the First World War was unprecedented in history. Whereas it had used the weapon of starvation against civilians in the past, in such instances this was either through the exploitation of a natural disaster to bring about famine (Ireland and India) or the result of pre-conceived policy against a non-industrial society (France during the Revolutionary Wars). Its use against Germany was the first time in history where a policy of deliberate starvation was directed against the civilian population of an advanced industrial economy.

This volume traces the evolution of Britain’s relationship with international naval blockade strategies from the Crimean War through the American Civil War and the Boer War

culminating in its maturity during the Great War. It also draws out how the United States—the leading neutral country—was made complicit in Blockading The Germans during the war and brings the story up to America’s entry into the War. Eamon Dyas is a former head of The Times newspaper archive, was on the Executive Committee of the Business Archives Council in England for a number of years, and was Information Officer

Irish Bulletin

**A full reprint of newspaper of Dáil Éireann
giving war reports.**

Published so far:

Volume 1, 12th July 1919 to 1st May 1920. 514pp.

Volume 2, 3rd May 1920 to 31st August 1920. 540pp.

Volume 3, 1st September 1920 to 1st January 1921. 695pp.

Volume 4, Part One: 3rd January 1921 to 16th - March 1921. 365pp

€36, £30 paperback, per volume
(€55, £45 hardback, per volume)

Post free in Ireland and Britain

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

<https://www.atholbooks->

To buy books and pamphlets published by
Athol Books,

**The Aubane Historical Society,
And**

**The Belfast Historical and Educational
Society**

Go to

www.atholbooks.org

**(Please use Firefox, Safari, Chrome or
similar).**

Britain versus Russia: Battle for the Caucasus 1918-20 (Part Five).

by Pat Walsh

As early as the end of January 1919 Lloyd George indicated to the Allied Supreme Council that, despite the influx of troops over the previous months, he saw the British occupation of the Caucasus as a temporary phenomenon. On 6 March the Inter-Departmental Conference on Middle Eastern Affairs under Lord Curzon, to which the Cabinet had delegated authority on such matters, agreed that preparations should be made for a withdrawal of British forces (CAB 23/9, 6.3.1919).

The British and Denikin

It was decided, as an alternative to British occupation, to use Denikin's forces as a shield over the Caucasus. British arms and military equipment would be supplied in abundance to Denikin on the understanding that Denikin's Volunteer army would fight the Bolsheviks and not turn their attention to the Caucasus states Britain had established to its rear.

Britain bore virtually the entire financial cost of the Russian Civil War on the White side.

The Chancellor of Exchequer and Treasury, Austen Chamberlain, was demanding the "severest economy" from government and military and the requisite savings could "only be obtained by reductions in men."

Another problem Britain faced at this moment was the situation in Ireland. The Irish people had overwhelmingly voted for independence in the first UK democratic General Election of 1918 and established a parliament to institute the mandate it had won. When Britain ignored the result and attempted to repress the Irish democracy Britain by military force it was faced with insurrection on its own doorstep.

Sir Henry Wilson, Churchill's Chief of the Imperial General Staff, a strong anti-Bolshevik, was also a hardline Unionist opponent of Sinn Fein. As more and more British troops were required for the "storm centres" of Ireland, India and Egypt and to enforce a treaty on Turkey, Wilson began to become less supportive of occupying the Caucasus with valuable military forces required immediately elsewhere (Major-General Callwell, *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, His Life and Diaries*, Vol. II, p.182).

On 21 March the Foreign Secretary, Balfour, secured the agreement of the Italians to step into Britain's shoes in the Caucasus and replace the withdrawing British forces. However, the Italian government of Orlando and Sonnino fell soon after the agreement and was replaced by a new one led by Francesco Nitti, who cancelled the despatch of Italian forces.

A frustrated Balfour then sought the replacement of British forces with American troops – using the Armenians as bait – but the U.S. was unwilling to have the problem palmed off on it and engage in such a responsibility at that moment.

The British evacuation of the Caucasus coincided with other withdrawals from North Russia and the Baltic Republics. But it also coincided with the period (September-October) when the White forces were achieving their greatest successes against the Bolsheviks, when victory seemed possible.

The decision to withdraw British forces from the Caucasus and instead fund Denikin's forces against the Bolsheviks had the effect of facilitating Churchill's policy of war on the Soviets, despite the Prime Minister's reluctance to embrace it. Churchill believed that the Bolsheviks could be defeated by increasing supplies to the White Armies and supporting them with British volunteers and military advisers. He used the British Cabinet's vague policy to support anti-Bolshevik forces in Russia by

authorising massive material aid to Kolchak and Denikin, for a situation of the "utmost military urgency" (John M. Thompson, *Russia, Bolshevism, and the Versailles Peace*, pp. 122-3).

As long as the Prime Minister pursued an obscure policy with regard to Russia his War Minister was able to pursue a private war on the Bolsheviks, within limits. In mid-1919, without consulting the Cabinet, Churchill instructed the Imperial General Staff to increase the amount of supplies to Denikin's Army to be sufficient to fully equip 250,000 men. The supplies included 25,000 poison gas shells. Churchill described mustard gas as the "ideal weapon against our beastly enemy".

In the Summer of 1919, after the reversal of Kolchak's fortunes in Siberia, Lloyd George concluded that because he had failed to muster enough popular support to defeat the Bolsheviks it would be wise to concentrate efforts in supporting Denikin, who at least seemed to command support in Southern Russia. Churchill argued that Kolchak was still worth supporting, if only to draw Soviet forces away from Denikin's advance.

Churchill convinced Lloyd George that it was cheaper to supply Denikin with surplus British Great War *matériel* than to transport it to England and store it. The amount supplied by Britain to Denikin's forces was enormous. It included full British Army kit for 500,000 men, 1,200 field guns with 2 million rounds of ammunition, 6,000 machine guns, and 200,000 rifles with 500 million rounds of ammunition, 600 lorries and motorcars, 300 motorcycles, 70 tanks, 6 armoured cars, and 200 aircraft, field hospitals and signal and engineering equipment. This was sufficient to fully equip an army of 250,000 men and more than Denikin was ever able to use, as the combat strength of his army was only ever around 150,000 men. In all at least 100 million pounds was spent on Denikin's army, according to Churchill's figures (Information can be found in 3 White Papers, *Statement of Expenditure on Naval and Military Operations in Russia*, Cmd 307, 11.11.1918-31.7.1919; Cmd 395, to 31.10.19, Expenditure on ; Cmd 772 revised. Also FO 371/5448, *Major General Sir H.C. Holman's Final Report of the British Military Mission, South Russia*, April 1920)

The British Military Mission, which organised the training of Denikin's forces was about 2,000 strong. Training the White army in the use of the new British weapons was an essential part of the aid from London.

Although it was stated that only British advisers were present in the Caucasus and it was denied that British forces were participating in the Russian Civil War, they did indeed take place in front-line operations, because much of the new British weaponry, like tanks and warplanes, could not be operated effectively by the Russians. British anti-Bolshevik "volunteers" were recruited from demobilised men and 47 Squadron RAF, partly manned with volunteer Aces from the Great War, bombed Russian towns and villages. There was even a plan for the RAF to bomb Moscow, although Churchill cancelled it at the last minute.

In the Spring Denikin split his army in two, sending the major part to defend the Donbass against a Red offensive, aimed at exterminating the Cossacks. The smaller part, under Denikin's best commander, Peter Wrangel, was sent against Tsaritsyn. This decision led to a falling out between Denikin and Wrangel, who believed all effort should be concentrated in the East to link up with Kolchak's front. However, by that time Kolchak's forces were in retreat.

On July 1 Denikin, a cautious military commander, issued his Moscow Directive, an all-or-nothing, ambitious broad front,

three-pronged assault on the Bolshevik capital. Denikin was pushed into this great gamble by the understanding that British assistance was temporary and time was running out. It involved Wrangel marching North toward Saratov and Penza toward Moscow with the Caucasus army on the East flank. The Don army would march straight up the Don valley in the centre. The Volunteer army was to advance from Kharkov, via Kursk, Orel and Tula on the West flank. (Richard Pipes, *Russia Under the Bolshevik Regime, 1919-1924*, pp.85-6)

Britain and White Russia

When Denikin's forces seemed to be on the cusp of victory against the Bolsheviks in the Autumn of 1919 there was a debate about what now confronted Britain in the event of a White victory. In a debate about what "*the ultimate aim*" of British policy toward Russia should be Lloyd George was recorded as asking the Cabinet whether it

"would be in the interests of the British Empire to aim for a united Russia under any government, whether it was Bolshevik or anti-Bolshevik, or of any other tendencies, however good it might be. It would be inevitable that such a government would have a natural inclination to creep forward and, as Lord Beaconsfield had pointed out in connection with the situation in the past, such a government would... result in a peril not only to the British Empire but to the peace of the world... The future of the British Empire might depend on how the Russian situation developed, and he personally did not view with equanimity the thought of a powerful united Russia of 130,000,000 inhabitants."(CAB 23/15, WC 624A, 11.9.1919)

The Prime Minister suggested the setting up of an independent Ukraine, a Don Cossack state and Turkestan to limit Russia in the future.

Churchill spoke against the Prime Minister in favour of the "*Great Russia*" position and against any independence for the Caucasus states, if it placed Britain into conflict with Denikin. He believed that Britain had to remain on good terms with Russia, when it re-emerged after the Bolshevik interlude (FO 371/3961, 5.10.1919). At a previous Eastern Committee meeting he had suggested that one day Britain would "*depend upon a restored Russia as a balance against Germany*"(FO General/216, 6.3.1919).

What concerned Churchill most was that with Denikin advancing successfully on Moscow an attempt might be made to cut off his supplies in order to curb his power. In no circumstances should the interests of the Caucasus states be placed on the same level as the defeat of Bolshevik by Denikin (FO 371/3961, 5.10.19). The War Office refused to challenge Denikin when he moved forces into Dagestan in June 1919.

Whilst supporting a full-blooded war on Bolshevism Churchill was ultimately in favour of withdrawal from the Caucasus. He, like Balfour, was indifferent to the fate of the peoples there. If Britain was to put scarce resources into anything, Churchill believed it should be into defeating the Bolsheviks and overthrowing them at source. If he had succeeded the Caucasus would have undoubtedly remained part of the Russian Empire.

The Caucasus states saw Denikin's forces as a more immediate threat to them than the Bolsheviks. Denikin, pursuing the policy of "*Holy and Undivided Russia*" did not recognise the sovereignty of these states and was particularly hostile to the Georgian Menshevik-dominated government in Tiflis, which the Whites viewed as being not very different from the Bolsheviks. Already there developed clashes between White and Georgian forces in early 1919.

Britain could not recognise an independent Georgia for fear of alienating Denikin, who it now depended upon as the major element in the war on the Bolsheviks.

When the British General Briggs met Denikin for the first time he gave the White General an ultimatum on behalf of the British Government to cease hostilities with the Georgians and turn his attention to the Bolsheviks or military aid to him would be reconsidered by London. Denikin replied:

"I am a Russian and I will help Russians and Armenians against these savage Georgians, who are acting like Bolsheviks... I will not listen to the orders of an alien government, but I have issued orders, and they will be carried out to kick these Barbarians over the frontier. If HM Government will withdraw her assistance we will carry it out on our own resources."(WO 95/4958, 20/2/1919)

General Denikin regarded the Armenians as his allies in the traditional Tsarist relationship which employed them as justification for a Russian presence in the Caucasus. He regarded the Georgians and Azerbaijanis, on the other hand, as enemies to be crushed.

Denikin then asked Briggs what were the British and French "*zones of influence*" he had heard about and what were the British actually doing in the Caucasus, since no one had actually invited them there?

Despite the tough talking Denikin, however, was forced to continue to toe the British line, as they were maintaining his army through His Majesty's Treasury.

Churchill's private war seemed to be paying dividends in October and all talk of peace had dried up. Lloyd George made no public statements on Russia from April until November 1919.

Denikin's great offensive in the late Summer of 1919 began with a series of victories. Kiev, Kursk and Voronezh all fell to the White volunteers. A British tank battalion, which was particularly effective on the rolling grass plains, and two squadrons of the RAF played important roles in the victories. The RAF destroyed the Bolshevik Volga flotilla.

On 7 September, the British Cabinet, taking the lead of the Prime Minister, decided to terminate aid to Denikin. Churchill was instructed to deliver one "*final packet*" of aid to Denikin to the value of 15 million pounds. Churchill was instructed to inform Denikin of the fact that this was the final shipment and that the British Military Mission would be withdrawn from South Russia in the spring of 1920. All aid would cease on 31 March 1920. The Cabinet's instructions were clear and left Churchill with no more room for manoeuvre (CAB 23/12, 7.10.1919).

The Bolsheviks were on the defensive along the whole of the Southern Front, and had to concentrate most of the Red Army against Denikin's advance. In mid-October 1919, at the high point of the Whites' fortunes, Denikin was only 300km from Moscow and controlled a large part of Russia, containing 40 million people. Yudenich, with supporting British forces from the RAF and Royal Navy, also began an advance on Petrograd reaching its outskirts, before being stopped by the numerically superior Red Army.

A week later Churchill declared to the Cabinet that the Bolsheviks would soon be beaten, in a final attempt to stiffen their resolve to overthrow Lenin. (Churchill's Memorandum '*Situation in Russia*', CAB 24/90, NA, 15.10.1919)

So when Denikin marched into the Ukraine it was "*now or never*" and this was the climax of the Russian Civil War.

One of the things that disabled the Whites and denied them support was the inability of the command to control their military and civilian personnel in territories they occupied. Indiscipline was rife, looting, corruption and score-settling was all pervasive.

The advancing Whites committed a large number of anti-Jewish pogroms in the territory they captured, particularly in the

Ukraine. They saw the Bolsheviks as a Jewish conspiracy and this view was widely shared by British officers and observers among them. There is no evidence that Denikin himself was Anti-Semitic but he just could not control his forces.

After reading reports of the massacres of Jews, the British Prime Minister, concerned at public opinion, asked Churchill to make enquiries about their treatment by "his friends". Churchill explained to Lloyd George, citing British Military Mission reports, that the anti-Jewish violence was simply local vengeance because "the Jews had certainly played a leading part in Bolshevik atrocities" (Michael J. Cohen, *Churchill and the Jews*, pp.55-7)

Actually the Bolshevik Jews were the least Jewish element within the Jewish community, often going to great lengths to disguise their Jewishness. They had largely broken with their community long ago when they became Communists.

When Chaim Weizmann, the Zionist friend of Lloyd George, complained to the government about the pogroms Eyre Crowe at the Foreign Office wrote in a Memorandum: "It is to be remembered that what may appear to Mr. Weizmann to be outrages against the Jews in the eyes of the Ukrainians be retaliation against the horrors committed by the Bolsheviks who are all organised and directed by the Jews." (FO 608/196, 1.8.1919)

The Jewish community of the Ukraine were caught between a host of anti-Semitic forces. Not only did they suffer the anti-Bolshevik Whites and Cossacks but Ukrainian partisans, who fought Russians of all persuasions and who were ferociously Anti-Semitic, wiping out entire Jewish communities when they got the chance (see Richard Pipes, *Russia Under the Bolshevik Regime, 1919-1924*, pp.99-114, for details of the Whites and Anti-Semitism).

Bolshevik Resurgence

The Bolsheviks, however, recovered from the White offensive and turned it back. There were a number of reasons for the resurgence.

In November 1918 the British had imposed a blockade on Soviet Russia to go with the one the Royal Navy was tightening on Germany, after the Armistice. This starvation blockade killed at a rate of over 100,000 civilians each month in both countries until Germany signed the Peace Treaty and Russia proved unbeatable.

The British Blockade, by land and sea, forced the Bolsheviks into a war economy – War Communism – and autarky, just when Lenin had it in mind to make compromises with International Capitalism, to boost the Russian economy.

The Bolsheviks had an aversion to building a standing army of largely peasants, or wasting the proletariat in such a force, and originally relied on a 35,000 strong brigades of Latvian Rifles to establish power – disperse the Constituent Assembly, putting down a Left SR Rising and defending the Volga from the Czechs.

The Red Army in February/March 1918 was largely a paper construct. It was assembled by Trotsky behind the German shield of Brest-Litovsk, during mid-1918 as a necessary force against *Entente* intervention. It was led mostly by ex-Tsarist officers.

Of course, one of the terms of the treaty had been that the Bolsheviks should have no standing army. However, the Germans, having seen off Russia and having urgent business on the Western Front, were inclined to turn a blind eye to anything their Bolshevik instruments were doing. It was small beer in the context of things. The Bolsheviks, presumably, could be dealt with when affairs were closed to the West.

When Lenin saw the Allies winning the War in October 1918 he ordered a general conscription aimed at building a new army

of 3 million by the Spring of 1919, when it might be needed. By late 1919 it had reached that target against a combined opposition of 250,000 (Evan Mawdsley, *The Russian Civil War*, p. 181).

The continued Allied presence in Russia after the Armistices justified the building of this army. When it became apparent to Russians that they were to be harshly punished by the Allies for unilaterally concluding the War with the Germans tens of thousands of ex-Tsarist officers flocked to it during the Winter of 1918/19.

The German withdrawal at the Armistices, particularly from the Ukraine and Georgia removed the buffer between the Western Imperialists. Admiral Kolchak was appointed "Supreme Ruler" of an "All-Russian Provisional Government" in Omsk with the approval of the British presence there and Russia and the Civil War began in earnest.

Before the Bolshevik takeover in Russia there had been some discussion within Lenin's circle about whether a Civil War was a necessary feature of successful revolution. Lenin agreed with Marx that the Paris Communards were defeated because they "did not want to start a civil war". Bukharin and Trotsky agreed with Lenin on this point (see Richard Pipes, *Russia Under the Bolshevik Regime, 1919-1924*, p. 6).

Of course, what the Bolsheviks meant by "Civil War" was actually class war. However, the British provided the Bolsheviks with something much better than a pure Civil War, where class forces lined up against one another. They provided for the support of the most unpopular classes in Russia by half-hearted foreign intervention. Nothing could have been more welcome to the Bolsheviks in assisting them with building a popular base and establishing functional military forces for a new Russian State than such a scenario.

The Red Army, unlike its White Guard opponents had

"a single, unified command taking orders from a tightly knit political oligarchy... The White armies were fragmented and separated by large distances. They not only had no common strategy, but most of the time could not even communicate with other to coordinate operations... To make matters worse, the White armies were made up of an agglomeration of diverse components, each with its own command and interests: this held true of the most numerous contingent of the Southern Army, the Cossacks, who obeyed the commands of the White generals only if and when it suited them." (Richard Pipes, *Russia Under the Bolshevik Regime, 1919-1924*, p.10)

The Cossacks were not really Russian patriots but were disturbed by the alteration in class relations that Bolshevik rule implied. They were antagonised by Lenin's Land Decree because in their midst lived nearly 2 million peasants, many who were landless and poorer than the Cossacks, who had been radicalised and could now take land. They made up the bulk of Denikin's fighting forces but were often addressed *assvoloch*/scum by their Russian commanders. (Evan Mawdsley, *The Russian Civil War*, p. 181)

White offensives, uncoordinated, occurred at different times, in different places, resulting in the Bolsheviks not feeling maximum pressure at one decisive time and enabling the Red Army to transfer forces to the crucial areas as needs must. This was the great advantage of the holding of the centre, where forces could be more easily transferred along shortened lines of communication.

In his *World Crisis*, Churchill wrote the following of Moscow, the Bolsheviks and their White enemies:

"The ancient capital... lay at the centre of a web of railroads... and in the midst of a spider! Vain hope to crush the spider by the advance of lines of encircling flies." (*World Crisis, Aftermath*, p.234)

Lenin had moved the capital from Petrograd in March 1918 because of its vulnerability to attack from the West. Despite being the governing force of a fragmenting society the Bolsheviks had some strategic advantages. They held the heartland of Russia, a gigantic area, with the great bulk of the Russian population at their disposal (4/5 to 1 in the Bolshevik favour). They controlled the great Russian railway network which radiated out from Moscow across the country to Petrograd, Archangel, the Don, Urals and Western Siberia. They had the arsenals of the old Tsarist armies as well as almost all the munitions factories.

Whilst the Bolsheviks were solid with an ethnically homogenous population at their back, their opponents on the other hand, were a *hotch-potch* of political tendencies, occupying only the wide periphery of the Empire with its assortment of peoples, many of whom feared the Whites every bit as much as the Bolsheviks. The establishment of the Omsk dictatorship had the effect of frightening many of the Menshevik and Social Revolutionaries, who had attempted to maintain distance between the Bolsheviks and Whites, into reluctantly going over to the Bolsheviks.

The Bolsheviks did not collapse under Denikin's offensive in the Fall of 1919 and popular resistance to the White Volunteer Army actually stiffened. Russians in the areas Denikin's army liberated from the Bolsheviks showed a marked reluctance to support the Whites. The Red Army was the military arm

of a civilian government whereas the White Armies had to improvise government as they conquered and controlled. The alternative to Soviet rule was a situation veering between dictatorial military rule and anarchy/score settling in the White administered territories.

At this time the Soviets were also at war with the Polish army of Marshal Pilsudski and *were doing badly in the field against them*. Poland was "*the Red bridge*" from Russia to Germany and Europe, on which Lenin hoped to carry the Proletarian Revolution. Marshal Pilsudski's aim, on the other hand, was to see Russia, of whatever colour, out of Poland. He decided in late 1919, when Denikin was in the ascendancy, that it was "*a lesser evil to help Soviet Russia defeat Denikin*" and he adopted a policy of disengagement with the Soviet Army. Denikin had refused to recognise Poland's Eastern frontiers and Pilsudski concluded that it was better to let Denikin go down to the Bolsheviks and deal with the Red Army later.

During Denikin's offensive Pilsudski secretly informed Lenin, in October, that he was doing this on purpose, allowing Trotsky to transfer over 40,000 men to the Southern front. In all the Bolsheviks were able to move 270,000 troops to reinforce their Southern lines (Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Bolshevik Regime*, pp.89-91 and p.122).

In November 1919 the Red Army captured Kursk and the Whites went into a headlong and disorderly retreat.

The Khojaly Massacre of 26 February 1992

The following is the text of an interview I gave to Eurasia Diary (www.eurasiadiary.com) and the Eurasia Media Network on the eve of the 28th Anniversary of the Khojaly massacre of 26 February 1992:

ED: 28 years have now passed since the horrible massacre against humanity committed in Khojaly, part of Nagorno Karabakh, in the territory of the Republic Azerbaijan. As you know, on 26 February, 1992 Armenian armored groups attacked Khojaly and in one night more than 613 innocent Muslim people, including women, children, babies were brutally slaughtered, and more than 1000 people were taken hostage. Khojaly town was completely annihilated, and it is impossible to find any trace, today. Firstly, please share your opinion about this terrible tragedy of Khojaly.

PW: I can remember, as a young man, hearing of the "Nagorno-Karabakh war" on the TV. At that point the conflict in Northern Ireland, where I lived, was drawing to a close and a peace process was developing that would end the 28-year conflict. I think the vast majority of people in Ireland and the U.K. never knew about Khojaly or what happened there. I had to actively seek out details myself. Later on when I wrote about the Ottomans and the Great War and people started asking me about Khojaly. When I began writing about this period, I was forced to understand the Armenian issue and it was this that prompted me to learn more about Khojaly.

We have had our share of massacres and killings in the North of Ireland and when I told people about what I learnt about Khojaly they were astonished. They were in disbelief because nothing of this magnitude was ever contemplated by either side in our conflict, let alone put into effect. It would have been considered far beyond the depths of depravity that something like this event should have taken place. Even the wildest people in our society would have been appalled at this massive and

brutal act of terrorism, directed largely at civilians. Later we saw this type of thing in the Balkans but in 1992 it really was shocking.

I do not like to accept any event as "natural" or "inevitable" and have tried to understand Khojaly in a larger historical context since. The only way I can make sense of it is through the pernicious character of Armenian nationalism. One thing that runs through Armenian nationalism is a desire for maximalist territory – desiring any piece of land where Armenians live in any number. Of course, in 1914-20 this manifested itself in the Magna Armenia/Great Armenia project of the Dashnaks. All sorts of distortions of history, demography and general information were, and have been employed, in this irredentist pursuit with deadly implications. And the Armenian form of nationalism seems to be all too willing to not only sacrifice the lives of those who do not measure up to its uniquely pure race and religion character, but also the interests of its own people in the pursuit of land at any cost.

In 1990, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the state that maintained the Karabakh settlement in an orderly way for 3 generations, it was imperative that the Karabakh issue be dealt with through dialogue and collaboration. Karabakh was a shared space and required some form of agreed solution before old wounds were deepened and blood ran again. However, Erivan, with old habits dying hard and obsession with its object of desire unrelenting, and heightened by an opportunity, implemented its land grab and ethnic cleansing to homogenize the population. This has had the most poisonous of effects for relations in the region, promoting blood feuds for generations and seriously damaging relations for peoples who need to live together for peace and prosperity. And Khojaly was really the ultimate manifestation of this disastrous form of nationalism,

which can be reflected by responses of similar character as a terrible precedent is set.

ED: Do you think that the Khojaly genocide should be recognized internationally like Holocaust and Srebrenitsa have been?

PW: Certainly, Khojaly was an event of similar character to Srebrenitsa and most people who have any interest in world events have heard of Srebrenitsa. If Khojaly, and other events of the same magnitude are not recognized in similar manner, from the same period of history, then there is something wrong with the idea of international law and justice. It is frankly brought into disrepute. This is because law has to be “blind” as the statue of Lady Justice signifies, or impartial, if it is to be given respect. When it is applied partially with massive “blind spots” it cannot be claimed to be actual law. It is something else, but it is not law.

ED: Armenia has been trying, in the long-term, to bring information to the attention of the world about so-called genocide. However, Khojaly genocide, happened only 28 years ago, in recent history, and is still being prevented by the Armenian Lobby in being recognized in the West. What is your opinion about this? And what should we do to bring our tragedies to the public attention of the world?

PW: Armenia has a deeply hypocritical attitude to these things. It likes to portray itself as a victim to the world, without any responsibility for the calamity it certainly had some responsibility for bringing on its own people in 1915-20, through Dashnak nationalism, and will not tolerate the idea that it has created many victims of its own. These range from the large number of Moslems who died in Eastern Anatolia and Transcaucasia as a result of the Armenian Insurrection in support of the Great War on the Ottoman State and the objective of carving out Magna Armenia, to the latest sufferers of death and ethnic cleansing in Karabakh and the Erivan State itself.

The Armenians have, of course, great advantages in promoting their false narrative in the West (and indeed in Russia). They have a large English-speaking and monied diaspora of long standing, as a result of the calamity of a century ago. They have power and influence in the U.S. and many major European states. They have the sympathy of the Christian world, which although is not as Christian as it once was, still has latent tendencies toward support for its own kind. And they are quite single-minded in their pursuits – a single-mindedness I would say that is often destructive and detrimental to their own interests and development as a people.

Azerbaijan faces an uphill struggle, let's be frank. But its young academics need to produce popular, readable books about its history that appeal to western audiences and get across the Azeri case. It is a strong case and it will have effect if it is heard. It needs to be simply put and gain traction through stating the simple facts, without exaggeration and avoiding the type of wilder claims that the Armenian lobby indulges itself in.

When I started finding out the facts a while ago and researching the history of the region, I determined to write articles in Ireland and on my website (drpatwalsh.com), and to write a book about the geopolitics of the period as it related to Britain, Russia and the Azerbaijan Republic a century ago. I hope for this to be published this year. It is vital that the distorted version of history, peddled by the lazy, unthinking media of today be challenged and an alternative case be presented in the West and particularly the Anglosphere, which is, for good or ill, the most important battlefield of ideas today. The most important aspect is to put events in a historical and geopolitical context, using the traditional means of cause and effect to explain developments. There is far too much “social science” masquerading as history, in which manipulation is used to construct false narratives. In putting out the facts that

describe the Azeri experience every little counts, and as one famous Irishman said: “Everyone has their part to play.”

ED: History shows us that war criminals, including those involved in the Holocaust and Srebrenitsa were taken to the International Court. Unfortunately, Armenian criminals, who led terrorist groups and perpetrated against innocent humans the dreadful crimes in Khojaly, have not been punished yet. What is the main reason of this?

PW: Well, of course, this comes back to “victor's justice”. War criminals invariably come from the losing side in war and there has to be a political will to pursue them. In all the massacres and destruction that have been perpetrated since the Nazis went on trial at Nuremburg there have been very few people convicted of war crimes.

With regard to Karabakh and Khojaly, in particular, I would say that the important geopolitical position of the Southern Caucasus has a lot to do with this. The region is an important arena of interests. It is possible that the U.S. could have pursued those responsible for Khojaly in the 1990s when there was effectively a unipolar world, before the Russian resurgence under Vladimir Putin. But the U.S. did not, perhaps owing to the strength of the Armenian lobby in America, and the desire to capture Armenia for the West and ultimately, NATO. Armenia is very much balanced between those in Erivan who understand that Armenia is ultimately dependent upon Russian patronage and its U.S. diaspora, which tends to be anti-Russian and would like to pull Armenia more into the United States' hegemony. Obviously, the Armenian diaspora is the United States' main instrument for influencing internal politics in Erivan so it would not wish to weaken their influence by demanding extradition for war crimes. Russia, similarly, has little interest in pursuing such matters. In fact, the Great Powers are probably exerting leverage over both Armenia and Azerbaijan through the unresolved state of the Karabakh, playing each off against the other in the new Cold War/Great Game. This is one of the most unfortunate products of the Armenian seizure of Karabakh 30 years ago. It has left all the countries of the Southern Caucasus pawns in great power politics, since the hinterland of Russia is the major battleground between the West and Moscow. Support for either Armenia or Azerbaijan on the Karabakh issue can be made dependent upon favourable influence for the West or Moscow. And following on from this the Karabakh issue may remain better unresolved and a continued source of conflict for these external interests. It is undoubtedly the case that these Powers are playing double games in the region and tending to their own interests rather than to the interests of all parts of humanity in the region.

In such circumstances, and unless a major peace process is launched involving major players like the U.S., Russia, Turkey and Iran, I cannot see a resolution of these issues soon. In my opinion it would require something of the order of what the U.S. did in 1998 for the North of Ireland and the Good Friday Agreement of that year, to begin a genuine process of peace and reconciliation in the area, involving justice for all victims, including the displaced and, in particular, those massacred at Khojaly in February 1992.

What Happened at Khojaly?

The massacre of over 600 civilians in the Azerbaijani town of Khojaly, which took place over the course of a single night during an assault by Armenian forces in February 1992, marked the bloodiest single incident in the Nagorno-Karabakh war. The Armenians used similar techniques that were later employed by Serbia in Kosovo and Bosnia. Heavy artillery belonging to Soviet forces was brought up to shell villages until local Azerbaijani defenders withdrew. The captured towns and villages were often looted, with the expulsion of non-Armenian

civilians, and most buildings destroyed to eradicate all traces of the inhabitants.

The event, which is referred to as the Khojaly genocide in Azerbaijan, represented a significant point in the conflict. It led to the flight of Moslem civilians from other settlements in the path of the advance of Armenian forces, fearing what happened to the women and children of Khojaly would happen to them. This pattern continued and by the time the two sides signed a cease-fire agreement in 1994, Armenian forces had grabbed control of not only the disputed territory of mountainous Karabakh but also just under 20 per cent of Azerbaijan's internationally-recognized territory. By October 1993, all of mountainous Karabakh, as well as the Lachin corridor – a strategic territory connecting Karabakh to Armenia – had come under the occupation of Armenian forces. The Karabakh region which did not border Armenia and seven Azerbaijani-populated districts outside of it that did share a border with Armenia were occupied. Nearly 50,000 Azeris, along with other non-Armenian minorities, were expelled from Karabakh and around 600,000 were forced to leave the surrounding occupied territories. The Armenian war to grab Karabakh took the lives of around 30,000 people, the substantial majority being Moslem.

In 2003, the then Armenian President, Serzh Sargsyan, admitted that the massacre served the effective purpose of the mass intimidation of Moslem civilians from Karabakh, achieving their complete ethnic cleansing. In an interview with the journalist Thomas DeWaal, which was later published in his book *Black Garden*, Sargsyan suggested that the Khojaly massacre laid down a marker to the Azerbaijani population of Karabakh and was meant to intimidate them out of their homes: *“Before Khojaly, the Azerbaijanis thought that they were joking with us, they thought that the Armenians were people who could not raise their hand against the civilian population. We were able to break that. And that's what happened. And we should also take into account that amongst those boys were people who had fled from Baku and Sumgait.”* (*Black Garden*, p. 172)

Sumgait, near Baku, had been the scene four years previously, of serious and obscure ethnic clashes that had left around two dozen Armenians dead and a smaller number of Azeris. There was possibly Soviet instigation in the event which was sparked off by the Armenian move on Karabakh in 1988 and the expulsion and killing of Moslems from both Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.

Monte Melkonian, a California-born Armenian who came to fight to capture Karabakh for Armenia and who led a squad of around 4,000 fighters during the war, described Khojaly as a *“strategic goal”* and *“an act of revenge”* in his diaries that were published posthumously by his brother Marker Melkonian in a book called *My Brother's Road: An American's Fateful Journey to Armenia*. (p. 213). Monte Melkonian blamed out of control irregular forces for the massacre and its associated atrocities. His brother wrote:

“The Arabo fighters had then unsheathed the knives they had carried on their hips for so long, and began stabbing. Now, the only sound was the wind whistling through dry grass, a wind that was too early yet to blow away the stench of corpses. Monte crunched over the grass where women and girls lay scattered like broken dolls. ‘No discipline’, he muttered.” (p. 213)

The town had no military significance but it was strategically important. It controlled Stepanakert/Xankandi airport and commanded the Lachin corridor between Armenia and Karabakh, Kalbajar and Shusha. Prior to the attack, the Armenian forces had surrounded the town from three sides, leaving the fourth open as a funnel for civilians to flee through. The fleeing civilians were then ambushed and killed in brutal fashion in woods and open ground, often with the use of knives.

Journalists captured the scene of carnage in video footage that was aired on TV. The footage showed the mutilated corpses of civilians, including those of small children scattered on the ground. Many had been scalped, decapitated, or had their eyes gouged, with some pregnant women having been bayoneted in their stomachs.

Pat Walsh

‘A Massacre The World Can Never Forget’ by Raoul Lowery-Contreras, author of Murder in the Mountains:

“Thanks to the Internet, we know of massacres that we might not have heard about five or ten years ago... That wasn't the case a quarter of a century ago. On the night of February 26, 1992, Armenian troops supported by Russian soldiers of the 366th Motorized Infantry Regiment attacked the Azerbaijani mountain town of Khojaly. Its 3000 people were defended by a hundred police and volunteer teenage students. Rockets and artillery shells bombarded the town. Nightly barrages had occurred for the five months since Armenian forces had cut roads to the rest of Azerbaijan; no vehicles could enter or leave Khojaly. Supplies were helicoptered in, people out; the flights ended on the 14th. Food was scarce. The bombardment drove Khojaly residents into basement shelters. When it ended, Armenian and Russian soldiers attacked. Defenders knew they couldn't hold against tanks, so they told all to flee Khojaly eastward to heavily defended Aghdam. From their GarGar River take-off point, groups of men, women and children started downhill through snow covered hills in freezing temperatures. With only the clothes they wore, they tripped and stumbled downhill towards safety through the night. Their elderly slowed everyone. Armenia claims to this day that the people of Khojaly were warned to evacuate through a “safe corridor” down the mountains. They say they promised safe passage. Between midnight and dawn 613 men, women and children were slaughtered by machine guns, rifles, knives and bayonets in that “safe passage.” Without a doubt, the killers were Armenians. Proof: Armenians took hundreds of hostages held for days and weeks to be traded with Azerbaijan for commodities and oil. Within hours of the massacre, American reporter Thomas Goltz made his way by helicopter to the killing fields and wrote a story for the Washington Post which he dictated over the phone from Aghdam by way of the Post's Moscow bureau. The story was published February 27, 1992 in the Post, with another article in London's Sunday Times the Sunday after the Massacre. The New York Times ran a story about the massacre on March 2 that described the Russian participation and that “scalping [was] reported” of bodies observed by reporter Goltz and others. Time Magazine ran a story on Khojaly on March 16, 1992. Despite some coverage by the Washington Post (2 articles), the New York Times, The Sunday Times and Time Magazine, few people in the United States knew anything about the massacre at Khojaly, which by definition of the 1948 Convention of Genocide was a genocidal act - a punishable war crime.

Armenians defend what happened at Khojaly. In a Horizon Weekly article entitled ‘Khojaly: The Chronicle of Unseen Forgery and Falsification’ by Yahram Atanesyan, he, who probably has never spoken with a survivor of February 26, challenges Goltz. Goltz' book, “Azerbaijan Diary” has been validated by another book. ‘Black Garden’ written by Caucasus expert Thomas DeWaal... Goltz was at the killing fields within a day of the massacre and is the only American reporter who visited Khojaly before the attack. He personally knew people whose bodies he saw. De Waal reported on the battle 10 years later. Unlike Atanesyan and other Armenian critics, he did interview survivors...”

The GDR and I – An Indirect Family Relationship

By Manus O’Riordan

[This article was first published by Gisela Holfter (Centre for Irish-German Studies, University of Limerick), co-editor (with Deirdre Byrnes and Jean E. Conacher), in *Perceptions and Perspectives - Exploring Connections between Ireland and the GDR*, Trier, Germany, 2019]

The GDR is a state that I never visited, but it would not be entirely accurate to say that I never set foot in it. One Sunday in June 1962, at the age of thirteen, I commenced an overseas vacation for the very first time in my life. This was a holiday in Poland, in the company of my father, Michael O’Riordan (1917- 2006). Passing overnight through London – itself a novel experience for me – we flew from London to Warsaw, with the briefest of re-fuelling stops in East Berlin. The portrait of GDR leader Walter Ulbricht adorned the airport terminal, but what mostly attracted my attention was the very much visibly armed *Volkspolizei* presence on a day, as it happened, when tensions were particularly acute, as a result of a mass West Berlin protest then taking place against the ten-month-old Wall that physically divided the city.

My father, in his capacity as General Secretary of the Irish Workers’ Party – and, from 1970, of the reunified Communist Party of Ireland – had paid his own first visit to the GDR in 1960 and would continue to do so on quite a number of other occasions over the remaining three decades of that state’s life. Perhaps the most meaningful visit for him occurred in 1966 when, as an International Brigade veteran of the Spanish Anti-Fascist War himself, he joined an East Berlin gathering of fellow International Brigade veterans from all over the world. The emotional highlight, however, was a visit, together with two fellow Irish International Brigaders, to the grave of their commander Frank Ryan, in Dresden’s Loschwitz cemetery. On that occasion, honours were rendered at Ryan’s graveside by GDR army officer Arno Herring, who was himself a veteran of the Spanish Anti-Fascist War.

My father had, by that time, already embarked upon the writing of his book, *Connolly Column: The Story of the Irishmen who fought for the Spanish Republic 1936-1939*. It was a lengthy process, taking a further thirteen years before the book was finally published in 1979 by New Books in Dublin (and printed in the GDR). By that stage, my father and I held rather different views on the GDR among other political differences. In 1971, I had become a member of the British and Irish Communist Organisation (B&ICO), becoming Chairman of its Dublin Branch in the mid-1970s, a group highly critical of the Communist Party of Ireland (CPI). Our political differences primarily focused on the national question in Ireland. Although we openly expressed such differences in print, sometimes even in direct criticism of each other, as father and son we arrived at a *modus vivendi* of avoiding face-to-face argument, so that family bonds remained strong and intact.

The CPI’s attitude towards the GDR was one of uncritical solidarity. The October 1979 issue of the CPI newspaper, *The Irish Socialist*, carried a celebratory full page: “Thirty years of the GDR: a living monument to the socialist future”. Under the heading “The CPI expresses admiration”, a message of solidarity to the GDR’s ruling Socialist Unity Party (SED), from CPI Chairman Andrew Barr and General Secretary Michael O’Riordan, declared, *inter alia*:

“The foundation of the GDR has a lesson to all Communists and workers parties that exist under capitalism; its relevance is the great act of working-class unity in the formation of one single party of the SED in 1946 [...] Today the GDR stands in the frontline of the socialist states [...] Long may it live!”²

My own more critical view of the GDR had been particularly influenced by two books published in 1977: Jonathan Steele’s *Socialism with a German Face* and Stefan Heym’s novel *Five Days in June* (‘Fünf Tage im Juni’), which was set against the background of the revolt of East Berlin workers in June 1953. In my article “Stalin, Beria and the German Question”, which was published in the December 1978 issue of *The Communist*, a theoretical journal of the B&ICO, I recounted how, in early 1952, Stalin had told Ulbricht’s SED that it should be prepared to “follow the Italian example”³ and become a minority party in a united Germany. I went on to relate the story of the June 1953 workers’ revolt, concluding with those ironic lines penned by Brecht in his poem ‘Die Lösung’ on the SED’s condemnation of the workers it purported to represent:

Wäre es da

Nicht doch einfacher, die Regierung löste das Volk auf und
Wählte ein anderes?⁴

Would it not have been simpler

If the Government had dissolved the people

And elected another?

The thirtieth anniversary of the GDR coincided with a Great Leap Forward in Ireland-GDR relations, centred on the June 1979 repatriation of the remains of Frank Ryan from Dresden’s Loschwitz cemetery and their reburial in Dublin’s Glasnevin cemetery. It is not my intention to repeat the account of the long process leading up to this development, as detailed by Jérôme aan de Wiel in his 2015 book, *East German Intelligence and Ireland, 1949-90*, and based on his forensic examination of GDR documentation.⁵ However, I will add one more piece to the jigsaw, a highly unorthodox encounter, in either 1962 or 1963, between my father and Helmut Clissmann, the officer in Germany’s intelligence service Abwehr into whose care Frank Ryan had been entrusted during the final years of his life, which he spent in wartime Germany, 1940-44.⁶ Clissmann was to be a founder of the Irish Section of Amnesty International in 1962, and, at one of its early public meetings, my father had followed him into the men’s toilets, where he introduced himself. “I have just one question”, he put to Clissmann. “Was Frank Ryan a collaborator?” Clissmann shook his head and said “No”. “That’s all I wanted to know”, my father responded.

My father had been one of three Irish International Brigaders who had flown to the GDR to accompany the repatriation of Frank Ryan’s remains from Dresden back to Dublin in June 1979. In *The Irish Socialist* of August 1979, the Communist Party of Ireland enthused about the GDR presence at the Dublin ceremony:

“Heinz Knobbe, Minister Plenipotentiary of the Embassy of the German Democratic Republic in London, also spoke at the graveside. He recalled that in Spain, Ryan had fought against German as well as Spanish fascism [...] ‘The fact that fascism had been destroyed in Germany was the legacy of

Frank Ryan and people like him.’ He said that Ryan was held in great esteem in the GDR [...] He concluded, ‘May Frank Ryan always remain an unbreakable link between Ireland and my country’.⁷

In the June 1981 issue of another B&ICO theoretical journal, *The Irish Communist*, under the heading of “Frank Ryan: Anti-Fascist Hero?”, and in the course of reviewing my father’s 1979 book, *Connolly Column*, I recalled my own memories of the re-interment of Ryan’s remains, at which ceremony I myself had also been present: “Helmut Clissmann smiled wryly to himself, not without reason, as he heard the representative of the East German Government [...] claiming that the destruction of fascism in Germany was the legacy of people like Ryan”.⁸ It was, of course, the USSR’s Red Army that had defeated Nazi Germany and I proceeded to pose the question:

“Has any thought been given to the fact that Frank Ryan was personally quite fortunate that he died while still a ‘distinguished guest’ of Nazi Germany, and that he did not have to account for himself a year later, when Soviet power reached Dresden? After all, think of the subsequent fate of the many Spanish Civil War veterans who had survived the Second World War in Nazi concentration camps. The commissar of the Hungarian Battalion of the International Brigade, Laszlo Rajk, was put on trial in 1949 and executed.”⁹

After another show trial in Czechoslovakia in 1952, International Brigader Otto Sling was executed and International Brigader Artur London was sentenced to life imprisonment. There was no show trial in the GDR, but in the wake of the June 1953 workers’ revolt, International Brigaders Franz Dahlem and Karl Kormes were purged and not rehabilitated until 1956. But what if Frank Ryan had been available for an East German show trial? What would the consequences have been for Karl Kormes, who had shared imprisonment in Spain with Frank Ryan? As my father himself had frankly acknowledged:

“Ryan found himself in Germany, neither as a captive anti-fascist nor as an invited voluntary collaborator, but in a unique category. Far from suffering the fate of other opponents of fascism, German and international, who were put into the concentration camps, the gas chambers or before the firing squads, he in fact was allowed to live with the Clissmanns.”¹⁰

That fact alone would have been sufficient to ensure Ryan’s execution by any post-War regime in Eastern Europe. As regards our respective assessments of Ryan in 1979-81, it was I, in fact, who was the Stalinist, and not my father, since I agreed at the time with the USSR’s condemnation of Irish wartime neutrality, while my father did not. By 1982 I had ceased to be a Communist of any sort, since, for me, Stalinism and Leninism had been one and the same thing. I am, however, a former Communist who remains immensely proud of having been one. For the remainder of the 1980s, corresponding to the extent of that new Party’s life, I was the Chairperson of the Dublin North West Branch of the Democratic Socialist Party that had been established by the Limerick Socialist TD Jim Kemmy. Paradoxically, this also signalled an end to my critiques of the GDR, for the personnel of the Socialist Party of Ireland, one of the component groups that had dissolved themselves into the Democratic Socialist Party (DSP), had already been running the Ireland-GDR Friendship Society and would continue to do so until the demise of the GDR itself.¹¹ Indeed, in November 1987, my father, as Communist Party of Ireland Chair, and Jim Kemmy, as DSP President, sat side by side in the Irish Jewish Museum for my lecture entitled “Irish and Jewish Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War”, with particular reference to the story of the Irish Jewish volunteer Maurice Levitas (1917-2001), and where I also paid tribute to the anti-Nazi resistance record of the chairman of the GDR State Council and SED General Secretary Erich Honecker.¹²

That lecture was to establish a new GDR connection for me, for Maurice had been resident in the GDR city of Potsdam since 1985. The closest of friendships followed, as did an extensive correspondence, embracing Maurice’s eyewitness account of the demise of the GDR, with some rather prescient observations regarding the social consequences of unemployment and a growth in anti-immigrant prejudice. Although I supported German reunification, Maurice’s letters, particularly those of 1989-90, made me also appreciate that much of what had been positive in the GDR experience was being lost in the process. Maurice departed Potsdam for London in 1991 and, in the following year, he went on to translate and publish *Erich Honecker Cross-Examined*, as an act of solidarity with that former GDR leader, in prison at the time, and awaiting trial in the new Germany.¹³

Sharing Spanish Anti-Fascist War commemorations had brought the thinking of both my father and myself closer together on a number of fronts. I was to conclude that I myself had been mistaken, and my father justified, on the question of Irish wartime neutrality. In my article for the Fall 2003 issue of Boston College’s *Irish Literary Supplement*, where I took issue with Fearghal McGarry’s 2002 biography *Frank Ryan*, and in particular with his chapter entitled “Collaborator”, I argued:

“In a 1981 review entitled ‘Frank Ryan: Anti-Fascist Hero?’ [...] I was in no doubt that by no stretch of the imagination could Ryan’s actual activities in wartime Germany be considered as a continuation of his previous anti-fascist resistance struggle, even though his inner beliefs remained as before. Writing from a point of view which regarded as valid the Soviet denunciation of Irish wartime neutrality that had resulted in the USSR veto on Ireland joining the UN for the first decade of its existence, I regarded Ryan’s championing of de Valera’s neutrality as being ‘objectively’ anti- Soviet. I no longer hold that view of Irish history [...] Taoiseach de Valera had, in fact, saved Ireland from both Fascism and War [...] Frank Ryan in Germany (as a de facto representative of de Valera) was neither the Anti-Fascist conspirator and martyr of Socialist Republican iconography nor the collaborator with the Nazis portrayed by McGarry. Even Abwehr officer Kurt Haller’s British intelligence interrogator at one point observed of Ryan: ‘Regarding himself as an Irish patriot and not a creature of the Germans, he refused to associate himself in any way with Hartmann’s Irish broadcasts’. ‘Patriot’ might well indeed have been the appropriate chapter heading to have used in respect of the final four years of Ryan’s life. Patriotism can, of course, also be the last refuge of the scoundrel. But Ryan was no scoundrel. Undoubtedly, he fails to pass the Stalinist test of unconditional loyalty to the interests of the Soviet Union, as he also fails to pass the Churchillian test of loyalty to the British Empire. He would have been a prime candidate for a show trial under either regime. But perhaps an admittedly more insular standard of patriotism will allow us to acknowledge the integrity of the role he played.”¹⁴

I was honoured to be asked by my father to edit the second – expanded 2005 – edition of *Connolly Column*, published a year before his passing, and which included my reassessment of Frank Ryan. It had been my privilege to accompany my father to Spain on the occasion of a series of International Brigade commemorations, including his first return to Barcelona in October 1988, a half century after his hospitalisation in that city as a wounded Anti-Fascist volunteer in 1938. It was in Barcelona that I myself then met with Frank Ryan’s one-time comrade-in-arms and fellow prisoner in Spain, Karl Kormes. As a former GDR ambassador himself – first to Yugoslavia, and later to Ecuador – Karl Kormes was particularly pleased to learn that, on the occasion of my father’s seventieth birthday party in November 1987, he had been awarded the GDR Order

of Marx and Engels, which was personally presented to him by Dr Gerhard Lindner, the GDR ambassador to Ireland. It was, indeed, the end of a particular era.

NOTES:

1 See http://free-magazines.atholbooks.org/ipr/2006/IPR_July_2006.pdf for my own obituary tribute to my father in *Irish Political Review*, July 2006.

2 Andrew Barr and Michael O’Riordan, “The CPI expresses admiration”, and also “Thirty years of the GDR”, *The Irish Socialist*, October 1979.

3 Manus O’Riordan, “Stalin, Beria and the German Question”, *The Communist*, December 1978.

4 Brecht’s poem was first published in the West German newspaper *Die Welt* in 1959. The English translation carried is that provided in Jonathan Steele, *Socialism with a German Face*, 1977.

5 Jérôme aan de Wiel, *East German Intelligence and Ireland, 1949-1990: Espionage, Terrorism and Diplomacy*, 2015.

6 Abwehr was the German military intelligence service for the Reichswehr and the Wehrmacht from 1920 until 1945, and headed by Admiral Wilhelm Canaris. Ryan’s first biographer, Seán Cronin, related how Helmut Clissmann and Jupp Hoven, then members the left wing German nationalist Young Prussian Association, had formed a friendship with Ryan while exchange students in Dublin in the early 1930s. They suggested to Canaris that if he might persuade Franco to free Ryan, and as Ryan was likely to want to campaign for the Irish cause in the USA, “anything that hurt Britain was good for Germany”. Seán Cronin, *Frank Ryan: The Search for the Republic*, 1980, pp 161-163.

7 Peter Williams, “Frank Ryan comes home”, *The Irish Socialist*, August 1979.

8 Manus O’Riordan, “Frank Ryan: Anti-Fascist Hero?”, *The Irish Communist*, June 1981.

9 Manus O Riordan, “Frank Ryan: Anti-Fascist Hero?”.

10 Michael O’Riordan, *Connolly Column*, 1979, p 156.

11 The Friendship Society’s Secretary, Fergus Brogan, was among those who negotiated the SPI’s dissolution into the DSP, while Seamus Ratigan, of that Society’s Committee, became founding Chair of the DSP in 1982.

12 On October 9, 2016, at the celebration of the 80th anniversary of the defeat of Sir Oswald Mosley’s British Union of Fascists in the October 1936 Battle of Cable Street, I shared the platform with British Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn and veteran Communist Max Levitas (1915-2018), where I saluted the leadership shown in that battle by my fellow-Dubliners, brothers Max and Maurice Levitas (1917-2001):

“Thirty years ago, Maurice Levitas told me of the political choices that had faced him as a teenager here in Whitechapel: “*I could choose to be either a Communist or a Zionist. I chose to become a Communist.*” Now comrades and friends, I myself am not a Communist. I have not been one for 35 years. But, as an ex-Communist, I am immensely proud of having been one! ... There is one historical fact that all of us should publicly acknowledge today. We would not be here celebrating the 80th anniversary of the defeat of Mosley’s Fascists, were it not for the leadership given on that day by Britain’s Communist Party, and the likes of Max Levitas, Secretary of the Young Communist League’s Stepney Branch, and Maurice Levitas, Secretary of its Bethnal Green Branch.”

See www.irelandscw.com/ibvol-MoR1.htm for the text of my 1987 lecture.

13 See www.irelandscw.com/obit-MLevitas.htm for my February 2001 funeral oration and obituary - www.irishtimes.com/news/lifelong-dedication-to-the-fight-against-fascism-1.284430 - of Maurice Levitas, *Irish Times*, 24 February 2001; and see www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/people/max-levitas-obituary-dublin-born-jewish-communist-who-fought-british-facism-1.3737515 for my obituary of Max Levitas, *Irish Times*, December 22, 2018.

14 See www.irelandscw.com/docs-Ryan2.htm and www.irelandscw.com/org-RyanComm.htm for my oration at the October 2005 Frank Ryan commemoration.

A Historic Document for *Irish Foreign Affairs*: The 1945 Stalin/Churchill/Truman Discussion of Spain

Introduction by Manus O’Riordan

On August 2, 2015, the Spanish monarchist newspaper *ABC* marked the 70th anniversary of the conclusion of the Potsdam Conference (held from July 17 to August 2, 1945) with an article whose sensationalist headline, in translation, read: “**Stalin’s frustrated attempt to overthrow Franco**”

The article related that, on July 19, the third day of the Conference, “Stalin posed to his counterparts the question of what to do about Spain, since one of his aspirations was to **eliminate the Franco regime** (*ABC* emphasis), as had been done with Hitler and Mussolini”, but that “Truman, as much as Churchill, rejected any type of intervention against Franco”. But the one statement of Stalin’s that it actually quoted, in a Spanish translation from a version of the Conference minutes, and here now translated back into English, disproved the article’s earlier suggestion that Stalin had been seeking a second Spanish Civil War:

“Is that to say that there will be no changes in Spain? ... I am not proposing any military intervention whatsoever, nor that

we should unleash a civil war in Spain. All that I wish is that the Spanish people should know that we, the leaders of democratic Europe, are adopting a negative stand against the Franco regime.”

This past September 5, 2019, a Spanish Republican Facebook post drew attention to the fact that the monarchist *ABC* had once again returned to that Potsdam exchange, under the heading of, in translation: “The secret meeting at which Stalin, Truman and Churchill discussed how to destroy Franco after WWII”. It opened: “*So, are there to be no changes in Spain?*” The question posed by a thoroughly indignant Stalin, on July 19, 1945.” This time, at least, the article published, not only the full minutes of that Big Three discussion, in Spanish translation, but it also provided a link to the US State Department archives, where the Potsdam Conference minutes can be found in their original English. Next day, September 6, I posted the minutes of that discussion on my own Facebook page, as well as those of several International Brigade commemorative sites.

That English language transcript received its first publication in print in this January’s edition of *¡No pasarán!*, the magazine of the International Brigade Memorial Trust, of which I am Ireland

Secretary. I reproduce it again hereunder. The exchanges speak for themselves, and they require no further commentary from myself.

POTSDAM MINUTES ON SPAIN, JULY 19, 1945 **The Soviet Proposal Presented to the Foreign Ministers**

The Soviet Government present for consideration by the Conference the following suggestion.

In view of the fact:

1. that the regime of Franco originated not as a result of the development of the internal forces in Spain but as a result of the intervention by the principal axis-countries - Hitler Germany and fascist Italy which imposed upon the Spanish people the fascist regime of Franco;

2. that the regime of Franco constitutes a grave danger to the freedom-loving nations in Europe and South America;

3. that in the face of brutal terror instituted by Franco the Spanish people have repeatedly expressed themselves against the regime of Franco and in favour of the restoration of democratic government in Spain,

The Conference deems it necessary to recommend to the United Nations:

1. to break off all relations with the Government of Franco;

2. to render support to the democratic forces in Spain and to enable the Spanish people to establish such a regime as will respond to their will.

BIG THREE DISCUSSION OF SPAIN **“Our proposals have been submitted” - Stalin**

Potsdam, July 19, 1945, 5 p.m.

Truman: The next subject is Spain.

Stalin: Our proposals have been submitted.

Churchill: His Majesty's Government and past government have strong distaste for General Franco and the government of Spain. All I said for Franco was that there was more in Spanish politics than drawing cartoons of Franco. But I view with disgust the killing of people for what they did five or six years ago. When Franco asked me to line up against the menace of Soviet Russia, I sent him a most chilling reply and I sent correspondence to Marshal Stalin and the President. We all detest the Spanish regime.

The difficulty with the Marshal's proposal is with the breaking off of relations with Spain. It may cause them to rally to his support. Breaking off relations breaks your influence. Ambassadors are needed particularly in time of difficulty. The course suggested would strengthen Franco's position, and he has an army. Should we take a rebuff or use force? I am against that. I am against interfering in the internal affairs of a country which has not molested us. I would greatly regret embroiling ourselves in their internal affairs. At the present time Franco's powers are undermined. We should speed the parting guest. But breaking off relations because of its internal conduct is a dangerous principle in this war. Nor would I like to see a renewal of the Spanish Civil War.

The San Francisco Charter has a provision against interfering in internal affairs.

“They sent the Blue Brigade against him” - Churchill **“appreciates” Stalin's “feelings”**

Truman: I have no love for Franco. I have no desire to get into a Spanish Civil War. We would be most happy to recognize another government. But Spain must settle it.

Stalin: That means everything remains unchanged in Spain.

Truman: No. Franco is weakening.

Stalin: Franco is gaining strength. He is encouraging Fascism elsewhere. I believe you have no love for Franco, but you must prove it by acts. I do not propose a civil war, but I wish the Spanish people to know that we are on the side of the democratic forces of the Spanish people and against the regime of Franco. There are diplomatic means of showing this to the Spanish people.

Let us assume breaking relations too severe. There must be more flexible means. We should not pass by this cancer. Otherwise we sanction it. It is presumed that the Big Three can settle such questions. Are we entitled to keep silent? We cannot shut our eyes to the dangers that the Franco regime holds out for all Europe.

Churchill: We cannot favor breaking relations. We have valuable trade relations and could not interfere unless we were certain of success. I appreciate how the Marshal feels as they sent the Blue Brigade against him. But they refrained from using arms when we went into Africa when they could have done us great harm.

“I do not place on the same level Spain and Portugal” - Stalin
Stalin: I suggest that the foreign secretaries try to find some means of making it clear that we are not in favor.

Truman: I agree.

Churchill: I should deprecate this. The question should be decided by the Big Three.

Truman: I urge the Prime Minister to let the foreign secretaries discuss the question.

Churchill: It is a matter of principle against interfering with internal affairs.

Stalin: It is not a matter of internal affairs. No such regime exists in any country of Europe.

Churchill: Portugal might be considered a dictatorship.

Stalin: Portugal's government arose from internal forces; Spain from foreign forces. I do not place on the same level Spain and Portugal.

“Leave the question without a decision for the moment” - Churchill

Churchill: Franco is moving to his finale. He came to power many years ago. The Russian government as well as the fascist government[s] took part in the civil war.

Stalin: The foreign secretaries should prepare an appraisal of the regime of Franco, including the sentiments expressed by Mr. Churchill. This will not bind the government of Great Britain. I suggest [a] most mild form of influence—less than we applied to Greece and Poland.

Churchill: I am not agreed in principle to making any Allied declaration and I did not understand that the President was.

Stalin: Statement need not be in reference to Spain alone but to all Europe.

Churchill: Our action in other countries is because of their involvement in the war. Of course if you wish to make a declaration of general principles regarding governments which have not achieved those principles, that is different. That declaration is in the American Constitution. We can't improve upon it. I don't know what the Spanish people think but I feel that they do want to be rid of Franco.

Truman: There seems to be no chance of agreement. Let us pass on and come back to this question later.

Stalin: But let us refer this matter to the foreign secretaries. Perhaps they can find a formula.

Churchill: That is the very question we are debating. I suggest we leave the question without decision for the moment.

And so it was left, without any follow up - **Manus O'Riordan**

The Holodomor Story

[The 1932 famine in Ukraine is used polemically to equate the regimes of Hitler and Stalin, hence to name 'Holodomor' to suggest a Holocaust. Anne Applebaum has written a book on the subject, "Red Famine", reviewed by Sheila Fitzpatrick in the following terms:

"Though sympathetic to the sentiments behind it, she [Applebaum] ultimately doesn't buy the Ukrainian argument that Holodomor was an act of genocide. Her estimate of famine losses in Ukraine – 4.5 million people – reflects current scholarship. Her take on Stalin's intentions comes closer than I would to seeing him as specifically out to kill Ukrainians, but this is a legitimate difference of interpretation. For scholars, the most interesting part of the book will be the two excellent historiographical chapters in which she teases out the political and scholarly impulses tending to minimise the famine in Soviet times ("The Cover-Up") and does the same for post-Soviet Ukrainian exploitation of the issue ("The Holodomor in History and Memory")."

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/aug/25/red-famine-stalins-war-on-ukraine-anne-applebaum-review>

Another review of the same book (<https://historynewsnetwork.org/article/169438>)

by Mark Tauger is very detailed and refutes the idea that Stalin had any intention to cause a famine; Mark Tauger is the inspiration for the article reprinted below from a blog called Kopamaros kept by [Björk Stáliðsdóttir](#).]

Posted on **January 1, 2019**

In the period of 1932–1933 a disastrous famine occurred throughout the Soviet Union, affecting areas including but not limited to Kazakhstan, Ukraine, the Lower Volga and the North Caucasus. It has been used to claim that a genocide took place against Ukrainians through deliberate 'terror-famine' by the Soviet government. To try to present the famine as another Holocaust it has been branded with the similar name 'Holodomor' (meaning famine-plague) in recent times.

Famines had been a frequent occurrence in the Russian Empire and pre-collectivization Soviet Union and this was the last famine in Russian history (with the exception of World War 2 and 1946-1947 famine following its destruction). During the 1000 years preceding 1917 Russia experienced at least 433 years of famine. Far back in 1092 a famine killed 15 percent of Kiev's population. Famines struck in years including 1872, 1891, 1905, and 1911. Anti-communists like to pretend that famine started with collectivisation and act like there was no famine during the NEP ignoring those of 1924, 1927 and 1928. In fact, the opposite is true since the long cycle of famines was ended following collectivisation.

It is important to understand the background and preceding years. After the revolution and First World War, the new revolutionary Soviet states of the former-Russian Empire were now under attack in a civil war and foreign invasion. Although the Red Army was able to eventually defeat these forces, this period brought immense destruction to the newly created Soviet Union. In 1921 the New Economic Policy was introduced to allow a steady recovery from the war and destruction suffered since 1914. The policy was in basic terms state-capitalism, a form of capitalism.

In this period the country suffered multiple famines, such as the 1921 Volga famine, which was caused by drought-induced crop failures as well as massive infestations of locusts, rodents, and plant diseases. This famine was witnessed by Norwegian explorer Fridtjof Nansen who headed a relief commission and took many photos of famine victims. In early 1924 the country was struck by another severe drought and, despite larger harvests in 1925 and 1926, Stalin admitted in 1927 that the country had not fully recovered from the 1924 famine. In July 1925 when the Dneprostoi project was under consideration, Stalin opposed it and stressed the need to expand agricultural machinery factories.

The situation in the countryside at the time of the NEP saw a rise in dominance of kulaks (meaning 'tight-fisted'; basically the rural capitalists), who took advantage of the harsh situation of poor peasants and middle peasants to enrich themselves.

The kulak is a very interesting figure in rural Russia ... There is no doubt that the methods used by this usurer and oppressor in the peasant's blouse have not been of the cleanest ... In Russian literature he has been dubbed the "village eater," and has been clothed with all sorts of diabolical qualities.

□ Wolf von Schierband "Russia, her Strength and her Weakness" 1904

The kulaks owned lots of land, and hired poor peasants, who owned little or no land, to work on their land for them. The kulaks, which accumulated more money thanks to their wealth, could buy the farming equipment and rent it out to the poor peasants who had none; further enriching themselves and making the peasants dependent on them. On top of this Kulaks would be able to make money through speculation and taking advantage of famine by hoarding grain to inflate prices and selling it at much higher prices to the hungry and desperate people, putting cities into a desperate situation.

In 1927, after the spontaneous evolution of the free market, 7 per cent of peasants, i.e. 2,700,000 peasants, were once again without land. Each year, one quarter of a million poor lost their land. Furthermore, the landless men were no longer accepted in the traditional village commune. In 1927, there were still 27 million peasants who had neither horse nor cart. These poor peasants formed 35 per cent of the peasant population.

The great majority were formed of middle peasants: 51 to 53 per cent. But they still worked with their primitive instruments. In 1929, 60 per cent of families in the Ukraine had no form of machinery; 71 per cent of the families in the North Caucasus, 87.5 per cent in the Lower Volga and 92.5 per cent in the Central Black-Earth Region were in the same situation. These were the grain-producing regions.

In the whole of the Soviet Union, between 5 and 7 per cent of peasants succeeded in enriching themselves: these were the kulaks. [8]

In 1927 another drought struck the Volga, Ukraine, and other regions which reduced grain production below subsistence in many regions. In 1927-1929 the country was experiencing another famine. During this famine the Soviet government of Ukraine established a famine relief commission called Uriadkom distributing aid including food and farm equipment. Ukraine received more aid than was sent to other parts of the USSR.

According to a report by the Uriadkom on 13 August 1928, 85.2 percent of the winter crops failed in the steppe regions of Ukraine in winter and spring 1928. These regions had planted half of their sown area in winter crops and usually had high and

stable harvests. Peasants in the region reseeded the failed areas with spring crops, but this prolonged the spring sowing in the steppe almost a month, and the area was undersown because poor harvests in the region in 1927 left the peasants with insufficient seed. Both of these factors augured a reduced yield. Spring in 1928 was late, cold and dry; dust storms blew the soil away and in many cases made more reseeding necessary. In June and July, continued drought and heat harmed late-sown spring crops, and rains in August did not improve the situation. [Mark B. Tauger "Grain Crisis or Famine?"]

This vulnerability to natural disaster when compared to the west was seen as a sign of agricultural backwardness by Soviet leaders. The famine was an important part of the argument that agriculture had to be changed.

We are fifty or a hundred years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this distance in ten years. Either we do it, or they crush us...

– Joseph Stalin, 1931 [12]

The Soviet Union desperately needed modern machinery and industrial equipment to recover from the destruction of the years of war since 1914 and to modernise and move their country forward.

Where is the way out? The way out is in the passing of small disintegrated peasant farms into large-scaled amalgamated farms, on the basis of communal tillage of the soil; in passing to collective tillage of the soil on the basis of the new higher technique. The way out is to amalgamate the petty and tiny peasant farms gradually but steadily, not by means of pressure but by example and conviction, into large-scale undertakings on the basis of communal, fraternal collective tillage of the soil, applying scientific methods for the intensification of agriculture. [Fifteenth Congress of the Party, December 1927]

Large collective farms and modern machinery were the way forward and early experiments proved successful. A lot of inspiration came from large farms in the USA. Not to forget also is that fact that Russia had had a tradition of communal agriculture in the form of the *Obshchina*.

The initial step in that policy was a plan to establish several dozen sovkhozy (large mechanized state farms) in the eastern regions of the USSR, implemented in 1928 on Stalin's initiative but with much discussion by specialists and the Central Committee. These farms were set up on non-peasant land in the eastern regions of the USSR (Siberia, Kazakhstan, the Volga basin and other regions had vast areas of remote unpopulated arid lands), and thus these sovkhozy were not established to exploit the peasants. These sovkhozy were to produce 1.5 million tons of marketable grain. The plan, modelled explicitly on Thomas Campbell's totally mechanized farm of more than 60,000 acres in Montana, was implemented rapidly during 1928-29; by 1930, according to the confidential report by the agency in charge of these farms, these sovkhozy produced double the planned target amount of grain.

[Mark B. Tauger "Soviet Peasants and Collectivization, 1930-39"]

The first Five-Year Plan began in October 1928 and the collectivization movement grew rapidly in the following years.

In 1931 severe drought and hot winds (*sukhovei*) affected regions across the USSR including the southern Urals, Western Siberia, Ukraine, Bashkiria and the Volga region. In the main spring-grain precipitation period, precipitation in the southern Urals and Western Siberia was one-fourth of the amount that agronomists there considered necessary for plant growth.

A Canadian agricultural specialist Andrew Cairns who made extensive travels through the USSR in 1932 wrote reports providing stark evidence of the effects of the 1931 drought on agricultural production. 38 of the 124 districts in the West

Siberian Krai had total crop failures in 1931 according to the chief agricultural official of the krai. Sovkhozy near Omsk, that Cairns visited, had average grain yields of 1.8 and 2.5 centners per hectare in 1931, as opposed to 9.3 and 13 centners in 1930. According to officials, the Middle Volga Krai had lost 3-3.5 million tons of grain to drought. In Ukraine grain harvests also were reduced by drought. The 1931 drought created famine conditions in the USSR and many horses, the chief draught animals, were lost or severely weakened.

In 1932, drought also reduced harvests in some areas, even if the drought did not approach the severity of 1931. In August 1932, Cairns was told by the Soviet Union's leading specialist on arid agriculture N.M. Tulaikov that drought and hot winds had ruined most of the crops on the left bank of the regions of the Middle and Lower Volga. Cairns himself saw large fields stunted and damaged by hot winds and drought south of Moscow. German agricultural attaché, Otto Schiller was told in August by the head of the agricultural of the Soviet statistical agency that drought and hot winds had reduced crops significantly in Ukraine, along the Volga, and in Siberia.

However, despite the existence of drought in 1932, drought in 1932 was not as severe or widespread as in 1931, and 1932 is not seen as a year of drought. Both Soviet officials at the time and historians overlook other environmental factors, aside from drought, affecting famine. Russian agriculture, which the government was at the time working to modernise, was far behind that of advanced countries in western Europe and was highly vulnerable to weather, pests, and diseases.

A sudden warm spell in January 1932 caused fall-sown crop to start growing, after which winter temperatures returned and killed a portion of the crop. At least 12 percent of the fall-sown crop in Ukraine was destroyed by this winterkill.

Despite regional droughts, 1932 was overall a warm and humid year. Heavy rains damaged crops and reduced yields in several regions, particularly on the right bank of the Volga, in the North Caucus, and in Ukraine. Cairns noted that in June drownings in basement apartments in Kiev were caused by heavy rains. Internal security police reported flooding in Uzbekistan cotton fields in August and a hurricane in the central industrial region in September. Slower sowing in 1932 was caused by "the large quantity of precipitation which interfered with work" according to a report prepared by the Ukrainian Agriculture Commissariat on 20 June 1932 on agricultural conditions and work in spring which reported heavy rainfall which was double or triple the normal amount, in April-early June, in many regions.

It may seem that more rainfall benefits crops, but British geographer David Grigg noted that in Europe generally, grain yields tend to be inversely related to rainfall during the growing season, in particular because it encourages the spread of crop diseases. A 1978 CIA report found rust and smut to be the main factors reducing grain quality and yield in the Soviet Union. In 1932 Soviet crops suffered from an extraordinarily severe combination of infestations of crop diseases and pests, indicated by Soviet agronomic literature as well as published and archived sources.

Several varieties of rust, a category of fungi that infests grains and many other plants, greatly harmed the crops in 1932. Rust causes plant cells to age prematurely, reduces the plant's capacity to photosynthesize, and diverts increasing amounts of carbohydrates and other nutrients for the infestations own growth and reproduction. Rust can in some cases kill the plant but more ordinarily the rusted grain will appear to continue to grow normally but the harvest will consist of smaller or fewer grains. This means that a field could appear promising but then produce an extremely low yield because of the infestation. Rust is among the most difficult of plant diseases to combat

and because of its destructive potential the US military even produced and stockpiled rust spores as a biological weapon in the 1950s and 1960s. Widespread outbreaks of rust in 1932 were documented by numerous publications. In the North Caucasus, Stem rust of wheat caused a loss of 80-90 percent of crop in regions near rivers in 1932 and 1933, according to a Soviet agronomic guidebook. Cairns and Schiller also observed widespread rust infestations and Soviet agronomists confirmed these impressions in Ukraine, the North Caucasus, Byelorussia, the Central Black Earth Oblast, and the Volga region. However identifying rust required specialized knowledge and training so it appeared that the 1932 harvest would be better than it was. Famine survivors in the Volga region, interviewed by Russian historian Viktor Kondrashin, remembered how in the 1932 harvest the ears were somehow "empty." Investigations at the time found that brown rust of wheat in destroyed 70 percent of the harvest in some regions of Ukraine and the North Caucasus and reduced the weight of grain and the number of seeds in ears.

Large outbreaks of smut also affected Soviet agriculture in 1932 and caused substantial losses of approximately 9 million tons. The Commissariat of Agriculture issued an emergency decree, in August 1932, on measures to deal with ergot, another plant disease.

Pests were another problem in 1932. The warm and humid weather led to severe insect infestations including locusts, field moths, and others. In one district of Ukraine it was reported that beet weevils had destroyed almost 500 hectares of beets in 3 hours. OGPU reports also claimed to have found a wrecking organization that operated in pest control organizations.

The loss of many horses was another great detriment to agriculture. Many horses had been lost from conditions in 1931 because desperate peasants would eat the horses fodder. But also many horses were slaughtered by Kulaks in protest of collectivization.

The threat of Kulak sabotage was a serious problem at the time. Frederick Schuman, who travelled in Ukraine at the time, later published in 1957 while a Professor at Williams College a book in which he spoke about the famine:

Their [kulak] opposition took the initial form of slaughtering their cattle and horses in preference to having them collectivized. The result was a grievous blow to Soviet agriculture, for most of the cattle and horses were owned by the kulaks. Between 1928 and 1933 the number of horses in the USSR declined from almost 30,000,000 to less than 15,000,000; of horned cattle from 70,000,000 (including 31,000,000 cows) to 38,000,000 (including 20,000,000 cows); of sheep and goats from 147,000,000 to 50,000,000; and of hogs from 20,000,000 to 12,000,000. Soviet rural economy had not recovered from this staggering loss by 1941.

... Some [kulaks] murdered officials, set the torch to the property of the collectives, and even burned their own crops and seed grain.

Sabotage by opponents of the government was a serious issue. Ukrainian nationalists employed the use of sabotage against agriculture. Isaac Mazepa, who was head of Petliura's anti-Bolshevik Ukrainian state in 1919-1920, seems quite pleased in his tone when describing the damage inflicted in Soviet Ukraine by sabotage:

At first there were disturbances in the kolkhosi [collective farms] or else the Communist officials and their agents were killed, but later a system of passive resistance was favored which aimed at the systematic frustration of the Bolsheviks' plans for the sowing and gathering of the harvest The catastrophe of 1932 was the hardest blow that Soviet Ukraine had to face since the famine of 1921-1922. The autumn and spring sowing

campaigns both failed. Whole tracts were left unsown, in addition when the crop was being gathered ... in many areas, especially in the south, 20, 40 and even 50 per cent was left in the fields, and was either not collected at all or was ruined in the threshing.

– Isaac Mazepa, Slavonic Review Vol. 12, 1934

The harvest of 1932 was a much worse harvest than was expected and the environmental causes, such as rust, were not fully understood by the leadership and therefore they tended to suspect factors like mismanagement and sabotage.

The degree of overestimation can be approximated by extrapolating from the archival data for kolkhozy. Official figures for Soviet and Ukrainian kolkhoz yields (6.8 centners and 8.0 centners) are close to average yields for all sectors (7.0 centners and 8.1 centners). The archival figures for kolkhoz yields (6.4 centners and 5 centners) can be reasonably assumed to be close to the genuine yields for all sectors and, therefore, kolkhoz production data in the annual reports can serve as a basis for estimating total grain production in 1932. Thus, for Ukraine, the official sown area (18.1 million hectares) reduced by the share of sown area actually harvested (approximately 5 centners) gives a total harvest of 8.5 million tons, or a little less than 60 percent of the official 14.6 million tons. This result appears to support Holubnychy's statement that 40 percent of the crop was lost in 1932. A similar calculation of the sown area in the Soviet Union (99.7 million hectares), reduced by 7 percent (based on the TsUNKhU data) to 92.72 and multiplied by the NKZ average yield of 5.4 centners, gives a total Soviet harvest of 50.06 million tons, almost 30 percent below the official figure of 69.87—within the range that Schiller predicted.

If the kolkhozy that did not complete annual reports had lower harvests than those that did and if Sovkhoz and edinolichnik harvests were as low as their 1932 procurements implied the harvest may have been well below 50 million tons.

[Mark B. Tauger "The 1932 Harvest"]

Following this bad harvest the country was struck by famine affecting people across the Soviet Union including Ukraine, the North Caucasus, the Central Blackearth oblast, the Volga basin, portions of the Urals and Kazakhstan. This was a disaster of course first and foremost for the victims of famine but also for the country and regime which had its industrialisation affected and the "power-hungry" leadership of country had its opposition heightened. This was at a time when Japan had just invaded Manchuria and was a threat to the country. The government was now faced with the task of making sure that food was distributed to as many people as possible, including the people in towns and cities, while working towards a good harvest in 1933.

The country also suffered epidemics of typhus, typhoid fever, and dysentery which coincided with the famine and were responsible for many deaths.

The government introduced political departments, Politotdely, which played a crucial role to overcome the famine and help peasants produce a crop. The politotdely helped organize the sovkhosy and machine tractor stations and purged officials for malfeasance, replacing them by promoting thousands of peasants.

They were supported with the largest allocations of food and seed aid in Soviet history of 5.67 million tons and special sowing commissions set up in crucial regions like Ukraine, the Urals, the Volga and elsewhere to manage regional-level aspects of organization and supplies to farms.

[Mark B. Tauger "Soviet Peasants and Collectivization, 1930-39"]

A report from the Central Blackearth oblast, one of the regions hit by famine, shows the work of the politotdely in the kolkhozy. With politotdely help, kolkhozy were able to make great improvements. They sowed 3.4 million hectares instead of 2.85 million hectares that they had in 1932, and 15 finished 15 days earlier.

They used fertilizer for the first time and sorted seed, they treated more seed against plant diseases, they weeded crops sometimes two and three times, and they took measures against insects. They completed harvesting grain crops in 65 days, versus 70 in 1932, and threshing in December 1933, a process that in 1932 had lasted the region into March 1933. They completed grain procurements in November 1933 (those of 1932 had lasted like threshing into spring 1933), paid off all of their seed loans, formed the necessary internal funds in kolkhozy and still managed to distribute to kolkhozniki much more in labour-day payments than the previous year, thereby ending the famine in the region.

[Mark B. Tauger "Soviet Peasants and Collectivization, 1930–39"]

The Central Committee allocated more than half a million tons of seed loans to Ukraine and the North Caucasus in one February decree. By April 1933, aid to Ukraine exceeded 560,000 tons.

It is said by proponents of 'holodomor' that the state came to take grain from peasants to starve them. In reality grain procurements were standard in order to take a portion of grain to feed the cities.

During a shortage the hoarding of grain becomes a problem. Some peasants would hide grain to either sell at higher inflated prices, to have more food for themselves, or to receive more aid from the government. Many times this hoarded grain had been stolen from collective farms often by individuals who worked on them. It was necessary for the state therefore to find and seize hoarded grain to make sure that it was distributed to as many people as possible and to make sure aid was distributed to those that needed it most. This was not a unique situation and the same thing happened in Tsarist times:

Governments worked hard to ensure that only the neediest peasants received aid, including by searching peasants' homes□ even in the 1891 famine□to expose hidden hoards that would disqualify them from aid.

[Mark B. Tauger "Famine in Russian History"]

Grain procurements targets were reduced multiple times. In Ukraine procurement quotas were reduced by 1.3 million tons in May 1932; 656,000 tons in July 1932; 1.15 million tons in October 1932; and 459,000 tons in January 1933 in response to appeals. In other regions there were requests to reduce procurements that were denied while Ukraine's were granted. Grain procurements were less in 1932 than other years in the 1930s. In the first half of 1933, 5 million tons of grain procurements were returned to villages in the USSR.

Russia had been an agrarian country which relied on selling raw materials and agricultural produce. Exports of grain were an important part of funding the modernisation of agriculture and industrialisation which would end that situation. Western countries had placed embargos and restricted the Soviet's alternative exports such as gold, meanwhile grain prices fell on world markets. Contracts for exports were signed in advance. The Soviets curtailed the exports of grain sharply when the crisis had become evident. The exports were reduced by over 66% from 5.2 million the previous year to 1.73 million in 1932, they were further reduced the following year. In the first half of 1933 aid to Ukraine alone was 60 percent greater than the amount exported from the whole Soviet Union.

Despite all the damage caused, the country was able to overcome the famine and in 1933 they produced a much better harvest. Famines which had long plagued the territories of the Russian Empire would become (with the exception of those following the Nazi invasion) a thing of the past.

The propaganda campaign in the 1930s over famine in Ukraine was largely the work of Nazi Germany and fascist sympathisers. One important figure was the multi-millionaire American press magnate William Randolph Hearst. Hearst owned the biggest media conglomerate in the world and was known for the use of 'yellow journalism' (sensationalist journalism which often uses faked interviews, misleading headlines, pseudoscience etc.; the 'fake news' of the time). Hearst, known to millions as "America's No. 1 Fascist" in the 1930s, employed Benito Mussolini in the thirties and the Hearst press became the Italian dictator's chief source of income, paying him ten times the amount he received in salary from being the head of the Italian state. In the late summer of 1934, Hearst travelled to Nazi Germany and met with Ernst Hanfstaengl, press officer for the Reich and intimate adviser of Hitler. He then was later informed by four stormtroopers that a plane was waiting to take him to meet Hitler, who he met with for a discussion. Numerous agreements were reportedly reached, such as the agreement that Germany would buy its foreign news through Hearst's *International News Service*.

In October 1934, a man by the name of Thomas Walker entered the Soviet Union. After spending less than a week in Moscow, he spent the rest of his thirteen-day journey in transit to the Manchurian border, left and did not return. Four months later, in February 1935, a series of articles began appearing in the Hearst press by Thomas Walker, who is described as a "noted journalist, traveller and student of Russian affairs who has spent several years touring the Union of Soviet Russia". Under such titles as "Six Million Perish In Soviet Famine" it is claimed that Walker "entered Russia last spring" (spring of 1934) and smuggled in a camera under dangerous and adverse circumstances to photograph the pictures accompanying the stories of a mammoth famine in Ukraine. This means, according to the version printed in the Hearst press, the Hearst press kept the story for 10 months before printing them in 1935 and that there was a famine during the spring of 1934. However the famine occurred in 1932 and the harvest of 1933, in contrast to that of 1932, was a great harvest. Furthermore, Thomas Walker did not enter the Soviet Union in the spring of 1934 but in October after receiving a transit visa in London on the 29th of September. He stayed in Moscow for five days before boarding a trans-Siberian train to the Soviet-Manchurian border which did not pass within several hundred miles of the black soil and Ukrainian districts which he later claimed to have seen and photographed.

The photographs, which Walker could not have taken, were inconsistent and many were clearly taken in different seasons. Many of the photos were taken a decade earlier, during the Volga famine, by Fridtjof Nansen. Some photos were identified as being from the dissolved Austro-Hungarian Empire, with one showing an Austrian cavalry soldier standing beside a dead horse during World War One. Similar faked photographs were also appearing in Nazi papers, including *Voelkischer Beobachter* and *Der Sturmer*, in Germany. These false images are still used to show the "holodomor" to this day.

Read also: "Kharkov" to "East Ghouta": Imperialist propaganda has long used false photographs

Not only were the photographs and the trip to Ukraine a falsification but so was the identity of Thomas Walker. Walker was deported from England and arrested in the United States a few months after the Hearst series. The man turned out to be escaped convict Robert Green, who escaped

from Colorado State Prison after serving two years out of his eight-years term for forgery. Robert Green had a trail of crime through the US and four European countries. Just a few of his crimes included forgery, “marriage-swindle” and violation of the Mann-White Slave Act (an Act against human trafficking for the purpose of prostitution). Green was indicted by a Federal grand jury on a charge of passport fraud and plead guilty. During the trial, a reporter noted, Green (Thomas Walker) “admitted that the ‘famine’ pictures published with his series in the Hearst newspapers were fakes and they were not taken in Ukraine as advertised.”

The propaganda campaign continued throughout the 1930s with the same false images being used in multiple publications, especially in Germany.

In Ukraine, the Ukrainian language was still being promoted. In Ukraine in 1934, over 55 million books were published in Ukrainian, an increase from 27 million in 1928. The number of books increased to over 65.3 million in 1937, almost 90 percent of all books published; only 5.8 million were published in Russian.

We are fifty or a hundred years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this distance in ten years. Either we do it, or they crush us...

– Joseph Stalin, 1931

In 1941 Nazi Germany and its allies invaded the Soviet Union. They were joined by Ukrainian nationalist collaborators the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN; paramilitary wing: Ukrainian Insurgent Army, UPA).

The forces of Germans and Ukrainian nationalists were not met with the reception you would expect from a people who were targeted for genocide by the previous government. The support for the OUN was limited to the region of west Ukraine (Polish Galicia), which was under the control of Poland, not the Soviet Union, before it was unified with Ukraine in 1939. A Ukrainian priest, Father Ohienko, dispatched to Kiev by the Nazis, in a letter during the war wrote:

I have been here for several months but I can find no spiritual peace. You can't imagine how Bolshevism has changed everything ... People are malicious and consider us enemies... [1]

Many Ukrainians joined the partisans to fight the Nazi occupation and millions fought in the Red Army.

Today in Ukraine attempts are made to spread myths about the partisan movement in the occupied territories of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic allegedly being a fiction. In reality, this, of course, isn't so. Perhaps its scale were a little exaggerated, but we can speak with confidence about 260,000 of its participants. This is a huge force. For comparison, UPA reached no more than 40,000 people. And if to remember that, besides 260,000 Soviet partisans, another 7 million more Ukrainians fought as a part of the Red Army, nobody should doubt who in reality the people of Ukraine supported back then. [11]

It was quickly noticeable that the propaganda and reality about the Soviet Union did not match up. As historian Heinz Hohne states:

Two sobering years of bloody war in Russia provided cruel proof of the falsity of the tale about sub-humans. As early as August 1942 in its “Reports from the Reich” the SD noted that the feeling was growing among the German people that “we have been victims of delusion. The main and startling impression is of the vast mass of Soviet weapons, their technical quality, and the gigantic Soviet effort of industrialization □all in sharp contrast to the previous picture of the Soviet Union. People are asking themselves how Bolshevism has managed to produce all this.” [1]

Ukrainian nationalist Lev Shankivsky quotes the report of a Galacian “culture worker”:

One can come across an ordinary village girl ... during our talk we discover that the girl is well-versed in mathematics, physics, chemistry ... had finished secondary school and worked as a tractor driver ... In other examples one could meet a former university, medical institute or teachers' college student among the village girls. Such cases are frequent ... People are well informed. One could discuss any political or social theme with the peasants ... Our fellows fared badly in discussions on professional matters or knowledge of state structure ...

□ Lev Shankivsky Pokhidnihrupy OUN (OUN Marching Groups) 1958 [1]

After the defeat of the Nazi invaders, many of their Ukrainian collaborators flooded into western countries particularly Canada and the USA. These former collaborators would be useful in the Cold War. They would now resurrect the famine-genocide campaign.

An important figure in this cold war propaganda campaign was Robert Conquest. Conquest was formerly employed by the British Secret Service's disinformation project, the *Information Research Department*. Robert Conquest published one of the most popular books on the famine-genocide, “Harvest of Sorrow.” The book uses the same discredited sources of Ukrainian nationalists, the Hearst press, and Nazi Germany. 13 references are made to a fictional novel written by Vasily Grossman. Conquest relies heavily on hearsay, rumour and anecdotes. Conquest is quoted as saying:

on political matters basically the best, though not infallible source is rumour [1]

Historians like J. Arch Getty criticised Conquest and his book, and observed that for no other period or subject, except the study of the Soviet Union in the 1930s, have “historians been so eager to write and accept history-by-anecdote.” Conquest later backed off his initial claim that the famine was deliberate, explaining in 2003 that he does not hold the view that Stalin purposely inflicted the 1933 famine.

The holodomor would still be pushed as propaganda against the Soviet Union and many books etc. would be published with the same falsifications. It would be used as a weapon against not only the Soviet Union and communism but also against Russia because of the west's desire to expand its influence over Ukraine.

It is quite simple to see that the famine that occurred was not deliberate or manufactured by Soviet leaders. The famine went completely against the interests of the Soviet Union, just as the Ukrainian nationalist said, it was a hard blow against the country. A famine would put the power of the country's leaders at risk, greatly damage the progress of industrialisation, create a propaganda story in foreign countries attacking the leaders and their policies, and weaken the country while under threat of foreign invasion. All of those things occurred while the country was trying to industrialize, at the same time the country had new threats from the Japanese invasion of Manchuria and Hitler's rise to power in Germany. The famine clearly was not directed against Ukraine because many other areas also suffered famine and aid was given to Ukraine. The evidence shows that it was primarily environmental factors including draughts, plant disease, and pests, which caused crop failures and a bad harvest. The country was able to overcome famine with a much better harvest in 1933. The long cycle of famines were made a thing of the past following industrialisation and collectivization.

Sources

1. [Fraud, Famine and Fascism](#) by Douglas Tottle
2. [Stalin, Soviet Agriculture and Collectivization](#) by Mark Tauger

3. *Natural Disaster and Human Actions in the Soviet Famine of 1931-33* by Mark Tauger
4. *The 1932 Harvest and the Famine of 1933* by Mark Tauger
5. *Grain Crisis or Famine* by Mark Tauger
6. *Famine in Russian History* by Mark Tauger
7. *Soviet Peasants and Collectivization, 1930–39* by Mark Tauger
8. *Another View of Stalin* by Ludo Martens
9. *Blood Lies* by Grover Furr
10. [Who Organised the Famine in the USSR in 1932-1933?](#) by Nikolay Starikov

11. [«Настоящий герой Украины»: как история жизни Сидора Ковпака помогает развеять мифы националистов](#) by Aleksandr Kolpakidi [translation]
12. *The Tasks of Business Executives (Speech Delivered at the First All-Union Conference of Managers of Socialist Industry, February 4, 1931)* by Joseph Stalin
13. [Review of Anne Applebaum's "Red Famine: Stalin's War on Ukraine"](#) by Mark Tauger

<https://kopamaros.wordpress.com/2019/01/01/the-holodomor-story/>

Lawrence of Arabia on 'The Syrian Question'

To the Editor of The Times, September 11, 1919:

The Syrian question

Sir, Your Syrian Correspondent has just referred to British promises to the French and the Arabs. When on Prince Feisal's staff I had access to the documents in question, and as possibly the only informed freelance European I may help to clear them up. They are four in number.

Document 1: The British promise to King Hussein, dated October 24, 1915. It undertakes, conditional on an Arab revolt, to recognize the "independence of the Arabs" south of latitude 37deg, except in the provinces of Baghdad and Basra, where British interests require administrative control and Great Britain is not "free to act without detriment to the interests of France."

Document 2: The Sykes-Picot Agreement made between England and France in May, 1916. It divides the Arabic provinces of Turkey into five zones, roughly (a) Palestine from the Jordan to the Mediterranean, to be "international" (b) Haifa and Mesopotamia from near Tekrit to the Gulf to be "British" (c) the Syrian coast, from Tyre to Alexandretta, and most of Southern Armenia to be "French" (d) the interior (mainly Aleppo, Damascus, Urfa, Dei, and Mosul) to be "independent Arab".

Document 3: The British statement to the seven Syrians of Cairo dated June 11, 1917.

Document 4: The Anglo-French Declaration of November 9, 1918.

The author of Document 1 was Sir Henry McMahon; 2 and 3 were by Sir Mark Sykes; Lord Robert Cecil authorized 4. All were produced under stress of military urgency to induce the Arabs to fight on our side.

I can see no inconsistencies or incompatibilities in these four documents. It may then be asked what all the fuss is between the British, the French, and the Arabs is about. It is mainly because the agreement of 1916 (Document 2) is unworkable, and no longer suits the British and French Governments. As, however, it is, in a sense, the "charter" of the Arabs, giving them Damascus, Homs, Hama, Aleppo, and Mosul, the necessary revision of this agreement is a delicate matter, and can hardly be done satisfactorily by England and France, without giving weight and expression also to the opinion of the third interest — the Arabs — which it created.

T E Lawrence

Advertisement.

What is a Nation? By Ernest Renan and Joseph Stalin

**Introduction by Brendan Clifford
Athol Books 2015**

What is a Nation? by Ernest Renan The Nation, by Joseph Stalin Epilogue by Brendan Clifford

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

A nation is a historically evolved mixture of things: race, religion, language, economic interest, geographical factors, dynastic influence. All of these things, or some of them, are blended, in various proportions, through historical events, to produce the sense of communal affinity between very large numbers of people that is called nationality. The blend is the nation. Its reality is in the blend. It is not reducible to any one of its components, though one or other of the components may be particularly emphasised in particular phases of national development.

Ireland is a nation; so is Northern Ireland: when NI became systematically less British in its political life, it did not lose the collective sense of itself as a distinct social body with a will to survive, even in conflict with Britain. This is why in 1969 Brendan Clifford described the two nations as two Irish nations. At the time he published the two nations analysis of the Northern situation, together with extracts from the two classic works on nationality from opposite sides of the European political spectrum (Renan and Stalin) to show what he meant by a nation. This pamphlet reproduces these extracts, with a new introduction by Brendan Clifford and an epilogue discussing the relationship between class and nation, war in an imagined world, invented nations, the nation as historic territory, Charles O'Connor, and sectarianism.

To buy books and pamphlets published by

Athol Books,

The Aubane Historical Society,

And

The Belfast Historical and Educational Society

Go to

www.atholbooks.org